

# QUARTER FOUR REVIEW

January - March 2020



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# FROM THE CEO

I do of course know that this should be my opportunity to reflect on the previous quarter however it seems wrong to ignore the very real impact on HOS of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the time of writing we have been in lockdown for over 3 weeks with ( at least ) another 3 to go. Until Mid March we were tootling along quite nicely with our highest ever number of clients and a marvellous increase in volunteering activity. We had a lot of "success" to celebrate and all our achievements are reflected in this report.



Since then the housing landscape has changed- social housing allocations have completely halted as the priority is to get homeless people off the streets; property transactions have ceased and lettings agents are closed. RSLs are dealing with COVID related emergencies only and are not accepting new applications.

Two things remain unchanged however: the first is the need of our clients for the "Right Home, in the Right Place" and the second is the unswerving dedication and commitment of the HOS staff team. HOS came through the 2008 global financial crash and I am completely confident that we can respond to the current challenges and continue to help our clients to find solutions to their housing problems.

**Moira Bayne**

# OUR CLIENTS

## Trends and comparisons from the quarter

Total client figures have remained steady through this quarter. We have seen a slight drop in the number of continuing clients compared to the previous quarter, however a slight increase in new client numbers has acted to balance that out. Isolating our Military Matters clients shows a modest period of growth in the quarter compared to last - especially concerning the number of continuing clients on the books. A fuller picture is given below.

Geographically speaking, our clients are spread across the country more evenly this quarter than the previous, though there are still a concentration of cases across the central belt. Further details are found on the next page.

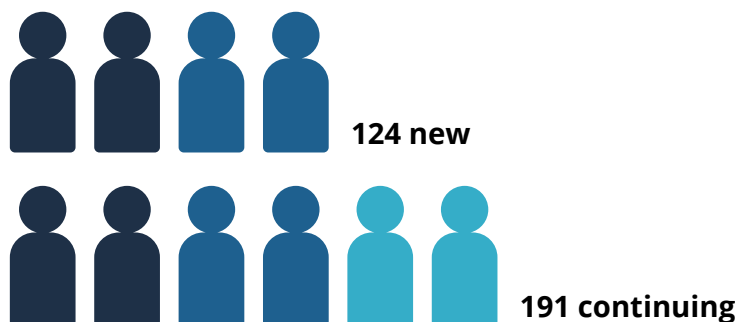
Regarding presenting disability, our client demographics are similar this quarter to the previous, though there is a slight increase in the number of clients reporting having 2 or more disabilities. Clients continue to access our service in similar ways - from online and other organisations primarily. Further details are found on the next page.



## Overall Client numbers

**315 clients**

comprising



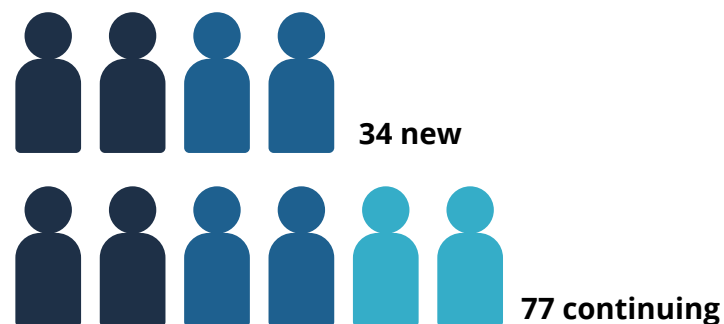
Representing:

- An increase of **+24** new clients vs Q3
- A decrease of **-25** continuing clients vs Q3
- A decrease of **-1** client in total vs Q3

## Military Matters Client numbers

**111 clients**

comprising



Representing:

- An increase of **+3** new clients vs Q3
- An increase of **+42** continuing clients vs Q3
- An increase of **+45** clients vs Q3

## Geography

This quarter, we have seen a wider geographical spread of clients than the previous, including a more even distribution across the country too. There still remains a concentration of cases in the central belt.

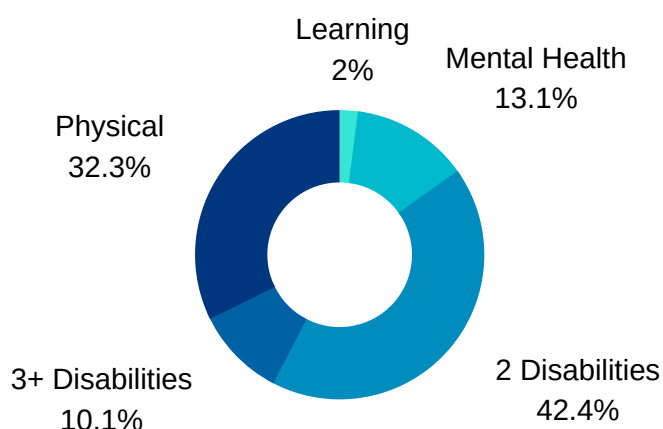


- 1 Glasgow (20)**
- 2 North Lanarkshire (10)  
Fife (10)**
- 3 Edinburgh (9)**

- Aberdeen (2)
- Aberdeenshire (1)
- Angus (2)
- Argyll & Bute (1)
- Clackmannanshire (2)
- Dumfries & Galloway (2)
- Dundee (3)
- East Ayrshire (2)
- East Dunbartonshire (2)
- East Lothian (1)
- East Renfrewshire (1)
- Edinburgh (9)
- Falkirk (4)
- Fife (10)
- Glasgow (20)
- Highland (6)
- Inverclyde (0)
- Midlothian (4)
- Moray (1)
- North Ayrshire (4)
- North Lanarkshire (10)
- Orkney (0)
- Perth & Kinross (2)
- Renfrewshire (7)
- Scottish Borders (4)
- Shetland (0)
- South Ayrshire (0)
- South Lanarkshire (5)
- Stirling (1)
- West Dunbartonshire (1)
- Western Isles (0)
- West Lothian (4)

\*In Q4, we also helped 13 clients from outside Scotland.

## Presenting disability



Figures for presenting disability are largely consistent with the previous quarter. We have seen a slight increase in the number of clients who report multiple disabilities (2 or 3+), and a slight increase in clients who report having a learning disability too. In line with these increases, this quarter we see figures for those reporting a physical or mental illness alone, decrease.

## Referral pathways

We continue to see most referrals come through our online channels, followed by from other organisations and charities. Figures from this quarter are consistent with those previous.

- Online - **33%**
- Other organisations/charities - **28%**
- Armed Forces organisations - **14%**
- Local Authority / Government - **8%**
- Word of Mouth - **7%**
- Medical / Social Care staff - **6%**
- Other - **6%**
- Events - **< 1%**

# Case studies

## #1: Social housing development

In January 2020 a family with 5 children contacted HOS for support with their housing options. They are currently staying in temporary accommodation with Highland Council. The husband is physically disabled, and the house is not adapted for his needs.

In the first instance, I explored all the options the family may have: social housing, private renting and home ownership. Social housing appeared to be the only option going forward for the family, so I decided a mandate to enquire with social housing providers would be beneficial.

When I contacted the local authority to enquire, I was put in touch with the housing options worker at Highland Council. She advised that the issue was that the family need a 4-bedroom ground floor property or bungalow and that they have very limited stock for that. Every four-bedroom property that has become available has been checked against the family's requirements, but none have matched. The housing options officer advised she had made early enquiries with a development officer about building the family a property. The housing options officer advised that she asked the family to get in touch with us to rule out other options, and ensure social housing was the only and best route forward for them.

The plan going forward is to arrange a meeting with all parties involved and discuss what we can do going forward. To prepare for such a meeting, I will write a HAR to explain why other options have been ruled out, setting out clearly why social housing is their only option.

## #2: LIFT mortgage and adaptation

F got in contact with HOS after their Occupational Therapist (OT) recommended us. The OT had been involved in a similar case where HOS had been able to help.

F has separated from husband, and is now sole carer of their severely disabled child. F had to give up her job to care for D, meaning she is completely reliant on benefit income. F was looking to adapt the current property to give D a bedroom and bathroom downstairs, as she was having to carry D upstairs which was getting more and more difficult, not to mention dangerous.

The OT and Council were willing to look at adapting current property, but only if F's ex-husband's name was removed from the property title. The council were not willing to adapt if F was not the sole owner, due to the risks. HOS put F in touch with an independent financial advisor to discuss taking out a new mortgage in her own name, however the property was going to be too expensive and she would not be able to afford it. HOS suggested contacting F's current mortgage provider but they were unwilling to transfer mortgage into F's name for the same reasons.

F got back in contact to find out what she could afford on her benefit income, managing to secure a smaller mortgage to use alongside the LIFT scheme. F has since been able to purchase a new, more suitable property in her own name, and is currently waiting for a wet floor shower to be installed before moving in.

# Case studies

## #3: The journey of helping a client to move into supported housing

JC contacted HOS in January 2020. Her application form was completed by her support worker. JC lives in a 2-bed 3rd floor private rented property in East Kilbride. The flat is no longer suitable for her needs as her sight is deteriorating following various strokes. JC now has daily support in her home.



The broker phoned JC's support worker as the person who had completed the Get Help form. It was decided that a client visit would be most beneficial.



A meeting was arranged in the client's house to discuss her housing options. During this visit the broker discussed the housing options available to JC and how HOS could support her through this process.



The broker suggested that they first call the council to enquire about her existing application to be re-housed. The council informed the broker that her application was live but had not been updated since last September after the first stroke. Since her circumstances had changed after her recent stroke, JC would need to request a new home assessment. The broker was able to call and arrange this for the following week.



Since the client only had one housing application in with the local council, the broker also suggested that they check some of the other local HAs that specialise in housing for older and disabled people. Trust Housing Association had some vacant housing units in the area. JC was advised to submit an application as soon as possible.



The broker called the council and found out that her application had been updated to reflect her current situation. If any suitable properties became vacant she would be considered as a high priority. Trust HA had also processed her application and informed the broker that all the vacant properties had been allocated but they would consider JC if any more housing in the area became vacant.

The following week the broker called the client for a catch up. She informed her that the OT had visited her and assessed her needs. She was going to recommend that JC is given priority for a move to a ground floor property with a wet floor shower. She also told her that Trust HA had received her application but it was still to be assessed.



Given the outbreak of COVID-19, this case has been put on hold. The council has suspended all allocations and services have been reduced. The broker has been in contact with JC and she is coping with self isolation, being supported by family and the council. The broker will make contact with the client as soon as all the restrictions have been lifted.



## Robert's LIFT story

*Sue contacted Housing Options Scotland for support and advice when her son, Robert, was to move from Sheffield to Blairgowrie. HOS Broker Susan was able to support the family apply for the LIFT scheme.*

It had always been in the family's plans for Robert to move to Scotland, but things were taken out of their hands when Robert's landlord decided to sell the property he was living in. Sue's daughter came across the HOS website and suggested Sue get in contact with the team which she did.

"The day you got in touch with information was the day we were in Sheffield helping to get Robert moved out. The timing was amazing – I'd just said to a friend that I was hoping something would come from this and it did.

Susan explained the options for us, including the LIFT scheme. She told me about the costings and how it would work and said she'd send me everything by email. She did that straight away and then put me in contact with Ian Haughey, an independent financial advisor. Susan asked me to keep in touch throughout the process and it all got sorted from there."

**You can read Sue, John and Robert's full story on the website [here](#).**

**The support from Housing Options Scotland was brilliant! I knew what I wanted when I was contacting estate agents but I couldn't explain it to people - they gave me the words and information about the LIFT scheme to make it all possible.**





# OUR TEAM

It has been a busy quarter for the HOS team. We have made it to more than 80 events / meetings, spanning the country from Dumfries to Dundee, Argyll & Bute to Midlothian. Some of the team's highlights are noted below.

This quarter has also seen a shake-up of the staff team as our previous Head of Engagement and Development, Fraser Gilmore left HOS for pastures new. Fraser said:

*"I am going to miss my HOS family, but I know that the organisation and all the wonderful and dedicated people involved in its running and development are going to continue to do great things. I have had an amazing time at HOS working with many wonderful and inspiring people."*

Following Fraser's departure, Ben Parker will take on additional hours to become our new Volunteer & Engagement manager. We wish Fraser all the best.



**Top:** at Shelter Scotland for training  
**Middle:** responding to the Government's Housing 2040 consultation  
**Bottom:** at a community event in Drumchapel



## Where?

- Glasgow (61)
- Edinburgh (21)
- North Lanarkshire (1)
- East Dunbartonshire (4)
- Dundee (2)
- Stirling (2)
- Argyll & Bute (1)
- Perth & Kinross (1)
- Renfrewshire (1)
- South Lanarkshire (2)
- North Ayrshire (1)
- Fife (1)
- West Dunbartonshire (1)
- Midlothian (1)
- Falkirk (1)
- Dumfries & Galloway (1)

## Doing what?



Staff Meeting (52)



Client Meeting (11)



External Meeting (14)



Training (1)



Event (5)



Volunteer meetings (5)

## Highlights

- Military Housing Brief at Leuchars, Fife
- Responding to the Scottish Government's Housing 2040 consultation
- Delivering a presentation at Dundee Carers Centre
- Group homelessness training with Shelter Scotland
- Media training with members of the board
- Meeting with the Scottish Accessible Housing Network
- Attending homelessness meetings with clients
- Managing conflict training
- Social media and story-telling training

# ONLINE

Our presence on social media has continued to grow this quarter. We have gained likes and followers on Facebook and Twitter. Our web traffic is significantly down on the previous quarter, though our client numbers and % referrals from online are relatively consistent. This implies that though we are receiving less visits to the page in total, more of those visits are resulting in us gaining new clients. This coheres with the fact that, on average, people are spending more time on our site compared to Q3.

## Facebook

We have seen further growth in our likes/followers on Facebook this quarter:

**924 likes (+37 from Q3)**

**1023 followers (+27 from Q3)**

The top organic and boosted posts from our feed are:



Organic: 488 reach



Boosted: 8.2k reach

## Twitter

We have also seen growth in our follower count on Twitter this quarter:

**1608 followers (+46 from Q3)**

Top Tweets from our feed include:



2422 Impressions



1253 Impressions

## Website

**Visitors:** 1449 (1370 new users; 79 returning), a decrease of **-1751 visitors** vs Q3

**Page views:** 4381, a decrease of **-3119 page views** vs Q3

**Average time on website:** 2 mins 14 seconds, an increase of **+40 seconds** vs Q3

**Site visited most from:**

1 Glasgow

2 Edinburgh

3 Livingston

**Popular pages:**

1. Get Help
2. About Us
3. Contact
4. Stories
5. Team Bios

**Devices:**

- Desktop - 727 (50.17%)
- Mobile - 595 (40.86%)
- Tablet - 130 (8.97%)

**How did people find our site?**

Direct\*: 731 (47.41%)

Organic search\*: 525 (34.05%)

Referral\*: 177 (11.48%)

Social\*: 109 (7.07%)

\*Direct = manually typing web address into browser; Organic search = via search engine; Referral = via a link to site; Social = through social media channels

# OTHER UPDATES

## Volunteering

The volunteer programme has flourished in this past quarter: we have seen the Housing Buddies get stuck in to supporting the broker team with more cases; the Online Researcher team has grown and spread across the country; and there's been plenty of behind the scenes work to streamline our recruitment and induction processes.

### Housing Buddies

This quarter our 5 buddies (Shirley, Fiona, Lindsay, Kath and Anne) have assisted with 6 cases (client visits; client phone calls), attended 4 events with HOS and provided email support and advice to the broker team on many occasions too. We are proud of our buddies and want to thank them for their contribution to the work of HOS.



Going forward, we are keen to create more opportunities for professional development for the buddies and brokers. We would like to develop a "Knowledge Exchange" aspect of the volunteering, where volunteers and staff can share knowledge and experience with one-another. In the longer term, we are keen to look at incorporating this with the CPD opportunities offered by other organisations in the sector. We would like to use the Housing Buddies programme to continue to expand our networks and gain/share more knowledge with other housing professionals to improve our service.



### Online Researchers

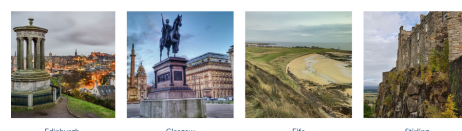
Our Online Researcher team has grown and we now have 8 researchers working with us – 5 of whom have joined us this quarter. Tessa has completed her guide for Edinburgh and we now have volunteers working in Glasgow (David), Stirling (Jay), Renfrewshire & East Renfrewshire (Paula), Highlands (Jessica), Dumfries and Galloway (Sarah) and North Lanarkshire (Heather). We have also built a website to house the guides and share with our clients. Thank you to all of our researchers for their hard work.



Going forward, we are discussing the possibility of working with Stirling University to involve their postgraduate Housing students in the development of the guides, and we are considering sharing them with other organisations/charities whose clients might benefit from the information they contain too.



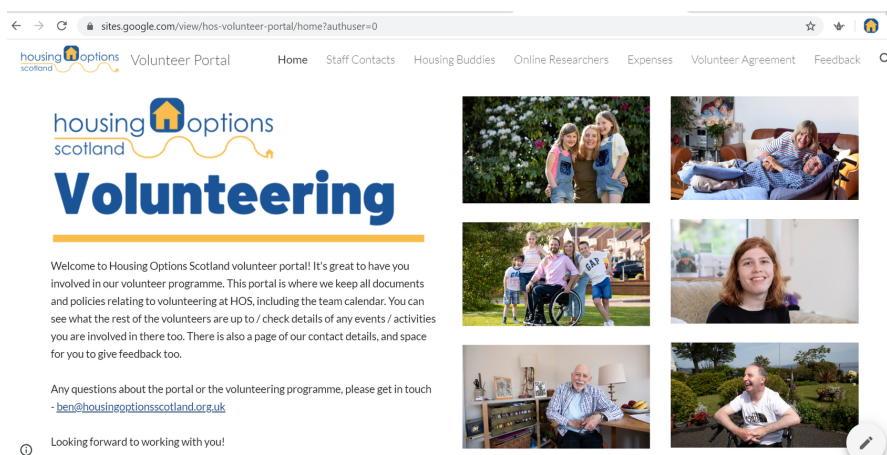
As part of an ongoing project, our volunteers at Housing Options Scotland are researching information about each of the different local authority areas in Scotland. This information is to support you as you move property, perhaps into a new area for the first time. Links to the different guides are found below and to the left. We hope they prove useful to you during your move.



# Volunteering

## Behind the scenes

We have now built an online 'Volunteer Portal' where all information relating to volunteering at HOS is kept. New volunteers are directed to the site as part of their induction and the move to holding relevant documents – such as our Volunteer Handbook and expenses policy – is making the administrative processes behind the volunteer programme more streamlined.



### *The new volunteer portal*

## Other

We continue to update the Volunteer Blog and we plan to revise its format to include more posts from our volunteers and staff team, as well as profiles and features on our volunteers themselves. Over the coming months we will also be reviewing our volunteer policies as part of our commitment to ensuring the continued evaluation and development of the programme.



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