



Annual Report

2020 - 2021



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Introduction



Margaret Follon

Chair, Housing Options Scotland

Reflecting on the last year is an almost impossible task in that they have been 12 months like no other we have lived through to date. That makes it hard to compare it with past years. For most of us it has been really challenging both personally and professionally. Like many I did not see my family, in my case children and grandchildren, for over a year and really missed them a lot. Getting to grips with Zoom has been one of the many challenges that has proved really beneficial in maintaining some contact but again I know that's not the case for us all!

Throughout it all I have been thankful for the fact that I live in a nice small house in a nice quiet street with a nice bit of garden. I have been able to try and grow vegetables, with mixed success and I can now tell the difference between some weeds and flowers. I am aware that I am one of the lucky ones in that regard, but it serves to remind me of how important our homes are and how much of a refuge they can be.

For many people, still, in this day and age however, the Right Home in the Right Place is out of their reach and so the work of HOS is as important now, if not more so, than it ever was. As usual I am full of admiration for the way the team has continued to work on during these strange times. The organisation has even managed to expand in several ways over the year, news of which you will find in the following pages. The board have also maintained their high level of support for the organisation and continue to give generously of their time and advice.

Last year I ended by hoping that this would be written in more settled circumstances! This year I am just going to hope that we can all keep safe and that more of those who need it can get a house that is right for them and their family.

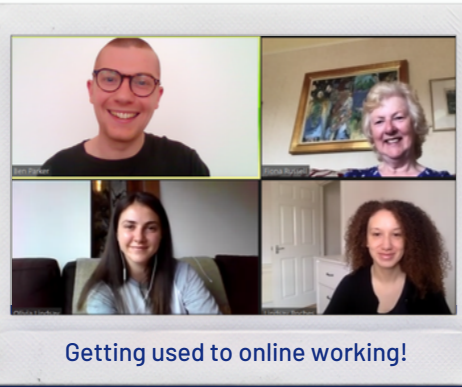
1 year at HOS



Quarter 1

1

At the beginning of lockdown, things were quieter and staff focused on checking in on vulnerable clients. Our volunteers were happy to help with welfare calls / check ins.



Getting used to online working!

3

Volunteers meet online to discuss changes to volunteer roles and how they can continue to support HOS through lockdown, including by taking on new projects.

2

The staff team focused on attending trainings and undertaking research into a host of topics. On top of this, HOS were happy to share their experience and expertise in home working with many other organisations.

Quarter 2

4

By July, the service was very busy and casework was at a record high. Similarly, we saw a boom in new volunteers joining the team.



QMU students Hannah and Amie

5

We hosted two Occupational Therapy students from Queen Margaret University, Hannah and Amie, who completed a 10 week placement with us. The placement was a big success and the team learnt lots from the pair. We are excited to host students again in the future.



New volunteers: Shanice, Lynn, Julia and Abdo

Quarter 3

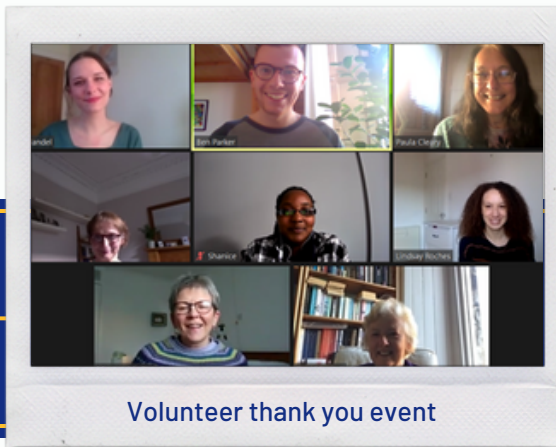


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Julia, Heather and Gina join the team.

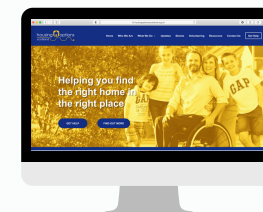
7

Our volunteers are busier than ever supporting clients and writing Area Guides. We host an online volunteer thank you event in November.



8

New services are developed such as Making Moves and HOS Helps begins with Almond Housing Association.



Quarter 4



10

Volunteer research project looking at allocation policies is published as well as "Working Together" research with Stirling University.

11

The casework continues to boom and we hit record case numbers, whilst the website is refreshed and new brand guidelines developed.



12

New volunteer projects are launched, new volunteers recruited and funding secured for the new year, including Homeless Housing Options and Military Matters volunteering. Onwards and upwards at HOS!

9

Eve joins the team, as well as ScotGEM student intern Hilary.

Headline figures

This has been the busiest year we have ever seen at Housing Options Scotland, with record numbers of clients getting in touch from right across Scotland. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, the team has supported more clients than ever before, many of whom are now settled in the right home in the right place.

We have helped 716 new clients this year, representing a 47.9% increase on the number of clients we supported in 2019-2020. Through the year we closed 533 cases and we have 283 open cases rolling over into the next year (April 2021). In practice, this means that we are starting next year 37.4% busier than we did this year. Our Military Matters service has grown the most this year with us supporting 266 new clients - that represents a huge 127.4% increase on last year.

Over the past 5 years, the service has grown considerably. Since 2016, we have seen a 91% increase in total client numbers and an even more staggering 255% increase in Military Matters clients.

Casework 2020-2021



All clients

716 new clients

April 2020 - March 2021

+47.9% vs 2019-2020



Military Matters clients

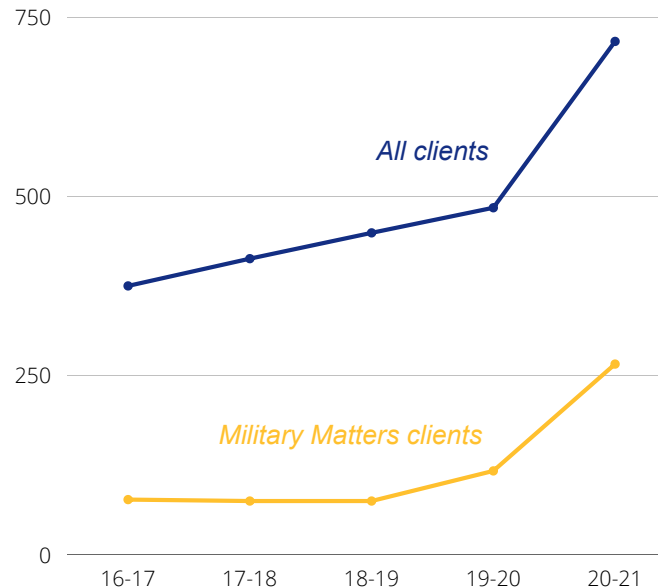
266 new clients

April 2020 - March 2021

+127.4% vs 2019-2020

Despite the pandemic, this last year has been the busiest we have ever seen! As ever, our brokers have been working tirelessly to support all of our clients, new and existing, as well as taking on new projects including Homeless Housing Options and Making Moves.

--- Olivia Lindsay, Head of Casework Services



Casework growth 2016-2021

+91% increase

all clients (2016-2021)

+255% increase

*Military Matters clients
(2016-2021)*

In terms of geography, this year, we have seen referrals from every local authority area in Scotland (except Orkney). Predictably, we have seen most referrals in Edinburgh and Glasgow, but we have seen large numbers of referrals across the rest of Scotland too.



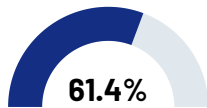
We have also had 51 clients get in touch from outside of Scotland - many from England / Wales and Northern Ireland, but some from further afield too.

31/32

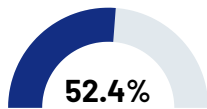
Local Authority areas

- 1** Edinburgh (114)
- 2** Glasgow (110)
- 3** West Lothian (41)

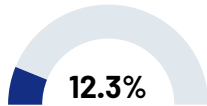
Physical



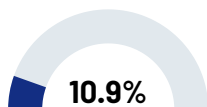
Mental



Learning



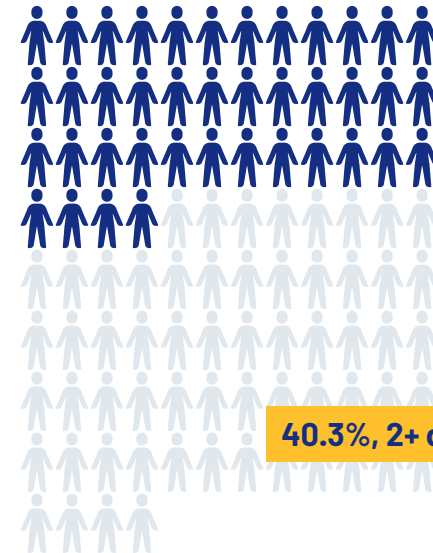
Other



**% of total clients reporting this kind of disability*

In terms of presenting disability, we see clients reporting having a physical disability most often, closely followed by a mental disability. A smaller proportion of clients report having a learning disability, but this represents an increase on last year. 9.7% of clients do not report having a disability at all.

We continue to see a significant proportion of our clients report having multiple disabilities (40.3%), and a small, but significant proportion of these (6.2%) report having 3+ disabilities.



40.3%, 2+ disabilities

**% of total clients reporting having multiple disabilities (2 disabilities, 34.1%; 3+ disabilities, 6.2%)*

It's been a busy year, and the team has worked hard to support many different clients from all walks of life to find the right home, in the right place. Below are excerpts from some of our success stories over the year, but you can read more [on our website](#).

Seriously, without your guys' help, I don't think we would be here right now. I would be struggling with the admin. All the hard work was done for me by someone who understands my abilities and my disabilities and takes that into account. It was just really easy and helped so much.

[Read Michiel's story](#)

We met with different people to come up with a plan for Alex. We contacted our local who knew Alex and were happy to host us for the meeting. That was great because it gave everyone a chance to say what they wanted to say. The HOS team explained what steps we needed to take and Alex was very much the centre of the conversation.

[Read Alex's story](#)

I had to deal with so much at the time and I just thought 'I can't do this' .. but you've been giving me lots of advice, all the ins and out and the law, what my rights are, and you have been there for me to help me fight my corner, to be honest.

[Read Senga's story](#)



A year of COVID-19

No report looking at the past year would be complete without reference to the coronavirus pandemic. The virus has dominated all our lives for the past year and working at HOS has been no different. We asked the staff team to reflect on how coronavirus has impacted their work, now we are over a year since the pandemic began.

Supporting clients

After an initial lull in casework at the beginning of the year, we have been inundated with people getting in touch needing our help. Through the pandemic, we have seen a shift in expectations from clients – where initially people seemed willing to talk about their problems but slower to act – perhaps, waiting for the pandemic to “end” before making any decisions – now we see clients keen to take action to solve their problems, not expecting to wait for the pandemic to end before doing so.

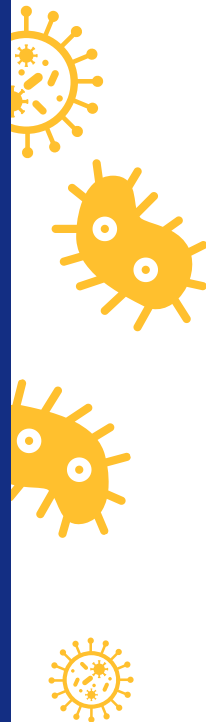
The pandemic has changed the way that we work with our clients quite significantly, as we haven't been able to make face to face contact with people for over a year now. Though we have kept up with phone conversations and, for some clients, the occasional Zoom / Teams video call, we are looking forward to getting back to supporting clients face-to-face soon.

“

In the earlier stages of the pandemic especially, clients were keen to talk about the virus as much as they were keen to talk about their housing situation. As many of our clients don't have close family or friends, they needed a way of dealing with the stress of it and someone to speak to about things.



Karen Campbell
Housing Options Broker



“

It was great to have our volunteers on hand to support clients and check how they were getting on at the beginning of lockdown. We had one volunteer support a vulnerable client with their shopping, and others make regular phone calls to clients who were particularly isolated.

Ben Parker
Head of Engagement & Volunteering



Working with others

As well as changes in working with clients, we have experienced significant changes in the ways we communicate with other organisations. In some cases, this has been difficult to manage as it has been much harder to reach people than before. Additionally, some changes to systems have been put in place – for example, online viewings of properties, or viewings stopping completely – which has slowed down some of the casework.

We have also seen a shift in processes which clients must follow with other organisations. This has been a mixed bag. In some areas, the shift has been positive – being able to conduct homeless assessments over the phone has been especially helpful for clients who are moving areas, for example. However, a shift to online applications for social housing has been difficult for older clients to manage, as they are often digitally excluded or less confident navigating online.

Working with each other

Over the past year, the HOS team has grown considerably. We have seen new staff members join the team, as well as many volunteers too. This has been particularly strange as some team members are still to meet in person, despite having been working at HOS for a long while now. On the plus side, we are now all much better at using online platforms and this has made daily communication much easier.



It's been a shame not to get out and about to things like events and client meetings over the past year, however new tech has still allowed these things to happen – just in a different way! Although I want to get out and about again soon, I think technology like Zoom and Teams will still be really useful for us in the future



Jil Dyson

Housing Options Broker



The past year has been a chance for everyone in HOS to demonstrate how effective and innovative they are under unimaginable pressure. We have countless examples (big and small) of people supporting their colleagues and (of course) their clients in new and imaginative ways.



Moira Bayne

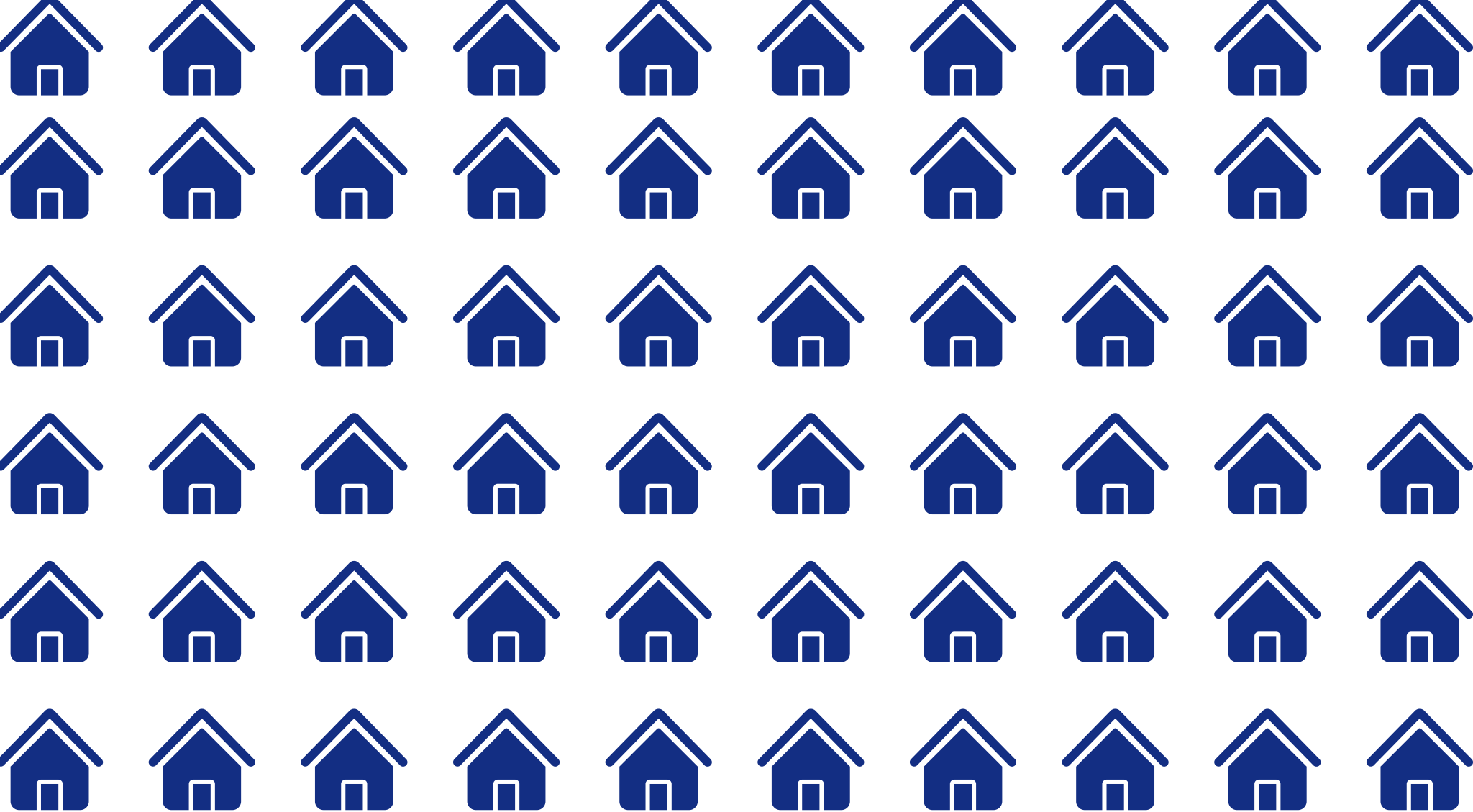
CEO



Acknowledgements

We would not be able to do the work we do without our funders who have supported us over the past year. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Scottish Government, Veterans' Foundation and Robertson Trust for their support, in addition to the many other organisations and groups who we work with. Finally, a thank you to our board, staff team and volunteers for all they do to help our clients find the Right Home in the Right Place.





Tel: 0131 247 1400

Web: housingoptionsscotland.org.uk

info@[housingoptionsscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@housingoptionsscotland.org.uk)

Produced by Ben Parker, Head of Engagement and Volunteering at Housing Options Scotland. Contact: ben@housingoptionsscotland.org.uk.