

Annual Report

2023-2024



We are Scotland's housing information and advice charity for disabled people, older adults and members of the Armed Forces community.

Our purpose is to help people make informed decisions about their housing.

housing  options
scotland 



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Introductions



Margaret Follon

Chair, Housing Options Scotland

I am always aware of just how hard the HOS staff work on behalf of their many clients. Having the opportunity to read this report and be reminded of the variety and diversity of those that have received the support they need is an enjoyable and humbling experience.

Over the last year we have worked with people from each of the Local Authorities across Scotland and supported clients with a huge range of housing issues.

It is, as ever, impossible to single out any one of the projects or events that HOS has been involved with for special mention, but the winning of the Marion Gibbs award for Equality in Housing was a very memorable night.

There is a lot of uncertainty around for many of us at the moment. Local, national and world events can be very unpredictable and can be a source of anxiety for many. It is very reassuring to know that HOS has been, and continues to be, a source of constant support for those in the greatest need.

Enjoy reading this report for 2023/24.

Introductions

It has been another busy and “challenging” year for everyone at Housing Options Scotland. We have supported more clients than ever before as the issues of lack of housing supply in all sectors combined with the very high cost of living combined to create the “perfect storm”.

What strikes me most is the commitment to our clients shown by everyone in HOS, and not just our brokerage team. The entire HOS family has a single aim to support our clients with the best possible information and advice. From comms to volunteering, from engagement to governance, we all play our part.

The HOS “model” is very simple. Each client has a named and readily contactable broker. Each broker is completely focused on the best possible outcome for his/her client. There have been numerous examples during the year of that dedication not just to our clients but also to our colleagues. Long may it continue!



Moira Bayne

CEO, Housing Options Scotland

Casework

The driving force of Housing Options Scotland in 2023/24 was, as always, our mission to support **disabled people, older people, and members of the Armed Forces Community** to be **informed about their housing options**.

The number of people approaching us for help was at a **record high**. Housing Options Scotland's diverse range of project strands means that the range of situations our clients present with was wider than ever – and our **person centred approach** was as crucial as it's ever been in helping people understand their options.

Every local authority in the country was represented in our statistics for the year, as well as cases coming in from the rest of the UK, and beyond.

Despite a challenging environment, with the cost of living crisis affecting many of our clients, feedback collected has continued to be **very positive** - with **90%** of those surveyed stating they were **happy with the service** overall.

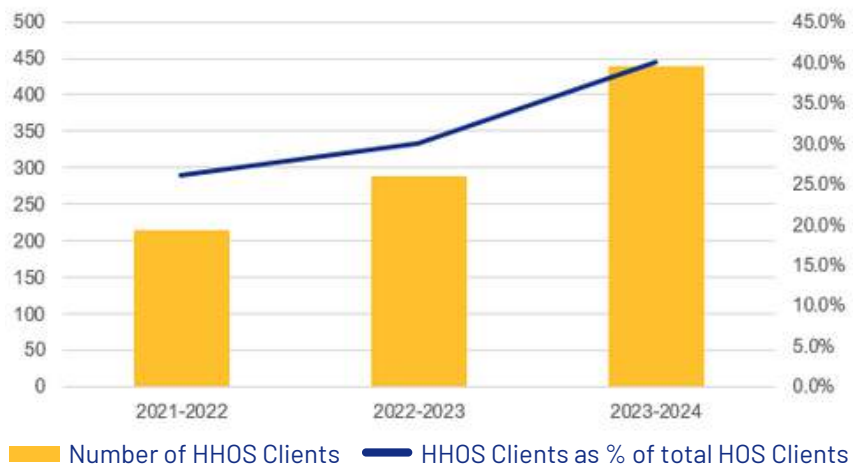




Homeless Housing Options Scotland (HHOS) is a more recent strand of our work. The service has allowed us to provide **emergency support** to people who are in housing crisis **within 24 hours**, and more broadly support people who are **homeless or at risk**.

We saw a marked increase in clients with **440 referrals**, a **+52.7% increase** compared to last year, and a **10% increase** in the total proportion of clients too, bringing homeless and at risk clients up to **40% of our overall caseload**.

HHOS Clients 2021/2022 - 2023/2024



Making Moves expands and enhances our service by offering advice aimed specifically at **younger disabled people**, particularly those looking to live independently for the first time. We provide easy to read information and in depth planning meetings which are focussed on **getting it right the first time**.

We are pleased to have seen another increase in client numbers in the third year of this service, up by **51.5% compared to 2022/23** – with **100 younger disabled clients** being supported by us in 2023/24.





Military Matters

263
Clients

Our longest running specialised project, **Military Matters** offers housing advice to **members of the Armed Forces community** - veterans, service leavers and those currently serving alike, as well as their families.

As a percentage of our overall casework, in it's 11th year Military Matters has remained steady with **24%** of our cases - that's **263 households**. Homelessness was overrepresented, with **46.6%** of Military Matters cases identifying as **homeless** or at risk.

We also delivered a range of briefings at Armed Forces bases around the country, aimed at preparing them for life on "civvy street."

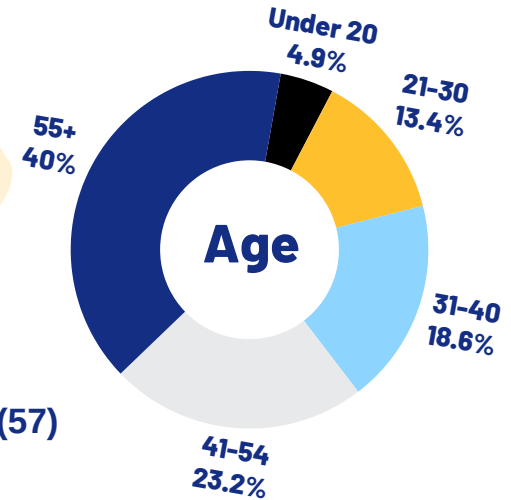
Our Military Matters project would not be possible without the generous support of the Veterans' Foundation, the Rangers Charity Foundation and The Worshipful Company of Grocers.

Statistics: At A Glance

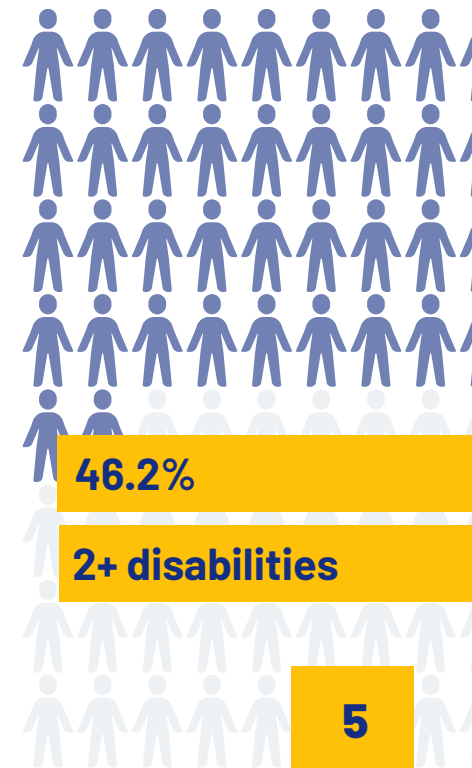
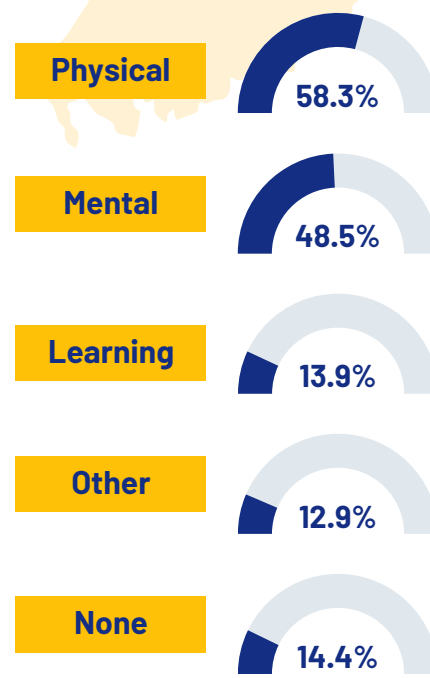
32/32


Local Authority areas

- 1** Glasgow (220)
- 2** Edinburgh (172)
- 3** South Lanarkshire (57)



Presenting Disabilities





“When I first contacted you, I thought I was in a position that I would never get out of, I was at my lowest. Your help and advice gave me the confidence that my housing situation would change, and it gave me hope.”

“You’ve lifted a huge weight off my shoulders”

“We are both shocked and delighted. Many thanks for your invaluable help.”

Stories

We recognise that our clients face a range of unique challenges, which is why we take pride in our **person-centred approach**. Every client is different, depending on their own personal circumstances.

To highlight the great work our Brokerage team does with each and every client across every corner of the country (and beyond) we have gathered a range of stories in our monthly roundups.

[Click here to read our client’s stories on the website!](#)



Engagement

Engaging with the housing, veterans, disability and older people's sectors was a big priority in 2023/24 - all with the express purpose of making things easier for our clients in a challenging climate.

Our podcast, Equality in Housing was particularly successful, and we were invited to showcase our expert knowledge at a range of speaking engagements.

Our Priorities

Meaningful partnership working with local authorities and other organisations to facilitate better solutions for our clients

Using our expert knowledge to inform the sector

Championing an equalities led approach to housing



As part of our commitment to working in partnership with the rest of the sector we piloted our **HOS**

Frontline service. This is a service aimed at Local Authorities, charities and other organisations who work with disabled people, older people and the Armed Forces community, providing direct, tailored **advice and support to frontline workers**. The service was well received and was used by a range of organisations all over the country.

Sharing Knowledge

Various staff members delivered talks and presentations, and contributed to panel discussions at a variety of events and conferences including:

- CIH Scotland's Housing Festival
- SCVO The Gathering
- SFHA Housing Management Conference
- All In For Glasgow
- Housing Cross Party Group
- Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations
- and many more briefings to a range of organisations

Equality in Housing Podcast



1572
Streams

WINNER
**The Marion Gibbs Award for
Equality in Housing 2023**

Our **Equality in Housing Podcast**, delivered in partnership with the **UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE)**, went from strength to strength in 2023/24.

We produced **10 episodes** across a range of challenging topics rooted in **equality, diversity and inclusion in housing**, with a variety of experts representing academia, the third sector and people with lived experience. 2 of these episodes were recorded live in front of an audience at **Scotland's Housing Festival** and **SCVO's The Gathering**.

As well as the **challenges** different groups face when accessing housing, guests highlighted examples of **good practice** happening all over the country too.

We were honoured and delighted to be awarded the **Marion Gibbs Award for Equality in Housing** at CIH Scotland's Housing Awards in October.



A huge thank you to our brilliant group of volunteers! We are extremely lucky to have their knowledge, skills and empathy as part of the HOS family.

How Volunteering Helped HOS

Our volunteers turned their hand to a whole host of activities for us in 2023/24.

- Our Housing Buddies have helped 10 clients this year, including supporting clients to complete application forms and checking in with clients over the phone.
- Our volunteers have acted as HOS Ambassadors at events throughout the year.
- They even conducted sectoral research for us, which will support us to engage with the sector even more in the 2024/25.



The volunteers were particularly instrumental in helping us to develop our **Later Life Planning Leaflet**. This is a guide designed to get people thinking and talking about their housing as they get older, so that they can be prepared before their housing becomes unsuitable for them. Our volunteers acted as test drivers during the design process and provided invaluable feedback.

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, Agnes Hunter Trust, The Worshipful Company of Grocers, and the Rangers Charity Foundation for their support, as well as the many other organisations and groups who we work with. Finally, a huge thank you to our board, staff team and volunteers for all they do to help our clients be informed about their housing options.

