



Ayr Housing Aid Centre scio

ANNUAL REPORT

1st JULY 2023 – 30th JUNE 2024



SCOTTISH CHARITY NO: SC049609



Scottish Social
Services Council inspectorate



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1. GOVERNANCE

Objectives & Activities

Ayr Housing Aid Centre SCIO is a rights based charity providing services to South Ayrshire and surrounding localities. Our clear objectives set out in our constitution are:

1. Relief of those in need by reason of age, ill health, disability, financial hardship, homelessness or threat of homelessness or other disadvantages
2. Relief of poverty
3. Advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation
4. Advancement of education

Our office is based at 7 York Street, Ayr with Prison Housing Advice staff based within HMP Kilmarnock Link Centre with attendance to HMP Barlinnie and HMP Greenock as required.

The Board

- Margaret Greenan, Chairperson
- Pat Lappin, Treasurer
- Alan Berry, Vice Chair from 8.8.23
- Julie Williams
- Craig McArthur
- Lesley Sehli resigned 13.6.24
- Sam Keith appointed 30.10.23

The Team

- Suzanne Slavin, Chief Executive Officer
- Emma Gaughan, Engagement Team Leader & Prison Senior promoted to Operations Manager from 16.11.23
- Gerry Tierney, Advice Team Leader & Tribunal Officer
- Allison Cairns, Housing Adviser
- David Anderson, I'M IN! Early Intervention Officer left 14.2.24
- David Anderson, I'M IN! Advocacy and Tribunal Officer started 12.6.24
- Jennifer Cochrane, Housing Caseworker
- Shirleyann Reid, Prison Housing Adviser promoted to Senior from 16.1.24
- Janet MacAlister, Tenure Sustainment Officer promoted to Prison Housing Adviser from 16.2.24
- Elspeth Lloyd, Tenure Sustainment Officer
- Cristine Kerr, Tenure Sustainment Officer started 17.4.24
- Alison Hood, Finance Officer left 23.8.23
- Sue Cooksley, Reception/Referral Officer
- Iain Jamie, Database & Statistical Support
- Ewen Hill, Office Support Assistant
- Leia Quinn, Social Work Student Placement 6.3.23 - 24.8.23

2. PRINCIPLE ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Each of our Services contribute to the Centre meeting its aims and objectives, contractual obligations and our Service User's and community's needs. All Services produce Internal Annual Reports and statistics which feed into our Annual Report cycle including the Annual Service User Feedback Report. We opened 1351 cases throughout this financial year, (with an additional 182 enquiries) compared to 1342 in the previous year. When each case is opened a standard person profile is created on AdvicePRO, either an enquiry or if necessary a full case. Relevant data protection and GDPR is explained and this data is used to monitor and analyse statistics to produce a range of reports. As well as working on the case AHAC encourages external and internal referrals to ensure access to specialist, accredited advice is available on request. During the closing process we actively encourage engagement with other support services where necessary.

Our Services

South Ayrshire Council Funded Services:

1. Type I, II and III Accredited Housing Information, Advice and Advocacy
2. Prison Housing Advice (Prison Link Centres, main base HMP Kilmarnock)
3. Tenure Sustainment (Crisis Homeless Prevention Housing Support Service)
4. HEY (Housing Education 4 Youths, Secondary School groups) funded to 31.8.23
5. Community Engagement and Promotion funded to 31.8.23

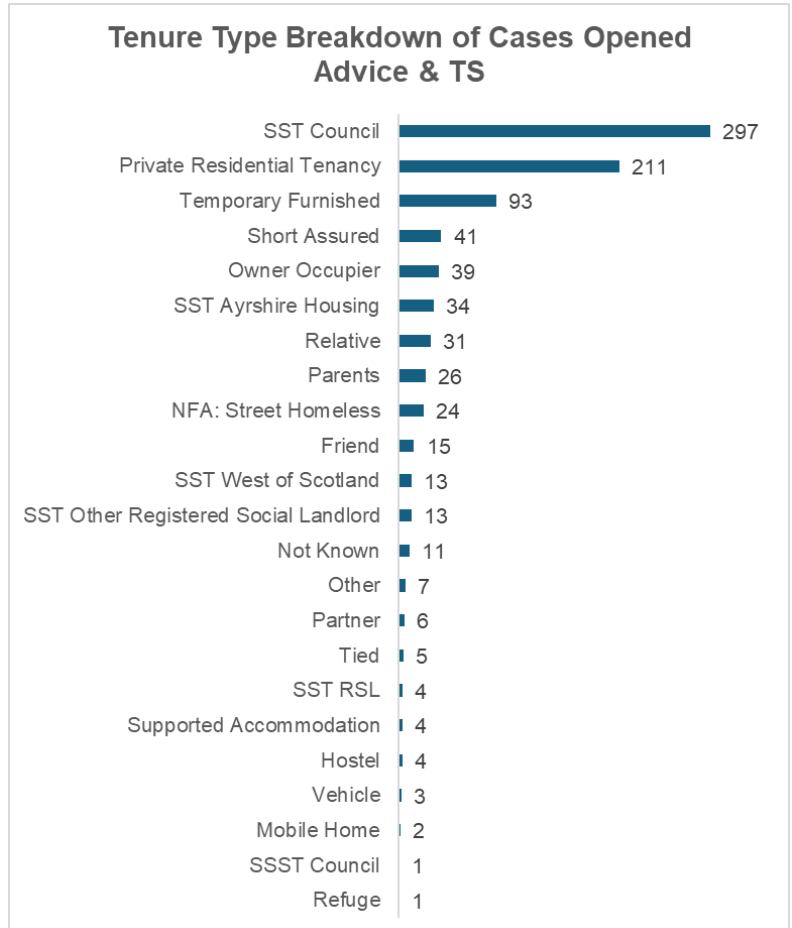
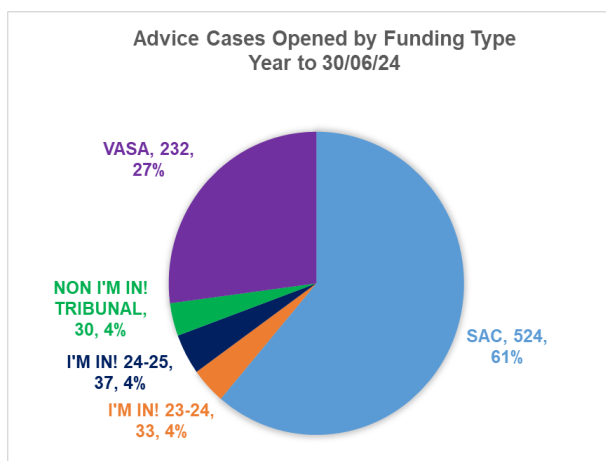
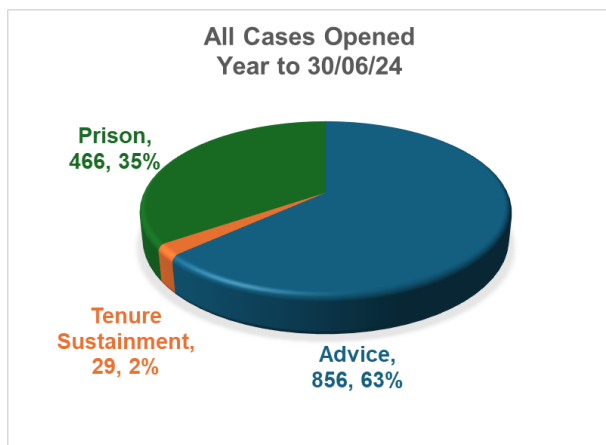
East Ayrshire Council Funded Services:

6. Prison Housing Advice (Prison Link Centres, main base HMP Kilmarnock)

Additional Funded Services:

7. I'M IN! (SeAscape collaboration Scottish Government funded South Ayrshire Private Rented Early Intervention Service) funded to 31.3.24
8. I'M IN! (SeAscape collaboration Scottish Government funded South & East Ayrshire Private Rented Eviction Tribunal Representation Service) funded 1.4.24 to 31.3.25
9. VASA Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Caseworker funded 1.4.23 to 31.3.25

Case Type Analysis

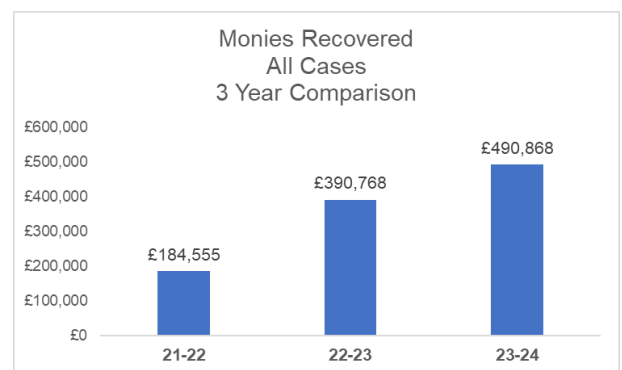


Key Case Outcomes

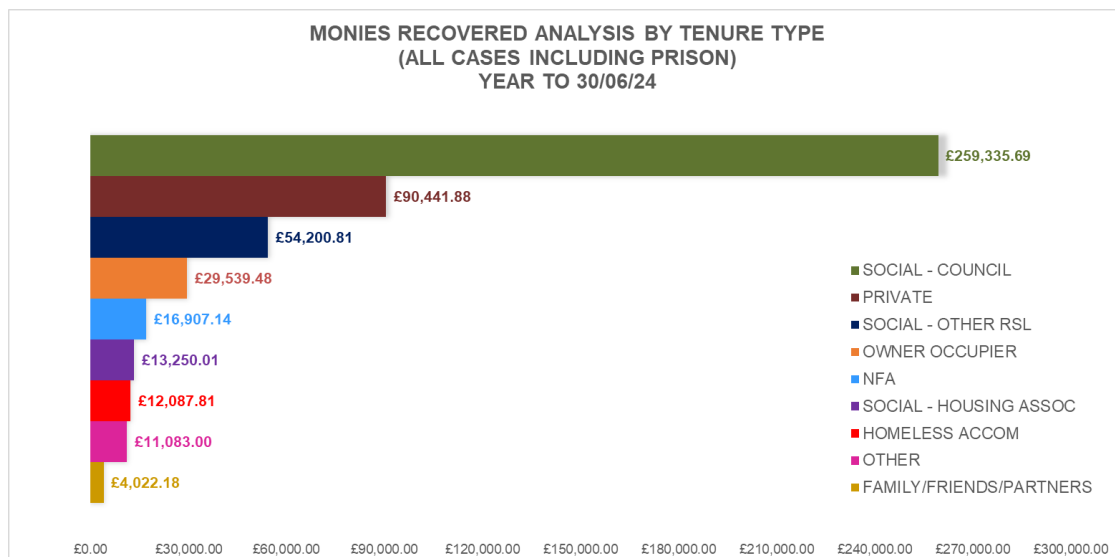
- 1,351 new cases opened in this year including prison with an additional 190 enquiries opened (9 of which were upgraded to cases at time of writing)
- 1,318 cases were closed in this reporting period including prison, an additional 123 enquiries were closed
- 3,724 outcomes including Prison cases
- Monies recovered including arrears reduced and income maximised across all sectors **£490,868** (including Prison) compared to **£390,768** last year, with an additional **£63,954** not included on Advice Pro from previous years, **£554,822**.
- 382 Homelessness Prevented households including Prison cases
- 111 Homeless Delayed households including Prison cases
- 118 Service Users were permanently re-housed (Prison cases not included)
- 261 Service Users acted on advice from the Centre (Prison cases not included)
- 1,126 of the closed cases had a positive outcome achieved, positive outcome likely or achieved in part, or information given (including Prison cases)
- 682 signposting/referrals made to external agencies and organisations

Tenant and Third-Party Beneficiaries – (including Prisons)

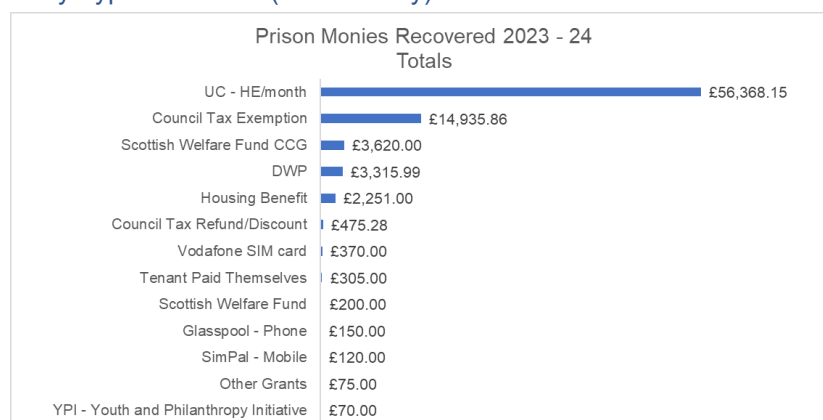
Over the years we have been monitoring monies recovered to Rent, Council Tax accounts, income increased to tenants and owners. Most of the grants we apply for go direct to Service Users and their rent accounts to reduce arrears, prevent homelessness or begin/sustain tenancies although some are received their us. The chart below highlights monies recovered by tenancy type to alleviate poverty and, in many cases, prevent homelessness and eviction across all sectors, not including an additional £63,954 not included on Advice Pro from previous years.



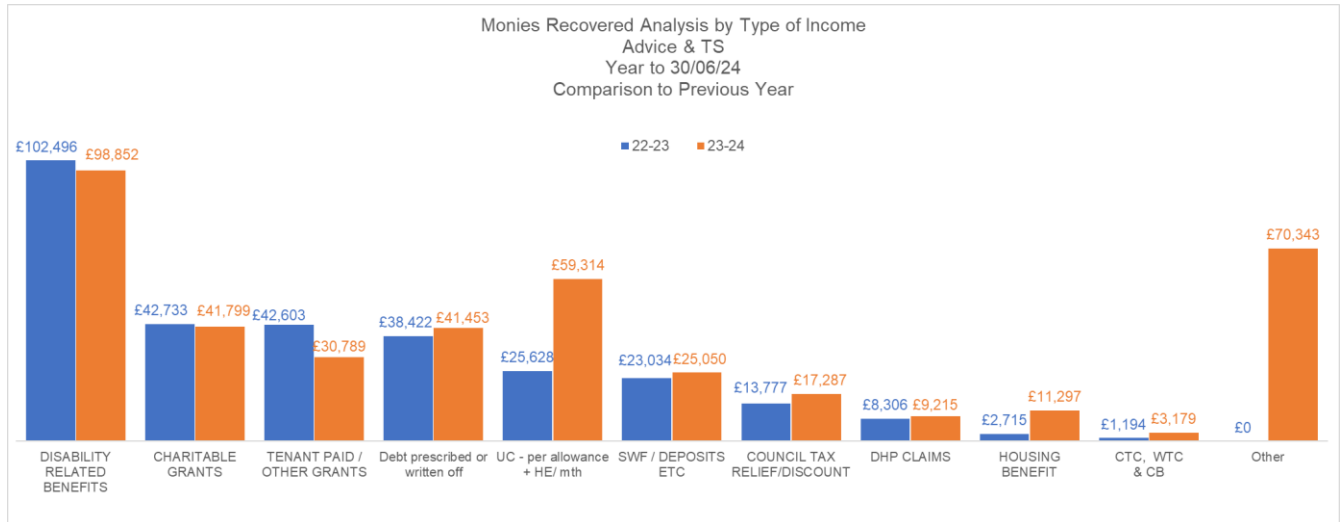
Monies Recovered Analysis



Monies Recovered Analysis by Type of Income (Prisons only)



Rent Arrears Recovery/Income Maximisation/Future Rent Projection (includes Prison cases)



Homelessness prevention delaying ejections in all sectors reduces demand on Public Sector resources, in particular, the provision of homeless temporary accommodation. Many Service Users have in addition benefited from our Advice and Tenure Sustainment Services which often includes budgeting skills and benefit or grant maximisation for unclaimed income to prevent future homelessness. The monies we recovered, summarised in the section above, highlights increased co-operation in terms of rent arrear cases and income maximisation. Our recovery amounts remain high across all sectors. This year monies recovered increased across all sectors to **£490,868** for 303 households (including Prison cases) compared to £390,768 last year for 324 households (including prison). With an additional £63,954 not included on Advice Pro from previous years, **£554,822**.

Homeless Prevention & Delaying Achievements In Detail

The Centre passionately believes early intervention and access to free, independent, accredited advice prevents homelessness. The continued development of Early Intervention and Prevention Services is key to assisting the Council to meet their strategic objectives and is a best value approach. It is important that everyone who is identified as threatened with homelessness within 6 months is able to access help as soon as possible which will in turn avoid crisis. Housing Options and other services are able to identify people to refer them to us as soon as possible.

AHAC directly prevented homelessness in 382 cases this year. There are 2 separate savings to be made when calculating homeless prevention. The overall social cost per household ranges between £25,000 to £95,000 plus the additional savings to Housing Benefit budgets which pay for temporary accommodation, (£8,000 - £25,000). By preventing homelessness this saved case administration, investigation and other ancillary costs. Another important factor is the personal, health, education, criminal justice and social benefit to those who are prevented from coming into the homeless system through positive intervention. For the purposes of our calculations, we have used a lower estimate of £30,000 per case. In a period of 20 years the Centre has directly prevented homelessness in over 5,000 cases which has had considerable economic benefit to South Ayrshire Council, Central Government, and social benefit to the potentially homeless household and the wider community. There is clear evidence of how Social Return on Investment (SROI) illustrates best value approaches in funding homeless prevention Services and Councils are aware of the spend to save approaches to reduce demand.

Temporary Accommodation Savings

The estimated saving to the public purse for negating the need for temporary accommodation is estimated at £10,000 per household (under-estimated at average of 6 months although many remain in temp 6 to 24 months). For this calculation we can also add in the 111 where homelessness was delayed, often moving straight from one home to their permanent home.

111 homeless delayed + 382 homeless prevented = **493 cases not requiring temporary accommodation**

Temporary Accommodation Savings based on 493 cases x £10,000 = **£4,930,000**

Homelessness Prevention Savings based on 382 cases x £30,000 = **£11,460,000**

Total Homelessness Prevention & Temporary Accommodation Savings - £16,390,000

Best Value Services

For many years, the Centre has strived to develop and evolve our services to meet the changing needs and aspirations of the community we serve. There are considerable savings to be made by investing in early intervention and crisis prevention and this is measured through social return on investment, (SROI). It is important to note the SROI only measures the homeless part of the work we do and does not take into account the various other benefits our service users gain from becoming more independent, resilient and empowered.

The Centre has a long-term ethos of encouraging and supporting staff in their constant learning and skills development along with ensuring they receive training and support. We consider the development of our Services and staff to be of utmost importance to ensure high quality Services and professional standards. This is clearly evidenced by our Service User Feedback, Care Inspectorate Report and type III National Standards Housing Advice Accreditation. Our Services provide a range of value back to the people we help including health, wellbeing, educational and economic. Some positive impact measures are medium to long term such as HEY (Housing Education 4 Youths), unfortunately this was only funded to 31.8.23 due to Council budget restraints when this part of the contract was paused and we hope they will resume this part of the contract in the future. We cannot underestimate the considerable value early housing conversations about future expectations and aspirations has to school pupils and young people to equip them with the information and skills for the future. Indeed many other local authorities are aiming to take a more pro-active approach rather than a crisis and we hope South Ayrshire will return to this model.

Social Return on Investment

During 2023/24 AHAC received £435,148 in funding from the public purse (2 local authorities and Scottish Government via I'M IN! & VASA). This was for specific projects and services delivered by the Centre and does not include any additional external funding, income, grants, fundraising, etc. We estimate our Services directly and indirectly benefits the Council, Health and Social Care, NHS, Central Government, Landlords and Service Users to be approx. **£16,944,822**.

ECONOMIC VALUE SUMMARY		£
Reduced demand on services		11,460,000
Savings on temporary accommodation costs		4,930,000
Monies recovered for 23/24 from previous cases not on AdvicePro		63,954
Monies recovered overall including prisons		490,868
TOTAL SAVINGS		16,944,822

Economic value is an important indicator; for every **£1** from the public purse the Centre generates an approximate value of **£38.94**; (calculated by dividing total economic value by total public purses monies received). Following our change to AdvicePro system, our social return on investment calculations are more precise than ever. We maintain a conservative approach by using lower estimates to ensure the figures are both realistic and not inflated.

1. CHAIRPERSON OVERVIEW

Introduction

I became Chair in November 2022 and since that time have seen AHAC grow and expand to meet the changing needs of those we help. This year Alan Berry took up his role as Vice Chair and we welcomed Sam Keith onto the Board in October. The Board remains strong with commitment to AHAC ethos ensuring strong strategic governance and supporting management in their quest for necessary additional top up grants to ensure sufficient staff with the necessary specialist skills and expertise to help the ever-increasing number of people requiring help. We continued to work with a range of stakeholders to mitigate the economic, health and social impact on the most vulnerable during this particularly challenging period due to the Cost-of-Living and Housing Crisis.

Our main aim and objectives continue to be the prevention and delaying of homelessness, helping those in housing need and the alleviation of poverty. Our priority has been to do the best we can to ensure we deliver quality services and meet the KPIs for the various funding contracts and expectations. The decision to pause the award winning HEY within schools and Community Outreach services from 31.8.23 will reduce any possible early intervention opportunities and proactive prevention work and we hope that our main funder, South Ayrshire Council will look at reinvesting in a proactive, early upstream model in the future once budgets allow. It is important that young people consider their housing aspirations and realities prior to leaving school so they can have those valuable conversations with parents at an early stage. We continue to respond to various consultations and campaigns to influence local and national policy which relate to homeless, housing and poverty which directly affect our service users. On 25.6.24 our Advice Team Leader Gerard Tierney was invited to attend and input at a Scottish Parliament Local Government Housing and Planning Committee meeting following our response to the new Housing Bill Consultation.

Future Development

The next 12 months will continue delivering and monitoring our secured contracts and seeking additional funds to extend the work we do to meet the increased need. We will continue to review our 5 Year Plan 2021-26 taking into account the need for increasing future funding streams to maintain adequate service delivery to meet the true needs and expectations of those we help. We hope to re-establish our fundraising and training activities to secure additional funding to enhance existing core services although these can be time consuming and time is often prioritised on the service development.

Acknowledgements

The Board are particularly grateful to the Staff and Management Team in the past year for their resilience and robust responses to people's immediate and longer term needs. Despite numerous challenges and changes to the economic environment we have been innovative in securing additional funding to directly help those in greatest need. Our management team has the ability to think out the box when seeking additional external resources which have a direct impact. An example of this is our new partnership with Glasspool, and I am very proud we were chosen as one of 49 organisations across the UK (with only 3 in Scotland). This partnership has made a direct impact in our last quarter of this year and helped ease staff frustrations around otherwise dwindling availability of grants available for those in need. I look forward to the coming year to see the true impact of a full year. Our team remains enthusiastic to ensure anyone in housing need receives quality housing advice, advocacy and engagement services. I extend my appreciation to the numerous partner agencies we work with making a real difference to many. Thanks again to our Board members who I am looking forward to continuing to collaborate with you.

Margaret Greenan, Chairperson

2. TREASURER FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

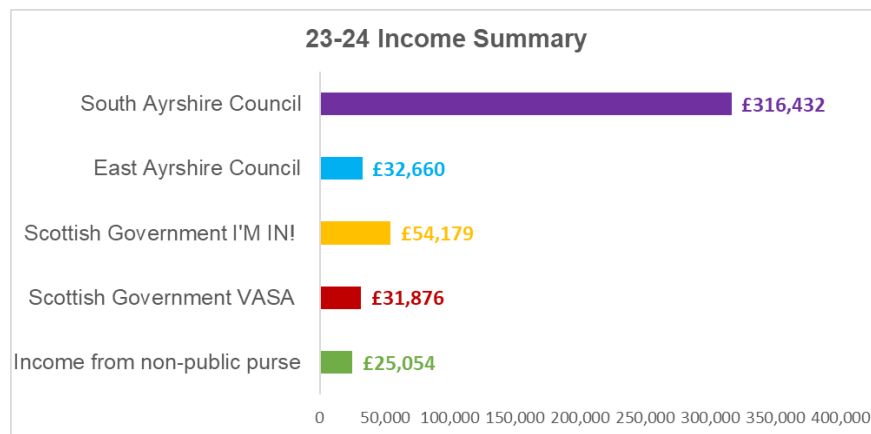
2023/24

Within this Report I have enclosed the Statement of Financial Activities from our Financial Statements which were independently reviewed and submitted to Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). The charity is in an acceptable financial position with total reserves of £399,168. A surplus of £59,554 was due to various staffing changes and renegotiation of running costs contracts as well as underspending in various categories. The Centre intends to use this surplus over the next 5 years to mitigate against projected future deficits in the event of external grant funding ending/reducing to allow maintenance of services and staffing levels to manage predicted increased costs due to the current financial climate.

We have designated reserves of £316,347 to provide for identified redundancy liabilities of £36,275, a further £255,072 for salaries and admin costs and to protect against contract liabilities in the event of current funding ceasing. With a future designated reserve for a potential office relocation of £25,000.

Restricted funds comprise of funds that are subject to specific conditions imposed by the donor on how these funds can be spent. As at 30.6.24 we had restricted reserves of £14,442 relating to grants received for specific purposes. Unrestricted reserves of £68,379 are available for any purpose. We continue to improve our banking position in accordance with the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

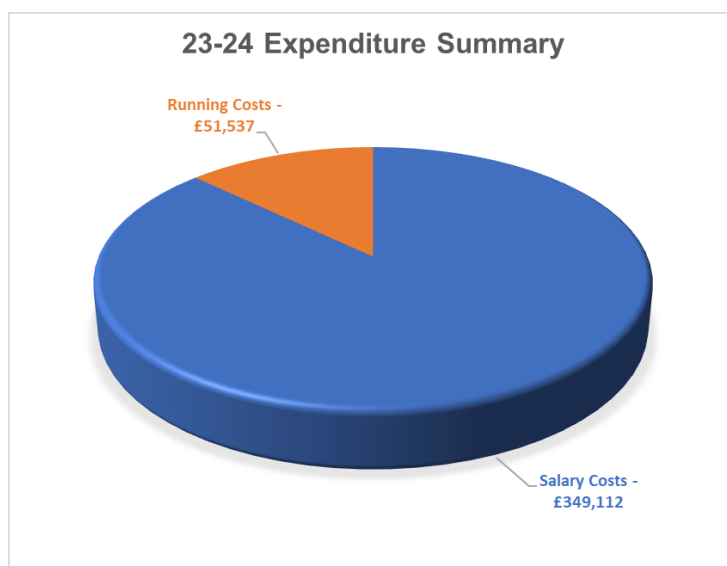
Income Breakdown



Total income received was **£460,202** detailed follows:

69% South Ayrshire Council
 7% East Ayrshire Council
 12% I'M IN! SeAscape Collaboration
 7% VASA Mental Health Fund
 5% Non-public purse income

Expenditure Breakdown



Total expenditure was £400,649 of which salary costs were £349,112, (87%) compared to 86% last year.

AYR HOUSING AID CENTRE SCIO
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies		543	-	543	3,706
Charitable activities					
Provision of housing advice, advocacy and support		349,091	99,569	448,660	495,265
Investment income	3	9,070	-	9,070	4,260
Other income		1,930	-	1,930	9,446
Total		<u>360,634</u>	<u>99,569</u>	<u>460,203</u>	<u>512,677</u>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Provision of housing advice, advocacy and support		<u>301,448</u>	<u>99,201</u>	<u>400,649</u>	<u>428,298</u>
NET INCOME		59,186	368	59,554	84,379
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>325,538</u>	<u>14,076</u>	<u>339,614</u>	<u>255,235</u>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>384,724</u>	<u>14,444</u>	<u>399,168</u>	<u>339,614</u>

CONTINUING OPERATIONS

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

2024/25 Projections

Our revised budget for the year ending 30/6/25 predicts a balanced budget mainly due to additional income secured and tight spending restrictions. Our estimated income for 2024/25 is projected to be around £450,000. Our prepared budget forecasts indicate continued growth and development to enable our core objectives of prevention of homelessness and alleviation of poverty. We forecast pressure in the coming years due to increased demand linked to the cost-of-living and housing crisis and it is likely we will need to secure additional income and external grants.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Stewart Gilmour & Co for conducting our independent examination this year. We look forward to working with them in the next financial year in providing payroll and accounting services. Thanks to the Management team for their dedication and support throughout the year relating to financial projections and sound financial practices.

J P Lappin, Treasurer

3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Introduction

AHAC's core ethos continues to be providing the prevention of homelessness, housing need and the alleviation of poverty. This year our poverty work increased, reducing pressure of those in crisis to allow headspace to make positive, informed housing choices. Based on service user expectations, 49% of people we worked with required some level of income maximisation and immediate intervention which resulted in our monies recovered (Page 6). Despite increased demands our teams have continued to deliver high quality services, priding ourselves going above and beyond with kindness, compassion and empathy at the core of everything we do.

Over the last 2 years we have met the challenges of increased demand head on by seeking additional funding from new sources. This assisted to "plug the gap" to meet demand including a decrease in funding from our main funder, South Ayrshire Council. As a rights and needs based organisation we have been able to meet new needs of those who come to us for help due to increased poverty due to the Cost-of-Living and Housing Crisis. A change in structure to meet the changing organisational needs brought opportunity for internal promotions. AHAC pride ourselves in nurturing staff through training, development and peer knowledge sharing to encourage internal talent, experience, knowledge and resilience within our highly recognised specialist services.

This year we again strengthened our financial systems with increased use of Xero and our paper free ethos. A surplus was created through restructure, delays in recruitment, additional income secured and renegotiation of running costs in contracts to create an underspend to allow us to continue to operate efficiently through strict expenditure controls. AHAC continues to fulfil our tender contract with South and East Ayrshire Councils until August 2025. The Centre will continue to seek other funding streams to enable us to continue to promote access to social justice and free Tribunal representation. Our 5-year plan and budget forecasts continue to be regularly reviewed along with continually evolving and developing to meet the changing needs of those we serve.

Service Development

AHAC main aims and objectives since 1986 have stood the test of time and continue to be helping anyone in housing need, by taking a rights and needs based approach to prevent and/or delay homelessness while alleviating poverty in a compassionate, collaborative and empathetic way. Despite numerous challenges and changes to the economic environment we have been innovative in securing additional funding to directly help those in poverty most by taking direct, immediate action. We were delighted to have been chosen as one of 49 Glasspool Frontline Partner organisations across the UK, with us being one of only 3 in Scotland. This partnership has proven invaluable since April 2024 positively directly reducing poverty and crisis for those in most need and allowing us to show true compassion to the most vulnerable while also positively reducing staff time searching for grants and reducing delays in decisions.

This year we secured funding again for the VASA Caseworker post for another year and saw a shift in funding from the Scottish Government I'M IN! Project in collaboration with SeAscape. I'M IN! changed from a single Early Intervention post in South Ayrshire to from 1.4.25 employing 2 part time Advocacy and Tribunal Officers and a Caseworker covering East and South Ayrshire areas. Our partnership with SeAscape who co-ordinate and provide the housing support element has enabled us to adapt to meet frontline need. This much needed service has been able to delay and prevent numerous private tenant evictions to allow for a planned approach and reduce demand on scarce temporary accommodation. I look forward to developing this project in the coming year with the East Ayrshire addition.

We do not see housing and poverty as separate issues and we provide a truly holistic service to those in housing need. Often a crisis intervention approach is required to reduce pressure to enable the person to look holistically at their issues. We recognised many years ago that many struggle to deal with their housing issue when there are so many other issues hampering their ability to prioritise their housing problems while they struggled with basic issues such as lack of income, debt and mental health deterioration. We recognised that by tackling their poverty we can promote headspace to finally deal with the housing issues which have contributed to their decline in health.

We take a similar approach to the wellbeing of our staff and will continue to support the team through our wellbeing days and ongoing focus on mental health first aid training for the full team.

Looking Ahead

The next 12 months will focus on continuing to deliver high quality services and work to increase income to fill the gaps to ensure we have sufficient staff to meet our every changing service user expectations. Every year we reflect and review our 5-year plan targets to ensure we have adequate staff with the skills required to meet demand. A SWOT analysis will be carried out in the run up to the new tender being released along with strategic review and adaptation of our structure, vision to meet frontline demands. We will start work on the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers Audit over the coming year.

We will continue to influence local and national policy through responding to homeless, housing and poverty related consultations and legislation which directly affect our service users. We were delighted to be invited to the Scottish Government after our input into 2 major pieces of housing legislation. We will continue to strengthen lines of communication with funders and Partner Agencies. The Centre is committed to working with Councils and partners to alleviate poverty and promote a compassionate

Acknowledgements

The Centre's primary strength is our committed staff who deliver an efficient, quality service which puts our Service Users at the centre of everything we do with kindness, compassion and with no judgement. Their commitment and dedication underpin the services we provide and is reflected in our high levels of engagement, feedback, case studies and real tangible impact reflected in funders being able to see the real value we provide via Social Return on Investment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and Board for their continued hard work, support and resilience in what has been a busy but rewarding year. Together we continue to make a real difference to many.

Suzanne Slavin, Chief Executive Officer

4. OUR SERVICES IN DETAIL

a. Type I, II and III Accredited Housing Information, Advice and Advocacy Service

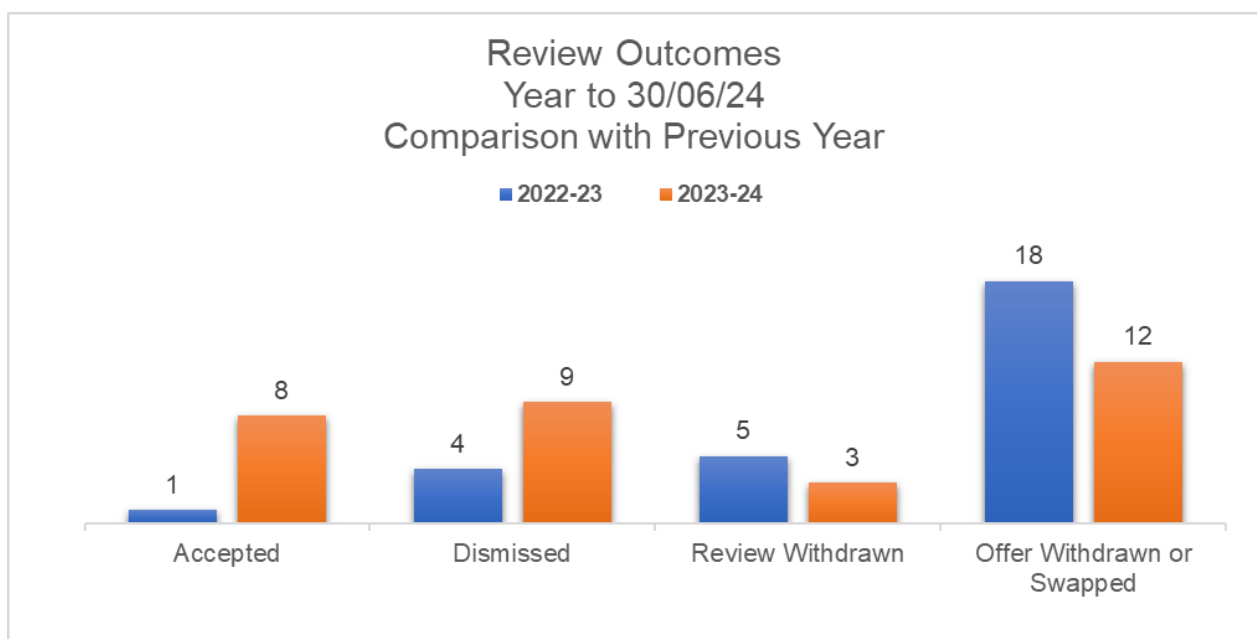
In this reporting year 856 advice and advocacy cases were opened, (compared to 881 in 2022-23). This does not include our Prison Advice Service which is shown separately below. 3,134 Internal Action Plans were created, averaging 3 per case. Homelessness (63%) and Housing Options (45%) continue to be the main reasons people come to us for advice. 40% of those we helped were looking for help with food, poverty, grants and fuel costs. Some were actively looking for alternative accommodation (25%) or were seeking a transfer (11%) where they were living in accommodation which did not meet their needs or was unsuitable. We noted this year Housing providers continue to struggle with demand and supply delays with void and stock turnover being slow. We hope offers of accommodation will start to flow a bit better in the coming year although it is unlikely to be able to keep up with increased demand and expectations from those seeking accommodation.

Advice and Advocacy Stats:

- 856 advice and advocacy cases opened
- 902 cases were closed generating 2,605 outcomes (including long running cases from previous years)
- The 902 cases closed helped 1,767 people (1,154 adults and 613 children)
- 80% of cases had a positive outcome achieved, likely or information given to enable them to act themselves
- 550 separate referrals were made to other organisations this year
- Affordability improved in 189 cases including 135 successful grants
- 117 service users were permanently housed
- 30 families had outstanding repairs completed by landlords, allowing them to remain at home
- From 629 cases involving homelessness we generated 1,903 outcomes for 1,264 people: 808 adults & 456 children
- Out of a possible 376 cases not already in the homeless system, 127 resulted in Homelessness Prevented (29%)
- 174 cases were still live at the year end and continued to be worked on

Homeless Reviews

We submitted 32 Homeless Reviews during this reporting year. A total of 10 offers were withdrawn, 2 unsuitable offers were swapped to more appropriate accommodation, 2 reviews were withdrawn, and 9 reviews were dismissed.



Private Rented Sector (not including Prisons)

The private sector in Scotland has seen a decline in availability and affordability with many landlords wanting to exit and sell, citing the lack of profit and affordability as the reason by they no longer wish to be Landlords. Last year Landlords were frustrated with rent account balances increasing from tenants still recovering the covid crisis due to reduced income and spending priorities changing for those affected by furlough, job losses and hours reduced is now coming to the surface.

We already see pressure within the sector with Agents advising us for every vacancy they are receiving around 700 enquiries for each let. Due to lack of availability, demand has saw rent levels increase to amounts many cannot afford. Some Landlords we have spoken to have chosen to select full time employed tenants with full time employed guarantors. This leaves many people we work with unable to choose the private rented as a sector. In this year, despite us having access to additional Grants for rent in advance and deposits our service users still struggled to persuade Landlords to take them over those who had cash up front, a full time employed guarantor and guaranteed regular income to be a low-risk tenant proposition. We have urged the Scottish Government to look at social quotas or tax incentives to keep the much-needed supply available to those who choose this sector. We see increased need for our I'M IN! Project which changed from an early intervention approach to a Tribunal Eviction Project focusing on legal representation and delaying and preventing eviction to reduce the need for temporary homeless accommodation. While there is insufficient social housing this sector has always had an important part to play for those who can and wish to access it. For many it provided choice of area and type of housing albeit for an increased cost and lack of longer term security of tenure.

Private Rented Sector Statistics

- 252 cases opened generating 933 Internal Action Plans
- 195 advice cases were threatened with homelessness (77%)
- 110 cases wanted Housing Options advice (44%)
- 40 cases needed help to claim grants (16%)
- 36 cases involved disrepair (14%)
- Out of 252 cases opened there were 110 families with children (544 people and 206 children in total)
- 287 cases closed generating 907 outcomes
- 85% of cases had a positive outcome achieved or likely
- 158 service users remained in their current accommodation
- 72 cases had a Homelessness Prevented outcome, and we were able to delay homelessness in an additional 72
- 55 were permanently housed

b. Prison Housing Advice Service

Our Prison Housing Advice Service, funded by South and East Ayrshire Councils has been provided by AHAC since 2017. Our key aim is to reduce and prevent homelessness by early intervention when a person enters Prison, throughout their sentence and prior to liberation. We collaborate with the Prison staff who identify those in housing need and make referrals to us at key stages such as Core Screen, Induction and prior to liberation. In this reporting year we opened 466 cases generating a total of 4,323 types of assistance.

Prison Stats:

- 753 appointments were carried out for 440 service users
- 8 service users required 5 or more appointments each
- Total monies recovered was £82,256.28
- 388 cases were closed in the year
- Homelessness was prevented in 216 cases mainly by ensuring rent entitlement was in place and/or providing housing information and advice on rights, tenancy sustainment, affordability
- 40% of service users were provided with temporary homeless accommodation on release
- 4 service users were permanently housed
- 99% of cases had either a positive outcome achieved, a positive outcome likely or information given
- 40 service users agreed to a referral to SeAscape for ongoing intensive support on liberation
- 18 (23) service users referred to New Routes Throughcare Mentoring Service

c. Tenure Sustainment Service

This is a crisis intervention Service where there is an imminent risk of homelessness due mainly to rent arrears. There is often an intensive response required at the point of referral. This service is predominantly Council tenants who agree to be referred by their Housing Officer. During this reporting year 29 Tenure Sustainment cases were opened, creating 183 Internal Action Plans mainly involving homelessness, rent arrears and poverty. A total of 19 cases were brought forward from the previous year.

Tenure Sustainment Stats:

- 29 cases opened generated 183 Internal Action Plans (average 6 per case)
- 28 cases closed during the year (some from previous years) generating 155 outcomes
- 64% of cases had a positive outcome achieved, likely or partially
- 14 Homelessness Prevented Cases also had their tenures stabilised, arrears reduced, and affordability improved
- 13 successful grant applications
- We maximised income through disability benefits and recovery of overpayments to facilitate arrears to be paid. In addition to this we encouraged payments to be made to rent accounts by tenants to reduce arrears.
- £161,168 monies recovered were recorded for cases closed in the year including reduction of rent arrears by various means such as successful grant applications, discretionary housing payments, correction of benefit claims, council tax reductions and discounts, DWP claims, etc
- 34 external referrals were made to various agencies
- All tenants who engaged had their rent arrears cleared off in full or significantly reduced

d. Housing Education 4 Youths Project (HEY)

We have been providing HEY since July 2012 when it was introduced into our South Ayrshire Council Contract. A starting point of the first lessons is to challenge stereotypes often attached to homeless people. We then discuss the stigma of homelessness with the group and pupils are encouraged to share their views. Part of the lessons give an overview of what it means to be homeless in South Ayrshire and the full class discusses various ways people may become homeless. We look at common assumptions and then discuss how for many it has been a change in circumstances which has led to their homelessness e.g. loss of employment, relationship breakdown, etc.

We have a long-standing ethos that early intervention and the provision of housing and homeless information has considerable value. Many families appreciate the conversations HEY prompts within the family and the information which is cascaded from children to parents after the sessions. The provision of 2 sessions provided to 4th year pupils has always been welcomed by all schools across South Ayrshire and became an integral part of the PSE programme within all schools. All pupils were given the opportunity to feedback on the lessons provided. In addition to actual feedback on the lessons we sought further information, included in our annual report, which provides valuable data for service planning and development within South Ayrshire.

Despite funding being paused for HEY from 1.9.23 we committed to deliver already arranged sessions to schools where we had a date booked in after 1.9.23.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Schools, Staff, and Pupils for welcoming us into your school to deliver these award-winning lessons. Without the continued support and assistance from all involved these programmes would not have been as successful as they have been. It is unfortunate that due to budget constraints South Ayrshire Council has had to pause this project, but we hope this will be a project for re-investment in the future.

Pupil Feedback

"I actually learnt a lot, this should be taught so much more in schools."-
Carrick Academy

"Very informative, taught me a lot of stuff I was confused about."
– Prestwick Academy

"I enjoyed learning about how much housing costs because it helps for the future." –
Belmont Academy

e. Community Engagement/Benefits

Staff continue to engage with the community and dedicate their time in and out with working hours, at various events, regular sessions and training provisions mentioned below -

- Attended regular drop-in sessions providing free, accredited Information and Advice at locations across South Ayrshire including Foodbanks, Care & Share, Working for Wallacetown, The Room @ Newton
- Staff volunteered their time to help the Rotary Annual Beach Clean at Newton Shore
- Supported YPI projects within local schools
- Supported volunteers, schoolwork placements, UWS students, Evolve and Social Work placements
- Invited various location services to provide overviews at our team meetings
- Provided service overviews to external agencies and organisations including SAC and EAC Housing Teams
- Attended various community events and festivals
- Assisted families in poverty at Christmas with gifts



5. STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS & DEVELOPMENT

The organisation employed 14 members of staff as at 30.6.24 not including a 6-month Social Work Student Placement and one vacancy at the year end.

Our management team ensure we are up to date with regulatory requirements: human resources, personnel issues, finance, projections, statistics, reporting, health and safety and quality control, etc. Training included a comprehensive Induction programme for all new staff, including relevant mandatory training for specific job roles plus all-staff team internal training sessions on new systems and portals, updated legislation and/or procedures.

The Centre continues to encourage and support staff to develop and continue their professional development via internal and external training, with staff achieving qualifications and certificates on specific job-related subjects via external organisations for example Shelter Scotland, Families Outside, Serco, VASA, Prevention and Service Support NHS And TURAS.

We have continued to encourage and mentor staff throughout the year with numerous internal and external training sessions on key topics. We had increased this to include peer support discussions and inviting external partner agencies to our Team meetings including agencies such as Circles Network, Harbour Ayrshire and CAP. Staff completed numerous training including National Standards, Homelessness, Cost of Living Emergency Tenant Protection, Poverty Crisis Strategies and Trauma Informed Approach amongst others.

During this year all staff undertook various internal and external training sessions including:-

- Lone Working and Risk Assessment
- Private Rented Sector and Notices
- Universal Credit updates
- 2-day Mental Health First Aid



Congratulations to Emma Gaughan completing her SVQ4 Social Services & Health Care Level 9 in August 2023 and working on her SVQ4 Care Services Leadership & Management 10 from August 2023 to August 2024.

Jennifer Cochrane and Janet MacAlister have started their Shelter Housing Law PDA in April 2024.

Planning is ongoing for our next Staff Wellbeing Day scheduled to take place in September. This event will provide staff with taster sessions of various activities to improve mental health and wellbeing focusing on relaxation and stress reducing practices to encourage self-care including cold water therapy. AHAC has continued to promote group meditation and mindfulness sessions in the office along with energetic workouts and walks. All staff who participated have commented on the positive benefits from these sessions in what can be a stressful environment, particularly during busy times with increasing demands.

6. SERVICE USER FEEDBACK

The Centre has produced a separate Service User Feedback Annual Report for cases opened during the period 1.7.23 to 30.6.24. Each service has different feedback forms tailored to Service Users' needs, expectations and regulatory requirements, see analysis below:

SERVICE PROVIDED	Cases Closed	Feedback completed	% RETURNED
Advice (including VASA & I'M IN!)	902	96	11%
Tenure Sustainment	28	10	36%
TOTAL	930	106	11%

Out of a total of 930 cases closed from Advice and Tenure Sustainment feedback was completed with 106 cases: around 11% overall. The majority of feedback was positive, and service users were happy with the service received.

Service User Comments

"I have never used a service like this before as I've never had to, but I cannot praise Gerry highly enough. He's been brilliant!"

"Allison was a great help when I needed it, I was struggling very bad, and she made sure we were okay."

"Can't thank you enough, wouldn't know where I would be without you."

"I wouldn't have known half of what I know now without Allison telling me my rights."

"Gerry saved my life. I don't know what I would have done without his help."

"I found the service to be more un-biased and more approachable than the council. I felt more comfortable talking to AHAC than the council."

"It was such a relief to speak to someone immediately which you don't often get nowadays, Allison was always contacting us and keeping us in the loop, this was a weight off our minds."

"Really happy Jenn was a great help less stress."

"The best organisation I've ever worked with very good."

"It made the process a lot easier with someone advocating on your behalf and able to fight your corner."

"I was in a situation where I couldn't see any way out. Gerry's help was fantastic and I couldn't praise Ayr Housing Aid highly enough."

"Gerry was so supportive, referring me to the homeless service and explaining my situation to the police. I wouldn't have coped on my own."

"I was at rock bottom when I called in. Jenn saved my life."

"AHAC would be always my first port of call if I have any issues in the future as I know that I would be well looked after."

"If this service hadn't been there I would have gave up. Absolutely fantastic, couldn't ask for any better help. Know each individual in their own way. Felt at ease."

"Service is perfect, very polite and very helpful."

"Really improved my mental health Jenn's assistance took a weight off my shoulders."

"Jenn made all the difference. My Mental Health was all over the place with the worry. I was barely getting 2 hours sleep a night. None of us felt safe. The impact on my mental health was huge. I felt like I was on a rollercoaster. I can't believe how much better I feel with the added security Jenn helped us get."

"The service was wonderful, just reassuring that there was someone there who knew what they were doing calmed us right down."

"Jennifer was a godsend; I offloaded more than just what my case was about and she didn't judge me."

"Jenn was excellent, easy to speak to and very caring. It was a big help with my mental health to be able to source an offer for permanent accommodation so quickly. Facing eviction was making my problems much worse. I was at my wits end but she really helped, even getting a van organised for my move. I couldn't speak highly enough of what she did."

"Janet's support was amazing, she is very grounded and an incredible human being and I could not speak more highly of her." The biggest help throughout my journey was being supported by Janet."

"Jenn went above and beyond for me, she was so good. She bent over backwards. I have both physical and mental health issues and Jen helped me through a very difficult time."

"I just felt that the information given was very useful when I was faced with eviction."

"I keep myself to myself and get nervous when I'm having to deal with anything official. I have trouble speaking on the phone because of my speech (I have a bad stammer which gets worse when I'm stressed). The problem I had was trying to get a new electricity meter. I just kept putting it off rather than try to speak to anyone. I also struggle with using a mobile phone. Jen was fantastic, put me straight at ease and spoke for me when I needed to make calls. She was brilliant and made the whole process much less stressful. I wouldn't have known where to turn if it wasn't for Jen. The worry was affecting my mental health and bringing me down. Jen has helped with that massively and now I feel a lot less worried, and my mental health is much better."

"David was excellent, he took the pressure off me and guided me in the right direction in contacting the various housing associations on my behalf. This improved my mental health as it was one less thing for me to have to deal with."

"Elspeth always greeted me with a smile and was always in high spirits. She was extremely helpful, understanding, pleasant and eager to solve any problems."

"I thought I had to be out of my property on Christmas eve and started panicking so I was really relieved when I spoke to David that I was able to stay here for a longer period. I did not want to uproot my children just before Christmas and without David's advice I would probably have packed my stuff up."

"I would not have had the confidence to apply for a full time job without Janet's amazing input. She is very friendly and approachable and I certainly did not feel guilty about asking for support and I did not feel judged in any way. Moving forward, I feel more positive and confident in asking for help in the future."

"I was so stressed until I came for my housing appointment, I didn't know where I was going to live after the fire in my house. You got everything sorted, especially help with confusing forms."

"The best organisation I've ever worked with very good."

"David took a lot of pressure away from myself in completing housing applications and an ADP claim. I suffer from anxiety and I had to make myself come into the office so I had to help myself and once I did this I felt comfortable."

"Janet was always very understanding and demonstrated a lot of empathy especially when I felt unwell. She was very patient even when she may have had to explain things 5 times or more. Janet always responded very quickly and come up with a solution to all my problems."

"The service is valuable as it helps and guides the person in the right direction. Keep up the good work."

"Really happy Jenn was a great help less stress."

7. CASE STUDIES

TENURE SUSTAINMENT, MAINSTREAM ADVICE, VASA, I'M IN! Early Intervention, I'M IN! Tribunal (fm 1.4.24) and PRISON

a. Single woman SAC tenant with rent arrears, considerable debt, risk of homelessness, declining health & financial hardship

Situation

- £3,324 rent arrears due to being unable to work due to health decline, benefit issues, relationship breakdown due to debt owed - Considerable debt £26,089 with Stirling Park, energy provider and other non-priority debts

Actions

- Maximise income – ADP & CTR/Single occupancy application submitted
- Assisted with LCWRA application – arrears repayment plan set up
- Referrals to HEAT Fund, CAP and AMHT following GP appointments
- Applied to Aberlour Assistance £300, HBF £350, Lacer Fund £250
- Emotional support - Fuel bank vouchers issued, and food parcels delivered

"Janet was able to solve anything for me or point me in the right direction. Janet was absolutely amazing!!!"

"The service vastly improved my mental health and wellbeing... Janet supported me or pointed me in the right direction to get out of extreme debt. It's a fresh start to my life, I can now open letters and answer the phone without worrying."

Outcomes

- Awarded ADP enhanced rate & LCWRA
- CTR and Single Occupancy awarded and backdated
- Rent arrears reduced, better Landlord relationship
- Grants awarded to assist with clothing for family and food/energy costs
- CAP has assisted clear all debts
- Now has designated CPN and Psychiatrist - Medication reviewed & feeling positive/motivated - feels ready to return to employment and now exploring vacancies
- Reconciliation with husband due to improvement in Mental Health and debts addressed

Benefits

- Homeless prevented - affordability improved - pressure, anxiety and stress removed
- Finances improved - better quality of life, mental health improved - family reconciled - returned to work

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £44,452.20

b. Single woman at risk of homelessness from council tenancy due to rent arrears, considerable debt, financial hardship and deteriorating health

Situation

- Sheriff Officers came to her door due to Council Tax debt - issued notice of proceedings due to significant rent arrears
- Suffering from depression and mobility issues unable to carry out daily tasks – CT debt and rent arrears due to living with her mum who has dementia during COVID lockdown and needing to give up her job as a Carer

Actions

- Immediate crisis intervention, full benefit check and calculations
- Assisted with UC, ADP, Council tax claims - Various grant applications made to alleviate poverty & improve situation

"Elspeth never let me down, she encouraged me to be more positive in my way of thinking and definitely kept me grounded"

"Elspeth helped me out of my depression, what a gem and an asset to your company. She listened to me and was emotionally supportive"

Outcomes

- Homelessness prevented, Relationship with Landlord improved
- Immediate and longer-term poverty reduced - Mental health and motivation improved, poverty reduced & regained control
- Awarded ADP (enhanced Living & Mobility) - £4,224 backdated & £8,983 awarded for 2 years
- Awarded £115pm as ongoing payment for 1 year - £1380 in total & new cooker - £350
- Awarded Council Tax reduction as now on UC - £25.20pm
- C/Tax Reduction Backdate awarded - £802.41
- DHP awarded - £47.14.pm for 7 months
- DWP agreed to place in LCWRA Group - £343.63 monthly
- Tenant cleared £1080 rent arrears – Stirling Park refunded - £640
- Affordable payment plan set up with Stirling Park - £40pm

"Elspeth was exceptional, she went above and beyond for me. I cannot speak highly enough of Elspeth of what she did for me, she brought me back from the brink"

Benefits

- Homeless prevented - affordability improved - pressure, anxiety and stress removed, long term finances improved - better quality of life, debt arrangements in place and maintaining payments

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £32,320.95

c. Council tenant with high multiple debts at risk of homelessness and financial hardship

Situation

- Single ex forces male, Council tenant with high multiple debts - financial hardship impacting health, unable to cope
- £2,172 rent arrears causing risk of Homelessness - Notice of Proceedings served by Landlord
- Due to ill health and periods of sickness lost employment - multiple years of Council Tax arrears and other debt passed to Stirling Park

Actions & Outcomes

- Immediate crisis intervention - Issued Fuel Bank & Food Bank vouchers - Assisted reducing Council Tax liability
- Assisted applying for Limited Capability for Work Related Activity - extra £416 per month - £4992/year awarded
- Issued Sim card with free minutes, texts and data to help manage UC claim - Grant awarded for clothing & travel
- Linked with SSAFA for help with flooring and Décor to create a home
- Linked with specialist Debt advice to CAP who assisted with insolvency application - £18,800 Debt dealt with

Benefits

- Homelessness prevented - Relationship with Landlord improved - Immediate and longer-term poverty reduced
- Mental health and motivation improved through poverty alleviation and debt free

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £26,025.14

d. Single vulnerable man with mental health, addiction and grief issues served Abandonment Notice

Situation

- Service user lived in flat with his mum, his mum died, he succeeded to it, but felt too many memories in it
- Struggling to return home due to mental wellbeing and was living with his friends to avoid returning as wasn't emotionally ready – when he returned 4 weeks later an abandonment notice had been served - he assumed it had been repossessed so he disposed of his belongings. Due to mental health, addiction issues and coming to terms with grief was struggling to cope - Gas was capped and had no electricity - He thought he was going to have to apply as homeless as didn't know rights and had no-where to go

Actions

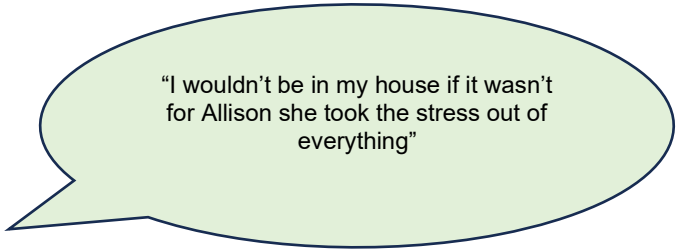
- Contacted Housing Officer, discussed abandonment notice, advised tenant was intending living there permanently
- Requested info to support CCG application and applied for CCG to replace furniture
- Coordinated and attended inspection to allow SAC to modernise his flat - called gas team for safety check and uncap
- Called Scottish Power to clear meter debt and topped up meter with fuel bank voucher

Outcomes

- Did not need to apply as homeless or seek temporary accommodation
- Property modernised - new kitchen and bathroom allowing to turn it into his own home without mum's belongings
- Gas and Electric switched back on and meters topped up - £89 fuel bank payments made
- £1854 CCG awarded to turn house into new home

Benefits

- Homelessness prevented, tenure stabilised, condition, affordability and mental health improved
- Relationship with Landlord improved - Immediate poverty reduced - felt safe and started enjoying tenancy again



"I wouldn't be in my house if it wasn't for Allison she took the stress out of everything"

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £1,943

e. Single woman fleeing domestic abuse seeking help with rechargeable repairs and furnishing new home

Situation

- Single woman fleeing domestic abuse from England; had former tenancy charges - due to mental health admitted to Woodland view for 1 week then applied as homeless
- Struggled with physical health due to the condition of property - Live housing applications with all RSLs & accommodated in Hostel - Service User didn't think should be liable because fled violence and wanted charge waived
- Community Care Grant declined as was keeping money in bank in case had to pay the charges

Actions

- Informed of rights and responsibilities as a former tenant; liaised with Landlord, submitted Subject Access Request for breakdown of charges and photos of damage
- Contacted Housing options for copy decision showing accepted as was fleeing violence
- Contacted former landlord to request charges waived due to domestic abuse
- Contacted SWF with a copy of the emails and asked them to review their decision to refuse CCG

Outcomes

- Made an offer - full £1434 recharge waived - £1764 CCG awarded
- Mental & physical health improved now in suitable accommodation
- Confidence increased, now volunteers within local community with numerous organisations

"She was sensitive and caring to my situation which made me feel better"

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £3,198

f. Vulnerable one parent tenant struggling with domestic abuse damage to home

Situation

- Single mum with one child, RSL tenant with history of domestic abuse referred by the Women's Hub
- Various repairs including front and internal doors damaged, lights smashed, fence broken, and other repairs not linked to the abuser
- Both service user and child experiencing multiple mental health issues including PTSD, anxiety and bi-polar disorder
- Service User had previously reported repairs to Landlord, but nothing done

"Jennifer was amazing, I was cringing at myself when I contacted for help but she made me feel so relaxed and did not judge. I was crying when I first contacted as my life was a mess, but she made me feel 100 x better in the space of a few hours."

Actions

- Visited property to meet Service User and child, view damage and took information - Informed of rights and went through housing options including presenting as homeless due to domestic abuse and feeling unsafe - Advised of prevention actions could take to feel safe and stay - Contacted Landlord to inform of repairs required for repairing standard and hoping to prevent homelessness
- Full grant search and applied to improve child and mother's health and wellbeing and turn house back into a home they feel safe and comfortable living in

"She was on the ball, I had repairs that I had been trying to get fixed for a year and a half, but she got them sorted right away. My mental health has improved 100% and it is a weight off my shoulders."

Outcomes

- RSL Landlord completed repair requested - Homelessness prevented - Service User and child are now happier in their home and feel safe and secure - £2,000 grant successfully awarded to decorate home, and improve child's educational and emotional wellbeing through fun activities
- Poverty alleviated through income maximisation - Mental health improved due to alleviation of poverty and grant
- Court Orders in place to give protection in future from new incidents and abuse - empowered to stay at home with child and not be forced to flee

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £2,000

g. Single man experiencing poverty in Council tenancy - unable to work due to long term disability

Situation

- Council tenant with long-term work injury sustained, now unable to work - no income or benefits in place
- Struggling to buy food, fuel, pay rent and essentials

Actions

- Immediate crisis intervention issued fuel & food vouchers
- Assisted with Universal Credit application - £575 advance payment (avoided rent arrears and further food and fuel poverty), £302 standard allowance per month, £336.68 housing costs per month
- Assisted reducing Council Tax liability – Single Person Discount backdated to 2019 – reduced liability by £1,944 Council Tax Reduction applied - £900
- Assisted to apply for Limited Capability for Work Related Activity - extra £400 per month awarded
- Issued Sim card with free minutes, texts and data to help manage UC claim going forward

"I would not be in the situation that I am at the moment without the help of Jennifer". "I am not the brains of Britain and she was so good in breaking things down and explaining it to me"

Outcomes

- Immediate and longer-term poverty reduced - Mental health and motivation improved through poverty alleviation

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £16,304

h. Single woman Carer in Council tenancy facing eviction due to rent arrears

Situation

- Single woman with mental health issues, unable to work due to caring responsibilities for parent
- £2,428.35 rent arrears accumulated due to benefit delays - Notice of Proceedings issued, Court case continued for 12 weeks to allow tenant to make repayments and avoid enforcing Decree

Actions

- Immediate poverty relieved - £180 fuel voucher
- Advised of tenancy rights, legal process and homeless rights
- Carried out Income & Expenditure and liaised with Landlord to set up affordable payment plan
- Completed grant search and applied to various organisations to increase income and divert payments to rent to sustain repayment arrangement
- Shopping vouchers awarded - £510
- Encouraged payment towards rent arrears - £350
- SAC Homeless Prevention Fund reduced arrears to prevent homelessness - £907

"The service I got was first class. Jennifer was just really helpful and helped reassure me things would work out."

Outcomes

- Homelessness prevented – Court Action dismissed - Poverty reduced - Health improved
- Arrears reduced from £2,428.35 to £980 and longer-term payment arrangement in place

SERVICE USER BETTER OFF BY - £1,817

i. Female single parent Private Tenant being evicted as Landlord selling

Situation

- 53 year old female, divorced single parent with Universal Credit income only; former partner harassing and threatened violence - Mental health declining due to threat of homelessness and Letting Agent harassment

Actions

- Advice on rights given for Notice to Leave and improper format was not valid; additional advice provided on second invalid Notice to Leave; Housing Options and Homeless rights advice given, assistance applying to social housing providers, Assisted with social tenancy process and procedure following offer of Social tenancy
- Liaised with Letting Agents, providing progress updates on accessing alternative accommodation and offer
- Provided assistance with Community Care Grant

Outcomes

- Homelessness prevented, no need for temporary accommodation or homeless application no longer required
- Alternative tenancy secured, moved to another area away from domestic issues and threats of violence
- Mental health improved and able to live in home where felt safe
- Liaised with Letting Agent to provide reassurance
- Anxiety and stress reduced / mental health improved

j. Private Tenant threatened with homelessness due to Landlord selling

Situation

- 39 year old single parent female with 2 children with anxiety living in Private Residential Tenancy
- Notice to Leave served and no live social housing applications
- Self-employed, receiving some UC and Housing Costs Element
- Unable to source alternative private rental due to lack of affordable availability
- Anxious about facing homelessness and situation causing increased mental health issues

Actions

- Advising on options for applications for Social tenancies.
- Explaining notice periods, Tribunal procedure and effect of cost of living protection provisions
- Assisted with Social housing applications with different providers
- Advising on points allocation and liaising with agencies to increase award
- Advising on effect of expiry of Notice

Outcomes

- Homelessness delayed, tenancy maintained following expiry of original notice with no FTT action, advised on procedures and legislation
- Reduced anxiety about homeless system, stress reduced, and mental health improved
- Assistance in obtaining beneficial placing for social tenancy applications

k. Short Assured Tenant threatened with homelessness due to breach of tenancy conditions, rent arrears and hoarding

Situation

- Referred by Community Links Practitioner, 43 year old, single male Short Assured Tenant with mental health issues
- Landlord issued Notice to Quit for breach of contract - hoarding and rent arrears
- Letting Agent attempted to enforce inspection for gas safety check, leading to further anxiety
- Housing situation caused increased serious mental health issues including paranoia and significant psychiatric issues

Actions

- Liaised with Letting Agent to explain issues, delay inspection and request postponement of Notice to ease tension
- Assisted with applications for grant funding to various providers to assist in clearing of property, help with hoarding going forward and rent arrears
- Income and expenditure and welfare calculations carried out; Assisted with application to Council for dedicated funding and assistance; Various meetings and onsite examinations attended to support; Encouraged willingness to allow access to clear property once funding obtained

Outcomes

- Homelessness prevented by ongoing liaison with Letting Agent; Multi-agency engagement involved in case
- Tenancy protected and mental health improved - Partner agencies involved to assist with fears of isolation
- Income maximised and grant funding to address core issues obtained, affordability of tenancy improved due to grant award for hoarding and rent arrears

l. Private Tenant, seeking alternative accommodation, property is unsuitable due to medical issues

Situation

- 41 year old single female with mobility issues in Private Tenancy no longer suitable due to medical conditions
- Social Housing Applications with various providers live but no progress, anxious about facing homelessness, increasing mental health issues
- Unable to source alternative private rental due to availability of suitable accommodation and affordability

Actions

- Liaised with CLP and GP to provide supporting evidence for move to alternative property with suitable amenities
- Assisted updating Social housing applications with various providers and arranged personal meeting with Housing Officer to discuss options
- Assisted with resubmission of medical evidence on application to social housing provider in suitable area

Outcomes

- Able to access suitable alternative private let with assistance from parents, homelessness delayed - remained close to social networks and family support
- Advised on continuing waiting list for social tenancies - awaiting offers from Local Authority and Registered Social Landlords as now well placed

m. Private Tenant threatened with homelessness due to termination of HMO licence by Landlord

Situation

- 46-year-old single male French national with limited English referred by SAC, mental health negatively affected
- Living in HMO Private Tenancy. Asked to leave as Landlord terminating HMO licence
- No live Social housing applications and anxious about facing homelessness
- Unable to source alternative private rental due to affordability and availability

Actions

- Assisted in homeless presentation and assisted with Social housing applications with other providers
- Income and expenditure and welfare calculations carried out and assisted with Community Care Application
- Liaising with Landlord and referred to Harbour Project to help move once offer for social tenancy secured

Outcomes

- Homelessness delayed, no temp required, and suitable alternative offer of social tenancy secured
- Ongoing liaison with Landlord and South Ayrshire Council
- Reduced anxiety about homeless system, stress reduced and mental health improved
- Income maximised and poverty alleviated; Community Care Grant awarded

n. Single parent man with 2 teenage sons with ejection removal date

Situation

- Service user with 2 teenage sons living in Short Assured private tenancy contacted AHAC for advice on rights
- Mental health (depression and anxiety) due to alleged domestic abuse and violence
- Service User's wife of on bail conditions not to return to the property; on-going court proceedings
- Service user not listed on the tenancy due to alleged coercion, tenancy in wife's sole name
- Letting agent applied to the Tribunal for an Eviction order based on the property being vacant - eviction notice served
- Service user unaware until Sheriff Officer's attended property to affect a notice with ejection date

Actions

- Advised on tenancy rights and legislation re Tribunal decision
- Advised service user and letting agent of spousal Matrimonial Homes rights
- Lodged detailed 'Minute of Recall' with Tribunal requesting decision recalled due to residing in property with 2 sons
- Provided additional information to Tribunal at the Case Management Discussion to request notice to eject cancelled and case considered - Assisted with housing applications and liaised with local authority and Registered Social Landlords to encourage housing offer while ejection delayed negating need for temporary accommodation

"Gerry was fantastic, he got everything done for me in the end."

Outcomes

- Successfully recalled Tribunal Ejection Order; new Case Management Discussion date arranged
- Prior to CMD offered permanent accommodation from local authority and accepted
- Assisted with application for Community Grant awarded
- Moved into new accommodation prior to CMD, eviction case withdrawn, homelessness prevented – temp not needed

o. Young mother with 2 children under 4 with post-natal depression facing eviction

Situation

- Young mother with post-natal depression with 2 children aged 4 and one
- Husband works in various locations throughout the UK
- Tribunal application for eviction from PRT by Landlord; Case Management Discussion imminent
- Landlord is a very prominent individual from the world of politics; £4,050 arrears due to a period of unemployment
- Service user and husband separated while the case progressed

Actions

- Met with the service user and explained Tribunal process and applications her landlord was seeking
- Advised of immediate application to local authorities as threatened with homelessness
- Represented the service user:
At Case Management Discussion successfully persuaded Tribunal a full Evidential Hearing was necessary (this further delayed potential ejection date and risk of homelessness)
Submitted relevant medical information to Tribunal ahead of Evidential Hearing
- Carried out Income & Expenditure to arrange affordable repayment plan
- Ran income maximisation check to ascertain entitlements
- Encouraged to pay monthly rent plus something towards arrears & advised of Discretionary Housing Payment

Outcome

- Landlord sought eviction & payment order at Evidential Hearing
- Tribunal Officer argued unreasonable to grant due to recent separation and health grounds
- Tribunal granted order 3 months later further delaying ejection date
- £2,700 payment order granted - arrears reduced by payments made
- Supported service user through process liaising with local authorities
- As the exit date approached the Service User received permanent offer of housing from a waiting list application with a neighbouring local authority with entry date 2 weeks after Tribunal eviction date
- Advised on legality of the order including the process and charge for removal to be served which requires a further 14 days
- Liaised with Landlord who mutually agreed to refrain from order execution removing the need for temporary accommodation or reliance on homelessness application

"Gerry really helped me through a stressful period in my life. I'm grateful for his assistance at Tribunal."

p. House fire whilst in custody

Situation

- Single male, short-term 4 months sentence, Council tenancy set on fire whilst in custody, 2 weeks prior to release

Actions

- Early intervention from entry to ensure housing payments continued and tenancy maintained
- Appointment to notify about fire and extent of damage, caring and compassionate help, information and advice
- Liaised with Neighbourhood Coach and Housing Options Team - arranged urgent temporary accommodation on release
- Assisted completing forms including housing application for area choices
- Assisted give authorisation for family members to collect belongings not destroyed
- Assisted applying for Scottish Welfare Fund for new clothing as all clothing destroyed

Outcomes

- UC housing element continued and prevented arrears
- Temporary accommodation arranged for release, awaiting repairs or allocation of new tenancy
- Family liaised with Neighbourhood Coach to collect salvageable belongings
- £200 SWF CCG awarded for new clothing

"I was so stressed until I came for my housing appointment, I didn't know where I was going to live after the fire in my house. You got everything sorted"

Benefits

- Immediate crisis intervention relieved anxiety and stress
- Temporary furnished flat arranged on release enabling the service user to have his daughter stay with him at Christmas in 3 weeks - poverty reduced

q. Council tenant and partner in custody

Situation

- Couple, both in different prisons with different short-term sentences; Council tenancy with male as sole tenant
- Poor mental health, brain injury & alcohol dependency; Anti-social behaviour at tenancy; dog left in tenancy when arrested

Actions

- Early intervention from entry and cases opened for both service users in HMP Kilmarnock and HMP Greenock
- RSPCA contacted and liaised with Housing Officer and ASB Team
- Permission to collect keys arranged for partner, she was released first and required access to prevent homelessness
- Referral made to SeAscape for housing support once released
- Referral made to Headway Ayrshire for support with brain injury
- Referred to internal Advice service for advice on ASB when released
- Applied for Scottish Welfare Fund

"Thanks for all your help and I hope I get everything sorted when I get out as I was worried and upset."

Outcomes

- Pet safely collected and fostered until release
- Tenancy maintained
- Ongoing advice when released from internal services continuing established rapport
- Engaging with support and specialist services
- No requirement for temp accommodation to be provided

Benefits

- Homeless prevented for both, tenancy sustained
- Pressure, anxiety and stress removed; mental health & pet welfare improved

r. Early release council tenant with rent arrears

Situation

- Single male Council tenant with multiple short-term sentences over the reporting period
- Universal Credit Housing Element non-payment, even though entitlement was established
- Increasing rent arrears due to non-payment with Housing Officer continuously requesting termination paperwork and serving NOP despite us advising UCHE award would be paid
- Service user worried door was left unlocked when arrested
- Service user did not wish to end tenancy as required an address for early release Home Detention Curfew Tag

Actions

- Persistent contact with DWP to encourage entitled housing payments to be made
- Liaised with Housing Officer, continually updating of our intervention and that there was entitlement to housing costs to encouraging no court action
- Advice given and rights enforced to ensure service user did not feel pressured to end their tenancy when they did not need to
- Referred to Social Security Scotland for assistance with ADP application
- Assistance to complete SWF Community Care Grant application

Outcomes

- £2100 UC Housing Element paid, clearing arrears – preventing eviction and homelessness
- Tenancy secured through lock change and key safe fitted for easy access on liberation day
- Service user released early on Home Detention Curfew Tag; £150 Community Care Grant awarded for clothing

Benefits

- Tenancy maintained as secure address for early release
- Pressure, anxiety and stress removed; health and wellbeing improved
- Income maximised and poverty reduced; rights enforced and returned to community

s. Long term prisoner preparing for release

Situation

- Life sentence prisoner with no release date, requesting parole; No family or external support networks
- Lack of skills, in particular digital literacy due to length of time in custody; Homeless on release
- Prison transfer from HMP Kilmarnock to HMP Barlinnie

Actions

- Assistance to research RSLs and obtain multiple applications and completion of forms
- Assistance to create proof of identification to ensure forms processed
- Encouraged and supported to speak to Education Department about creating a new basic household skills training course whilst in custody, which would benefit him and others
- Discussions and action plan created for tasks to complete once a release date was confirmed, this gave him hope and ensured referrals were not made too early; Continued appointments once transferred to new prison

Outcomes

- Multiple live housing applications marked pending ready to action once Parole granted – Landlords aware of complex circumstances and agreed to be flexible with positions
- Continued engagement and rapport maintained
- Stress reduced and service user feeling prepared for release

“Our prison advice service is for everyone in custody, at any stage of their sentence. A small task like printing a form, may seem insignificant but can mean so much more to someone in custody. Being in prison takes away an individual’s direct access to many services and our Adviser will help bridge that gap where possible to ensure rights are enforced.

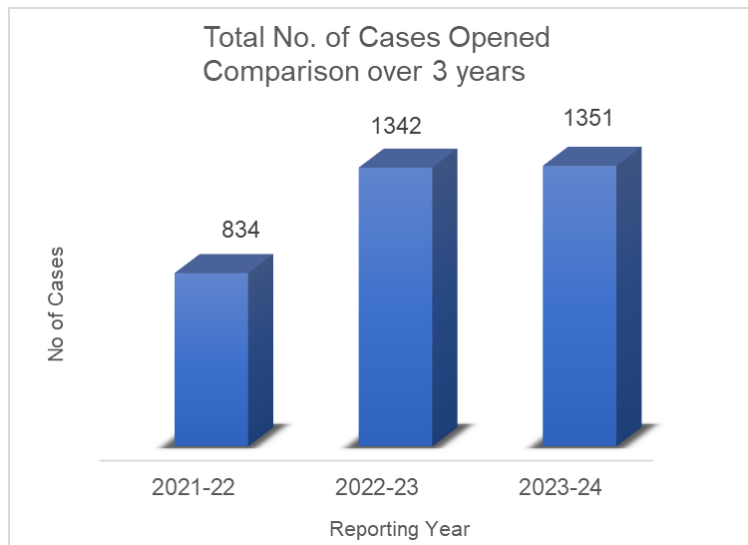
In this case example the individual is a long-term prisoner and may never be released but he is optimistic and wanted to be prepared, so he was not turned away!” – Prison Housing Adviser

8. DETAILED STATISTICAL REPORT

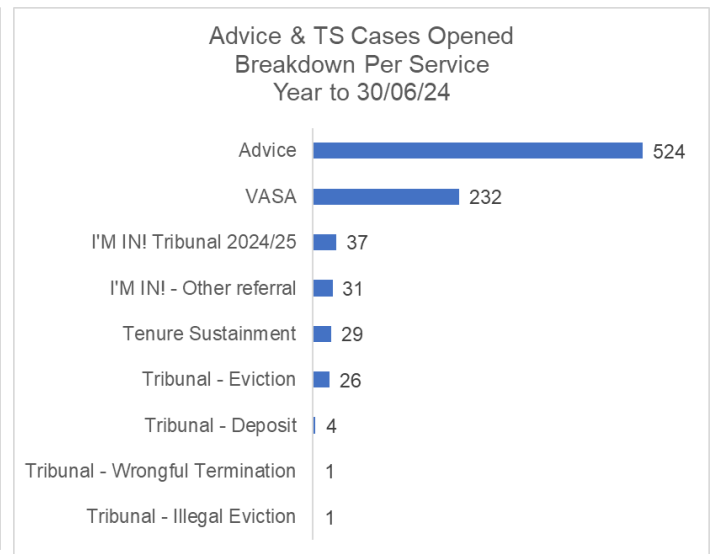
In July 2023 we changed how we created cases and extracted statistics when we started using AdvicePRO Case Management Software, (previously used Microsoft Excel Databases). This involved a complex and time consuming migration of statistics to ensure we were still able to capture the extensive stats we have adapted over many years to meet the expectations of all our funders. This system allows statistical analysis, reports, essential to the Centre's reporting and evaluation cycle to be pulled live easily and effortlessly. We continue to produce accurate reports for each service to monitor trends and respond to specific requests from Managers and Funders on selected areas and contribute to maintaining high quality control compliant systems. Please note the Prison Housing Advice Service covers both East and South Ayrshire areas. We have included this Service in the relevant statistical analysis wherever possible.

Cases Opened Statistics

Comparison of Cases opened over last 3 years

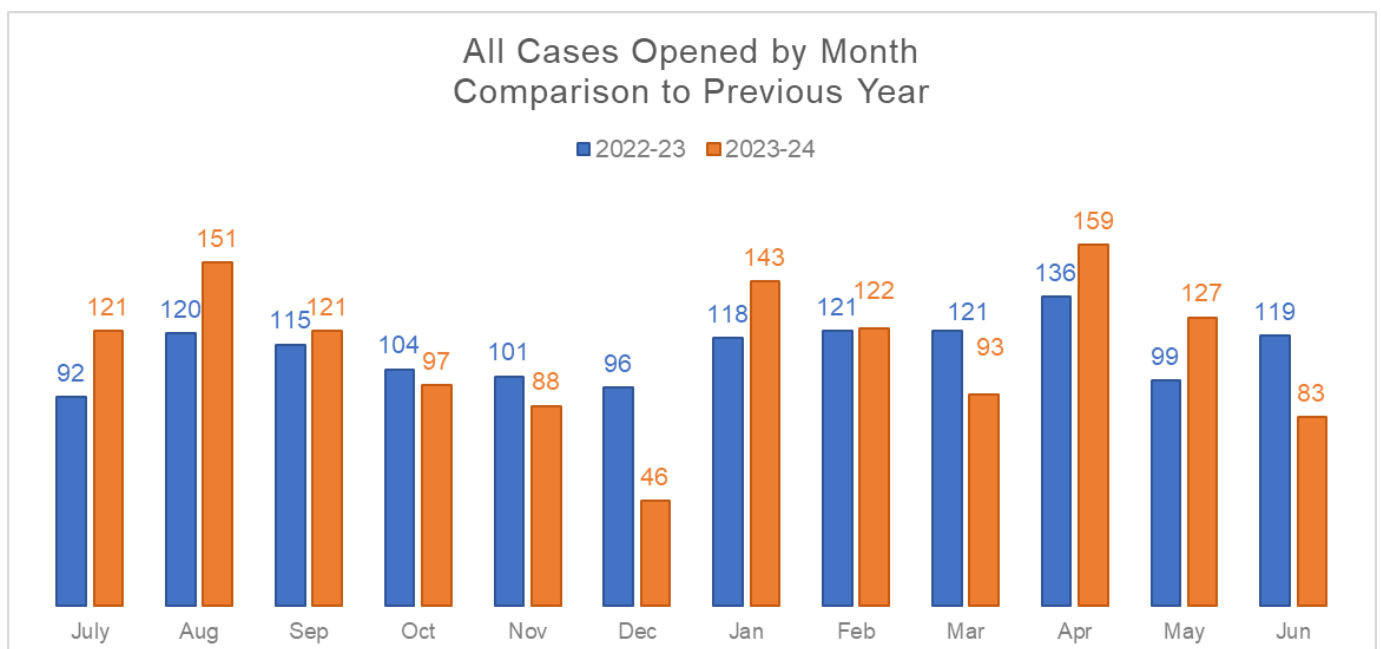


Types of Services



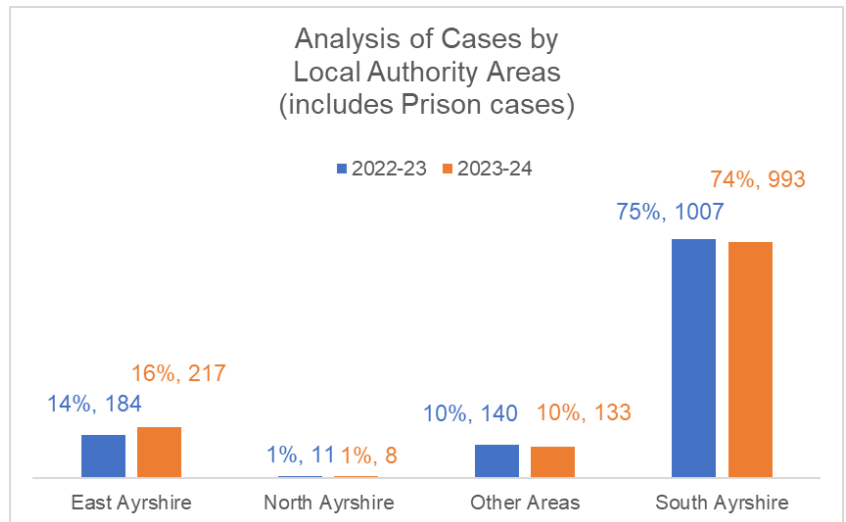
Monthly Cases Opened

We can see an increase in cases opened most months compared to the previous year, but with higher demand in August, January and April.



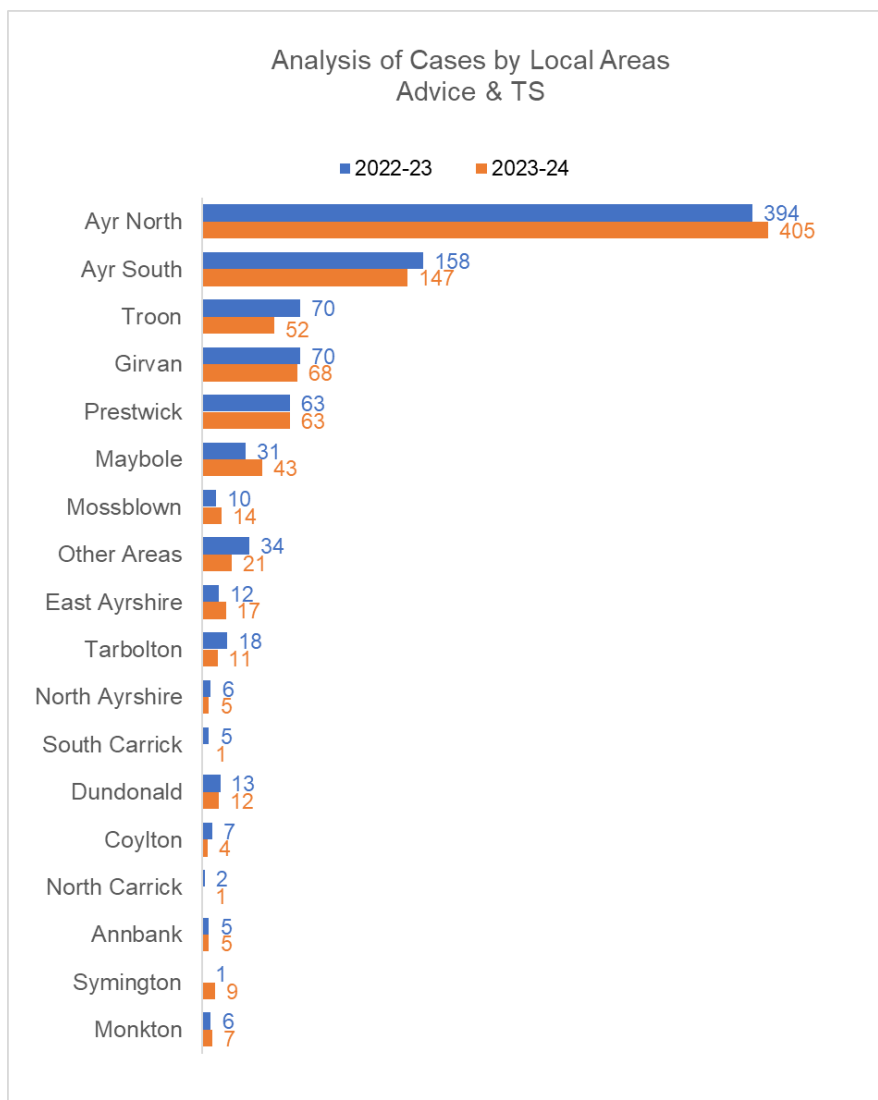
Local Authority Areas

Most of the 217 East Ayrshire cases and 133 cases from other areas are linked to the Prison Housing Advice Project.

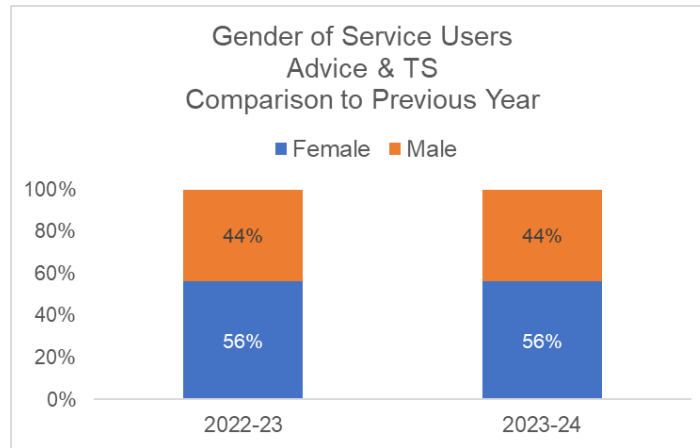


Local Areas (Prison Service not included)

This data relates to the local area the Service User resided at the time when they contacted us. With numbers similar to last year, our largest group continues to be Ayr North.

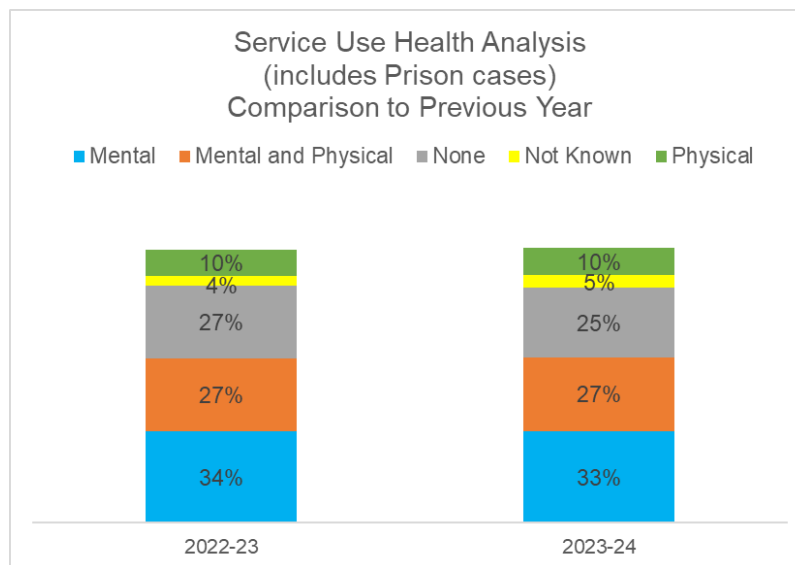


Gender of Service Users (Prison Service not included)



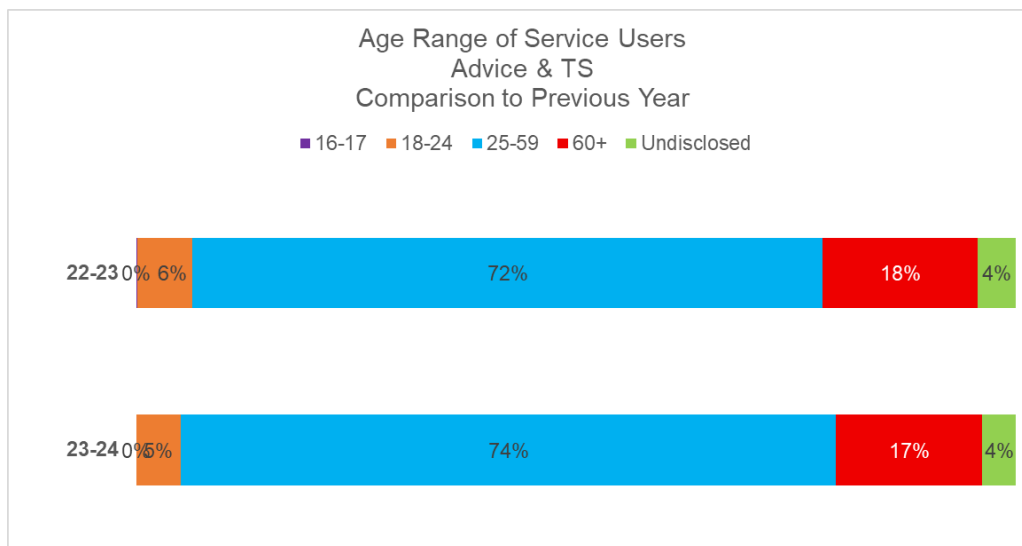
Health Analysis

Mental health issues are still present in the majority of cases and this is only based on what the service user tells us. A total of 70% of cases had indicated some level of disability.



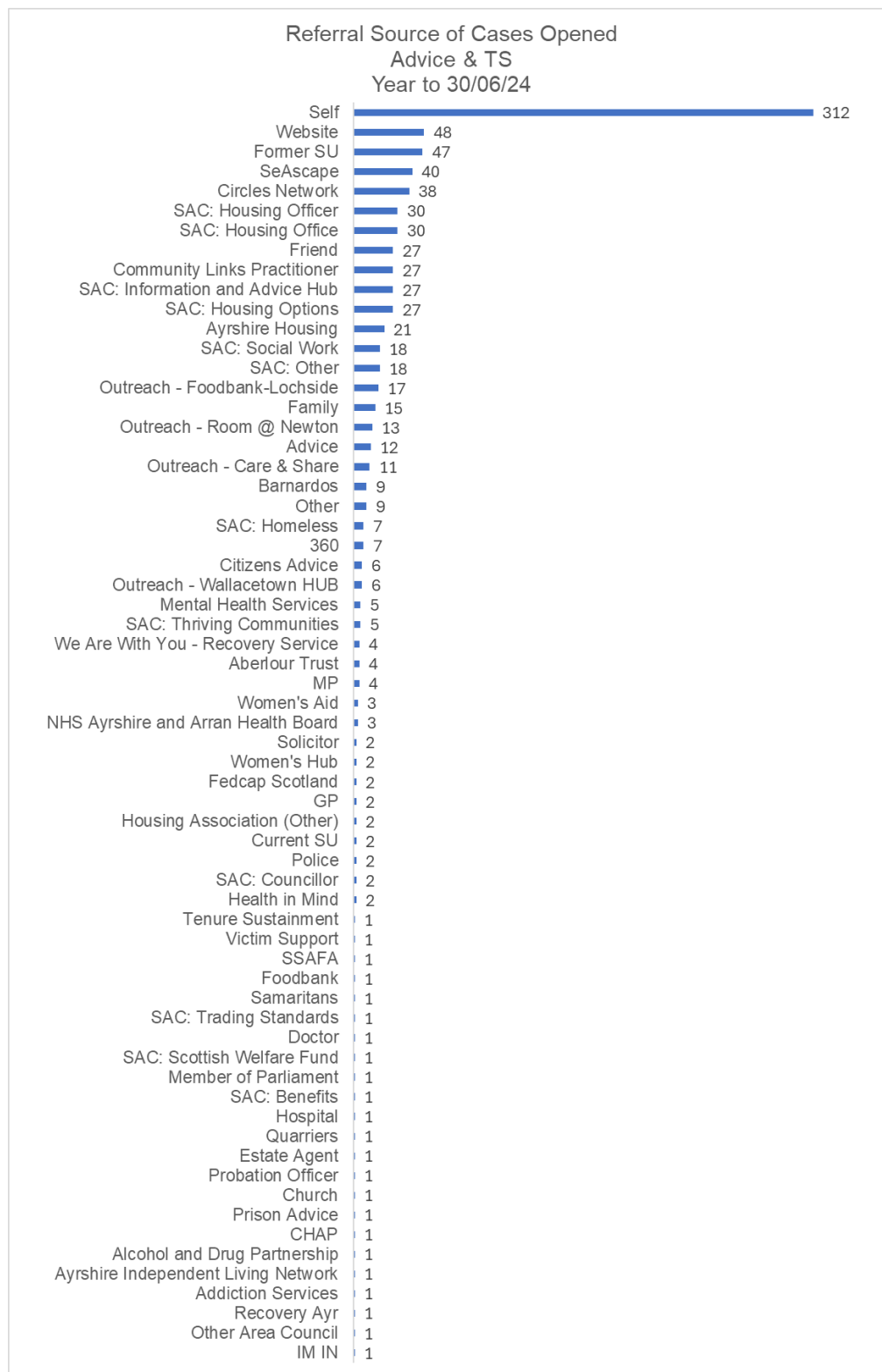
Age Range (Prison Service not included)

The age range of service users has remained similar with the majority of those who get in touch being within the 25-59 age group.

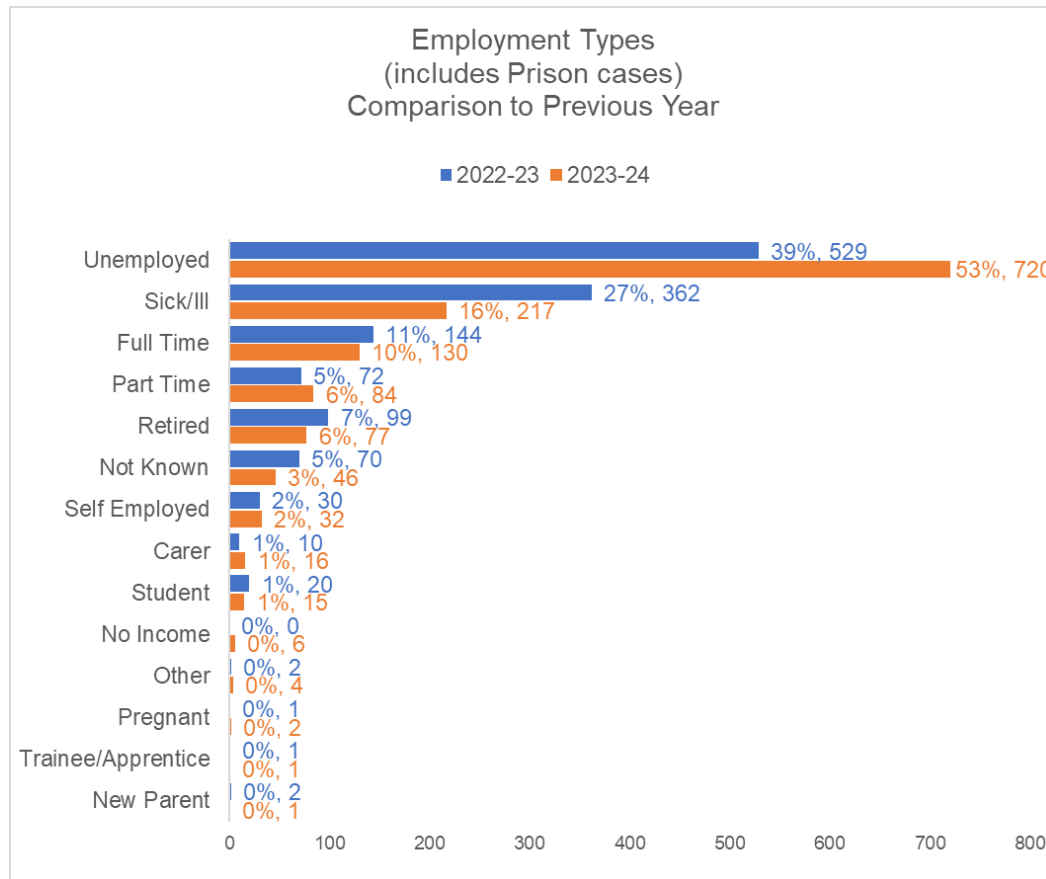


Referral Source (Prison Service not included)

The chart below illustrates how the service user found us or who referred them to us. As you can see our referrals come from a variety of sources. The self-referral category continues to be the primary method of referral with many telling us it is due to word of mouth and our reputation: 35% of ~~total~~ cases. Referrals from Housing Officers increased to 30 this year (25 last year). There was an increase again this year in referrals from Homeless and Housing Options teams (34 this year, 26 last year). Community Links Practitioner referrals have returned to typical levels after a significant increase last year (27 this year down from 61). Mental Health Services include the Community Mental Health Team at Ailsa Hospital and Penumbra.



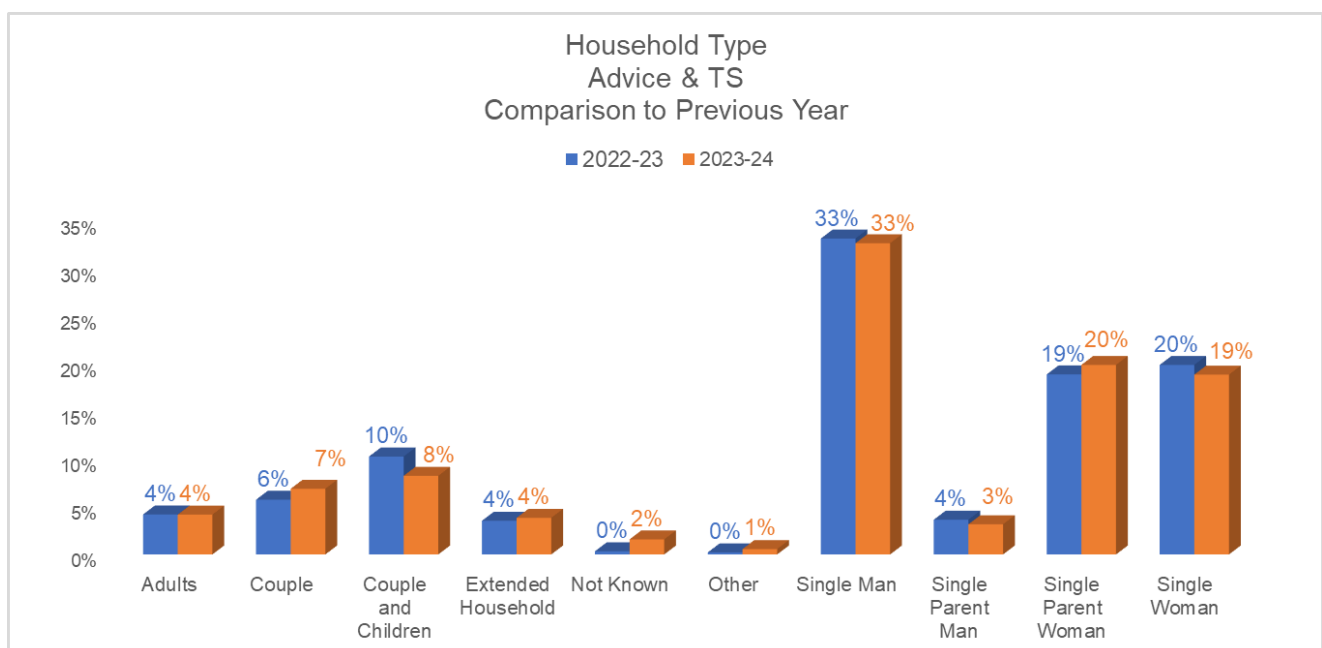
Employment Types



This year we saw an increase of those describing themselves as unemployed and a decrease in full time work, sick/ill and retired. We saw an increase in those needing help who were employed part time which is linked to the cost-of-living crisis. Even those who are working have felt increased poverty and housing related issues.

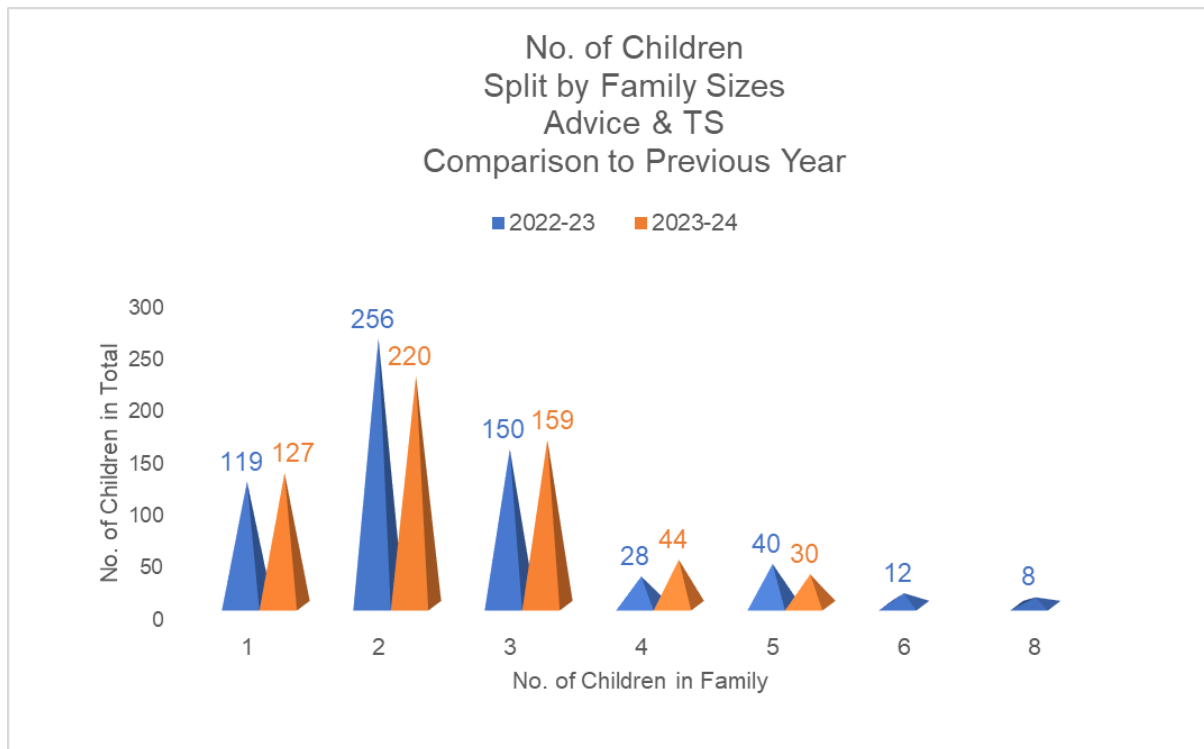
Household Types (Prison Service not included)

Like last year single men and women make up the majority of our cases. Many of this group are involved in homelessness the under 35's affected by the Single Room Rent Restrictions and the large gap between actual rent and the Local Housing Allowance received to help pay rent. We continue to campaign on this issue and the LHA rate generally.



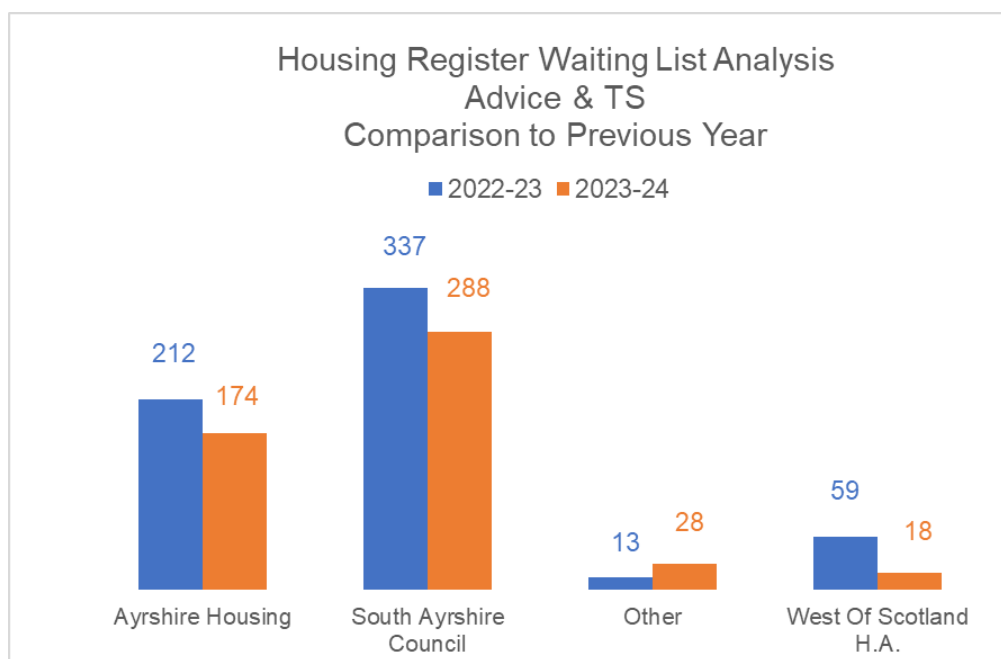
Number of Children in Family (Prison Service not included)

It is useful to consider how many children face housing related problems which can impact on their development, health, education, and many other aspects of their lives. There is a wide spread of family sizes with us helping 307 families with a total of 580 children.



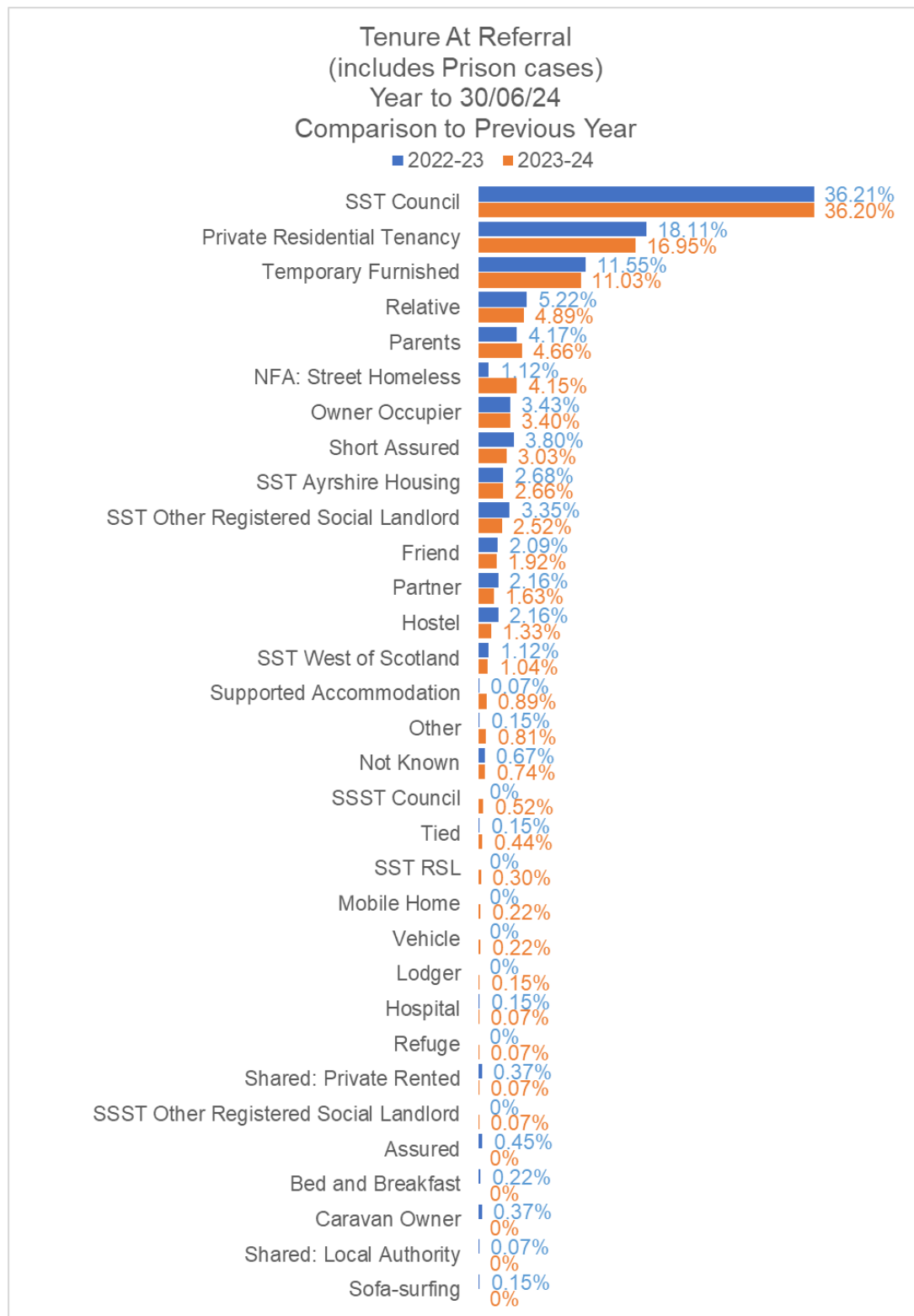
Housing Waiting Lists (Prison Service not included)

Most cases opened are patiently waiting on South Ayrshire Council waiting lists with many now turning to social housing as their preferred choice due to lack of affordable availability in the private sector. It is interesting to note a reduction in those on Social Housing Waiting List which may be linked to people's frustrations that they do not consider any point being on these lists due to the lengthy waits.



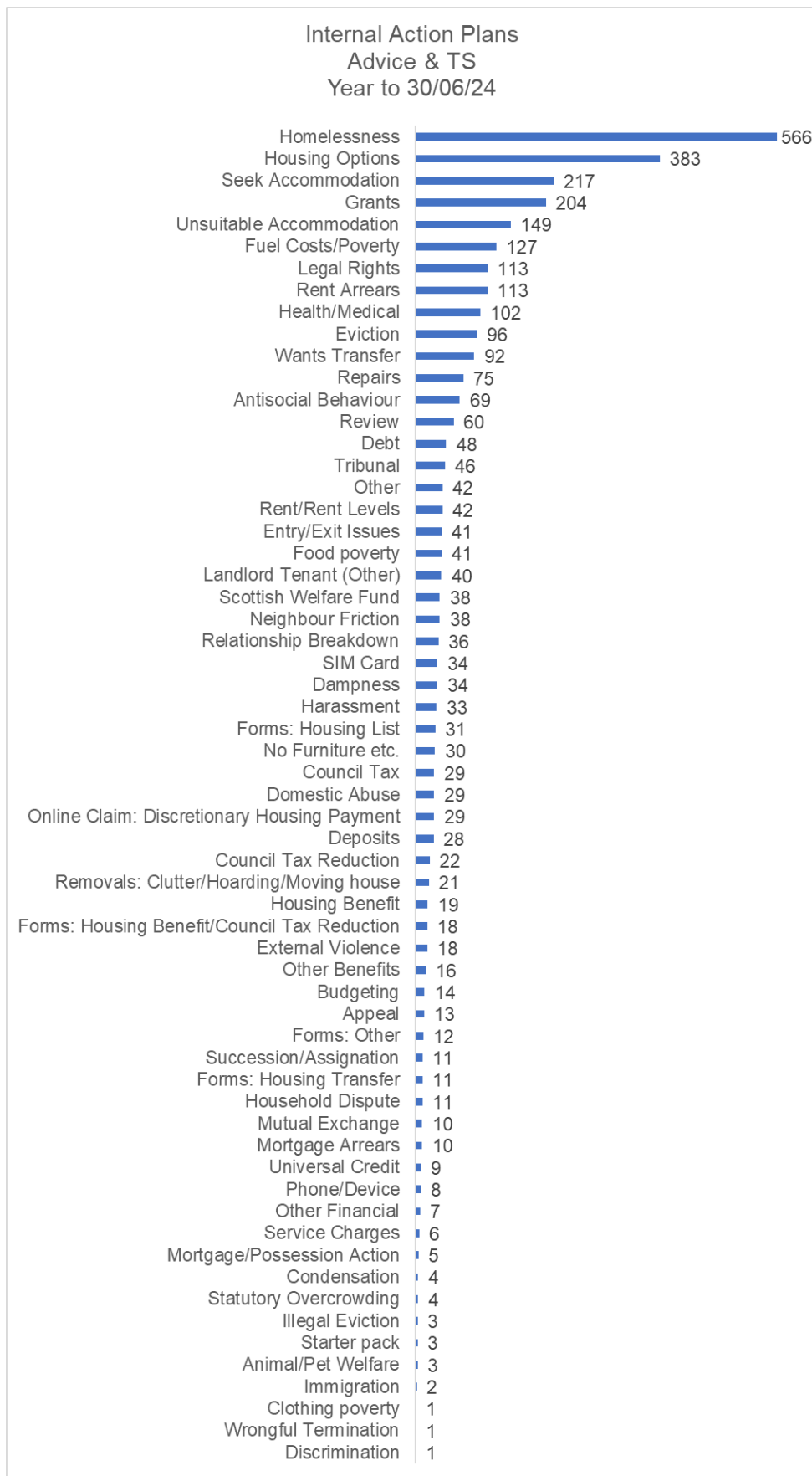
Tenure – (Including Prison Cases)

- No Fixed Abode/Street Homeless increased by 3%
- A slight decrease of 1% in Private Residential tenants this year



Internal Action Plans (Prison Service not included)

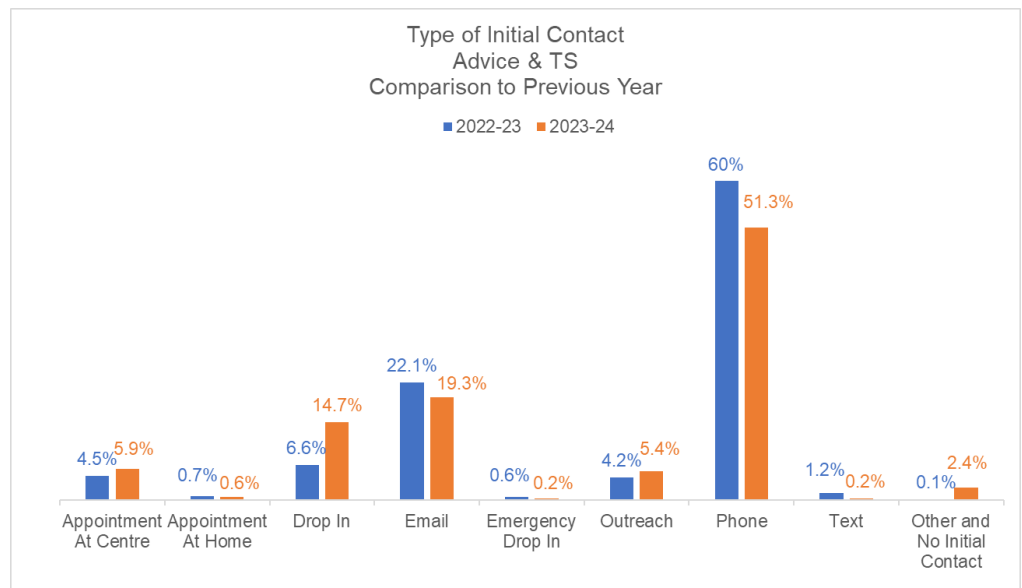
Out of the 885 cases opened during this reporting year a total of 3,318 action plans were created averaging around 4 per case, an increase on the previous year (2,735). Homelessness issues continue to be the main cause people come to us for help (64%), followed by Housing Options, seeking accommodation, grants, poverty, rent arrears and Tribunals. Those seeking help while in unsuitable accommodation increased from 61 to 149 this year.



Type of Initial Contact (Prison Service not included)

This chart records the first contact with us. It is important to note that some will go on to come into see us later with paperwork or have a mix of contacts throughout the life of their case.

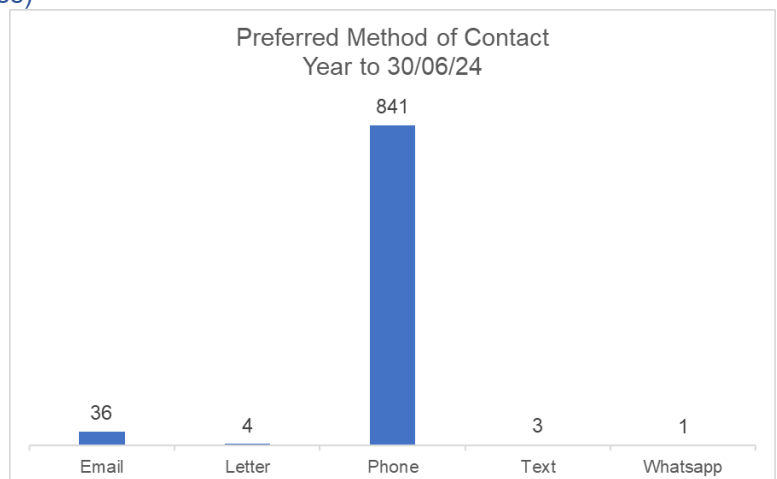
As expected, we were able to start encouraging people to come into the office although there was still some reluctance with many still preferring indirect means. We are starting to see an increase in flow into the office including drop-ins. There is great value to be had from seeing someone face to face and being able to discuss your issues in a calm, friendly environment.



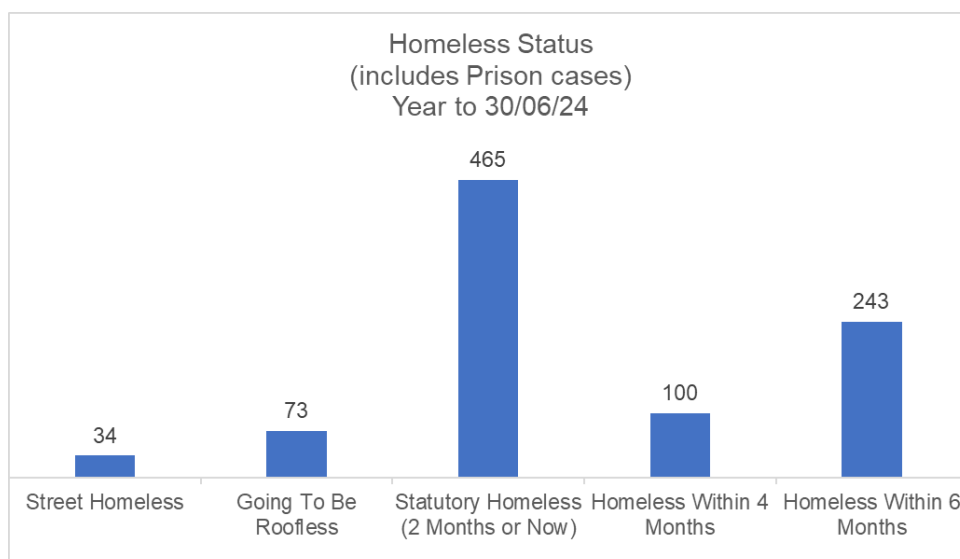
Preferred Method of Contact (Not including Prison Cases)

We actively ask service users how they would like to be contacted and communicate with us after their first contact. This allows us to plan service delivery.

Face to face appointments are offered on opening all new cases to ensure all information is gathered and advice understood. Following this 95% of service users confirmed phone as their preferred method of contact to arrange future appointments and provide updates. We continue to send information via email following appointments and calls to ensure advice is understood and for service users can refer back to.



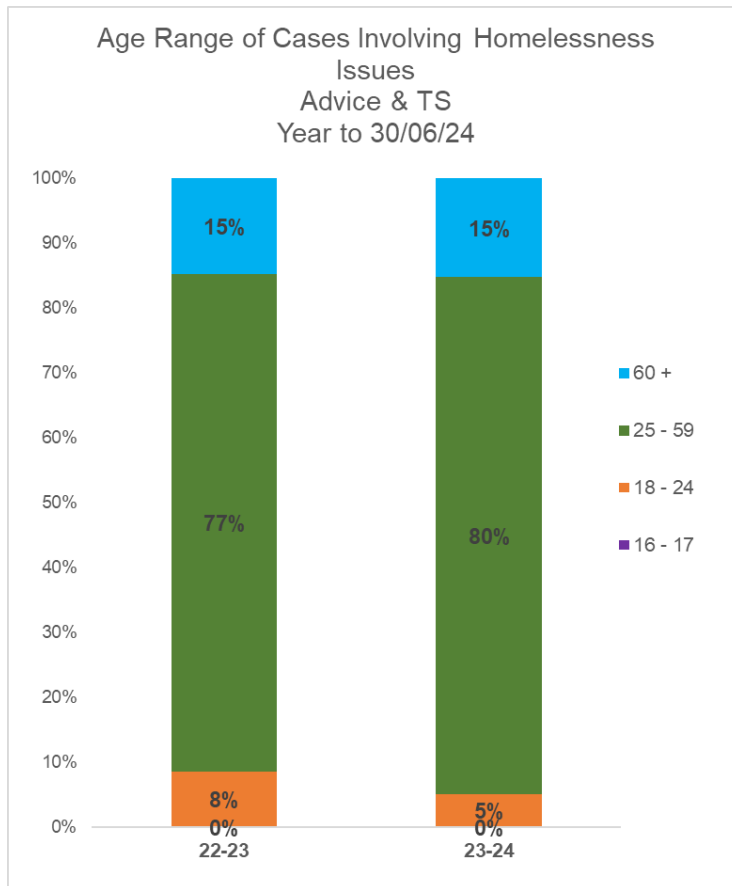
Number of Cases Involving Homelessness Issues (Including Prison cases)



A total of 915 out of the 1,351 cases opened this year had a threat of homelessness (68% compared to 50% last year). Homeless cases included those who were roofless, statutory homeless and threatened with homelessness within 4 – 6 months. We saw an increase in those street homeless and going to be roofless meaning we had to trigger an emergency crisis response.

We welcomed the increase in those going to be homeless in 4 to 6 months to help with a planned early intervention approach.

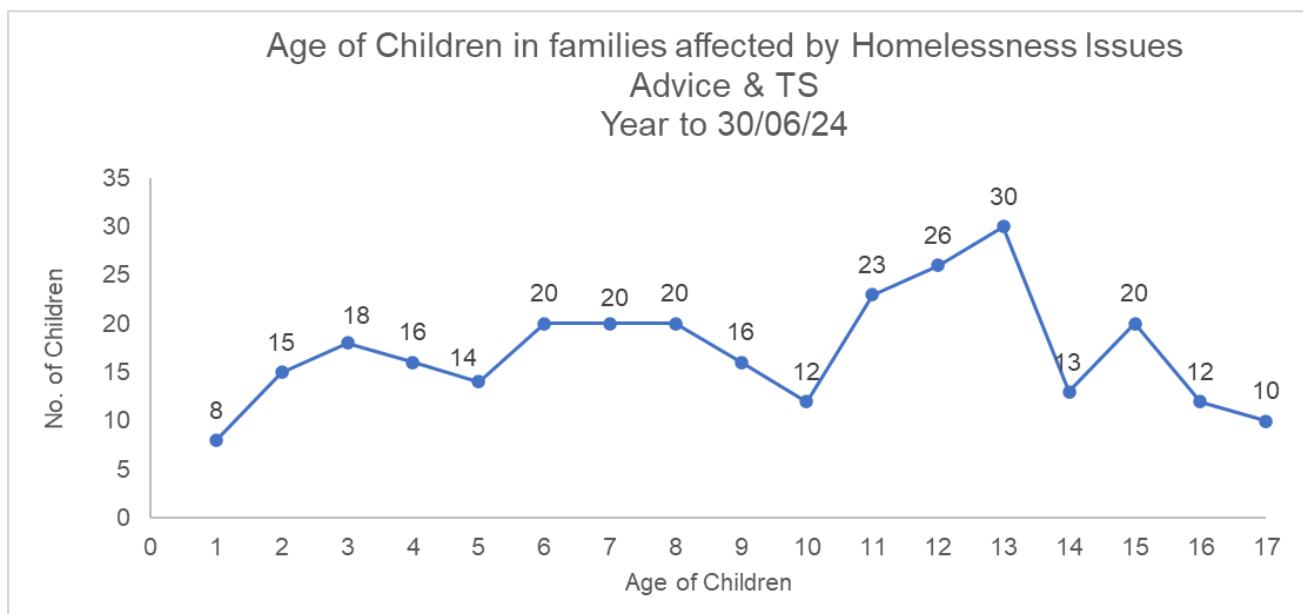
Homeless Age Ranges (Prison Service not included)



- 80% of those facing homelessness are in 25-59: increased by 5%
- 15% are 60 or over:

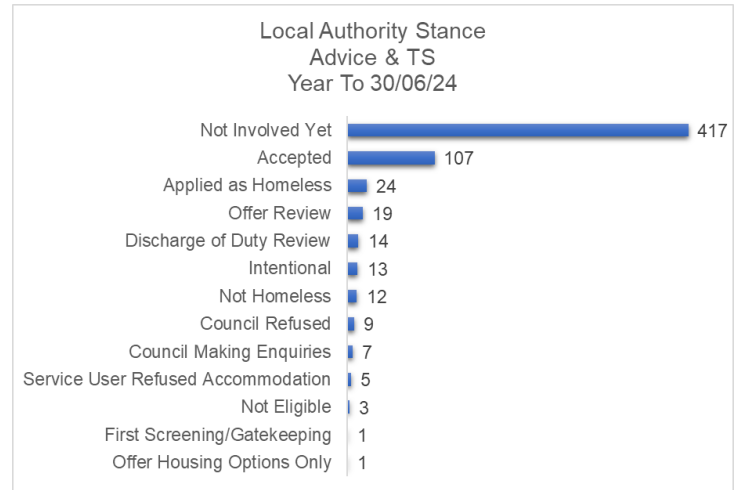
Children Age ranges affected by homelessness (Prison Service not included)

From cases with a homeless status recorded, 417 children were either homeless or threatened with homelessness. Date of birth or ages were provided for 288 children, age ranges were varied although more than half the children involved were 10 years old or younger, (66%), 25% were 0 - 4 years old and could be linked to those with increased poverty due to childcare costs with young children.

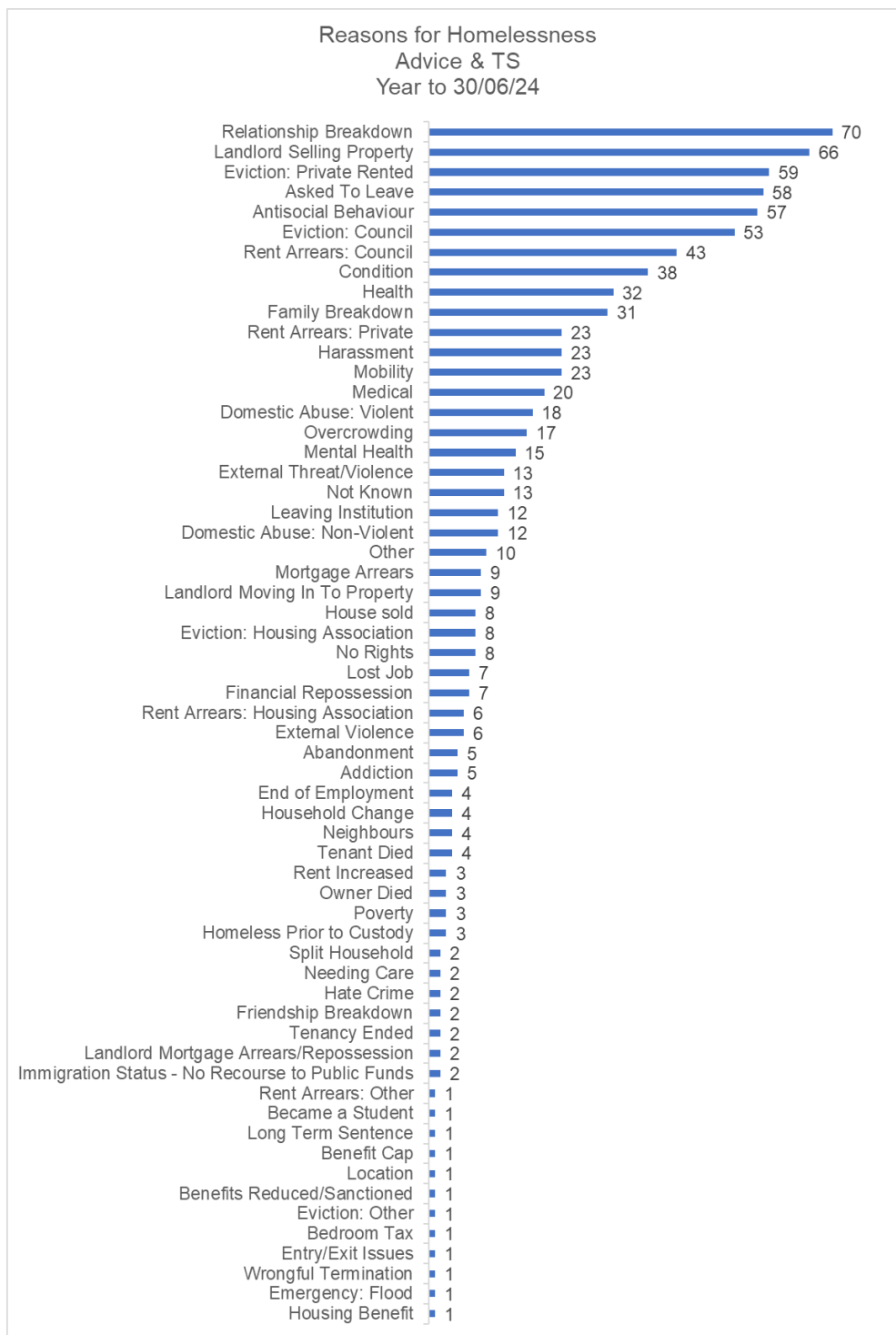


Local Authority Stance (Prison Service not included)

This chart represents the Council's attitude to their Homeless status at the time the Service User came us. It is encouraging that the majority (66%) of Service Users are coming to seeking advice on their rights prior to contacting the Council which is positive for homeless prevention if they come early enough.



Reason for Threat of Homelessness (Prison Service not included)

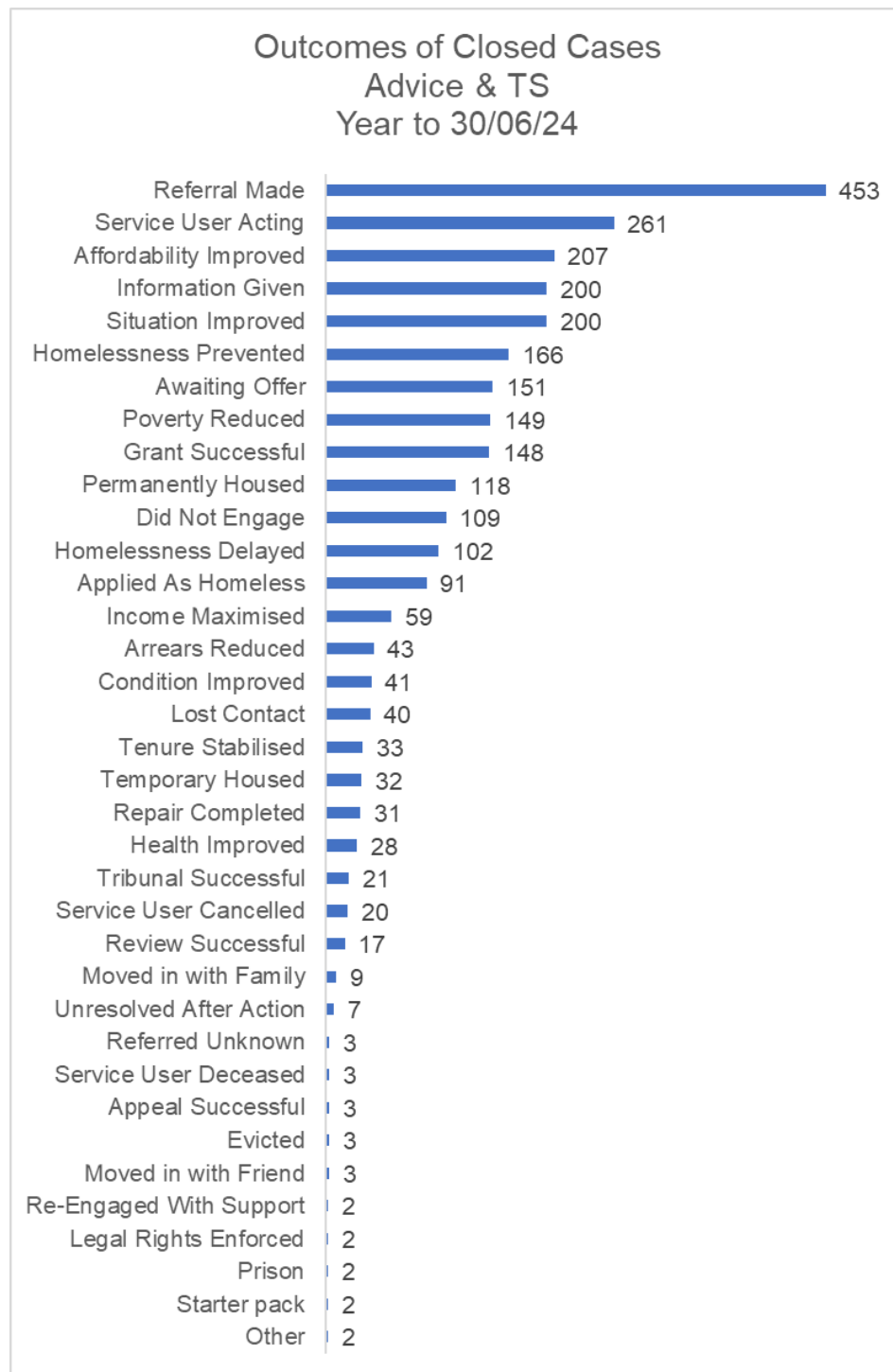


- 66 landlords were selling properties, 9 were moving in and 8 houses were already sold (95 last year)
- Rent arrears cases both in the public and private sectors (66 last year)
- 15 were caused by mental health issues
- 70 were due to relationship breakdown (47 last year)
- 32 cases were due to Health
- 23 were due to mobility
- 20 due to medical reasons
- Domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour and external violence were prevalent in 93 homeless cases

Closed Cases Statistics

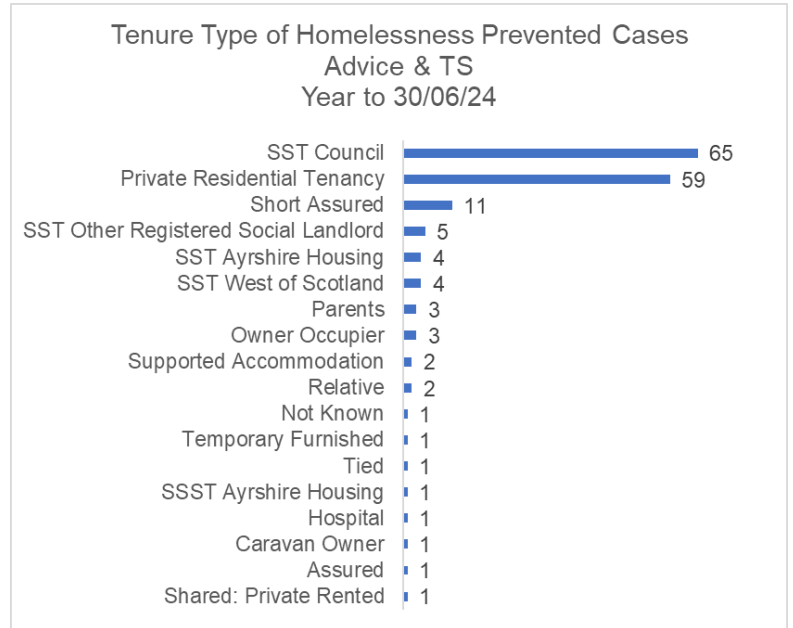
Outcomes of Closed Cases (Prison Service not included)

From the 930 cases closed they generated 2,761 outcomes, (average 3 per case). The graph below similar to the previous year, shows that the main outcomes include Referral Made, Service User Acting, Affordability Improved, Information Given, Situation Improved, Homelessness Prevented.



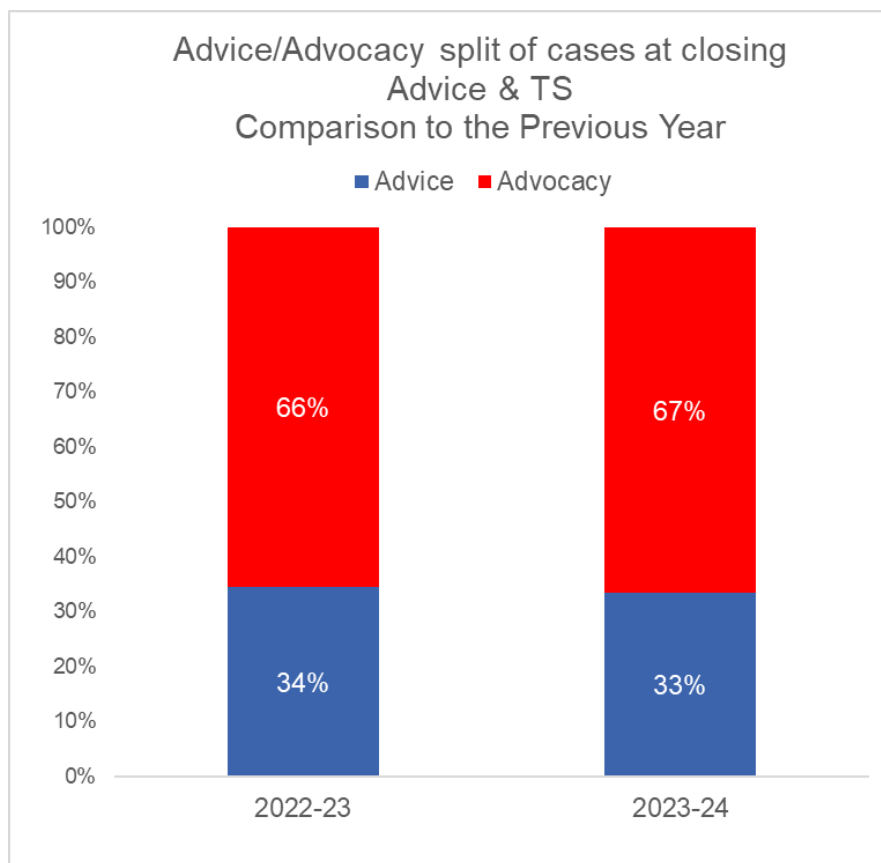
Breakdown of Homeless Prevented cases by Tenure Type (Excluding Prison Cases)

Here we show the tenure the person was in prior to us helping to prevent their homelessness. There was a lower percentage of private tenants this year (43% compared to 52% the previous year), but around a 6% increase in other RSL tenancies as well as a 4% increase of council tenants. Most people had their own tenancy; there were fewer people this year who were staying with friends and family; 3% compared to 8% last year. Where they did not have a tenancy we often assisted into other accommodation or helped maximise waiting list applications to avoid having to apply as homeless.

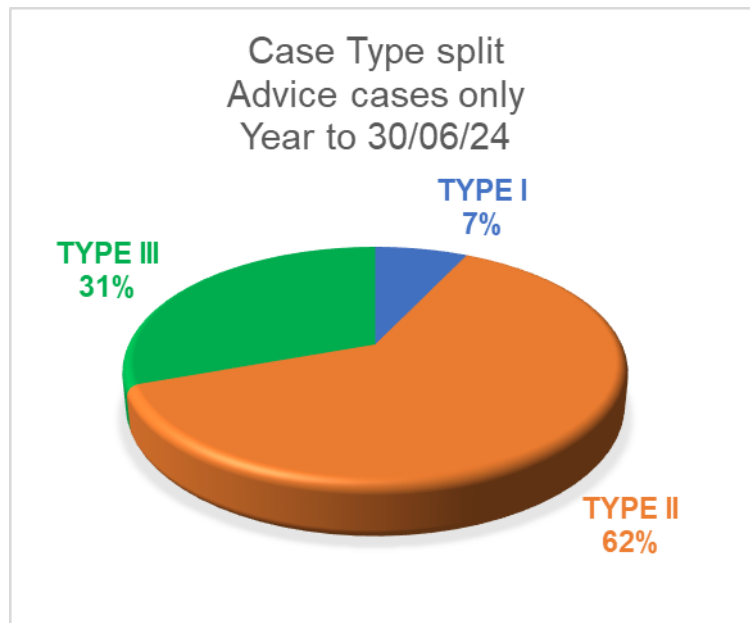


Advice/Advocacy Analysis (Prison Service not included)

Advice can cover several topics and have many internal action plans which involves giving information, advice, discussing options, etc. Service users can take on board the information given and consider options to make informed choices. In advice cases there is no need to interact with a third party. Advocacy cases often involve numerous regular contact and advocacy work with 3rd parties such as Local and Central Government Departments, Landlords, Lenders, partner agencies and individuals. Positively advocating is often crucial for early intervention homeless prevention especially if the person does not feel able to speak to third parties themselves.



Advice Case Type I, II and III Breakdown – (Prison Service not included)



Type I – active signposting and information

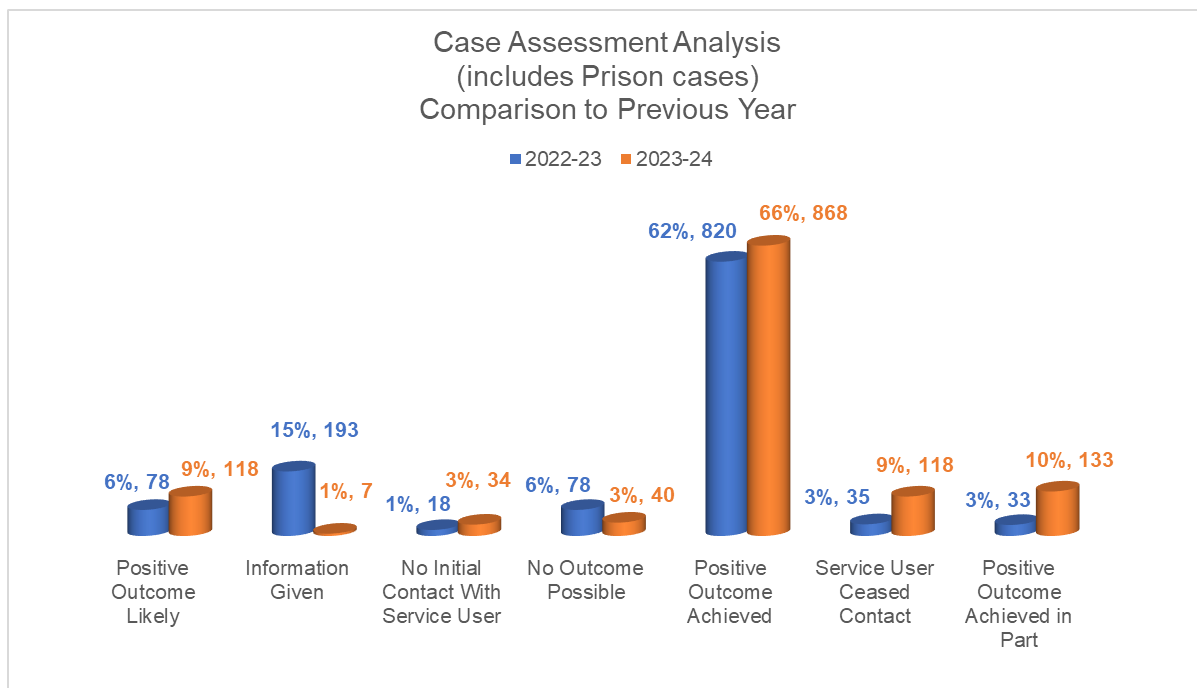
Type II – advice and casework

Type III – advocacy, representation and mediation including tribunal

In this year we had a lot of people looking for information and so our type I cases were higher than usual. It should be noted that many cases can start off as a type I but quickly progress to type II/III.

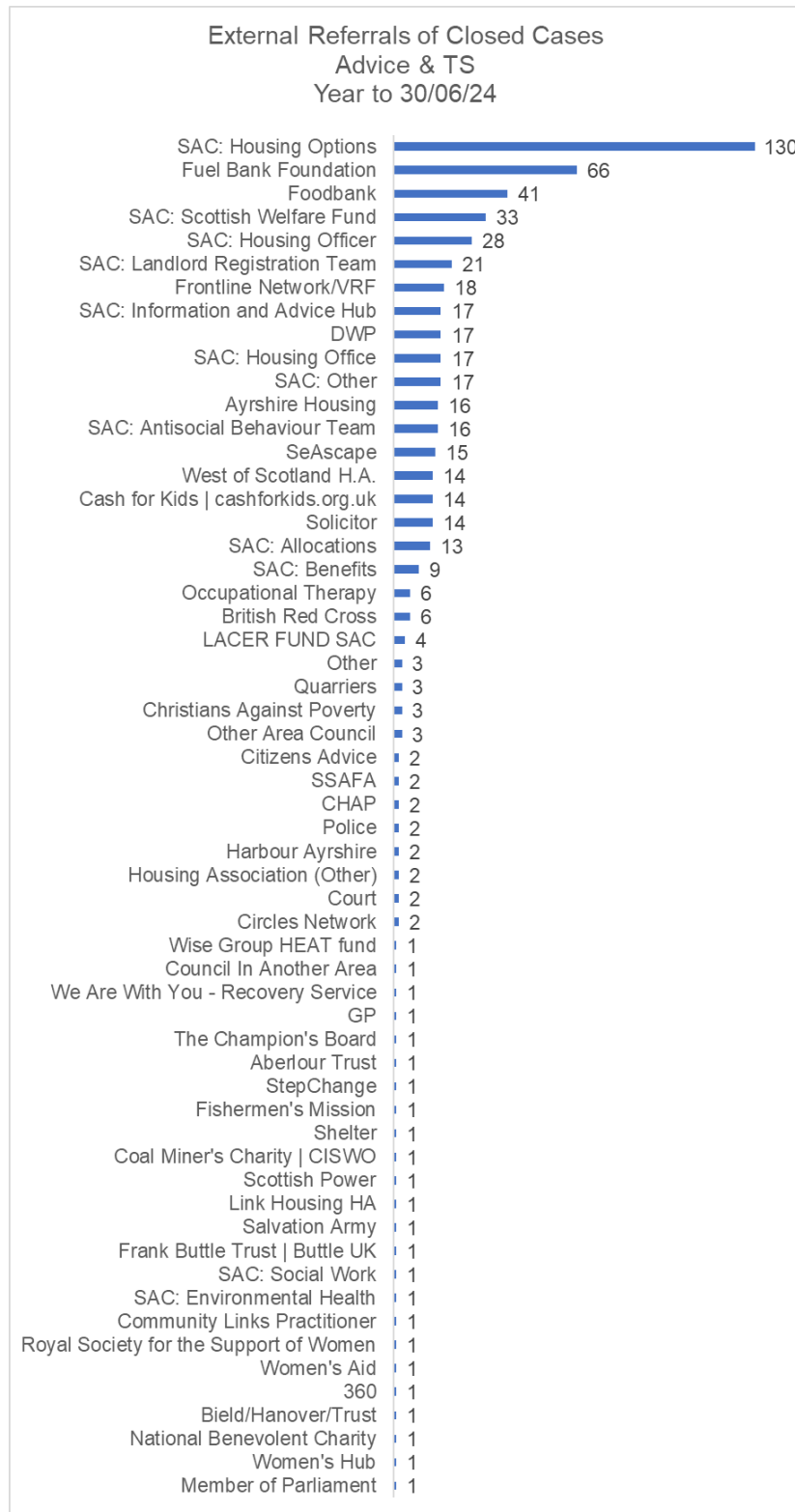
Case Assessments

Most closed cases had a positive case outcome achieved or likely: 75% or 986 service users



External Referrals (excluding prison)

The chart below shows the wide range of organisations and other bodies we refer service users to during the life of the case. Altogether there were 584 referrals in this reporting year. Many referrals to Housing Options are those who have statutory homeless rights. As part of our Tribunal Representation service, it is important those with rights have made applications as offers are made based on date of application and this process can take many months.



- 122 to Housing Options
- 66 to Fuel Bank Foundation
- 41 Foodbank referrals
- 33 to the Scottish Welfare Fund
- 28 referrals to engage with their SAC Housing Officer
- 17 referrals to SAC Info & Advice Hub
- 16 referrals to ASBT
- 15 to SeAscape
- Additionally, there were 21 Glasspool internal grant referrals made for the year from 1.4.23

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank and recognise our funders and partner agencies for all their support during this year, including:

Funders:



Some of our Partner Agencies and Accreditations:



Thanks to our frontline staff and management for their input and dedication throughout what was an extremely busy year. Thanks to the Board of Trustees and its sub-groups for ensuring strong governance and strategic vision. Thanks to our Service Users for continuing to engage with us to work together even when things seemed impossible you trusted us to help you through it. Finally, thanks to all our funders for supporting us to help people in need and make a real difference to those in South and East Ayrshire and beyond. I am very proud of the difference we have made.