**LHS Private Sector Consultation: Scheme of Assistance Report**

**Introduction**

This report presents the findings from Falkirk Councils Scheme of Assistance consultation for the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028, which ran from 26/10/22 until 28/2/23. The survey was highlighted through our People’s Panel, internally via staff/ services, drop-in sessions, online and through social media.

The survey contained 14 Scheme of Assistance questions and sought to gather views on Private Sector Adaptations assistance as well as Property Condition priorities, assistance and enforcement. As part of the survey, we asked questions about digital connectivity and equality.

29 responses were received for this consultation.

Key findings, the results for each Scheme of Assistance question, a summary of the digital connectivity and equality findings along with a list of all questions asked are detailed below. Please note that due to rounding, figures may not always add up to 100%. Care also needs to be taken when interpreting these findings as they represent a response rate of 0.06% of all private sector owned homes in Falkirk.

We do not have an active housing communication list for homeowners within Falkirk however, to help validate the findings, we will offer residents the opportunity to feedback their views on these findings, when this report is published.

Survey findings were considered during the development of our 2023-2028 Local Housing Strategy. To help us further review the property conditions assistance we offer, we plan to run further engagement during 2024. Further information will be added to our [What's new in the private sector](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/news/article.aspx?aid=6564) and [LHS 2023-2028: Private Sector Housing Consultations](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/homes-property/private-housing/consultations.aspx) pages.

The LHS is due to be published early 2024 and will outline the actions we plan to take over the next 5 years.

**Scheme of Assistance Survey – Key Findings**

**Adaptations**

* 29 responses received: 23 homeowners, 3 private tenants, 2 council tenants
* 55% advised they could afford the 20% Adaptation cost share if not eligible for 100%, 24% could not, 21% didn’t know
* 41% thought we should explore the option of introducing a Discretionary Grant to cover the 20% Adaptation cost in some cases and 28% believed in all cases

**Property Conditions**

* Current property condition priorities still considered very important or important
* Practical Support, General Advice & Signposting, Online Assistance, Discretionary Financial Assistance still considered very important or important in addressing property conditions
* 46% supported keeping the current Discretionary Financial Assistance, 29% supported increasing the assistance provided and 18% supported removing it and funding other types of assistance
* 68% supported common repairs being able to access Discretionary Financial Assistance
* Support for taking enforcement actions to address property conditions

**Digital Connectivity**

* 93% confirmed they had a device
* 97% confirmed they had internet
* High “can do” online capacity

**Results: All Questions**

**Private Sector Adaptations**

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| **Question 1** | **If you were only eligible for an 80% grant, would you be able to afford to pay the remaining 20% share of an adaptation?** |
|  | 55% advised that they would be able to afford the 20% share, 24% advised they wouldn’t and 21% didn’t know. |
| **Question 2** | **Should we explore the option of introducing Discretionary Adaptation Grant Assistance to cover the 20% share?** |
|  | 41% answered yes, in some cases; 28% answered yes, in all cases, 21% said no and 10% didn’t know. |
| **Question 3** | **How important do you think the following areas are in assisting adaptation applicants?** |

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|  | The following types of assistance were considered very important or important and have been ranked in order of priority: |
|  | 1. Adaptation process information 2. Support through Adaptation process 3. Quick Installation 4. Housing Options 5. Warranty Information 6. Completion Visit 7. Other 8. Client choice (materials & finish) |
|  | Comments made under Other included: full help with application, quicker assessment process and completion visit essential before grant released. |

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| **Question 4** | **Please let us know if you have any other comments relating to Private Sector Adaptations** |
|  | The following comments were made:   * Fear that if adaptations are requested, my PRS tenancy will end * income/ savings exclusions important but don’t deplete savings * an adaptation should not be denied due to affordability – Equalities Act |

**Property Condition**

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| **Question 1** | **How important do you consider the current types of assistance?** |

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|  | The following types of assistance were considered very important or important and have been ranked in order of priority: |
|  | 1. Practical Support 2. General Advice & Signposting 3. Online Assistance 4. Discretionary Financial Assistance |

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| **Question 2** | **How important do you consider our current Property Condition Priorities?** |

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|  | The following property condition priorities were considered very important or important and have been ranked in order of priority: |
|  | 1. Below Tolerable Standard 2. Properties subject to Statutory Notice 3. Lead Pipe Replacement 4. Tenemental Common Repair |

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| **Question 3** | **Are there any other types of works we should consider adding as a priority?** |
|  | The following works were suggested:   * Trees close to property * Insulation for properties with no cavities or loft |

**Property Conditions – Financial Assistance**

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| **Question 1** | **Do you think we should change the Discretionary Financial Assistance offered?** |

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|  | **No, keep Discretionary Financial Assistance** 46%  **as it is** (uptake has been low) |
|  | **Yes, increase the Discretionary Financial** 29%  **Assistance amount: £500 is too low** (this  would reduce the number of grants  available in a year) |
|  | **Yes, remove Discretionary Financial** 18%  **Assistance and fund other types of**  **assistance** (for example, common repairs  assistance see question 10 below) |
|  | **Other**  7% |

**Property Conditions – Common Repairs**

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| **Question 1** | **Should a common repair that falls within our Property Conditions Priorities be able to access Discretionary Financial Assistance?** |
|  | 68% believed common repairs that fall within the property condition priorities should be able to access Discretionary Financial Assistance, 18% didn’t know, 14% said no. |

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| **Question 2** | **How important do you consider the following types of assistance for Common Repairs?** |

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|  | The following types of common repairs assistance were considered very important or important and have been ranked in order of priority:   1. Under One Roof 2. Discretionary Grant Assistance 3. App Assistance 4. Missing Shares |

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| **Question 3** | **Are there any other types of assistance we should consider providing?** |
|  | The following assistance types were suggested:   * Council improvement works in mixed tenure tenements * Mixed tenure where council is in the majority * Roof repairs/ older properties |
| **Question 4** | **How important do you consider the following enforcement actions?** |
|  | The following types of enforcement action were considered very important or important and have been ranked in order of priority: |
|  | 1. Issue Statutory Notice 2. Enforce Statutory Notices & recover (resources permitting) 3. Enforce the Repairing Standard in PRS 4. Enforce Landlord Registration 5. Maintenance Plan following Statutory Notice |

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| **Question 5** | **Are there any other types of property condition enforcement you consider important?** |
|  | 50% didn’t know, 31% advised no, 19% advised yes and suggested the following for consideration:   * Water & Heating * Excess noise and Antisocial behaviour * If homeowner cannot afford * Environmental works (closes/ gardens) * HMO accommodation that houses homeless people |
| **Question 6** | **Please let us know if you have any other comments relating to Private Sector Housing Property Conditions?** |
|  | The following comments were made:   * Council should pay owners cost if progressing improvement works * Properties used by council should not be BTS or have notices attached |

**Digital Connectivity – Key and relevant findings**

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|  | * 93% confirmed they had a device * 97% confirmed they had internet * High “can do” online capacity |

**Equality – Key and relevant findings**

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|  | * 71% female, 22% male, 7% preferred not to say * 50% (45 -64), 29% (65 or over), 21% (25-44) * 100% white * 8 had a disability * 10 had a condition with day-to-day impact |

**Appendix A**

**Scheme of Assistance Questions**

**Private Sector Adaptations**

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| **1** | If you were only eligible for an 80% grant, would you be able to afford to pay the remaining 20% share of an adaptation? |
| **2** | Should we explore the option of introducing Discretionary Adaptation Grant Assistance to cover the 20% share? |
| **3** | How important do you think the following areas are in assisting adaptation applicants? |
| **4** | Please let us know if you have any other comments relating to Private Sector Adaptations |

**Property Condition**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1** | How important do you consider the current types of assistance? |
| **2** | How important do you consider our current Property Condition Priorities? |
| **3** | Are there any other types of works we should consider adding as a priority? |

**Property Conditions – Financial Assistance**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1** | Do you think we should change the Discretionary Financial Assistance offered? |

**Property Conditions – Common Repairs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1** | Should a common repair that falls within our Property Conditions Priorities be able to access Discretionary Financial Assistance? |
| **2** | How important do you consider the following types of assistance for Common Repairs? |
| **3** | Are there any other types of assistance we should consider providing? |
| **4** | How important do you consider the following enforcement actions? |
| **5** | Are there any other types of property condition enforcement you consider important? |
| **6** | Please let us know if you have any other comments relating to Private Sector Housing Property Conditions? |

**Digital Connectivity Questions**

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| **1** | Do you own a device that can access the internet in your home? |
| **2** | Do you have access to the internet at home either Home or Mobile? |
| **3** | Using online Services *(they were asked to rate a range of actions e.g. Accessing the internet, using online services…)* |
| **4** | In your day-to-day life, how do you feel about? *(they were asked to rate different digital home options e.g. having Alexa, Siri, Google in your home, having a connected home…)* |
| **5** | What types of digital assistance would help you most? |

**Equality Questions**

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| **1** | What area do you live in? |
| **2** | How best would you describe your own housing circumstances? |
| **3** | What is your gender? |
| **4** | Do you consider yourself to be trans or have a trans history? |
| **5** | What is your age? |
| **6** | Do you consider yourself to be disabled? |
| **7** | Do you have a physical or mental health condition or illness, or a learning disability, which you expect to last for 12 months or more? |
| **8** | Do any of these conditions or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas? |
| **9** | If yes, does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? |
| **10** | What is your ethnic group? |