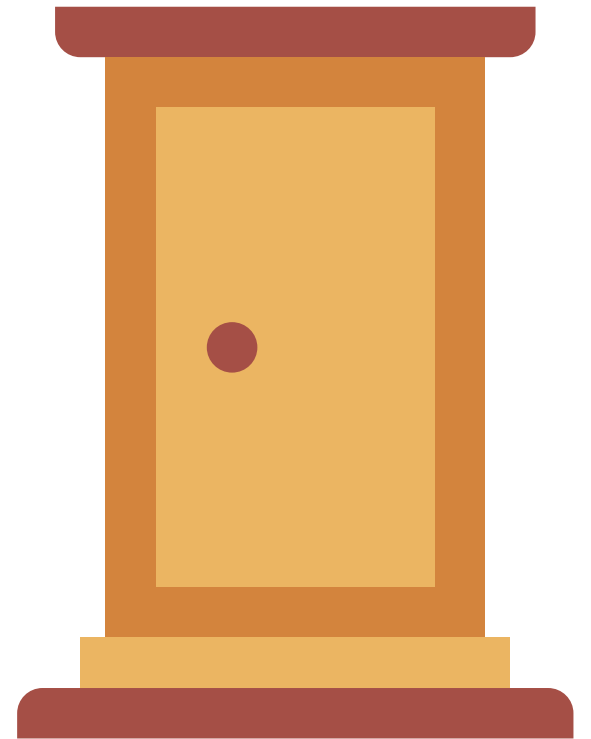


Quarter 2 Report

2020-2021



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From the CEO

Moira Bayne

Quarter 2 was an eventful one for the entire country and of course the HOS team - lockdown ended for a while but things are still far from "normal".

In this period we saw our highest ever number of new clients and I am pleased to say that, with a bit of team work we have managed to provide our usual (high) standard of service.

We were joined by Hannah and Amie , two Occupational Therapy students from Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh. They have been a delight to work with and have given us some legacy work which we can use when their placement ends.

I am very pleased with the amount of creative work that is happening within the team- an increased social media presence including some print media articles; ideas for new projects; system improvements; development opportunities - it's all happening at HOS.



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The headline figures

It has been an exceptionally busy quarter at Housing Options Scotland. Overall (new) client figures have risen by **+82** or **+67%** compared to Q1, and (new) Military Matters cases have increased even more by **+32** or **+86%** compared to Q1. September was our busiest month with 97 new cases, compared to our quietest month of the quarter in July with 80 new clients. The team also closed more cases this quarter than in the previous, closing 118 (vs 90 in Q1) – an increase of **+31%**.

We saw an increase in applicants from across the country too, with people getting in touch from 28/32 local authority areas this quarter (vs 24 in Q1). As usual, Edinburgh and Glasgow saw the highest numbers. Further details are found on the next page.

Client demographics are similar this quarter to those previous, though we have seen a slight change in how clients accessed our service this quarter. There was a slight decrease in clients accessing the service through an online search, via other organisations or charities and via Armed Forces organisations, counteracted by an increase in clients hearing about the service through their local authority, government or medical and social care staff.

Total

New clients

July - September 2020

203

Cases closed

July - September 2020

118

Cases open

as of October 2020

302

which includes

Military Matters

New clients

July - September 2020

69

Cases closed

July - September 2020

41

Cases open

as of October 2020

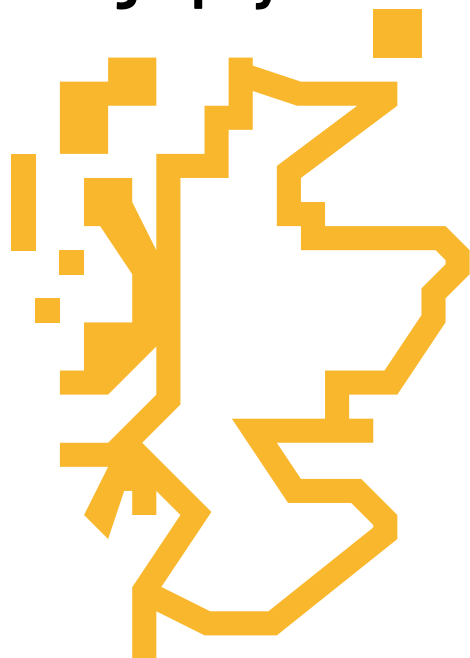
94

vs Q1, 2020 - 2021

Total new clients: +82 / +67%

Military Matters new clients: +32 / +86%

Geography



28/32

Local Authority areas

- 1** **Edinburgh (37)**
- 2** **Glasgow (29)**
- 3** **South Lanarkshire (11)**

- Aberdeen (1)
- Aberdeenshire (2)
- Angus (2)
- Argyll & Bute (3)
- Clackmannanshire (1)
- Dumfries & Galloway (2)
- East Ayrshire (1)
- East Dunbartonshire (1)
- East Lothian (3)
- East Renfrewshire (1)
- Edinburgh (37)
- Falkirk (1)
- Fife (3)
- Glasgow (29)
- Highland (7)
- Inverclyde (2)
- Midlothian (4)
- Moray (2)
- North Ayrshire (4)
- North Lanarkshire (10)
- Perth & Kinross (10)
- Renfrewshire (10)
- Scottish Borders (4)
- South Lanarkshire (11)
- Stirling (3)
- West Dunbartonshire (3)
- West Lothian (4)

*In Q2, we also helped 13 clients outside of Scotland

Presenting disability

Physical disability	28.4%
Mental health	16.9%
Learning disability	2.0%
Other	4.0%
2 disabilities	36.3%
3+ disabilities	4.0%
Blank	5.0%

Referral pathways

- Online - **32.3%**
- Other organisations - **13.4%**
- Armed Forces organisations - **14.4%**
- Word of Mouth - **10.0%**
- Medical / Social Care staff - **11.9%**
- Council / Government - **6.5%**
- Other - **8.0%**
- Events - **0.5%**



Dorrie's Story

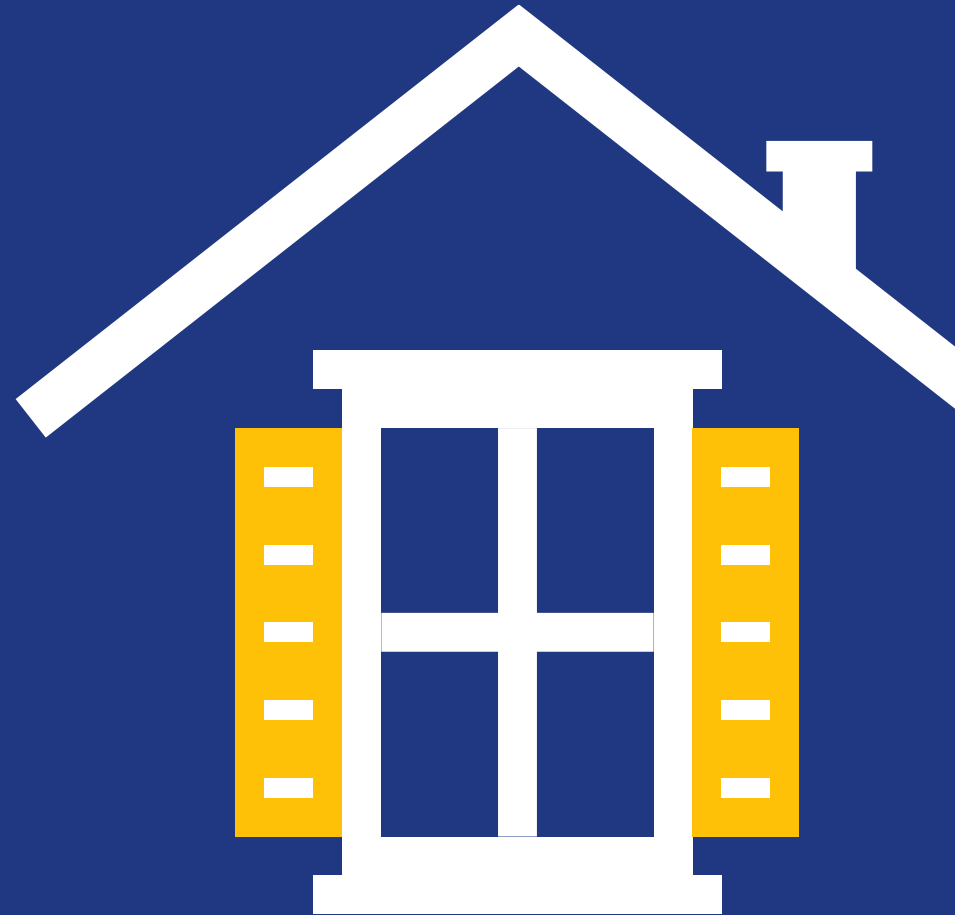
Dorrie had been living in Leicestershire with her Siberian husky, Midnight, when she began to have problems with a neighbour. She raised these with the housing officer, but the problems persisted and she felt unsafe at home. Dorrie said:

"I felt threatened and intimidated – I didn't like to even go out into the garden. I didn't feel comfortable at all, it was horrible"

Because of her situation, Dorrie wanted to move house. She'd always wanted to return to Scotland where she grew up, though she didn't know where to begin.

"I just wanted to feel secure, to know I could go out my front door and into the garden and not feel intimidated. I thought that if I could get home to Scotland, things would be better."

Thinking that it was best to start at the top, Dorrie contacted Nicola Sturgeon's office who put her in touch with Housing Options Scotland. There, her case was assigned to Karen, Housing Options Scotland Military Matters broker.



Karen helped Dorrie with the move, explaining the things she should consider and putting her in touch with different people who could help. Dorrie decided that she would like to apply for social housing, but the wait was making her anxious:

"There were times when I thought it was never going to happen. My son was fantastic and he kept reassuring me that something would come up but I was still worried"

After several false starts, it was suggested that Dorrie should try make contact with the Housing Associations and local council directly.

"Karen helped me get in touch with LINK housing association and I then got in touch with Perth & Kinross council too. After discussing my doctor's letter with them, they phoned me back a week later, offering me a bungalow in my home village!"

Dorrie was asked if she wanted to see the bungalow in person but that wasn't possible because of COVID-19. Instead, she asked for pictures to be taken and sent to her.

"I saw the pictures and did some research into the specific area. I'd seen one of the bungalows several years ago and knew they were lovely. I had a good feeling about it all so I said yes - now, 7 weeks later I'm moved in!"

"I feel settled now and I just look forward to making new friends and catching up with old ones too. Being up here and with a dog - you couldn't ask for more. I'm excited and can't wait to take my husky for walks in the countryside."

Thinking about the whole move, Dorrie had the following advice for anyone in a similar situation to herself:

"Come to Housing Options Scotland! Honestly, Karen was so helpful and everyone was so nice. I couldn't have asked for any better help - they really went above and beyond! Don't give up hope - there is something out there for you, and there is someone to help too, if you only ask. To quote sir Harry Lauder: 'Keep right on to the end of the road!'"

From the brokers

Our Volunteer & Engagement manager, Ben Parker, spoke to Housing Options Broker, Jil Dyson, about what she's been up to in Q2. Read all about it below!

Can you talk us through some of your casework?

Of course! Things have been very busy, but here are 3 examples for you:

One family got in touch wanting to buy somewhere for the first time. I completed a full assessment of their situation and confirmed that ownership was a good option for them. The family were looking for a wheelchair accessible property with 4 bedrooms and somewhere rural, but they didn't know where to start. I put them in touch with an independent financial advisor and offered advice about getting adaptations fitted to properties. Happily, the family found a property in Argyll & Bute and move into their new home in October.

Another client was living in a flat owned by her son but struggling with access issues and problems with the neighbours too. She had applied for social housing but was confused about the process. I chased up her applications and noticed that she'd been assigned zero priority on the housing list. I followed this up and realised that she was waiting for an assessment with an Occupational Therapist. I sorted this for the client and she was then given priority on the list. She soon received an offer for a house in the area she wanted - that was satisfying to see!

I am also working with a client who currently rents in the private rental sector. Her flat is in a general state of disrepair and not adapted to suit her needs. The client wants to buy so I've been advising about the different schemes available to help. The client isn't in paid employment so I've put her in touch with a financial advisor to advise about benefits based mortgages. I've also showed her the DSS moves website so that she can move into more suitable rented accommodation in the short term. I'm hopeful she'll be able to buy soon enough!



It's been a rapid, busy and strange quarter. Some things are getting back to normal but lots aren't. I feel very lucky to be part of such a supportive workplace where people are so understanding of how challenging things are at the moment.

Did you attend any training sessions?

- Understanding domestic abuse and sexual violence during COVID-19 hosted by the British Embassy in Warsaw
- Midmarket renting training - how does it work and who qualifies?
- Understanding older veterans with Age UK
- Being cyber aware with SCVO

Did you work on any other projects?

- I have done some work around domestic abuse and the impact of COVID-19. I produced a briefing for the staff team with information on how we can best support clients who are experiencing this.
- I have also been working on a new project looking at delivering a specialist service for younger disabled people exploring their housing options. I've been working with some of our volunteers and Hannah and Amie, our placement students, to build up an evidence base for this. I can't say too much more about this stage but there's lots more to come on this so watch this space!

Did you receive any support from our volunteers?

- Lindsay helped one of my clients apply for social housing by running through the paper application form for EdIndex; Edinburgh's common housing register. This had been a barrier for my client for several months so I was very grateful for her help.
- Tessa helped another one of my clients offering local info about Edinburgh for them, whilst they considered whether they wanted to make the move there.
- Fiona completed an application for social housing with one of my clients in Renfrewshire. He was struggling to fill out the forms and didn't get on with the online application process. Fiona was able to get hold of a paper application form and go through it with the client. He is feeling much more positive now this is done.
- I also had some help from Fiona when she contacted one of my clients to talk through housing stock in the Stirling area, helping my client think about where she might like to apply for social housing there.



Volunteering update

Housing Buddies

Our Housing Buddies have been busier than ever this quarter, helping a total of 33 clients with a variety of tasks over the quarter:

- Helping fill out social housing application forms
- Gathering further information from clients after they submit their "Get Help" form with us
- Following up with clients who haven't responded to the broker team in a while to see how they are getting on

On top of this, our Housing Buddies have given advice to brokers about specific cases and local circumstances, as well as completing small bits of research, helping the team update documents and information sent to clients. Thank you to our Housing Buddies for all their help.



Online Researchers

The online researcher team has grown once again as we welcome Abdo Swaiy and Shanice Machio to the team. Abdo and Shanice are working on guides for Dundee and Stirling.

At the time of writing we now have guides completed (or near complete) for: Edinburgh; Renfrewshire; East Renfrewshire; North Lanarkshire; Fife; Glasgow and Stirling. As well as this, guides are being worked on for Highlands, Dundee and Perth & Kinross. We are receiving positive feedback from clients who are grateful to receive them. Thank you to our researchers for all their efforts.



Client surveys

Paula has been busy working with the team to design a survey and process for gathering client feedback. After various revisions and plenty of discussion, we are set to launch the feedback survey and process in time for the beginning of Q3. Thank you to Paula for her time and expertise.



I am so pleased with how the HOS volunteering programme has developed in recent months.

Volunteers are an integral part of HOS providing a range of support to our clients and to the staff team. We simply couldn't manage without them.

Moira Bayne, CEO

Research project

Our research project looking at the provisions in place for people with a learning disability when applying for social housing is going full steam ahead. We published a piece in Scottish Housing News advertising the research, and Tessa and Lindsay have done a fantastic job reviewing the allocation policies of housing associations across Scotland too. They are busy collating the results of the research together and we hope to have the research project written up by the end of the next quarter. A big thank you to Tessa and Lindsay for their hard work. Watch this space!



Other updates

Paula has also been working on reviewing the website for the team, suggesting changes and places to add content, as well as completing an evaluation of the student placement we are hosting for Queen Margaret University. We are also excited to have recruited for a part-time staff member to support with the volunteer programme. Julia Bandel will be starting as our new Volunteer & Engagement Assistant early next quarter in October 2020.

Media and social media updates

Media

This quarter we have worked with a new press and PR associate, Charlie Pears-Wallace. Charlie has worked hard and we have seen plenty of coverage of our work in print media and online. A few notable examples are linked below:

- [Guide shines spotlight on Renfrewshire](#)
- [HOS helps veteran return home](#)
- [HOS extends support offering to clients and beyond](#)
- [HOS echoes celebratory message of Scottish Housing Day](#)



Housing Options Scotland extends support offering to clients and beyond
Published 3 September 2020

Housing Options Scotland echoes celebratory message of Scottish Housing Day
Published 16 September 2020

COMMUNITY

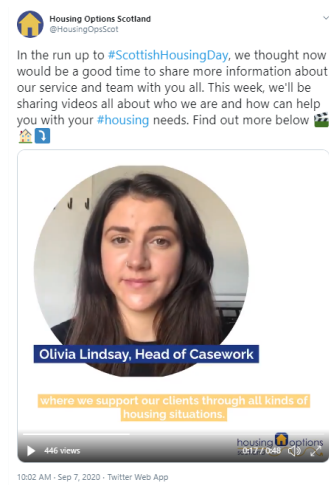
Housing Options Scotland helps veteran return home

The charity are celebrating a recent success story, which saw 73-year-old veteran Dorrie able to return to Perth and Kinross, where she used to live.

Social Media

We have enjoyed more success on social media this quarter, increasing our likes/follows on Facebook (+126 followers, +16 likes) and Twitter (+37 followers). We have had particular success with our video content, and this is something we hope to make more of in the future. Particularly well performing posts are linked below:

- [How can HOS help with social housing?](#)
- [Who are Housing Options Scotland?](#)
- [Who are our Housing Buddies?](#)
- [How can HOS help with homelessness?](#)



Other updates

Student placements

We were joined this quarter by Hannah and Amie, two Occupational therapy students from Queen Margaret University on their final year placement. This has been the first time the organisation has taken on occupational therapy students, and the first time the university has placed students in a housing setting too. Hannah and Amie joined us in September and will complete their placement at the end of October. You can [read more about the placement](#) in this article.



Fundraising

We have applied for funding from the Armed Forces covenant fund to support the creation of a new, Military Matters volunteer project and staff role. We look forward to hearing about the outcome of our application in the new year.



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