



**HOUSING'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PERTH & KINROSS
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP**

JANUARY 2021

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Introduction

The Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) is a statutory requirement, set out in the Statutory Guidance and Advice note to support the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014.

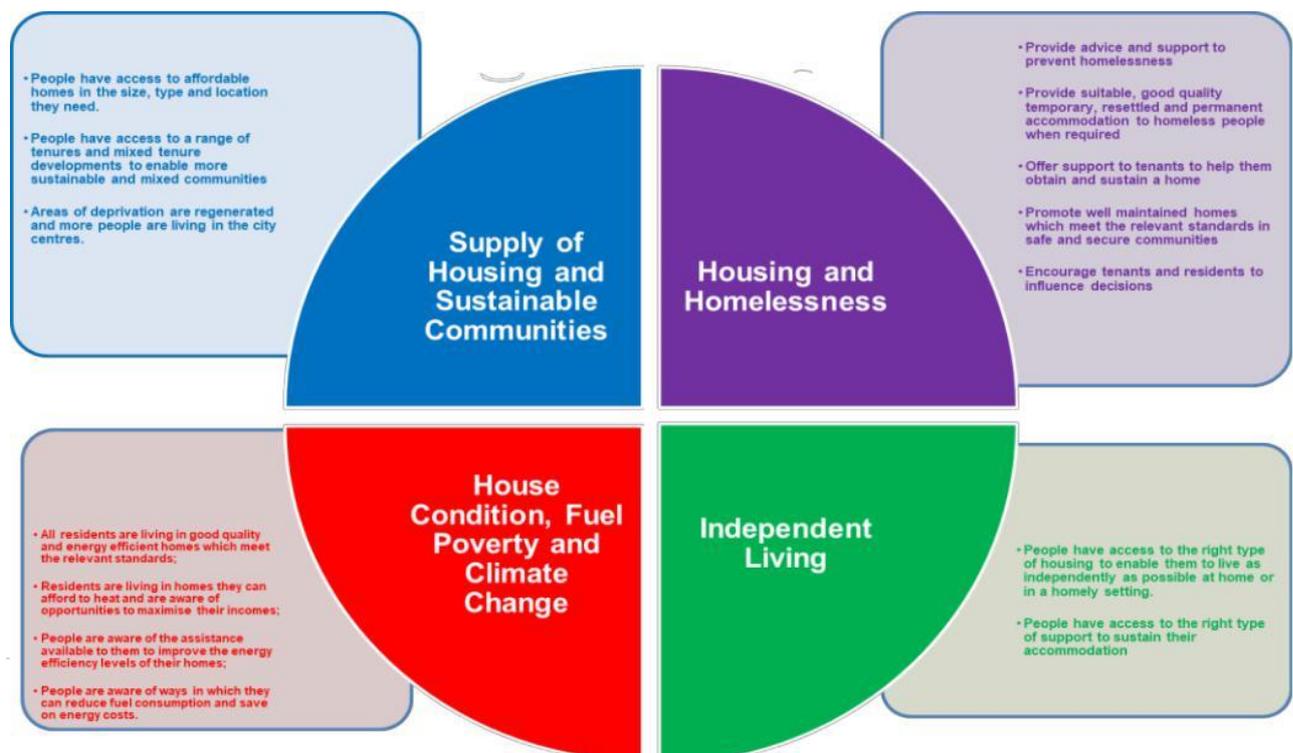
Perth & Kinross Council's Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) has been developed in partnership with Housing and Health and Social Care strategic planners and operational practitioners. The statement acknowledges people's right to live at home or within a homely setting; that suitable, quality housing contributes to reducing health inequalities; and recognises Housing's key role within health and social care integration.' It also meets the aim of the Perth and Kinross Offer as it provides partners with a meaningful platform for people and communities to be involved in the decisions that affect them and provide them with the best opportunities available, where they feel supported and are encouraged to flourish and live life well.

This is the second Housing Contribution Statement produced by the Housing Service and its partners. Housing has an important influence on health inequalities in Scotland through affordability, housing quality, fuel poverty, and the role of housing in community life. The Statement clearly articulates the links between Housing, Health and Social Care and highlights the shared outcomes and service priorities identified in both the Strategic Plan and the Local Housing Strategy (LHS).

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) which sets out its strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and related services.

The LHS defines the local housing priorities within the context of the National Performance Framework (NPF), the Perth and Kinross Community Plan, the Perth and Kinross Corporate Plan and the **Health and Social Care Strategic Commissioning Plan**. It highlights the regulatory standards and outcomes we are required to meet (by Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator) as well as other key outcomes jointly agreed with stakeholders during the LHS strategy development process.

LHS Key Priorities and Outcomes



The Scottish Public Health Network sets out the contribution housing can make to health and wellbeing in their report '**Foundations for well-being: reconnecting public health and housing**'¹.

The report states:

'Good housing is an essential pre-requisite for human wellbeing and is central to some of the most pressing health challenges in Scotland, including poverty and inequality; climate change; and population ageing. Long-standing interests and new developments – for instance, legislation on health and social care integration, community planning, and community empowerment – have combined to create an ideal window of opportunity for a reconnection between public health and housing.'

The report then goes on to explain:

'Physical characteristics of the dwelling itself, household experience, and aspects of place and community can all impact directly on health, as well as indirectly on health determinants, such as financial circumstances, education and employment, relationships and social life. Housing also has the potential to create, sustain, or exacerbate inequalities in health between different social groups.'

The Perth and Kinross Strategic Commissioning Plan 2020-2025 sets out how we can work together to meet the needs of people in Perth and Kinross both now and into the future and help to achieve Perth and Kinross' vision **to make it an area where everyone will have access to good quality, energy efficient housing which they can afford that is in a safe and pleasant environment.**

Working collaboratively with all our stakeholders has been key to the delivery of our success. This will be further enhanced as the Service plays its part in the development of the Perth and Kinross Offer. Through this we aim to work together to meet the needs of people in Perth and Kinross and achieve our vision of making it an area where everyone will have access to good quality, energy efficient housing which they can afford that is in a safe and pleasant environment.

The '**Housing Contribution Statement**' (within the Strategic Commissioning Plan) sets out how the Local Housing Strategy can support the delivery of the Health and Social Care Partnership aims, ensuring people have access to suitable housing and support to enable them to live as independently as possible. This includes:

- Working with housing developers to build sustainable housing which can be easily adapted to meet changing household needs.
- Continuing to work in partnership with a range of services to meet the housing requirements of people with particular needs.
- Providing a range of housing options for older people, including sheltered housing with on-site housing support.
- Intervening early to prevent and respond to homelessness effectively.

¹ Scottish Public Health Network – 'Foundations for well-being: reconnecting public health and housing. A Practical Guide to Improving Health and Reducing Inequalities'. Emily Tweed, lead author on behalf of the SctPHN Health and Housing Advisory Group with contributions from Alison McCann and Julie Arnot – January 2017 - https://www.scotphn.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017_02_22-HH-Main-Report-Final-2.pdf

- Ensuring suitable housing and housing support is available to prevent admissions and prolonged stays in hospital and engage early with partners to deliver a seamless service for people discharged from hospital.
- Ensuring residents and tenants have access to services which allow their current home to be adapted to meet their medical and support needs.
- Supporting residents to live in warm, dry, energy efficient and low carbon homes which they can afford to heat.

Throughout this paper links are made to the contribution towards the achievement of our Community Planning and Corporate Objectives; the outcomes of the LHS; and the Health and Social Care National Outcomes. The main links to the National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes² are:

- **National Outcome 1** – People are able to look after and improve their own health and wellbeing and live-in good health for longer.
- **National Outcome 2** – People, including those with disabilities or long-term conditions, or who are frail, are able to live, as far as reasonably practicable, independently at home or in a homely setting in their community.

This report provides an update on our achievements in delivering the housing contribution, the challenges and the next steps.

How we work together

The Housing Service is a key contributor to the development and implementation of the priorities set out within the Health and Social Care Strategic Commissioning Plan and a range of governance and operational arrangements ensure the achievement of these priorities.

The Health and Social Care Partnership is responsible for providing the Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership (CPP) with updates on the relevant actions within the Community Plan and for reporting on the outcomes achieved through the delivery of the Strategic Commissioning Plan.

Housing's contribution to this strategy is regularly discussed within Health and Social Care Management Teams, specifically the Executive Management Team and the Integrated Management Team. In addition to this, meetings take place regularly between Senior Managers of Housing; Adult Social Work and Social Care; and, between Service Managers from the Health and Social Care Partnership and Housing and Environment Service.

The Depute Director, Communities is a member of the Adult Protection Committee and Chair of the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. Officers with strategic housing, health and social care responsibilities are in regular liaison around strategic needs assessments and planning activities. At an operational level, locality housing teams work closely with health and social care locality teams to support the delivery of housing, health and social care outcomes within our communities.

² National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework. February 2015.
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-health-wellbeing-outcomes-framework/>

More recently, to strengthen joint working and the delivery of shared outcomes, it has been agreed that Senior Managers within Housing will co-chair the Independent Living Group and Housing is also represented on the Planning and Commissioning Board.

The Public Sector budget setting and monitoring process also allows a shared understanding of financial pressures together with the ability to effectively provide housing solutions to prevent costly health and social care responses.

Challenges

To meet our joint aims and outcomes in relation to prevention and the ability to provide person-centred support we must make best use of available resources. There are many effective housing solutions that can prevent costly health and social care responses. The assessment of housing need and demand highlights many challenges that need to be collectively addressed by the Health and Social Care Partnership and Housing Partners to support people to live at home or in a homely setting for as long as possible.

Key challenges include:

- Changing demographics in Perth and Kinross, particularly in relation to an ageing population profile.
- Increasing demands for complex adaptations to existing homes.
- Increasing demands for specialist housing and support for people with particular needs.
- Responding appropriately to the specific housing and support needs of vulnerable groups such as homeless people, older people, people with mental health issues, people with learning disabilities and people with drug and alcohol issues.
- Responding to the challenges that the rural nature of the Local Authority area can bring in relation to the provision of support and suitable accommodation.
- Continuing to identify households in fuel poverty or at risk so that appropriate support and assistance is provided.
- Responding effectively to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the longer-term impact that this may have on households.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic continues to present an unprecedented challenge to all aspects of society, including the Housing Service. This level of challenge continues to necessitate that we adapt our ways of working to ensure that we continue providing critical front-line services, and workers continue to show great flexibility in adapting to new ways of working.

This level of flexibility allows us to continue to deliver services to a high standard despite the ongoing circumstances. Our teams have continued to provide a full range of services around homelessness, tenant support in sheltered housing and emergency repairs to ensure that residents and communities continue to receive the services that they need.

The Perth and Kinross Offer

We also want to build on the goodwill, generosity and positivity that communities have shown to our staff for their hard work during the pandemic. The Perth and Kinross Offer is a new direction for the Council, designed to transform the way we work with our communities, partners and, employees, to ensure that public services can be delivered sustainably and achieve better outcomes for the people of Perth & Kinross.

The Offer provides a platform to allow us to agree how we can align budgets, use our resources for maximum impact and for ensuring communities have services where and when they need them.

It also sets out how together we can create the future we want and need, and how we can keep improving our services and communities. An important part of the Offer is that everyone in Perth and Kinross gets involved and understands the part they can play.

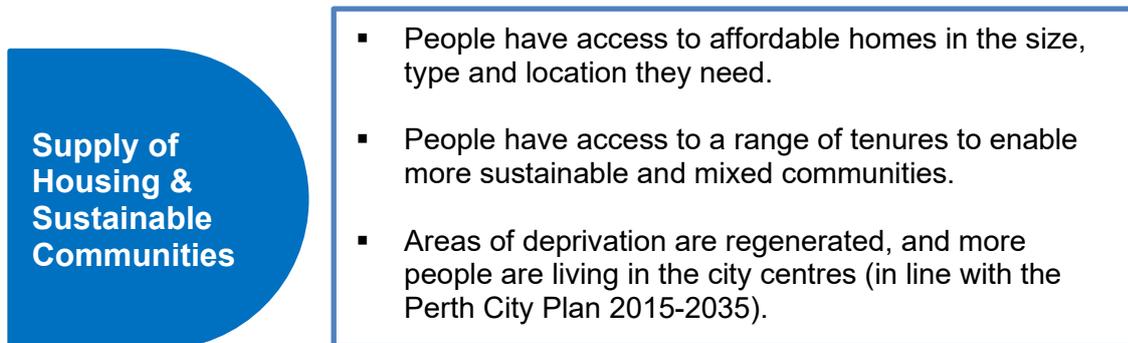
The Offer is key to enabling the council to continue to respond effectively to an increase in demand for services, financial and budget constraints, respond to new legislation and the challenging fiscal climate.

Examples of the Offer in action can be highlighted in how we involved the Making Where We Live Better Group to help us identify housing solutions and options to improve the lives of people with a disability. We also developed various ways to engage with people with particular support requirements, including their families and carers, to ensure they could shape the way we delivered our service and change things for the better. These changes can be seen in the new pathway for housing, the assessment process and the models of accommodation that we are currently progressing.

The Offer is also evident in how we ensured that the needs of our older tenants continued to be met by enabling them to play a key role in the refurbishment work to our sheltered housing units. Their involvement ensured that they influenced the key decisions on design, layout and colour.

Our Estate Based Initiatives (EBIs) is another example of the PK Offer in action. Through EBIs, positive outcomes are achieved from involving tenants and residents in agreeing joint priorities and spending money on projects identified by them. It has also empowered many tenants and residents, and the appearance of local communities have been transformed.

Achievements and Next Steps



Our aim – Create more affordable homes and manage existing stock to create homes in the size, type and location people want to live with access to suitable services and facilities which encourage community integration.

Strategic Links



What have we achieved?

Housing Supply

Good quality homes can have a positive impact on quality of life. During 2019/20, we continued to work with our Partners to support delivery of the outcomes set out within our Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP), investing just under £21 million on affordable housing across the Perth and Kinross area. We managed to exceed our annual new build target of 550 units by delivering a total of 861 homes during the year. This was the highest level of completions since 2008, meaning we have now already surpassed our 5-year target of 2,750 new homes with a total of **2,761 homes** built over the first four years of the local housing strategy.

The 861 new homes completed during 2019/20 comprises:

- 646 private housing properties.
- 215 social rented houses (of which 41 of these homes were suitable for people with limited mobility being all on one level with facilities such as wet floor showers).

All of these new build homes complied with the 'housing for varying needs' standard which sets out design standards for mainstream housing to achieve 'barrier free' design. This standard aims to ensure a home is flexible enough to meet the existing and changing needs of most households, including those with temporary or permanent physical disabilities who may use a wheelchair for some of the time.

Housing for people with mobility issues embraces a wide group of people – from people with limited agility and strength, to those whose physical disability permits them to walk with or without the use of walking aids and for some who may occasionally use a wheelchair. Where possible, our new build developments have been designed to facilitate independent living to meet the needs of households with limited mobility through being on one level with level access and having wet floor showers fitted. During 2019/20, 41 homes were built to this standard.

Properties for wheelchair users provide a completely step-free environment, space for a wheelchair to circulate and access all rooms, a kitchen and bathroom that suits the occupant's particular needs and fittings and services that are within reach and easy to use. We are committed to increasing the supply of wheelchair accessible homes in accordance with requirements set out in the Guidance note (MHDGN 2019/02) issued by the Scottish Government and we are currently consulting internally and with our RSL partners, with a view to agreeing a robust and flexible approach to delivering wheelchair accessible homes across urban and rural Perth & Kinross. For the 2021/22 financial year a target of 6 wheelchair accessible homes has been set for Perth and Kinross. This target will be reviewed as part of the full redraft of the LHS to be submitted April 2022.

In addition to new build housing, we also purchased 35 ex-Council properties in high demand areas through our Buyback Scheme and supported social tenants to move to homes which better met their housing and medical needs and aspirations through our Common Allocations Policy. 243 social tenants were able to move to another property through housing transfers and 32 households successfully swapped homes through our Mutual Exchange Scheme.

Regeneration

Empty properties can sometimes attract anti-social or criminal activity and can have a negative impact on environments, impact on a person's mental health, and potentially

devalue neighbouring properties. Good neighbourhood management, environmental improvements, local lettings initiatives, community involvement, and partnership working are a range of measures progressed by landlords to support sustainable communities.

Our vacant property team work hard to promote and encourage the occupation of vacant properties in Perth and Kinross which includes providing advice on related grants or loans to help bring properties back into use. During 2019/20, our vacant properties team helped bring a total of 139 properties back into use, helping to increase the overall supply of housing in Perth and Kinross and keep communities safe and secure for residents.

Impact of Achievements

The impact of these achievements has been that many people in the area have accessed housing of a type and in an area that is suitable for their current and future household needs, enabling them to live independently at home for longer. New housing supply and the management of existing housing stock helps reduce housing waiting lists, tackles overcrowding and has a positive impact on the general health and wellbeing of individuals helping to improve community spirit.

What are we doing next?

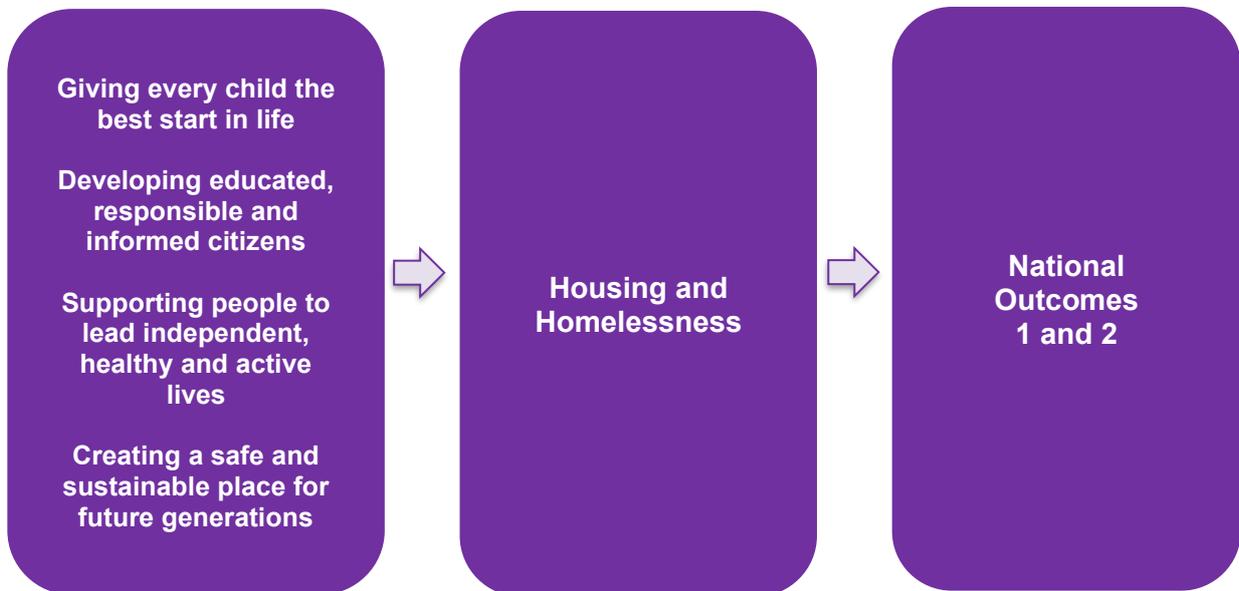
- **Continuing to provide a range of affordable housing options including, and encouraging Partners to include, mid-market rent and shared equity options as part of their new build programmes to ensure a range of tenures are available to help build sustainable and mixed communities;**
- **Continuing to identify and help bring empty properties back into use for housing, helping to increase housing supply and reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour within communities;**
- **Working with Private Landlords to raise awareness in relation to new Regulations within the Private Rented Sector, ensuring high standards for people choosing to live within this sector;**
- **The continued implementation of the 'Design Guide' for new build developments will further address the needs for specific client groups.**

Housing and Homelessness

- Provide advice and support to prevent homelessness.
- Provide suitable, good quality temporary, resettled and permanent accommodation to homeless people when required.
- Offer support to tenants to help them obtain and sustain a home.
- Promote well maintained homes which meet the relevant standards in safe and secure communities.
- Encourage tenants and resident to influence decisions.

Our aim – To promote safe and secure communities for residents of Perth and Kinross with access to good quality, affordable accommodation with the necessary support in place to sustain them in their homes and prevent them from becoming homeless.

Strategic Links



What have we achieved?

Housing Options

We continue to work with our Partners to provide people seeking information about their housing situation with advice and assistance about the range of housing options available to them. During 2019/20 the membership of our Common Housing Register (CHR) expanded to include Fairfield Housing and Kingdom Housing Association. This means the CHR now operates with 5 Landlords who collectively manage a housing stock of over 11,700 affordable homes for rent.

We continue to operate a 'no appointment' system, ensuring people have immediate access to advice and support at the first point of contact when it is needed. On average, we saw 615 people per month during 2019/20. During the year, 227 enhanced housing options interviews were carried out on average per month (2,733 in total for 2019/20). The enhanced housing option interview is where detailed support, advice and assistance is provided by housing options staff to resolve the household's acute housing needs. Around 70% of these interviews were completed in Pullar House by the Housing Options Team with the remainder carried out in other localities or through surgeries, ensuring that people can access advice in a location that suits them best.

Home First - Homelessness

Home First is our aspiration for people facing homelessness in Perth and Kinross, providing people with a settled Home as our First response when homelessness occurs. Everyone needs a safe, warm place they can call home, and we recognise that home is more than a

flat, a hostel or a property. Home is where we feel safe and secure, have roots and a sense of belonging. Home supports our physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan sets out the Home First approach which seeks to ensure that wherever possible, homeless households move directly into settled accommodation avoiding the stigma, cost and uncertainty of temporary accommodation and homelessness. Where temporary accommodation cannot be avoided, the accommodation provided should be good quality, should meet the needs of the household and the length of time in the accommodation should be minimised.

During 2019/20, a range of measures including the integrated schools programme, family mediation, our hospital and prison discharge protocols, and personalised budgets led to a reduction of more than 19% in the overall number of households presenting as homeless on last year's figure (in the context of a 4% increase in the number of people assessed as homeless nationally). In 2019/20, 758 households presented as homeless, a reduction from 943 in 2018/19.

The number of families presenting as homeless over the 12-month period reduced by a further 38% from 270 to 167, demonstrating our continued commitment to minimising the impact of homelessness on children.

The number of young, single people presenting as homeless in the 12-month period also reduced significantly from 222 to 159 – a reduction of 28%. This, in the context of an overall reduction in homeless presentations, is due to successful early intervention and prevention work. To further enhance this area, we have commissioned a new specialist support service from the Rock Trust, which was introduced from April 2020, as part of our agreed actions within our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP). The Rock Trust service focusses on homelessness prevention, supporting the transition into settled accommodation and tenancy sustainment.

Our Home First approach continues to achieve positive outcomes with an increased proportion of households moving directly into settled accommodation avoiding the stigma, cost, experience and duration of homelessness. Our homeless case duration remains low with an average of 89 days from decision to discharge of duty, which was the lowest case duration in Scotland in 2019/20 (national average was 224 days).

In 2019/20, Perth and Kinross Council had the lowest prevalence of households in temporary accommodation at 0.5 households per 100,000 population. We also had the shortest length of stay in temporary accommodation nationally with an average of 71 days (national average was 184 days).

The number of homeless households waiting for an offer of accommodation was, for several years, over 500 households. Home First has enabled us to significantly reduce this backlog, demonstrating that we are responding quickly and immediately when homeless occurs. We currently have only 80 homeless households awaiting an offer.

Health and Homelessness

In 2019, we commissioned independent research, to better understand the linkages between health and homelessness, and to understand prevention and intervention opportunities, and implement appropriate support services in partnership with the Health and Social Care Partnership. Based on the findings and recommendations, we have implemented a range of key actions and activities such as:

- Housing being a core member of the weekly Protecting People Group resulting in greater support/input and improved joint working in relation to complex cases.
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- Re-introduction of streamlined pathway to access services - enabling them to respond more effectively when people are ready to seek support and treatment.
- Dedicated and agreed time for the Drug and Alcohol Team and Drug Treatment Services to provide surgeries in our Supported Accommodation.

Housing Support

Preventing homelessness and tenancy sustainment are key components of our Home First model. All homeless applicants or those threatened with homelessness are offered support. More than 1,000 people were supported by the Central Support Team in 2019/20.

Prevention activity is varied and can either be proactive and at scale such as the Integrated Schools Programme or individualised such as engaging with prisoners through housing advice surgeries. Prevention activity can also be reactive for example where someone approaches the service for advice and assistance because they are threatened with homelessness or where the Council has received a Section 11 notification.

Prevention and tenancy sustainment activity are very closely linked as by definition, the objective of supporting someone to sustain their tenancy is to prevent them losing the tenancy and becoming homeless.

Floating Housing Support

Floating Housing Support (FHS) services enable vulnerable individuals at risk of losing their tenancy to live independently, maximise their independence and ultimately sustain their tenancy. The aim is to provide short-term personal outcomes focussed support, on both a practical and emotional level, to support people to live independently in their own home. In 2019, we recommissioned this service and three third-sector providers now deliver 1,020 hours of support per week across Perth and Kinross. 338 people were supported by this service during 2019/20.

Tenancy Sustainment

A key priority is to support tenants to sustain their tenancy. Pivotal to this is the provision of the right information and a range of support services. Our approach to tenancy sustainment starts at the point of allocation by ensuring that the property is of a suitable size, type and in the right location. We have improved on our tenancy sustainment rates in all areas for 2019/20. This improvement has been achieved due to a range of improvement measures such as a more robust settling in process, increased availability and provision of housing support and enhanced quality assurance procedures around new tenancies. This resulted in 87.94% of our overall new tenants being able to sustain their tenancies for 12 months or more during 2019/20 compared to 86.2% in 2018/19. Of the tenancies which were not sustained, some of these were for positive reasons such as moving in with a partner, securing employment or participating in a mutual exchange or transfer to a CHR partner.

Through our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, we implemented a 'Property Ready Fund' to provide properties to homeless people that were ready to occupy and not just ready to let. Basic furnishings and white goods are provided through this fund to enable households to move into a property quickly whilst at the same time making it feel more like a home, increasing the likelihood of the tenancy being sustained. Our performance in relation to tenancy sustainment for those households who had experienced homelessness improved from 82.16% to 84.18% during 2019/20.

It is important that we respond early to any difficulties experienced by tenants when they first move into their new home. Providing housing support and dealing with any concerns allows us to establish a good tenant/Landlord relationship from the outset. Our target is to contact new tenants within 5 days of them receiving their keys and in 2019/20 we achieved this for 89% of new tenants, matching our performance in 2018/19.

To mitigate the impact of welfare reform challenges, in April 2018, we introduced our 'Sustaining Tenancies Fund'. This seeks to support tenants in arrears experiencing financial hardship and are at risk of losing their home. Arrears can often arise through no fault of the tenant, for example, zero hours contracts, ill-health and ongoing welfare reform. The fund provides assistance for tenants who are engaging with us and demonstrating a commitment to reducing their arrears. In 2019/20, 246 tenants were supported through payments towards clearing their outstanding arrears balance. We are aware that many families will have found themselves in financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. In March 2020, we reviewed and enhanced the criteria to ensure that those tenants who were unable to maintain arrangements or even pay their weekly rent are targeted for support. This compares to 145 tenants supported during 2018/19.

Due to many tenants losing income during the pandemic, rent arrears have increased. However, to support and assist tenants, we doubled our Tenancy Sustainment Fund (TSF) to £300,000 for 2020/21 to enable us to support as many tenants as possible in financial difficulties.

In addition, a 'Think Yes' fund was introduced in April 2020. This involves each locality team having a financial provision framed around the principle of sustaining a tenancy, agreed and delivered at a locality team level. The budget enables frontline staff to respond quickly and effectively to people facing situations which could impact on their ability to sustain their tenancy. This additional funding assists where funding from other sources such as Community Care Grant, Tenancy Sustainment Fund or Personalised Prevention Budget is not applicable. Examples include the provision of white goods, floor coverings, funds to purchase essential household items, funds or travel passes to enable attendance at important appointments, assistance with moving costs, top up gas or electricity meters or a contribution towards initial rent due.

Value for Money and Affordability

We understand that household income and/or high housing costs can impact on a person's health and wellbeing. Housing costs is one of the key drivers of poverty and we are therefore committed to providing tenants with value for money services and maintaining affordable rents.

It is extremely important that, as a provider of social housing, we ensure that while delivering high quality services to our tenants, our rent levels remain affordable. Our rent levels continue to be the most affordable in the area and around the 6th lowest in Scotland.

Each year, in partnership with our tenants, we review the rent levels we charge for the Housing services we provide. These annual reviews ensure that we continue to meet our duties to tenants as their landlord, respond to tenants' priorities and maintain high levels of service delivery.

As a result of the pandemic our normal approach of using Summer and Autumn Tenant Conference events to consult with tenants was not possible. We were not able to hold conferences or have any face-to-face engagement events, and our focus on providing critical services through the pandemic meant the usual rent setting process could not take place. Despite this it remained very important to us that tenants have a say in their rent levels for 2021/22. We took time to consider how the pandemic impacted on our tenants and what we need to do to support them. We recognised that many tenants are struggling with financial hardship, digital inclusion, and social isolation and the rent options tenants voted on have enabled us to provide enhanced support for tenants during these difficult times.

Tenants, like many other people, are facing financial difficulty because of reduced income, loss of income or increased household costs. This is having an impact on some people's ability to meet rent payments. There has been an increase in rent arrears and the number of tenants applying for Universal Credit (UC).

We want to make sure that our rent represents good value for money for tenants by keeping them as affordable as possible whilst maintaining high levels of service delivery and tenant satisfaction. Perth & Kinross Council continues to have one of the lowest rent levels in Scotland and remain the most affordable option locally.

Safe and Secure Communities

The external environment is important for health and wellbeing, creating a sense of place and community. Involving and empowering our communities is at the heart of creating safe and sustainable communities where people want to live. We are committed to providing our tenants and residents with a range of opportunities to become involved to help shape, influence and improve the services we deliver and continue to build on our previous successes with our Estate Based Initiatives (EBI) projects.

During 2019/20, through our environmental improvements programme, we invested £647,000 across Perth and Kinross to improve the safety and appearance of localities. Money was invested into improving boundary/retaining walls which were in a poor state of repair; improving steps on communal footpaths or house entrance paths which were defective and dangerous; introduction of new ramped access; new fencing; and new steps and handrails outside blocks of flats.

These improvements were carried out in several areas across Perth and Kinross over the last 12 months including Perth, Crieff, Aberfeldy, Blairgowrie, Methven, Almondbank, Auchterarder, Bridge of Earn, Errol, Scone and Glenfarg. These have made communities safer to live in; more accessible for elderly and disabled members of society; as well as also enhancing the visual appearance of many of these areas.

Every resident of Perth and Kinross has the right to the peaceful enjoyment of their home without the impact of undue levels of noise and anti-social behaviour. During 2019/20, 94.76% of anti-social behaviour cases (concerning council properties) were resolved within the local target, which is a 13.76% improvement on our 2018/19 performance. We continue to work in partnership with our colleagues in the Safer Communities Team to ensure every appropriate option is considered to tackle this.

During 2019/20, our Safer Communities Team tested and obtained a new Noise App which allows residents to help evidence noise levels during the past year. This has proved very popular in identifying action needed to address noise complaints and enable tenants to enjoy their home free from noise and anti-social behaviour. The Safer Communities team has also revised working arrangements to take a more proactive approach to addressing cases where drug use and dealing is impacting on the rest of the community.

A new 'City Operations Project' was set up during the last financial year to replace CCTV cameras in Perth City. New cameras will be installed in several hot spot locations. In March 2020, the Safer Communities Team also hosted a Serious Organised Crime Prevention Seminar for front line professionals. The Seminar focussed on the threat of serious organised crime in Perth and Kinross and what could be done to help contribute to the prevention of this.

Opportunities to Participate, Influence Decisions and Empower Communities

Working collaboratively with all our stakeholders has been key to the delivery of our success. This will be further enhanced as the Service plays its part in the development of the

emerging Perth and Kinross Offer in which we aim to work together to meet the needs of people in Perth and Kinross and help achieve our vision of making it an area where services are fit for purpose, person-centred and shaped by people with lived experience.

Equality Engagement Conversations

Engagement with equality protected groups has been ongoing throughout the year both before and after coronavirus lockdown. Using the Place Standard Tool, we met with people to hear how they wanted services to be improved and change things for the better.

We also had conversations with people from a range of groups across Perth and Kinross including people from the local South Asian, Chinese, Gypsy/ Traveller and LGBT+ communities. We have spoken to young people, disabled people, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners and people with learning disabilities. These conversations will continue in the coming months to develop agreed actions.

We have also met specifically with partner organisations and community groups around the Council's Recovery and Renewal Plan for equalities and identified 4 priority areas where the biggest impact was experienced during the coronavirus crisis by equality protected groups (digital inclusion; mental wellbeing; communication and employment)

Contact was maintained throughout the coronavirus lockdown with community groups and support and advice provided appropriately including multi-cultural dietary food deliveries; advice and information in other languages (including BSL) and an overall equality impact assessment of our collective response.

We continue to offer a range of communication channels and opportunities to participate in our decision-making processes from face-to-face contact, telephone conversations, emails and social media. We also have dedicated PKC Tenants Facebook and Twitter pages. Our Estate Based Initiatives (EBI) Programme is a good example of our partnership approach. Walkabouts including tenants, Elected Members and other Council services take place on an annual basis and tenants can identify and prioritise projects in their localities which they feel will for example improve community safety.

During 2019/20, money from the HRA was used to deliver 69 tenant and resident selected projects on HRA land and buildings that made a difference to the local community. Projects included improved signage in Potterhill Gardens; a community garden development in Perth City; new access paths and new off-street parking to improve safety and overcome derelict land in Birnam, Muthill and Abernethy; improved bin storage; and a bicycle store.

Impact of Achievements

The impact of these achievements has been that:

- Our Housing Options approach allows early intervention to prevent homelessness and identify any support requirements to enable tenants to sustain their tenancy;
 - Home First has transformed the way we assist homeless people straight into permanent accommodation in Perth and Kinross. It has had a positive impact on the outcomes for many households by reducing the stigma, duration and experience of homelessness;
 - Tenancy sustainment activities aimed at early identification of support needs have helped households sustain their tenancies for longer;
 - Work to ensure communities across Perth and Kinross remain safe and secure as well as involving residents in shaping decisions has helped create a sense of community belonging where people feel safe and want to live.
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What are we doing next?

- Continuing to provide advice and support by delivering the Home First Model and implementing our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to assist households who are in need of housing;
- Continue to ensure tenancy sustainment levels remain high and tenants and residents are assisted as soon as they start to experience difficulties;
- Reviewing our Income Maximisation Team to ensure we can effectively monitor and respond to requests for Welfare Reform and Universal Credit helping tenants and residents to maximise their incomes and reduce rent arrears, where possible;
- Carry out our Tenant Satisfaction Survey to help us gauge satisfaction levels and areas for improvements;
- Continue to work with Partners and involve tenants and residents in any decision making to ensure the area is a safe place to live.

Independent Living

- People have access to the right type of housing to enable them to live as independently as possible at home or in a homely setting
- People have access to the right type of support to sustain their accommodation.

Our aim – To support people to live independently at home for as long as possible with help from the community and local support networks.

Strategic Links



What have we achieved?

Links with Health and Social Care Partnership

The Health and Social Care Partnership's Strategic Commissioning Plan was updated for 2020–2025 and approved in November 2019. The plan presents the key strategic priorities and outlines the significant challenges that we will face to deliver services that address inequalities, are increasingly preventative and person-centred and which enhance the resilience of citizens and communities, resulting in improved opportunities and outcomes for all. The Housing Contribution Statement is referenced within the Strategic Commissioning Plan and sets out how, through the Local Housing Strategy, housing will support the delivery of the Health and Social Care Partnership priorities.

New Homes

Enabling people to have access to suitable housing and support is key to enabling them to live independently. All our new homes either meet or exceed the housing for varying needs standards, ensuring that our mainstream housing is 'barrier free' with the flexibility to meet the existing and changing needs of most households, including those with temporary or permanent physical disabilities. During 2019/20, 215 affordable homes were completed to this standard.

Through our new build developments, several homes were also designed to facilitate independent living for people with more limited mobility. Over 41 of the affordable houses completed last year were houses on one level, level access and wet floor showers.

Housing Adaptations

By working with a range of Partners, we ensure residents and tenants have access to services to allow their homes to be adapted to meet their medical needs. These adaptations allow people to live at home safely and independently. During 2019/20, the following adaptations were carried out:

- 95 major adaptations, and 257 minor adaptations to Council housing;
- 159 major adaptations were provided to private homeowners with financial support from the Council through the Care and Repair Scheme.

In 2019/20 the Council approved 200 Major Adaptation grants to private sector households, providing 234 individual major adaptations in their homes, with a works cost of £868k and a grant value of £743k. At the year-end, 159 of these major adaptations had been completed. The most common adaptations carried out include: level access and wet floor showers; stairlifts; and providing ramped access over 5m long. However, there has also been an increasing number of cases where very complex major adaptations have been required e.g. the provision of ceiling track hoists and associated internal door and partition works as well as bathroom adaptations, ramp and door entry system. These works all enable vulnerable people to remain in their own homes and communities for as long as possible, thus reducing the need for specialist housing provision until it becomes necessary.

In addition, there is a scheme for people who require small ramps (less than 5m long) to loan a ramp, regardless of tenure, to enable them safe and suitable access to their home. In 2019/20, 28 such ramps were installed with 14 in the private sector and 14 for PKC tenants. During the year 3 ramps were recycled from homes where they were no longer required and installed at new addresses.

Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) Provision

In August 2018 we introduced a dedicated Housing OT, initially as a one-year fixed term post. The post holder has responsibility for carrying out housing needs assessments for housing transfer applicants requiring housing for specific needs; assessing void properties to suit specific needs e.g., where adaptations are required or for clients with specific varying needs. They are also involved in the early planning stages of the Council's new build development ensuring that specific needs are addressed as part of the build and additional suitable equipment is provided when properties are ready to let. They have been involved in assessing current waiting list demand for specific housing needs and are a member of the Independent Living Panel ensuring we focus on sourcing appropriate housing for applicants with complex needs. The Housing OT also works jointly with the wider OT Service in assessing housing need for hospital patients prior to discharge. This post has been successful in ensuring effective joint working across services to meet the needs of vulnerable clients enabling them to live as independently as possible. The post was made permanent from August 2020.

From this year we are also funding a second OT within the wider OT Team for 12 months. This post will focus on reducing the high number of complex private sector cases that have resulted from delays during the Covid pandemic. The post holder will specialise in assessing cases within private sector housing where the outcome will be a referral to Care & Repair for major adaptations. This post is funded from the Care & Repair Budget and will assess cases that have been subject to comprehensive scrutiny at the initial triage stage to determine the outcome required.

Independent Living Pathway and Panel

During 2019/20, work to promote independent living, increase the availability housing, and support options for people with particular support requirements has progressed jointly with Housing, Planning and the Health and Social Care Partnership. We developed and implemented an independent living pathway which included a single assessment process and a multi-agency Independent Living Panel. This Panel has established itself as the central group whose main role and purpose has been to review, analyse and, if appropriate, authorise allocation of specialist housing provision for individuals with independent living needs in Perth and Kinross. During 2019/20 the Panel met 13 times and received 86 referrals. Of these referrals:

- 9 have been allocated either a supported accommodation placement or mainstream housing with a support package.
- 11 have been assessed as having an urgent and current need for accommodation/support.
- 66 have been assessed as having a future need for some form of specialist accommodation or support.

The Panel has ensured we have a greater awareness and understanding of the current and future need for supported accommodation for a range of groups – mild to moderate learning disability / autism, complex cases, mental health, physical disability and acquired brain injury. Both the pathway and single assessment have provided a streamlined process for people, carers, families and practitioners to follow in accessing suitable accommodation and support. The Panel has allowed an excellent platform for cases to be discussed fairly and proactively, and for accommodation to be allocated effectively.

We also continue to update and refine our Accommodation Modelling Tool and Framework to ensure the demand for housing for people with support requirements links into the new build programme, vacancy process for specialist provision and the allocation of some RSL and Council accommodation.

We devised and implemented a Checklist of Independent Living Needs as an appendix to the newly commissioned PKC Design Guide which outlines the various standards and features required within accommodation for people with a range of support requirements. This checklist has been used to inform design specifications of some projects ensuring accommodation will be built to meet the needs of clients, including housing with varying needs standards.

The Design Guide Checklist has enabled us to develop various accommodation models and housing options through our new build programme and through the regeneration of some surplus buildings for people with support requirements. 10 projects have been identified which could provide 44 units of accommodation and 9 units of staff accommodation throughout Perth and Kinross. 3 of these projects will be operational by the end of 2021.

We have also implemented a range of methods to engage and involve people with particular support requirements to ensure our pathway, assessment and accommodation options continue to meet their needs. Most of the engagement has been through the Making Where We Live Better Group (previously called Us and the Housing Group) which promotes inclusion through raising awareness of issues faced by those with learning disabilities in Perth and Kinross and works together to identify solutions and improve their lives. We have also developed a suite of feedback tools such as interactive surveys, the use of social media and small focus groups to help gain feedback from people not open to statutory services and the third sector agencies that are working with families and people who may require independent living accommodation in the future.

To ensure we reach out to as many people as possible, we also work closely with PKVAS, the Scottish Refugee Council and Housing Options Scotland. These agencies have been key in providing our information in a variety of languages and formats.

Housing and Support for Older People

Our team of support officers provide housing support and assistance to tenants within our 91 units of retirement, 108 units of amenity and 151 units of sheltered housing. Within housing for older people, some tenants can receive a daily welfare check and all tenants have access to a range of activities and events, delivered in partnership with a range of services to help tackle isolation and improve their health and wellbeing.

We have produced a 'Housing Health Check' guide for people thinking about older persons housing. Included within this guide is the opportunity for people and their family/carers to visit our units or join in with social activities and discuss their hopes/aspirations for future housing. Dedicated support officers provide person centred support to tenants and connect them with other supports or organisations that will help them have a successful tenancy.

There has been a variety of improvement works across all the sheltered housing units including Wi-Fi being installed in communal lounges. Our tenants have also worked with Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust to produce or design dementia friendly artwork throughout the units.

We have installed TV screens in communal lounges and support tenants to participate with online classes, remote bingo and film nights. To increase digital awareness and technology with some of our tenants, we have sourced pedometers for tenants and staff as an introduction to technology. Support Officers now record their support sessions and interactions with tenants via their laptop and /or smart phones. To build on our progress with technology, we are also working through an Older Persons Housing digital/TEC action plan, which we developed based on tenant's, carer's and staff feedback.

To ensure we continue to meet the needs of our tenants and provide them with a range of opportunities, we continue to work with a range of services and partners such as working with local schools, colleges, Vision PK, Alzheimer Scotland, local community workers, police, fire service, PLUS mental health charity, centre for inclusive living (CILPK), libraries and carers hub.

We have currently expanded the support and services that we provide within our sheltered housing units to some of our older tenants and residents that live close to our units. This has enabled some older people who previously felt isolated or lonely to take part in the activities within the communal facilities such as bingo, exercise and art classes.

During the pandemic, Support Officers have continued to offer support and practical help to our 350 older tenants. To support our most vulnerable tenants within our sheltered housing complexes, staff from other teams within the housing service were re-tasked to the units to ensure that enhanced support and assistance was provided, particularly at this challenging time. Alongside this, welfare checks were also carried out every day, shopping collected for our 'shielded' tenants and staff continue to produce innovative ways to help reduce social isolation, keep tenants entertained and maintain their health and wellbeing. Activities included charity fundraising walks, fancy dress days and knitting hearts to send to the Covid Assessment Ward at PRI. Our appeal for primary school children to send letters to our sheltered housing tenants was a great success, with almost 100 letters received to help cheer up our residents.

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) within Housing

During 2019/20, the TEC within Housing Group was formed to look at options of increasing the range of TEC available for housing tenants to support those with additional needs and increase tenancy sustainment. This group signed up to the TEC Charter developed to support and underpin the use of TEC in creating and delivering housing and support solutions. The work of this group has led to the creation of a training package for staff to promote the rollout of TEC options and the identification of staff champions within housing to raise awareness of TEC. A Guide was developed, which details a range of options and initiatives available, to help support staff in signposting and making referrals for TEC. Work has also been progressed to identify and link in with key partners to promote partnership working and expand the range of projects that can be rolled out within housing regarding TEC. This included work with Blackwood using their Clever Cogs system, students and Social Prescribers visiting the Smart Flat, and linking with the Fire Service and Community police. The development of further effective methods to gain feedback from tenants, carers and key partners on the impact and benefits of TEC within housing has also progressed, with TEC questions being embedded into existing surveys, support plans, newsletters, and on social media to allow feedback to be captured.

To support and enable people to live independently at home, 3,628 people currently have a community alarm system in their home. This system provides assistance to people in an emergency situation or if they simply need some reassurance.

Digital Inclusion

The world we live in is changing rapidly due to the internet and technology. Based on the feedback from our tenants and information gained through our tenants' survey, we identified that many of our tenants are digitally excluded with many struggling to use online services or do not have access to broadband. This means that they have no access to important information about services, finances and communities. Therefore, to support our tenants, a Digital Inclusion Project was set up to help tenants access the many opportunities available online. The main aspect of the project is to provide group sessions or one to one support, including the loan of tablets for tenants who do not have access to a smartphone or

computer. The support sessions are usually targeted at what the person wants to learn, before being shown the main online usages and how to access services online. The project has:

- Provided 66 tenants with one-to-one support.
- 36 tenants, out of the 66, are now classed as being digitally included.
- 4 of the 66 tenants are now willing to become Digital Champions.
- Provided 1,075 hours of support to people.

Tackling Social Isolation and Welfare Checks

Many tenants are struggling with social isolation as a result of the lockdown period and the restrictions. Feedback from tenants in response to our tenant welfare checks was overwhelmingly positive with many finding the support invaluable. The checks allowed us to personally connect with tenants and gain a far greater understanding about household circumstances and individual needs. We now know that the impact of social isolation is being felt significantly, especially by older and vulnerable tenants. As the pandemic and social restrictions ease, we need to be able to provide ongoing support in this area. We are currently setting up a new Social Inclusion Support Service for tenants that will enable us to maintain more regular contact with older tenants around their health and well-being, and to help link them with vital services and support that exist in their communities.

Impact of Achievements

The impact of these achievements has been that many people who may have been isolated or required specialist housing and support have been supported into suitable accommodation and / or have support packages in place which means that they can continue to live independently and safely at home, which in turn helps improve their health and wellbeing.

What are we doing next?

- **Continuing to have an oversight of the Independent Living Panel and progress any actions that are required;**
 - **Developing and rolling out awareness training on independent living for those with support requirements as part of the iHub – Housing Solutions Change Programme;**
 - **Continuing to develop and implement ways for Technology Enabled Care to be offered and/or included within the package of support;**
 - **Continuing to develop and progress models of accommodation to meet independent living needs;**
 - **Progressing any housing related actions as identified from the Supporting Adults with Complex Care Needs Transformation Programme;**
 - **Expand the Digital Inclusion Project to help reduce the number of tenants that are digitally excluded.**
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- **Develop and implement a Social Inclusion Support Service to support our most vulnerable and older tenants.**

House Condition, Fuel Poverty and Climate Change

- All residents are living in good quality and energy efficient homes which meet the relevant standards.
- Residents are living in homes they can afford to heat and are aware of opportunities to maximise their incomes.
- People are aware of the assistance available to them to improve the energy efficiency levels of their homes.
- People are aware of ways in which they can reduce fuel consumption and save on energy costs

Our aim – Support residents of Perth and Kinross to live in warm, dry, energy efficient and low carbon homes which they can afford to heat.

Strategic Links



What have we achieved?

Housing Standards

We recognise the impact that poor quality housing can have on a person’s health and wellbeing, and we are progressing a range of measures to support the provision of good quality housing in the area.

To achieve this outcome, we need to ensure that the design of all new build homes, as well as that of our existing stock, meets the relevant energy efficiency standards. We also need

to ensure that they are built in a way in which they are resilient to the future impacts of climate change. Good quality housing has a direct impact on the general health and wellbeing of a household, and we continue to invest in our housing stock to improve emotional wellbeing, decrease the risk of long-term health conditions and improve educational attainment levels.

During 2019/20, we invested over £8.7 million to improve the condition and energy efficiency levels of our Council housing stock and help towards achieving the Scottish Government targets in relation to house condition and energy efficiency. This level of spend enabled the following improvements to be carried out:

- 37 new kitchen replacements;
- 169 new bathroom replacements;
- 662 new central heating systems installed (414 upgraded central heating systems through the Capital Investment Programme and a further 248 replacements through the Warm Homes Fund);
- 333 new triple glazed windows and insulated exterior doors installed;
- 14 externally applied wall insulation installations;
- 28 internal wall insulation installations;
- 176 new gas mains connections installed;
- 89 air sourced heat pumps installed;
- Solar panels installed in 2 sheltered housing complexes covering 48 tenancies and in 10 new build properties;
- 1 solar thermal installation.

This programme of improvements helped us maintain a high Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) pass rate of 95.77% (end March 2020) compared with the Scottish average for 2018/19 of 94.09%. 82.3% of our Council housing stock is now also compliant with the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) compared to the Scottish Local Authority average of 80.9% (2018/19).

However, housing standards need to be improved in the private sector as well as the social housing sector. The Energy Efficiency (Domestic Private Rented Property (Scotland) Regulations 2020) were due to come into force on 1 April 2020 however a decision was made to postpone these regulations as a result of COVID-19. Our Regulatory Services Team and Private Landlord and Private Sector Teams are in regular contact with Private Landlords in Perth and Kinross to respond to any complaints from tenants, carry out spot checks, and help raise awareness of the new regulations.

Fuel Poverty and Income Maximisation

According to the latest data, the percentage of households living in fuel poverty in Perth and Kinross is consistent with the Scottish average of 25%. This equates to approximately 17,000 households across Perth and Kinross.

Perth and Kinross has a very challenging geography. Around 47% of the population of Perth and Kinross live in rural settlements. Many households have no access to the gas grid (which is still the cheapest form of energy) and often properties in rural locations can be older and more difficult to install energy efficiency improvements. Many households might also face additional living costs by living in a rural location such as travelling costs, shopping etc. This can all place additional pressures on household budgets and the ability to pay energy bills.

In addition, around one third of households within Perth and Kinross are single person households. Single person and single parent households are the two household types expected to see the highest percentage increase of all household types by 2041 (2016 household projections). Lower household incomes and/or increased housing costs can lead to difficulties in being able to heat the home to the recommended heating regimes and can often mean that households may be faced with very difficult decisions of whether to 'heat' or 'eat.' We therefore need to be able to identify these households and offer the help and support they may need which is something we will continue to prioritise in coming years.

One of the biggest challenges in addressing fuel poverty is being able to identify households or properties which would benefit from energy advice or energy efficiency improvements. Our 'Feeling the Pinch' campaign can let households know about the financial help and support available, the support available to help people heat their homes and reduce energy costs, and also other general support and mental health support available to those who may be struggling.

Although we do not have control over energy prices or households' incomes, we do offer comprehensive benefits checks to everyone contacting the Welfare Rights Hotline and we work with Partners to provide information on income maximisation and where to find fuel advice. We regularly signpost people and encourage our Partners to signpost households to our Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) should people find themselves in fuel poverty and requiring further assistance. Our HEAT service can work with the household and the Energy Supplier to arrange a debt recovery plan if the household is in fuel debt, or also check on eligibility for any energy discounts or energy improvement programmes.

Energy Efficiency Assistance

A programme of awareness sessions was organised for frontline staff and managers in the public, private and voluntary sectors who regularly visit people within their own homes.

A total of 10 awareness sessions were arranged between October 2019 and end February 2020. 147 members of staff from across the council and many external organisations attended these sessions. These sessions enable staff to identify and direct many households living in fuel poverty to the HEAT service before fuel poverty can start to impact on the health and wellbeing of the household.

Whilst the pandemic resulted in the latest edition of our Home Energy Guide being delayed, this is now in the final stages and will be published and distributed soon. This guide provides useful information, tips and advice on how to save money on energy bills.

There are also various energy efficiency programmes available within the Perth and Kinross area which aim to improve energy efficiency levels and help make properties warmer and more affordable to heat.

The Scottish Government's national energy efficiency programme (Warmer Homes Scotland) is delivered by Warmworks and referrals for this programme come from Home Energy Scotland (the Scottish Government funded energy advice service). In Perth and Kinross our HEAT service can refer households to Home Energy Scotland who might qualify for the Warmer Homes Scotland programme.

Perth and Kinross also obtained funding through the Warm Homes Fund for improvements during 2019/20. This allowed a total of 309 properties to be improved during the year. 248 council properties and 28 private properties had gas central heating installed for the first

time; and a total of 30 council and 3 private properties were also able to benefit from Air Sourced Heat Pumps through this funding source.

HEEPS-ABS started in 2013/14 and to date Perth and Kinross Council has received a total of £13,530,966 of funding. HEEPS funding can be supplemented with ECO funding sourced from energy companies and this has enabled us to successfully carry out external wall insulation works for some homeowners completely free of charge. This work significantly reduces energy bills and the carbon footprint of these households helping enable residents of Perth and Kinross to live in warm, dry, energy efficient and low carbon homes which they can afford to heat.

During 2019/20, work on the HEEPS programme was progressing very well prior to the COVID-19 lockdown. Projects containing both Council (through Capital Investment Programme) and privately-owned properties were completed at High Street Alyth; MacDonald Crescent and Davie Park in Blairgowrie; Ardblair Road, Blairgowrie; Craig Varr and Schiehallion Place Kinloch Rannoch; and High Street, St Catherine's Road, St Johnstouns Buildings, Charles Street, Victoria Street and James Street in Perth.

The final phase of the 2019/20 programme included the installation of external wall insulation to properties in the Moncrieffe area. These properties are particularly difficult and expensive to insulate (costing more than £20,000 per property). We therefore had to work closely with the Scottish Government to combine their HEEPS Equity Loan Scheme to provide further assistance for owners. There have been three local authority and one self-funded property completed to date. Overall, a total of 90 properties received internal or external wall insulation as a result of the HEEPS-ABS funding during 2019/20.

It was recently announced that Perth and Kinross Council has been awarded over £1.68m to continue the programme of energy efficiency work on local homes. The Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland (HEEPS) award from the Scottish Government for 2020/21 will allow us to carry out work in the following areas:

- Pomarium and Potterhill Flats (external wall insulation);
- Milne, Market and Lickley Court Flats (external wall insulation);
- Moness Avenue/Crescent, Aberfeldy (external wall insulation);
- Glamis Place, Craigie (external wall insulation);
- North Bridge Street Crieff, High Street Kinross (internal wall insulation);
- North Methven Street, Melville Street, Atholl Street, County Place and South Inch Terrace Perth (internal wall insulation);
- Stuart Crescent, Coupar Angus (internal wall insulation).

A further 1,448 properties were able to receive energy efficiency measures through ECO funding during 2019/20.

Improving Awareness of How to Reduce Energy Use and Save Money

It is important to ensure people are aware of ways in which they can reduce fuel consumption and save on energy costs to decrease fuel poverty levels and increase energy efficiency whilst minimising our carbon footprint.

During 2019/20, we trialled a new delivery model for the Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) service which is delivered in Partnership with Scarf. The HEAT service offers home visits to households within the Perth and Kinross area to help them save money on fuel bills and share hints and tips with them on how to reduce their carbon footprint. This service provides free and impartial energy efficiency advice to households across any tenure in Perth and Kinross.

The move to the new model of delivery meant that we could fund more home visits for households throughout the year and access a bank of energy advisors meaning that service provision would not be interrupted during busier periods. A total of 492 enquiries to the service were received during the last financial year and 315 home visits were carried out. This is a 97% increase compared to the number of enquiries received to the service in 2018/2019 (250 enquiries) and a 154% increase compared with the number of home visits carried out during 2018/2019 (124 home visits).

The home visit can lead to further referrals to organisations such as Home Energy Scotland (HES) for further details on eligibility for funding or loans; or referrals for grant funded schemes available within Perth and Kinross such as Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland Area Based Schemes (HEEPS-ABS), Energy Company Obligation (ECO), Warm Homes Fund, or Warm Home Discount Industry Initiatives Scheme (WHDii) as mentioned above.

In addition to the telephone advice and home visits carried out during 2019/20, the HEAT service also attended 11 events during 2019/20 to help raise awareness of the service. This included attendance at Perth foodbank; dementia cafes; local church events; and our tenants conference. In total it is estimated over 350 people were in attendance and these events and managed to hear about the service and how it can assist households within Perth and Kinross.

This service has been extremely important as it helps households across all tenures (including the private sector) reduce their fuel consumption and save on energy costs as well as making eligible households aware of energy efficiency programmes which might help. This, in turn, helps reduce fuel poverty and minimises the carbon footprint thus reducing the impact on the environment.

Impact of Achievements

The impact of these achievements has meant that many households within Perth and Kinross have benefitted from energy efficiency improvements or advice, helping make their homes warmer and more affordable to heat. By trying to raise awareness of fuel poverty and the climate change challenges, we are slowly increasing awareness of the help and support available to households who may be struggling to heat their homes. Our Partnership with Scarf is ensuring many households are also aware of ways in which to reduce their energy use which is in turn can make their energy bills more affordable. All of this work is reducing the impact that cold, damp homes can have on a person's health and mental wellbeing.

What are we doing next?

- **Ensuring our new build housing meets the relevant housing standards and energy efficiency requirements;**
 - **Continuing to deliver housing improvements to Council properties through the Capital Investment Programme;**
 - **Working with the Private Landlords to help improve housing conditions within the private sector;**
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- **Continuing to raise awareness of fuel poverty and the challenge of climate change;**
 - **Working to identify households in fuel poverty and signposting these households to the Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) for assistance;**
 - **Developing a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) which will set out area-based plans and priorities for improving the energy efficiency levels of buildings and helping to decarbonise heat;**
 - **Delivering the actions set out within the Climate Emergency Action Plan.**
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