


Business Bulletin

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 27 August 2024

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

Convener:	Members:	Contact:
<p>Convener: Councillor Jane Meagher</p> 	<p>Councillor Fiona Bennett Councillor Marco Biagi Councillor Graeme Bruce Councillor Stuart Dobbin Councillor Pauline Flannery Councillor Tim Jones Councillor David Key Councillor Claire Miller Councillor Ben Parker Councillor Tim Pogson</p>	<p>Taylor Ward Committee Officer</p> <p>Derek McGowan Head of Housing and Homelessness</p>

Recent News	Background
<p><u>Housing Emergency Action Plan Update</u></p> <p>Appendix 2 provides a summary of progress to date.</p> <p>An initial invite list for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Housing Group has been developed, along with draft Terms of Reference. A date in September will hopefully be agreed for an initial meeting.</p>	<p>Contact: Derek McGowan, Service Director, Housing and Homelessness Service</p>
<p><u>Local Housing Strategy 2025/30 Update</u></p> <p>Work continues to develop Edinburgh’s Local Housing Strategy. An early engagement survey ran from 6 May to 14 June 2024, seeking initial views on housing priorities and insights into respondents current housing circumstances/future plans. The survey was published on the Consultation Hub and promoted citywide through posters, social media, press releases and through a wide range of partner organisations. 345 responses were received (318 from individuals and 27 organisational responses). Summary slides are attached in Appendix 1.</p> <p>The survey identified the top three housing priorities as: housing supply, affordable homes, and tackling homelessness, with many respondents recognising the interplay between these.</p> <p>The survey also received 206 individual comments about housing in Edinburgh and the development of the strategy. Many of these comments were in-depth and have provided a wealth of feedback to draw upon to help shape the next round of consultation, which will take place between August - October 2024. This will include a mix of workshops, forums, topic-specific surveys and community outreach.</p> <p>A further update will be provided to Committee in October, followed by the draft strategy in December 2024.</p>	<p>Contact: Robyn Barrie, Senior Housing Development Officer</p>
<p><u>Accessible Housing</u></p> <p>The Accessible Housing Sounding Board is seeking to dovetail/prioritise its work in line with the development of the new Local Housing Strategy (LHS), which will</p>	<p>Contact: Lisa Mallon, Housing Manager</p>

Recent News

Background

include information and actions on specialist housing and supporting people to live independently. The proposed LHS consultation and engagement activity, such as the development of topic specific sessions, will provide an opportunity to focus on this, adding to feedback gathered as part of the Accessible Housing Study work. The Accessible Housing Sounding Board will review the engagement activity on this section of the LHS.

A lot of the themes covered in the LHS under the broad heading of specialist housing and independent living are closely linked to the work of the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership (EHSCP). Discussions will continue with colleagues in the EHSCP to identify priorities (such as reviewing budgets and service delivery for adaptations) and as part of the current consultation on the EHSCP draft strategic plan.

Support for Rent Collection - Update on Tenant Hardship Fund

In February 2023, the Council [agreed](#) the annual Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and noted the intention to establish a Tenant Hardship Fund (THF) for the 2023/24 financial year. The THF is administered by a team that has specialist expertise in relation to rent collection and the benefits system. The team provides support to tenants to access benefits, including Universal Credit, and provides advice and training to housing officers to support rent collection.

By 31 March 2024, 2,741 applications for THF assistance had been received. 2,585 applications have been approved at a total cost of £576,332. 154 applications have been declined or held pending awaiting further information.

Reasons for declined or applications held pending include the following.

- Legacy or former arrears;
- Small static balances;
- Where notice to terminate has been given;

Contact: [George Norval](#),
Housing Operations Manager

- Where Universal Credit or Benefit assessments are underway;
- Long term non-payment of rent obligation despite considerable efforts to engage with tenant; and
- Sequestration.

From September 2023 it was agreed to support a one off payment break to mitigate any other financial pressures that might affect rent payments. Examples of circumstances that might justify a payment break include, but are not limited to:

- Unexpected need to replace white goods, soft furnishings or general possessions;
- Household appliance repairs including car repairs;
- Children's clothing or payments for school activities; and
- Pressures from energy bill demands, personal debts, or other financial commitments.

38 income maximisation cases were referrals made by the THF team. This is in addition to over 500 referrals made to the Income Maximisation team during the course of regular rents work by Housing Officers.

Reflections and Next Steps

For 2024/25, the THF award has been increased to a maximum of two fortnightly charges where reasonable to apply. This equates to a maximum average payment of around £480.

This will be particularly helpful in circumstances where essential intervention may be required to prevent court escalation and secure an affordable repayment arrangement.

This also applies to new Universal Credit claimants, many of whom will not receive welfare benefit payments for five weeks and are unable to pay rent during this period. A two-fortnight payment could make the difference during this period and protect against an arrears spike.

Recent News	Background
<p>At the moment, officers are reviewing a selection of accounts to get a sense of where there has been a greater regularity of rents and arrears payments made since rent credit assistance began. To date, 161 applications have been received for this financial year with a projected award of £77,786.</p> <p>Housing Officers will continue to support tenants who are experiencing rent arrears and make referrals to the Tenant Hardship Fund as appropriate.</p>	
<p><u>Affordable Childcare Provision</u></p> <p>Contracts</p> <p>As outlined to Committee in February and following an open procurement process, the contracts for the Affordable Childcare for Working Parents service have now been awarded to four providers. The service went live on 1 August 2024 for a period of three years, with the option to extend for a further 36 months. The successful providers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North West and North East: North Edinburgh Childcare, with an annual sum of £65,400. • South West: Smile Childcare, with an annual sum of £55,230. • South East: Childcare Connections, with an annual sum of £20,000. • North West: Waterfront Nursery, with an annual sum of £14,600. <p>As North Edinburgh Childcare did not bid for the full available budget for three to five-year-olds, Waterfront Nursery were awarded the remaining funds for that subplot. North Edinburgh Childcare were also awarded funding for their provision in Leith under the North East Locality.</p> <p>The Parental Employability Support (PES) team are working with the providers to transition all parents over into the new service. They will be reassessed for eligibility and offered income maximisation support with the Council’s Advice Shop. All other parents within the providers’ settings will be encouraged to contact the PES team to be assessed for eligibility.</p>	<p>Contact: Katie Weavers, Business Growth & Talent Development Lead</p>

Recent News

Following discussions, one of the incumbent providers, Kidzcare, confirmed that they would not bid for a future contract and that their nursery in Craigmillar would close of 31 July 2024. This was due to pressures on their costs, such as capacity limitations of the premises, higher staff wages and energy. Staff were offered employment in other Kidzcare settings and the Council's Early Years team offered affected children provision within local Council settings.

Grants

As outlined in February, grants have been issued to the three remaining incumbent providers. The requirement of this grant is to work towards agreed tapering reduction over a period of three years. Following the three years (end July 2027), this grant will cease. Each provider is solely responsible for their business model and the developments required to adapt as part of this process.

Background

Edinburgh's Local Housing Strategy: Early Engagement Survey

An early engagement survey ran from 6 May until 14 June 2024 to help inform the development of the Local Housing Strategy. This was open to all residents and organisations. Further engagement activities will follow from June – October 2024.

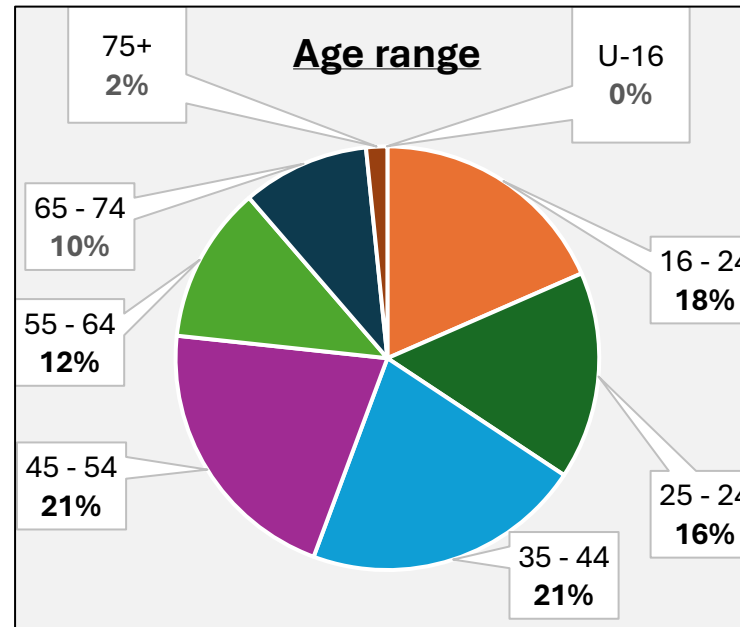
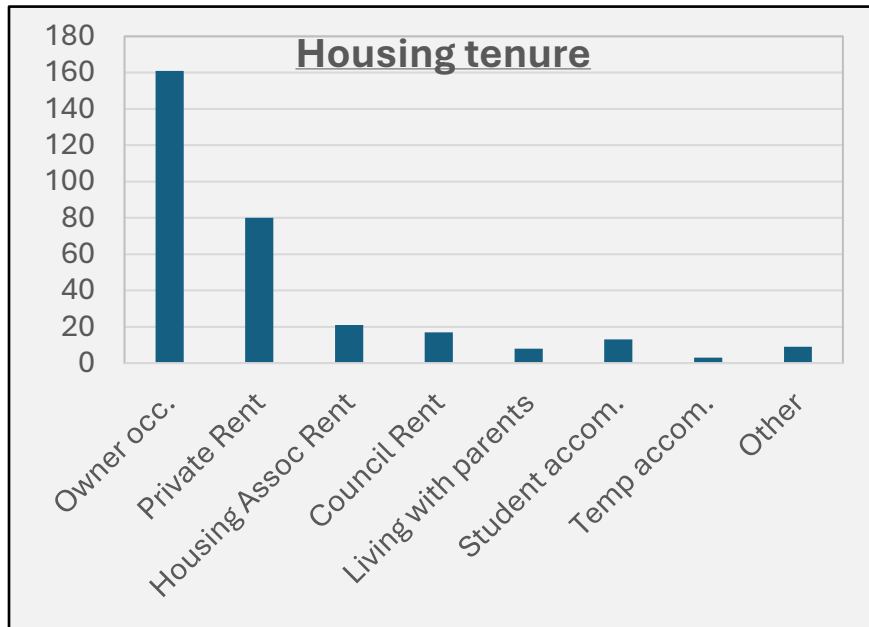
Total no. of responses	345
Responses by individuals	318
Responses by organisations	27*

*Organisations who responded:

Avant Homes, Hameshare CIC, Crossreach, Grassmarket Community Project, Rowan Alba Ltd, Skills Development Scotland, Pilton Community Health Project, Simon Community Scotland, Edinburgh Access Panel, Hallam Land Mgmt, Dowbrae Real Estate Consultancy, Fresh Start, Muirhouse Housing Association, ETF, Move On, Blackwood Homes and Care, Homes for Scotland, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Wheatley Homes, Living Rent, Children 1st. City of Edinburgh Council officers

Summary of promotional activity	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Posters displayed in locations across the city
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Newsbeat Article (internal) and Press release (external)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Social Media promotion and E-signatures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Promotion to, and through, a wide range of partner organisations

SNAPSHOT OF DEMOGRAPHICS



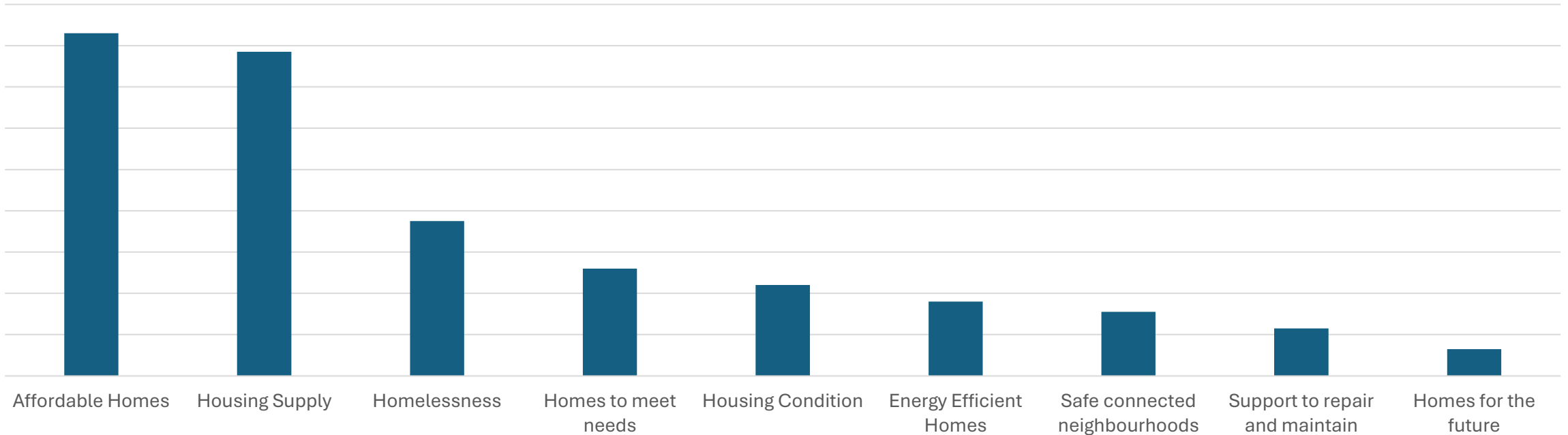
Ethnicity of respondents	
White – Scottish/ British/ Irish	247
White – Other	42
Mixed or multiple ethnic group	13
Asian, Scottish/ British Asian	12
African, Scottish/ British African	0
Caribbean or Black	1
Other ethnic group	1

Sex of respondents			
Female	179	Male	119

Medical Condition?			
Yes	89	No	199

YOUR HOUSING PRIORITIES

What do you think are the top 3 housing priorities for Edinburgh?

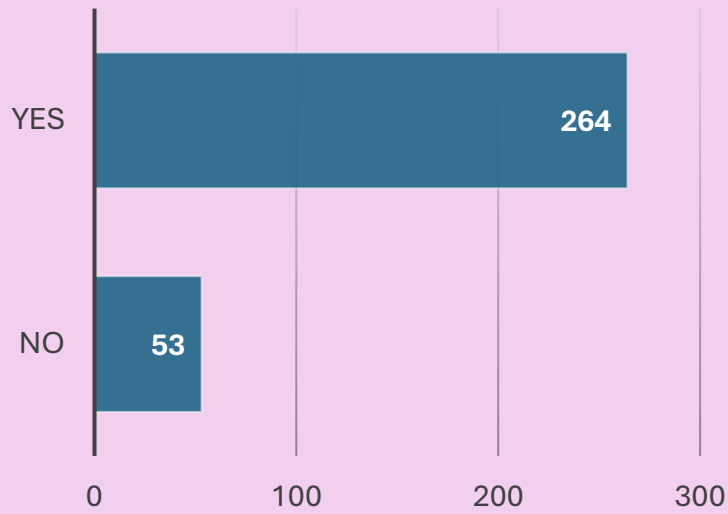


Further comments about housing in Edinburgh or the development of this strategy

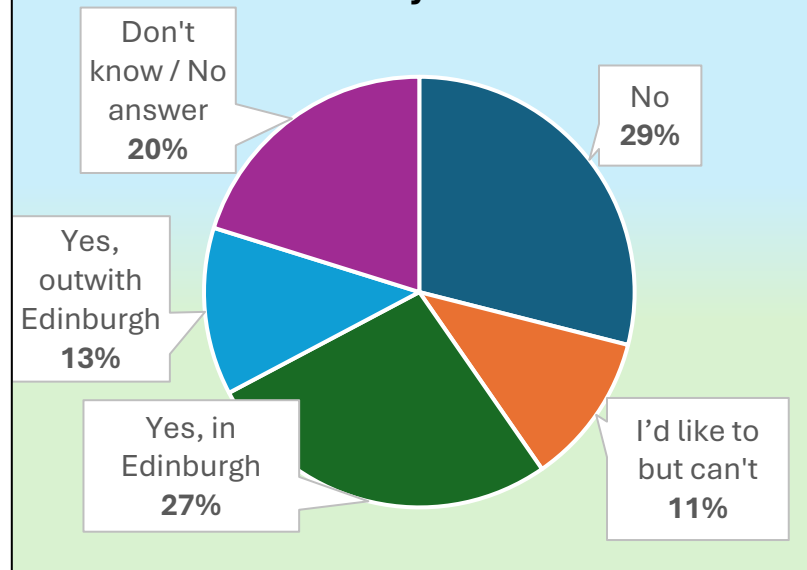
- 206 respondents provided additional comments.
- Many comments are in-depth, covering a number of points.
- An initial categorisation of the comments has been carried out to group the comments by theme/ issues. Initial analysis set out in the following slides.

YOUR HOUSING SITUATION

Does your current home meet the needs of your household?



Do you expect to move home in the next 5 years?*

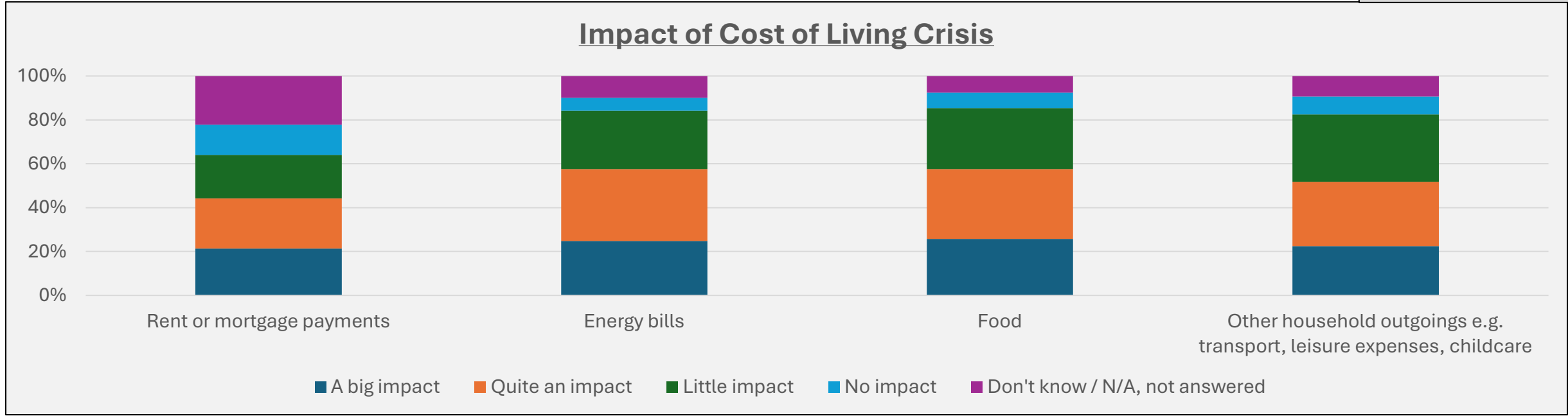


If you are planning to move out of Edinburgh, what is your main reason?	Total
High housing costs in Edinburgh	22
Greater housing options	0
Proximity to local facilities e.g. schools, healthcare	0
More greenspace	1
Proximity to family or friends	4
For work purposes/employment	7
For study	2
Other	5

If not, what is the main reason?	Total
Too expensive	13
The size doesn't meet my needs e.g. overcrowding	11
The layout doesn't meet my needs e.g. not accessible	9
Concerns around safety / anti-social behaviour	2
Not my desired tenure	3
Not my preferred location	2
I am homeless	2
Other	7

Initial Observations on planned movement across tenure types

- Intentions to move into owner occupation from the rented sector (both private rent and housing association) appear to be higher amongst respondents who plan to move **outwith** Edinburgh than those planning to move within Edinburgh. Housing costs cited as a factor for several.
- 2 respondents plan to move from the PRS to mid-market rent (within Edinburgh).
- 3 (of 17) Council tenants plan to move (all to another social rent in Edinburgh).
- 11 (of 21) housing association tenants plan to move, to a range of tenures.
- 5 (of 8) respondents living with parents plan to move, to a range of tenures.



Additional Analysis: Tenure Type vs Impact of Cost of Living Crisis on Rent/ Mortgage Payments

Tenure Type (number of respondents)	Housing costs having big impact	Housing costs having quite an impact	Housing costs having little impact	Housing costs having no impact/ not applicable
Owner occupier (161)	22 (14%)	36 (22%)	33 (20%)	68 (42%)
Renting from a private landlord (80)	28 (35%)	25 (31%)	20 (25%)	6 (8%)
Renting from Council (17)	1 (6%)	2 (12%)	6 (35%)	8 (47%)
Renting from a HA (21)	8 (38%)	7 (33%)	3 (14%)	3 (14%)
Living with parents (8)	6 (75%)	0	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)
Living in Purpose Built Student Accom (13)	4 (31%)	6 (46%)	1 (8%)	2 (16%)
Temporary accom (3)	2 (67%)	0	0	1 (33%)

YOUR HOUSING PRIORITIES/ FURTHER COMMENTS

I have never known there to be such a crisis around housing. Social housing is imperative for our future generations to have a family in a safe, secure and long-term accommodation.

Rents are insanely expensive and there is too much competition for so few properties.

Housing cannot stand alone to ease the homelessness across Scotland, as well as the current crisis post-pandemic. Safer communities are crucial to maintaining connection and belonging.

To meaningfully address the Housing Emergency, we must focus on increased delivery of all tenures alongside supporting people to remain independent in their homes for longer.

Provision of care and support and stronger linkages between these services and housing are needed to ensure people can be supported to remain at home for as long as they choose.

I am concerned that insufficient consideration is given to whether existing infrastructure (such as schools and GP's) can support more households when granting permission for new build estates.

Stop allowing universities & businesses to build student flats & bring the people of Edinburgh back to their own city.

There needs to be urgent work carried out on current tenancies that are not fit for habitation and causing multiple issues with health and wellbeing. Support to repair and maintain is critical to make best use of available housing stock.

When families do not have access to safe, stable homes this creates a series of practical, financial and emotional challenges which can lead to spiralling circumstances or create or exacerbate other challenges.

Ensure existing homes are prioritised for residential use over short term lets.

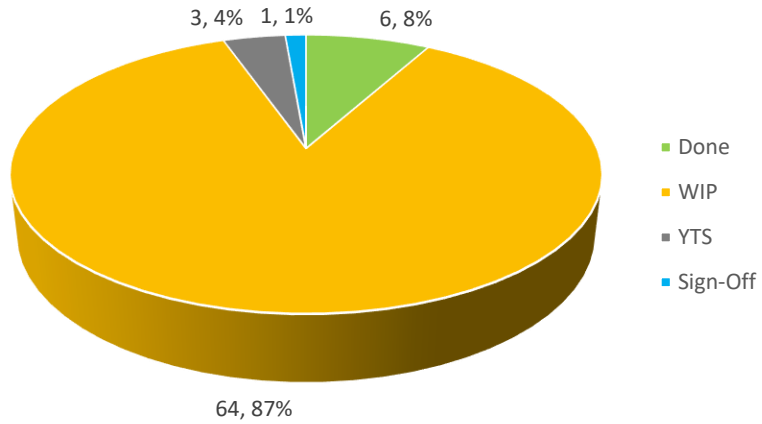


HEAP

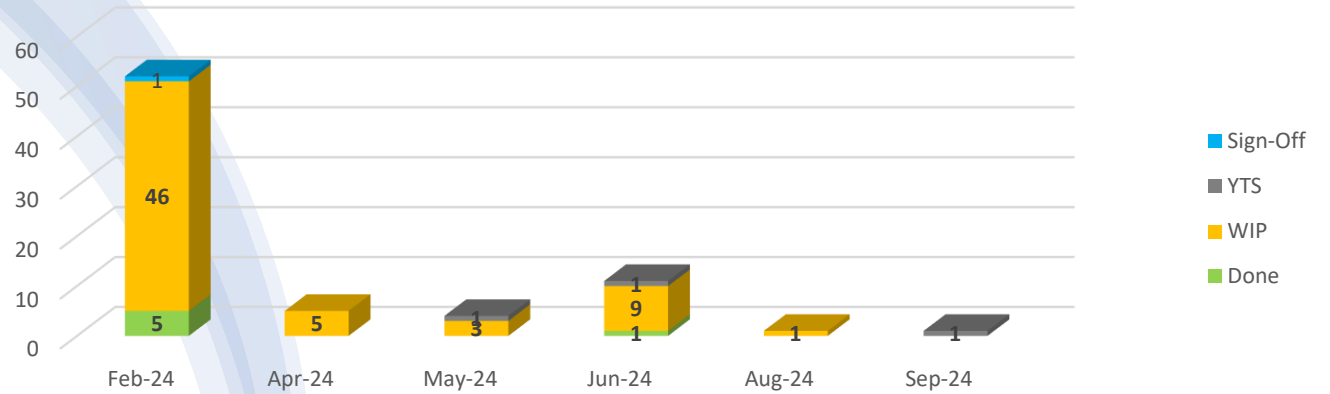
Progress on Actions



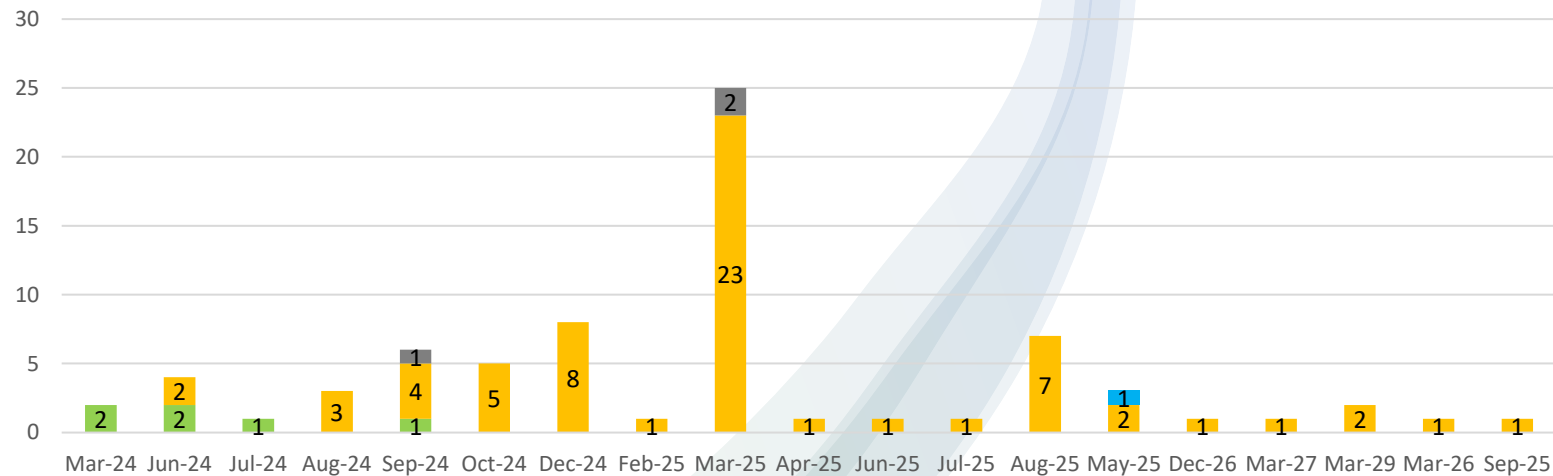
Progress on Actions



Action status as per Planned Start



Actions status as per Delivery plan



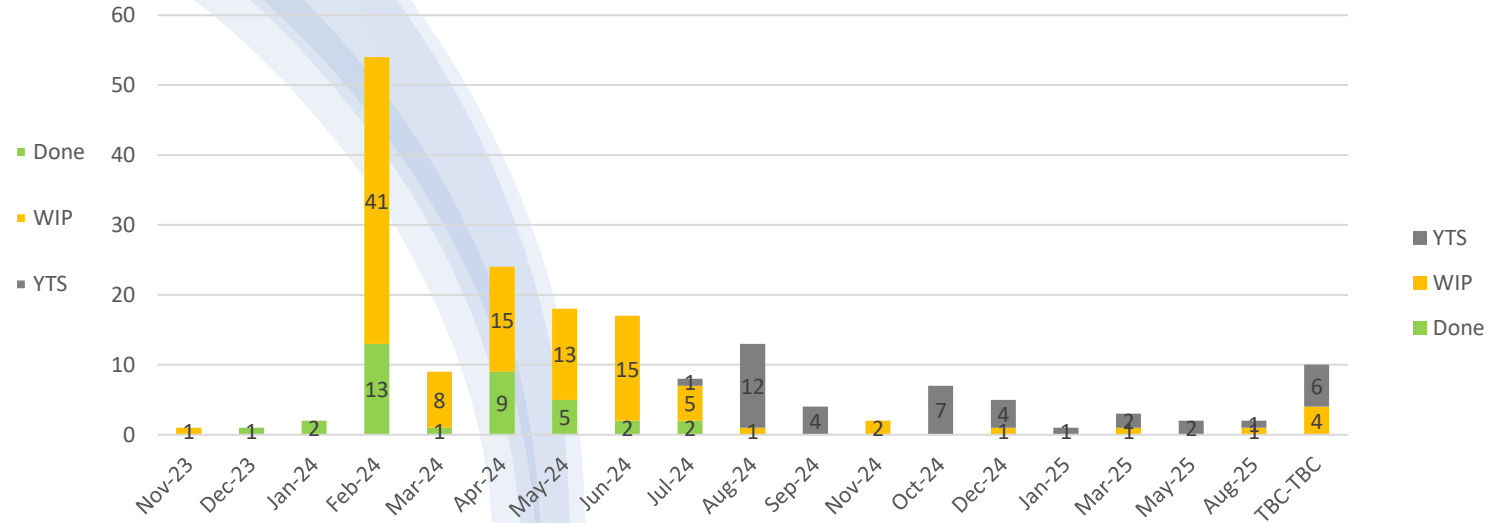
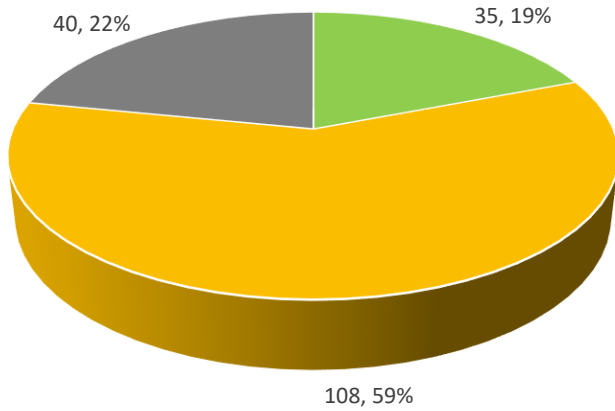
Status	Action
Done	6
WIP	64
YTS	3
Sign-Off	1
Grand Total	74

Progress on Milestones



Milestone Start View

Progress on Milestones



Milestone Delivery Plan

