

## **Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group's Report**

### **Summary and Recommendations**

This report provides an overview of the work from the Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group that sits under the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group co-chaired by the Housing Minister and Cllr Chalmers, COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing.

This paper invites members to:

- i. Note and consider the final report provided by the Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group co-chaired by the Homelessness Network and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) who will present at the meeting;
- ii. Provide any comments and views on the report's recommendations, particularly where they relate to Local Government as outlined in Annex 1; and
- iii. Agree that feedback on the Task and Finish Group's report is provided to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group.

### **References**

Previous reports:

- N/A

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**June 2024**

## **Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group's Report**

### **Purpose**

1. This report provides an overview of the work from the Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group that sits under the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group co-chaired by the Housing Minister and Cllr Chalmers, COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing.

### **Current COSLA Position**

#### **Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group's Report**

2. Members should note a final pre-publication report has been produced by the Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group co-chaired by Margaret Ann Brunjes, Homeless Network Scotland and Eileen McMullan, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) that is outlined in Annex 2. This group is one of the four task and finish groups that sits under the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group.
3. The Task and Finish Group's membership included the Scottish Govt as well as representatives from housing associations, homelessness sector organisations, Association of LA Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) and officer representatives from Edinburgh and North Ayrshire Councils, along with COSLA officials on an occasional basis.
4. The Task and Finish Group began work over a year ago and is the last of the four Task and Finish Groups to provide a report for the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group's considerations. Presently, we understand the Scottish Govt are still considering their response to the report.

### **What is Changing?**

5. Members will be aware that supported housing is shared accommodation, where typically people will have their own room but with an element of shared spaces e.g. a shared kitchen or living area. Presently, there are many different types and ranges of quality of supported housing commissioned across health and social care in Scotland.
6. In the homelessness sector, 19 local authorities commission a total of 115 supported housing projects - the majority of which are in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Such accommodation is usually provided as a temporary housing option until settled housing becomes available.
7. The review of supported housing is in the backdrop of a modernising agenda for the homelessness sector. This is essentially building from evidence that many people in local communities, with the right support if they need it, can build and live their lives in

a home as part of a local community.

8. The work of the Task and Finish Group learned about the circumstances of people who are not able to maintain an ordinary home, or who do not want one. Currently, this is a very small, albeit important, group of people that is estimated to be between 2-5% of those that become homeless every year. As a result, it is for this group of individuals that a new model of supported housing provides an alternative housing option.
9. The Task and Finish Group's report outlines that supported housing should offer a settled, not temporary, housing option for the small proportion of people who do not want or have not kept mainstream housing, as well as maximise security of tenure for them.
10. Additionally, the report sets out that supported accommodation should be jointly planned and commissioned by councils and Health and Social Care Partnerships, in order to break the legacy of 'homeless' supported accommodation. Given that DWP funding mechanisms can create a range of issues for residents and for local authorities.
11. Key recommendations in the Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group's report are set out in Annex 1 for Local Government and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) with the full pre-publication final report in Annex 2.
12. Broadly in all the issues covered in the Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group Report the core issue appears to be funding. We also understand in most areas resources have been reduced.
13. In respect of the recommendations relating to Local Government in Annex 1, ALACHO have advised some care would need to be taken about what would be assessed on the adoption of a standardised approach to identifying support needs, given we understand the statutory duty relating to housing support needs is defined in quite a narrow way. As a result, if other support needs including social care, social work or health are identified these will need to be addressed, albeit not by housing staff.
14. ALACHO have also advised that funding would need to be made available for a joint strategic plan for supported housing between local authority housing and homelessness teams and HSCPs. As a result, rent and support should be separated, with support costs properly funded and rents remaining affordable.
15. Further, the recommendation on the adoption of ethical commissioning and procurement practices and longer-term contracts with delivery partners would seem sensible. However, current procurement arrangements are driven largely by funding. As a result, if funding is only approved for 1-3 years as is often the case with the Scottish Govt's homelessness funding then procurement practices would likely not change.

### **Proposed COSLA Position**


16. Feedback from Board members on the Supported Accommodation Task and Finish Group's final report is reflected to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group.

**Next Steps**

17. COSLA will reflect the views from the Board to the Homelessness Prevention Task and Finish Group at its next meeting that is to be confirmed in July/August 2024.

**June 2024**

**Contribution to agreed COSLA Plan and Verity House Agreement:**

<a href="#">COSLA Plan 22-27</a>	<b>Priority Areas</b>	
	Strengthen Local Democracy	√
	Secure Sustainable Funding	√
	Improve the Wellbeing of Individuals, Families and Communities	√
	Enhance Education and Support for our Children and Young People	
	Deliver a Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy	√
	Support the Most Vulnerable in our Communities	√
<a href="#">Verity House Agreement</a>	<b>Shared Priorities</b>	
	Tackling Poverty	√
	Just transition to net zero	√
	Sustainable Public Services	√

## **ANNEX 1 – RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR LOCAL GOVT AND HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIPS**

### **For Local Authorities and Health & Social Care Partnerships**

- Adopt a standardised approach to identifying support needs at the person-level which corresponds with a strategic tool at the local area level. This should include the 2-5% guide range for supported housing described in this report.
- A joint strategic plan for supported housing between local authority housing and homelessness teams and HSCPs. This should bridge RRTP and HSCP strategic and delivery plans, be based on a local strategic assessment of supports needs and involve delivery partners in housing associations and third and independent sectors. Plans should embrace innovation in joint planning, commissioning and delivery.
- Adopt a progressive funding model of affordable rent to cover housing related costs alongside adequate funding through the general local authority fund, housing support and HSCP funding to cover care and support costs. The aim of this is to reduce the reliance on high rents to fund supported housing.
- Adopt ethical commissioning and procurement practices and longer-term contracts with delivery partners in housing associations and across the third and independent sectors. This should sustain a skilled and resilient workforce and enable a flexible approach which recognises that individual support needs may fluctuate over time.

# Supported Housing Task and Finish Group Final Report and Recommendations

May 2024

## **FOREWORD**

When guidance for local authorities to develop Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans was developed by a short-life and Scottish Government appointed action group in 2018, they placed a bookmark beside the role that supported housing should play in this new policy context.

A new policy context was being built from the irrefutable evidence that most of us, with the right support if we want it, can build and live our lives in an ordinary home as part of an ordinary community. But it was also recognised that not everyone is able to maintain an ordinary home - and not everyone wants one.

So when the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group appointed a cluster of groups to do a deep dive on the big questions, it provided the ideal opportunity for the homelessness sector to return to this bookmark and write the next chapter. The task of this group was to undertake the analysis that can enable us to chart a course that brings supported housing more confidently into the range of housing options and in a way that maximises people's choice and control.

The group's position is that supported housing should offer a settled, not temporary, housing option for the small proportion of people who don't want or haven't kept mainstream housing. It should maximise security of tenure. It should be jointly planned and commissioned by councils and Health and Social Care Partnerships, breaking the legacy of 'homeless' supported accommodation altogether. It should offer self-contained homes with easy access to great support on-site or nearby. And it should have adequate funding models to mitigate the 'benefit trap' created by high rents that limit people and their potential to earn or learn.

This report enters an exceptionally challenging environment. The optimism of the period that set in motion this work has been displaced by post-covid social and economic impact, a housing and cost-of-living crisis, huge pressure on public finances and rising homelessness with some parts of Scotland experiencing systemic failure in their homelessness services.

But this is a report for a sector positioned to act on homelessness. Evidence-led action is the most effective action. And so by moving in the direction outlined in this report, we can make progress on homelessness and contribute to creating more settled housing options and lives.

### **Chairs of the Supported Housing Task and Finish Group:**

*Maggie Brunjes, chief executive of Homeless Network Scotland*

*Eileen McMullan, policy lead at Scottish Federation of Housing Associations*

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 About this report**

The transition to Rapid Rehousing and Housing First became central to homelessness policy in Scotland in 2018. A focus on faster access to mainstream housing options drove the need for a closer review of the role of supported forms of shared accommodation.

This report presents the position and recommendations from the Supported Housing Task and Finish Group (membership at appendix i), who were appointed by the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) to undertake this review.

It is the final of four HPSG task and finish groups to report, following the temporary accommodation group in March 2023 [\[ref 1\]](#), the prevention group in August 2023 [\[ref 2\]](#) and the measuring impact group in December 2023 [\[ref 3\]](#). As the last in the sequence, we provide a summary of common themes observed across all reports at *section 7.4*.

### **1.2 The group's task and starting point**

The HPSG asked that the group review the 'Shared Spaces' research and policy position published in October 2021 [\[ref 4\]](#) and make recommendations on the future role of supported housing and in the context of three key policy developments: rapid rehousing [\[ref 5\]](#), duties to prevent homelessness [\[ref 6\]](#) and Housing to 2040 [\[ref 7\]](#). The Shared Spaces policy paper envisaged a transformation programme toward supported housing as a settled housing option for a *small* number of people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and who don't want and/or can't sustain a mainstream tenancy, including with Housing First support.

The overarching focus of these policies, and their intersection with health and social care policy, is to support people to live independently at home or in a "homely setting" [\[ref 8\]](#) in their community. This focus spans the majority of households who move house with no need for support, those who benefit from some housing support, and those who need a range of health and social care supports.

This policy suite commits to the evidence-based Housing First approach [\[ref 9\]](#) for the group of people who are homeless while facing a range of other health, social and economic disadvantages. Housing First was progressed with the acknowledgement that shared and supported housing needed further analysis to align it more confidently with the range of housing options and to maximise people's choice and control. We have also learned more about the circumstances where Housing First does *not* work since it started branching out across most local authority areas in Scotland from 2019.

HPSG also asked for the group's considerations of the health and social care sector in an envisaged role as joint planners and commissioners of supported housing, including the best way to ensure that supported housing can be a *settled* rather than a temporary housing option for the group of people who want or need it.

This report seeks to insert the missing piece of the jigsaw to give a fuller picture of Scotland's housing policy and where it intersects with health and social care policy.

### **1.3 The group's method**

Three main approaches were taken:

- i. The group met seven times over fourteen months between November 2022 and January 2024. Membership comprised policy makers, housing and support providers including supported housing, service commissioners and knowledge-based organisations. This range of professional and lived experience helped achieve a rounded perspective and evidence-based approach.
- ii. A survey of local authorities was undertaken to achieve shared understanding of the current role of supported housing and to help us make recommendations about the way forward. The group was briefed on the scale of supported housing commissioned by homelessness budgets, about who owns the buildings, who provides the on-site support, the scope of what is provided and what it costs. 28 of 32 local authorities responded, 19 of whom confirmed they commissioned supported housing. This data is discussed at *section 5.3*.
- iii. Detailed presentations were invited from expert contributors on themes that spanned different types of specialist supported and shared accommodation,

local methods for assessing housing support needs, and the role of and potential gaps in housing support. This process was intended to help the group draw out specialist service components being delivered, or identified as a gap, to assist deliberations on supported housing as a housing option. Expert contributors to the group are as follows and summarised later in this report or at *appendix ii*:

- **Recovery housing** | Sanctuary Housing Association
- **Managed alcohol programme** | Simon Community Scotland
- **Working communities** | Emmaus UK
- **Secure and supported housing** | Rowan Alba
- **Economic benefits of housing support** | Housing Support Enabling Unit
- **Housing support needs assessment** | West Dunbartonshire Council

## **2. Shared accommodation: the old and new focus**

### **2.1 Debates on effectiveness**

Shared forms of accommodation have long been associated with the experience of homelessness in Scotland and across the UK and beyond, from large-scale hostels and shelters to small-scale supported accommodation and care homes.

Whether it provides an effective response to homelessness, or whether people want to stay in it, continues to spark debate.

Some of the debate is driven by the desire to right an historical wrong that routinely congregated people experiencing homelessness into basic accommodation, enabled by a culture that accepted this as 'good enough.' While this view is now far less tolerated in the professional sector, it can stubbornly persist outside of it, despite the evolving awareness that it is not personal decisions, but structural, social and economic factors, that drives homelessness among people most exposed to those factors:

*“The temptation is to argue for the benefits of hostels, hotels and similar, on the basis that they are better than no accommodation at all. But in the midst of this crisis, we must somehow account for the experiences of those who avoid and abandon these*

*forms of accommodation because they find them less tolerable than sleeping rough.”* [\[ref 10\]](#)

The policy in Scotland over the last 25 years has been to move away from shared hostel style accommodation. But this progress has also focused minds on the need to make distinct and defend the shared accommodation models which are commissioned to provide a specialist housing and support service equipped to meet specific equalities and/or health and social care considerations.

However, the complexity of the funding arrangements (*section 5.5*), the variable quality of buildings currently used, the different approaches to support, and the use of shared-unit temporary accommodation models (commonly called rapid access or emergency accommodation) have cluttered the landscape and blurred the edges between suitable and unsuitable temporary accommodation and shared and supported accommodation.

## **2.2 Toward a better-defined role**

In Scotland, this debate has moved on further and faster than in many other places by a progressive sector and parliament committed to modernisation and inclusion. Over the last 25 years, this has delivered major changes, including a strong rights-based approach to housing and support, a committed policy of rapid rehousing and Housing First and the closure of most large-scale hostels and ‘shared-air’ communal-style night shelters.

However, in 2024 we are seeing an isolated reemergence of night shelter provision and a more widespread use of unsuitable temporary accommodation, both in the context of housing pressures and rising homelessness - *see section 4*.

And as Housing First branches out, we have learned more about the circumstances where it does not work or where people do not want a mainstream housing option at this point in time. Housing First is designed to help redress the multiple and often severe disadvantages faced by some people who experience homelessness and who are braving a range of other challenges that have not been fully met by existing services. It does this by providing ordinary housing in an ordinary community and wraps around the person support that is person-centred, strengths-based, flexible and not time limited. Housing First rejects the idea that many people are not ‘ready’ for housing and with

tenancy success rates currently at 90%, there is no doubt it works for the vast majority of people who can access it in Scotland. However, the group of people that it does not work for is whom this work seeks to ensure there are feasible and sustainable housing options for.

### 2.3 New scope of focus

**This report intends to make the case for the circumstances in which supported housing is used and to define what the optimum scale, quality and commissioning arrangements of this provision should be in Scotland.**

The task and finish group were committed to bring clarity to the task ahead, which recognises that:

- (i) Most of us, with the right support if we need it, can build and live our lives in an ordinary home as part of an ordinary community.
- (ii) A different type of housing option is needed for a small but hugely important group of people who can't maintain a mainstream housing option, or who don't want it at this point in their lives.
- (iii) Supported housing can play a key role in these cases, providing it meets the optimum service design outlined at *section 6*. Across current provision, the extent to which this optimum design is being met varies.
- (iv) Safeguarding is a significant factor for all forms of shared or congregate housing; balancing safety with autonomy and choice is inherently challenging in communal settings, but aspiring to do this well must be a core component.

In scope is provision that *currently* tends to be smaller in size and can be characterised in general terms by shared kitchen facilities and living area, usually with own bedroom and ensuite washing facilities. It tends to be recognised as 'homeless' accommodation, locally and across professional sectors, and is mainly provided on a temporary basis. It may involve a regulated housing support service and is named variously as supported accommodation, supported housing, residential or resettlement accommodation. For the purpose of this report, we will use the term 'supported housing' throughout.

This report is *not* focused on all other accommodation that is provided in an interim or temporary basis for people who are homeless, including provision in hostels, lodgings, hotels, night shelters, B&Bs, welcome centres or rapid access accommodation.

However it is intended that by reprovisioning and targeting supported housing in Scotland, we can contribute to creating more appropriate and settled housing options that reduce the need for using unsuitable temporary and shared accommodation.

### **3. Policy Context**

#### **3.1 Homelessness Policy**

The Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan (EHT Plan) [\[ref 11\]](#) is a joint Scottish Government and COSLA plan published in 2018 and updated in 2020. It sets out how national and local government and third sector partners will work together to end homelessness. The key themes in the plan reflect the recommendations made by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) in 2018 [\[ref 12\]](#). HARSAG was set up to recommend to Scottish Government Ministers the actions needed to eradicate rough sleeping and transform the use of temporary accommodation in Scotland.

#### **3.2 Corresponding Strategies**

Statutory homelessness in Scotland has a broad definition and each experience of it is unique. It can impact on many aspects of someone's life, including health and wellbeing, relationships, education, employment and on ability to travel and have digital access.

Consequently, almost all social policy and strategy connects to varying extents with the objectives of the EHT Plan. The National Framework for Housing First summarises the range of connected strategy and policy frameworks [\[ref 9\]](#).

The overarching frameworks that the EHT Plan is currently aligned with are:

- The vision and values of Scotland's **National Performance Framework** [\[ref 13\]](#).
- A **wellbeing economy**, which recognises the importance of delivering not just economic, but human and ecological wellbeing [\[ref 14\]](#).

- **Housing to 2040**, which sets out a vision for housing in Scotland and a route-map which sets the overarching strategy for housing in Scotland [\[ref 7\]](#).

Specifically, the future role of supported housing as a response to homelessness in Scotland should correspond with the following national frameworks:

- (i) Outcome 2 of the **National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes** [\[ref 8\]](#), the strategic framework for the planning and delivery of health and social care services:
 

*“People, including those with disabilities or long-term conditions, or who are frail, are able to live, as far as reasonably practicable, independently and at home or in a homely setting in their community.”*
- (ii) The new **duties to prevent homelessness** contained in the Housing Bill that was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in March 2024 [\[ref 6\]](#). The Prevention Review Group, whose work instigated the prevention duties, included supported housing as an option to prevent homelessness and respond to it:
 

*“Where needs are more complex, to the extent that they cannot be supported in mainstream housing even with additional support, then primary responsibility for meeting those accommodation needs should sit with the Health and Social Care Partnership. This is intended to capture the needs of those who require highly specialist medical or other support. It is not intended to cover needs that might be met through Housing First provision.”*

The Housing Bill does not set out a primary responsibility of Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP) to provide housing in the situation envisaged above, but where Housing First is not the best option for a person with complex needs and would likely pose a 'threat of homelessness', the Integrated Joint Boards (IJB) and local housing authorities would be compelled to act to 'minimise that threat'.

In addition, at para 42 of the Bill, local housing strategies are required to assess housing support needs and availability of housing support services, although this is not linked to the provision of housing.

At a local level, planning and commissioning for supported housing should be centred within the following frameworks:



- (iii) The **Health and Social Care Strategic Plan**, which is overseen by the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Chief Officer and the Integration Joint Board of each of Scotland's 31 HSCPs.
- (iv) The **Homelessness Strategy** which local authorities have a duty to have. Some are discrete or combined with housing options strategy and some integrated into the Local Housing Strategy. **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs)** are intended to chart a course away from overdependence on temporary accommodation and toward settled housing more quickly. Scottish Government provided RRTP transition funding for five years and extended by an additional year for 2024-25.
- (v) **Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)** and **Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA)** to integrate supported housing provision or re-provision with local housing planning and analysis. The **Housing Contribution Statement** provides the 'bridge' between the **Local Housing Strategy** and the HSCP's Strategic Commissioning Plan.
- (vi) While how homelessness services will align is currently uncertain, the stated intention of the **National Care Service** to promote ethical commissioning and procurement as well as sustainable funding which would provide the best underpinning conditions for supported housing and a skilled and resilient housing support workforce.

## 4. The housing context

### 4.1 Housing Pressures

This report is published in a period of significant pressures on housing in Scotland exacerbated by a post pandemic context and cost-of-living crisis. Social and affordable new build programmes have not kept pace with demand, coupled with challenges acquiring and upgrading existing housing stock for social use. The range of pressures have impacted in profound ways, including rising homelessness and the largest number of households on record in temporary accommodation in Scotland.

The local authority leadership networks SOLACE and ALACHO published a joint report in July 2023 - Housing in Scotland: Current Context and Preparing for the Future [\[ref 15\]](#).

This report described the *“unsustainable pressure reflecting the critical lack of capacity in local housing systems in Scotland”* and concluded that *“the housing reality in Scotland is that there are simply not enough social and affordable homes available and local authorities currently have inadequate means to reverse this position.”*

In July 2023, and in response to the temporary accommodation task and finish group’s report [\[ref 1\]](#), the Scottish Government announced a £60m fund to support local authorities to make open or off market purchases of private properties in their area to be used as social housing. Information on the National Acquisition Programme was published in December 2023 [\[ref 16\]](#).

In December 2023, the Scottish Government presented the 2024-25 budget to the Scottish Parliament [\[ref 17\]](#) with a reduction of £196m (26%) in the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) budget; £74m capital (16%) and £121m (71%) in financial transactions. There is now a corresponding reduction in Resource Planning Assumptions, the Scottish Government framework for councils to plan their housing supply. The inability to deliver on capital projects is attributed to a combination of reduced capital funding in real terms from the UK government, construction supply chain issues, labour shortages and high inflation.

## **4.2 How this interplays**

Supported housing is part of a housing system which faces pressures and is failing in some well evidenced areas:

### **(i) Competing Demands**

Supported housing is a more expensive form of publicly funded accommodation met through housing benefit, local authority commissioning and charitable sources because it is intended to be adequately equipped to meet specific equalities and/or health and social care considerations. Like all specialist provision, it needs targeted effectively to those who can benefit most from it.

However, due to wider housing pressures it is understandable that any available capacity in supported housing is being used to provide temporary accommodation in some circumstances. This can either mean people having to

stay in supported housing longer than they need it, or a placement to supported housing being made when a mainstream housing option is more appropriate for the person:

*“Ideally we want to move people onto SST [Scottish Secure Tenancy], but housing waiting lists mean people staying longer than intended.”*

(local authority survey respondent)

This has a knock-on effect on our ability to understand the real demand for supported housing and in ensuring that it is provided at the right scale at a local level. This is not person-led or cost-effective.

## **(ii) Potential of Land and Assets**

The vast majority of buildings that supported housing is provided from in Scotland are owned by the local authority or a housing association – over 80% (19 areas) according to the survey undertaken for this report. Compared to the ideal types of supported housing described in the Shared Spaces research [\[ref 4\]](#):

- 36% of properties meet the physical standards.
- 28% will require a full refurbishment to reach the standards.
- 25% will require some level of alteration.

Many Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) report challenges with the system of recycling capital grant attached to a property which is no longer fit for purpose. The Scottish Government guidance on recycling suggests that consent is possible but in practice RSLs have found this to be a challenge. For supported housing to meet the standards expected, the current system of recycling capital funding through the affordable homes programme will need reviewed so that the capital grant can reinvest with more ease in the re-provision of supported housing or refurbishment of existing schemes.

When supported housing is re-provisioned to better meet housing support needs locally, opportunities are presented for assets to be upgraded and improved:

*“Would like to replace/refurb others to bring up to self-contained, ensuite provision.”*

And in other cases, there may be potential for sites to be redeveloped for new build social and affordable housing. However, many RSLs report challenges with the system of recycling capital grant attached to a property which is no longer fit for purpose:

*“Looking for a more suitable site to relocate the service.”*

(local authority survey respondents)

## **5. Current Picture of Supported Housing**

### **5.1 What we mean by housing support**

Housing support is defined by the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CACHE) as areas of activity that enable people to maintain their accommodation and live well in the community [\[ref 18\]](#). This report connected the background of housing support to the Supporting People fund (2001-08), which brought together a number of funding streams for housing support spanning health and wellbeing, social care, employment, money and benefits and tenancy support. At that time, local authorities assumed responsibility for planning and commissioning housing support services; since the ringfencing of this fund was removed, services have been reduced due to budget savings.

Housing support can be provided in people’s own homes, in self-contained or shared living environments, or in conjunction with accommodation, like supported housing. The role of housing support worker has recently been set out by the Housing Support Enabling Unit (HSEU) [\[ref 19\]](#).

### **5.2 What we mean by supported housing**

The CACHE research defined supported housing as:

*“Provision that involves providing often specifically allocated housing alongside support for tenant sustainability. Can include short-term (often crisis or housing transition-linked support) or long-term supported housing.”*

### **5.3 Profile of supported housing in Scotland**

The task and finish group facilitated a survey of local authorities to collate current information on supported housing that is provided as a response to homelessness in their area. The survey asked about who owns the buildings, who provides the on-site support, the scope of what is provided and what it costs. Please see *appendix (iii)* for a summary of current provision, along with estimate demand for the future.

**28 of 32** local authorities responded. **19** local authorities confirmed they commissioned a total of **115** supported housing projects. The survey responses indicated that many local authorities are currently in the process of recommissioning homeless accommodation and support services, with the work of the task and finish group considered timely.

*\*In the data that follows, please note that not all survey questions received a response. For each question, the total number of responses is included as 'n#.'*

**(i) About the buildings**

	<b>Number (73)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Who owns the building?</b> <b>(n73)</b>	<b>32</b>	43.8 %
<b>RSL</b>	<b>28</b>	38.4 %
<b>Third sector</b>	<b>11</b>	15.1 %
<b>Other</b>	<b>2</b>	2.7 %
<i>*Other includes where building is leased by local authority from the private sector, and shared ownership amongst organisations.</i>		

<b>What aspects are shared?</b> <b>(n76)</b>	<p><b>32.9%</b> do not share any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bedroom, bathroom, kitchen or living space.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>67.1%</b> share at least one aspect of accommodation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.9% share a bedroom</li> <li>• 31.9% share a bathroom</li> <li>• 65.8% share a kitchen</li> <li>• 48.7% share a living room</li> </ul>

<b>What would it take to bring building up to described standard?</b> <b>(n69)</b>	<b>1. Meets Standard</b>	<b>25</b>	36.2 %
	<b>2.</b>	<b>14</b>	20.2 %
	<b>3.</b>	<b>6</b>	8.7 %
	<b>4.</b>	<b>5</b>	7.2 %
	<b>5. Full Refurbishment</b>	<b>19</b>	28.0 %



(ii) About the support

Does the local authority commission the on-site support?  
(n107)

	Number (107)	Percentage
Yes	96	89.7%
No	8	7.5%
Partly	3	2.8%

*Where the local authority does not commission support costs in part or full, this is funded in partnership with the HSCP or through alternative funding streams.*

Who is the onsite support provided by?  
(n107)

	Number (107)	Percentage
Local Authority	11	10.2%
RSL	23	21.5%
Third sector	71	66.3%
Combination	2	1.9%

What is the annual cost to commission the support provided in this service?  
(n50)

Occupancy Level	Median Annual Cost
6-15 (n27)	£ 154,094
16-25 (n14)	£ 211,752
26+ (n9)	£ 308,545

- Minimum annual project cost reported: £ 28,456
- Maximum annual project cost reported: £ 710,159
- Average annual project cost reported: £ 215,018

*Analysis of average costing was only possible for responses which included both occupancy level and annual cost due to the type of data recorded.*

Is the service intended to respond to specific equalities or social care considerations?  
(n65)

Focus	Number (65)	Percentage
Addiction	30	46.2 %
Mental Health	29	44.6 %
Disability	20	30.7 %
Domestic Abuse	23	35.4 %
Criminal Justice	23	35.4 %
LGBTQI+	22	33.8 %
Age specific	16	24.6 %
Care Experience	20	30.8 %
Refugee/Asylum	10	15.4 %
Single Sex	5	7.7 %
Single parent	4	6.25 %
None	16	24.6 %
Other (not known)	2	3.1 %

(i) Using the service

	Number (107)	Percentage
<b>How many people can the service accommodate?</b> (n106)		
< 5	1	0.9 %
6 to 15	53	50.0 %
16 to 25	31	29.2 %
26 +	23	21.7 %

<b>How frequently does the service operate at full capacity</b> (n66)		
Rarely full	4	6.0 %
Usually full	43	65.2 %
Waiting List	19	28.8 %

(iv) About your plans

<b>What are local plans in relation to this service?</b> (n66)		
Continue	50	75.7 %
Make Changes	15	15.0 %
Close	1	1.5 %

*Summary of supported housing profile:*

Supported housing is part of a complex delivery system involving multiple partners and insecure funding, particularly revenue but also on the capital side for maintenance and refurbishment. With 75% of commissioners planning to continue to fund it, it continues to feature at a local level as a response to homelessness for people with specific needs.

In Scotland, the local authority is usually the planner and commissioner of supported housing. It is common for Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to work in partnership with the third sector to provide it, either through (i) leasing arrangements, with the third sector organisation responsible for management of housing and support; or (ii) a shared management arrangement, where the RSL retains responsibility for property management and the third sector provides on-site support. Most on-site support is provided by third sector organisations.

Supported housing is usually used to its full capacity, with some operating a waiting list. However, it is highlighted that not all residents need supported housing and often stay longer because there is insufficient affordable housing to move on to.

While most local authorities plan to continue to provide supported housing, short-term contracts and frequent recommissioning processes are routine. Over half of supported

housing would need some or a full refurbishment to meet physical standards described in the Shared Spaces research - see *section 6*.

#### **5.4 How it is currently funded**

Funding for supported housing is a complex package spanning housing and support costs, alongside capital costs where relevant to build, purchase or develop housing.

The main sources of funding for supported housing are as follows:

- Housing Benefit and services charges, which pay for the cost of providing, managing and maintaining housing. This can include enhanced housing management services. Service charges include additional services such as maintaining communal areas, furniture, fuel and meals where provided. Service charges are lower in self-contained models where less of the housing is shared.
- Housing Support Services, largely funded by the local authority to provide services that support people to live independently.
- Health and Social Care Partnership funding in some cases, where additional care and support is required, and specific eligibility requirements are met.
- Charitable funding sources to supplement support costs and/or to extend services.

The on-site support in supported housing is almost always commissioned by local authorities (96% in our survey), with some support jointly commissioned through HSCPs or charitable sources. Support is primarily commissioned from third sector organisations, with RSLs and local authorities also providing support in some supported housing.

There is no nationally collected data on funding for supported housing. However, housing and support providers report that local government funding cuts, alongside commissioning and procurement practices since the ringfence of the Supporting People fund was removed in 2008, have significantly impacted on funding available.

In some cases, capital funding for supported housing provided by RSLs has been available from the Scottish Government through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) and through a mix of capital grant and private or charitable funding



sources. However, this is only available through the AHSP where a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) or short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) is being used. Non-tenancy forms of supported housing are not supported by the AHSP nor is there currently any other source of capital funding other than through local authority budgets.

## 5.5 The complexity of DWP funding

CACHE summarised the DWP funded component of supported housing as follows:

*“Can be understood as ‘exempt’ or ‘specified’ accommodation in UK policy where the housing organization provides the property alongside support. Supported housing is ‘specified’ to qualify for housing costs within housing benefit regulations and is commissioned by local authorities in Scotland.”*

Most supported housing in Scotland comes under the specified accommodation rules.

Exempt accommodation is in two parts:

- i. Resettlement places for people “without a settled way of life.” A very narrow definition and very few, if any, examples of it in Scotland.
- ii. Supported accommodation provided by a housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation and where the support is provided by the housing provider or person acting on their behalf.

Specified accommodation covers three groups:

- i. Supported accommodation provided by an English county council, or a housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation. The housing provider can arrange for another organisation to provide the housing support.
- ii. Temporary accommodation provided by a local authority or a housing association, registered charity or voluntary organisation for people who have left home because of domestic abuse. Women’s refuges may also meet the ‘exempt’ criteria.
- iii. A local authority hostel defined as non-self-contained, domestic accommodation with meal or food preparation facilities [\[ref 20\]](#).

In 2022, the House of Commons' Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee conducted an inquiry into **exempt accommodation**. The inquiry was instigated following concerns across the housing and homelessness sector about the standard of support that was being provided by some providers in England and Wales, and concern that some providers are 'playing the system' to maximise rental income and failing to provide the support required. There has not been the same evidence of these specific issues in Scotland, where housing support is regulated by the Care Inspectorate.

The DWP published Housing Benefit Guidance for supported housing in May 2022 [\[ref 21\]](#) with examples of eligible and ineligible service charges - guidance that applies to Scotland, England and Wales. The DWP is continuing to look at value for money in supported housing, particularly around licensing in the new Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act [\[ref 22\]](#). Although this new Act and licensing scheme only applies to England, it may have significance in Scotland as there are plans to define 'care, support and supervision' for the purposes of Housing Benefit regulations.

The DWP has also instructed local authority Housing Benefit teams to gather information about what is spent on supported housing in their local authority area, in order to 'improve quality and value for money on supported housing' and inform policy development [\[ref 23\]](#).

## 5.6 The case for change

Supported housing is subject to a complexity of funding arrangements which is poorly understood and is detrimental in different ways:

- For residents of supported housing: complex DWP funding rules create high rents, an acute 'benefit trap' and a major barrier to employment or learning opportunities.
- For housing and support providers: short term contracts and budget pressures create a precarious funding situation and represent a high level of risk for both providers.
- For local authorities: the LUHC committee noted "a practical impossibility" for Housing Benefit teams to challenge rent levels in supported accommodation.
- For national and local government, housing and support providers: a tightening of rules expected following the DLUCH and DWP investigation.

**The group's position is that funding and benefit mechanisms that directly result in people's lives being limited, and services being pressured is not sustainable.**

The invisibility of funding for housing support has been recognised and the resulting financial fragility of supported housing service acknowledged. The group notes that further research is planned to evidence the cost benefits and social benefits more clearly, with the aim of influencing future funding decisions by HSCP and local authority commissioners of housing support and supported housing services.

A review of how supported housing services are funded by the UK and Scottish Governments across capital, revenue and benefits is the ultimate course of action to resolve funding issues and to enable supported housing to provide a positive and sustainable housing option in Scotland. However, we recognise that this aspiration is a large-scale and long-term one.

In the meantime, the recommendations in this report focus on what can be delivered with the levers Scotland already has, or structures that are planned. This includes a sustainable funding framework and the development of a National Care Service working in partnership with housing that can potentially provide the fuller framework for consideration of all types of supported housing in Scotland.

## **6. Future role of supported housing**

### **6.1 The evidence**

There is a growing evidence base that demonstrates the negative impacts of temporary forms of housing on people's social and emotional wellbeing, especially when it is poor-quality, large-scale or shared. It is well argued in this paper [\[ref 24\]](#) that control over our living environment is foundational to a minimally decent life, but this is compromised in temporary living arrangements and especially in congregate accommodation.

However, there was a research gap on how to bring supported housing more confidently into the mix of housing options for the small proportion of people for whom mainstream housing is not wanted or has not been sustained. Therefore in 2020, a significant qualitative research project called 'Shared Spaces' [\[ref 4\]](#) was commissioned to explore the future role of supported housing as a response to homelessness.

The research was led by Anna Evans at Indigo House and jointly commissioned by Homeless Network Scotland, Action for Children, Turning Point Scotland and Crisis.

A Research Advisory Group was chaired by Dr Beth Watts-Cobbe from the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University and with membership including national and local government, housing associations and providers of supported housing.

The agreed research questions were:

- In what circumstances, if any, is shared or supported accommodation the appropriate housing option for households experiencing homelessness?
- What should the shared and supported accommodation options required in these circumstances look like?
- What is the likely scale of such shared and supported accommodation options likely to be in the future?
- How well placed are local authorities and service providers to adopt these housing options at the scale required?

The researchers consulted with 52 professional stakeholders and 54 people experiencing homelessness across six case study areas – Aberdeenshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highland and South Lanarkshire. People with lived experience were purposefully sampled to include those who had stayed in supported housing, or who may need or want this type of housing based on their circumstances.

The research concluded that:

- Most people **do not** want shared accommodation that is defined by a shared bedroom, bathroom or kitchen.
- Some people want on-site support that is defined by self-contained homes with own bathrooms and cooking facilities, in a larger building and with an element of common and/or office space either on-site or nearby.
- People most likely to benefit from this type of supported housing were those facing severe and multiple disadvantages – and who don't want, or haven't been able to sustain, a mainstream housing option, including Housing First.

- That the scale of demand for this is estimated at approximately 2-5% of people who are assessed as homeless by their local authority each year.

The caveat to this modelling is that supported housing may be considered an option for some young people, who may not have high support needs but who do want to stay in a shared living environment with peers. As flat-sharing is more common among young people across the general population, this provision can offer a supported flat-share style housing option for young people that have experienced homelessness and could be considered ‘transitional’ rather than temporary or settled housing:

## case in point:

### Flat shares help young people home in on life skills

<b>Service Provider</b>	Rock Trust
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<b>Service Name</b>	My Place
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<b>Location</b>	East Lothian
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**Young people who are care experienced or homeless are gaining invaluable life skills and stable supported housing without time limit through a peer flatmate project where they share a home with a volunteer. The [My Place](#) project led by Rock Trust and East Lothian Council partners young people in accommodation with a Peer Flatmate to provide a safe, stable home in the community. Peer flatmates are typically students at a nearby college or university and are offered training and support. They take on a mentoring role, providing practical support to help flatmates develop independent living skills and navigate the shared living environment.**

The project is of benefit to people who are struggling to maintain a tenancy or battling isolation, care leavers and those who would benefit from living with other young people. Though there's no time limit on the length of stay tenants are expected to move on to their own permanent tenancy once they are ready. And unlike traditional supported housing, they can stay in their home and choose not to receive support as long as there are no issues.

Housing is provided by the local authority; bills are shared, and tenants receive a £500 settling in budget along with weekly face-to-face support from The Rock Trust. As Peer Flatmates are unpaid, they don't pay rent.

The project is supporting K and Q from Southeast Asia who were in vulnerable positions that led to their exploitation, abuse and trafficking to Scotland on the false promise of a better life. Homeless and without a main caregiver, they applied for asylum in the UK and moved into My Place in February 2020.

K and Q built a strong and trusting relationship with their peer flatmate M and would share cooking, gardening and maintenance of their home. Shared mealtimes gave them a chance to chat with their new friend about everyday life and discuss any issues they faced.

My Place project staff also helped the pair access grants to buy bikes and laptops to boost their wellbeing and opportunities. The bikes enabled the pair to exercise and explore the local area, while the laptops meant they could access an English as a Second Language course, supporting their development and increasing access to study and employment. Training and support are provided to peer flatmates and formal interviews are carried out to determine suitability. Though the role is unpaid, peer flatmates are not expected to pay rent and extra support is provided by the Rock Trust and After Care Service, East Lothian.

## 6.2 Best features of supported housing

Overall, supported housing must offer a *settled* housing option for people who have experienced homelessness or to prevent homelessness. Having a housing option that is 'settled for as long as you want it' is a vital component of providing the safety and

ontological security that people need, but with the choice and autonomy to later move onto mainstream housing if things change. Supported housing is about the quality of the environment and the quality of the support delivered by a skilled and valued workforce. And it is about community, connecting people with social networks and with the wider community, combatting social isolation and the risk of experiencing homelessness again.

The following features are important if supported housing is to offer a secure and appropriate home of choice for people:

**(i) Physical environment**

- Self-contained home in a homely setting – no shared bedrooms, kitchens, toilets and washing facilities.
- Integrated into a community.
- Smaller the better, with up to 12-14 self-contained homes.

For example, a core and cluster housing model with care and support (the ‘core’) on-site. Individual homes may have the ‘core’ in the same building or individual homes may be scattered in the neighbourhood near the core.

**(ii) Service design**

- Promotes independence, choice and control.
- A progressive approach to safeguarding which protects people from harm and from discrimination due to characteristics protected by the Equality Act.
- Support is delivered by a skilled and valued workforce and meets or exceeds Care Inspectorate quality frameworks [\[ref 29\]](#).
- Has inclusive visitor policies and in line with Anne’s Law [\[ref 25\]](#).
- Accessible to all social work care groups, not a ‘homeless’ service.
- Routes to service from across all parts of housing, health and social care.

**(iii) Legal and financial**

- Maximises security of tenure – a private residential tenancy or Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST).

- Progressive commissioning partnership between strategic housing authorities and HSCPs.
- Combined funding model of affordable rent with care and support costs met through the general local authority fund, housing support and HSCP funding.

The key challenge is to find a model of funding that enables housing and support to be separated and for providers to find a stable core support model that is also sufficiently flexible to be person centered and meet the changing needs of tenants.

## case in point:

### compassionate support helps people put down roots

**Service Provider** Rowan Alba

**Service Name** Thorntree Street

**Location** Edinburgh

**Men with a history of alcohol addiction, rough sleeping and hostel stays are turning their lives around thanks to Rowan Alba’s model of long-term accommodation with personalised support. The charity’s [Thorntree Street](#) facility in Leith, Edinburgh, houses over-50s in nine self-contained apartments with lift access, a full kitchen, communal areas with entertainment and a garden. It is built on priorities people sleeping rough identified in a consultation: community, non-judgmental relational support and having peers in services.**

**Strong relationships between staff and tenants, secure tenure and tailored support for day-to-day activities have led to a track record of just one tenant being asked to leave since 2004.**



Tenants who previously felt stigmatised by other services report that they feel safe, with a greater sense of belonging, better self-control, improved physical and mental health.

One tenant who was previously sleeping rough said: *“I was in my late 60s and still on the streets. I could drink two or three bottles of vodka a day. It is a dangerous life. Alcohol led to me becoming homeless. I had a job, a wife and family, but I could be stubborn. I would get a flat, but then it would lead to eviction again and I was back on the streets. I now have a place to stay and some stability. I have somewhere to call home and my own key. If it hadn’t been for Thorntree Street I don’t think I would be here.”*

Rowan Alba established the Thorntree model with building owner Bield Housing Association. Access is controlled and staff are on hand 24 hours a day. Tenants – referred by social work – come and go as they please and are not barred from bringing alcohol into the building.

Housing management, independent living, health, addiction and disability support are offered along with inclusive wellbeing and learning activities and a Care at Home service if needed. Rowan Alba says the model saves £3 to £4 for every £1 invested by the local authority as tenants’ interaction with criminal justice and health services is reduced. The charity also provides settled homes for younger men and women with complex needs caused by early trauma, violence and aggression at Thorntree Mill, also in Edinburgh.

Karen Barr, CEO, says: *“Making such a positive impact on the lives of marginalised people by providing them with a safe place, acceptance and a tolerant attitude is literally saving lives. We address their health, addictions and financial challenges with human kindness, making them feel cared for, sometimes for the very first time in their life. We extend this to our communities with our prevention service through befriending with people in crisis. We are proud to declare our model works.”*

### 6.3 The circumstances in which it would be used

There are two main circumstances in which supported housing offers an option for people who have connected with homelessness services. These categories are adapted from the evaluation of Scotland's Housing First pathfinder [\[ref 26\]](#):

- (i) As a **health and social care centred response** for:
  - a. Some people who lack capacity at this time to comprehend a standard tenancy agreement and/or the consequences of not meeting its conditions (such as an acquired brain injury resulting in severe cognitive impairment).
  - b. Some people whose health or social care needs exceed what can realistically be catered for in mainstream housing.

*A person should be able to choose to opt out of a supported housing option, even if they meet one or both of these descriptions. A harm reduction strategy should be put in place for people who choose to opt out.*

**Or:**

- (ii) As a **housing and homelessness centred** response for people who do *not* fit the description at point (i) above, but who:
  - a. Expressly *do not* want (or have not sustained) mainstream housing, including Housing First.
  - b. Expressly *do* want shared and supported housing.
  - c. Are a young person under 25 who wants to stay in shared and supported housing (which can be considered transitional, not temporary).

While the routes to supported housing and reasons for choosing it will be unique within and across both categories, we intend no differentiation between the type of supported housing service. This overarching approach is what will enable consistency in quality of environment, care and support. And to provide a settled housing option (for as long as someone wants it), ending the legacy of providing 'homelessness' supported housing.

# case in point:

## A supported transition to settled housing

Service Provider	Blue Triangle
Service Name	Working to Reconnect + Achieve Potential
Location	Renfrewshire

### *A support worker's insights on supporting Peter\* in local authority supported housing.*

Peter was referred to [our service](#) after being liberated from prison following a 7-month sentence for knife crime. A support worker from Renfrewshire Council carried out an initial assessment of support needs before his details were passed to me.

When I first met Peter in his local authority supported accommodation, I was able to spend time speaking with him, hear his views on his situation and began to build a therapeutic relationship. I was able to understand that he was feeling isolated from his family and wasn't connected with any support services. Peter was struggling with his mental health and wasn't taking recently prescribed medication as he didn't know how to access it. He mentioned he found it hard to read and respond to letters. I also discovered that he didn't have an income.

We agreed to meet every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon initially, where I supported Peter to achieve his chosen goals. As the weeks passed, it became evident that he was progressing toward his goals and beginning to build trust in our service - he registered with a local GP, linked in with local drug services, accessed benefits online and applied for his bus pass entitlement card to visit family. As Peter had a history of tenancy breakdown linked to offending, his move to settled housing was phased with a *short* Scottish secure tenancy

initially. However, Peter will be signing a Secure Scottish tenancy in the coming weeks and feels he has benefited greatly from working with the supported accommodation team.

*\*Not his real name*

#### 6.4 The estimate scale needed

The Shared Spaces research [\[ref 4\]](#) triangulated data sources to set the percentage range of an estimate annual demand for supported housing at 2-5% of people who make a homeless application to the local authority each year.

The approximate range is between **796 and 1,964 people** each year across Scotland, based on 2022-23 homelessness data published by the Scottish Government [\[ref 27\]](#) - see *appendix iii* for breakdown.

The Housing (Scotland) Bill introduced to the Scottish Parliament in March 2024 places a duty on local authorities to undertake a **strategic assessment of housing support needs** in their area. This is a hugely important development that can help to ensure that local housing support needs are adequately met. The task and finish group considered that:

- A standardised approach to identifying support needs at the person-level is needed, which should correspond with a strategic tool at a local authority level.
- The 2-5% range for supported housing is the best available measure and should be incorporated into how housing support needs are forecast in each area.
- This range of people identified by the local authority homeless service as best-fit for supported housing should be measured alongside the level of need for supported housing among people using health and social care services – moving away from commissioning ‘homeless’ supported housing in Scotland.
- The local authority retains overall responsibility for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## 6.5 Where it fits with other housing options

The task and finish group recognises that most of us, with the right support if we need it, can build and live our lives in an ordinary home as part of an ordinary community.

The group also highlight the expert contribution from Sanctuary Housing Association (*appendix ii*) on the fuller potential for RSLs to support people to sustain mainstream housing. For example, to actively assist transitions through community or residential care for people in recovery from addiction while ensuring mainstream housing is sustained.

The best available evidence enables the following breakdown of broad housing options among households who make a homeless application to their local authority:

- Around 50% do not have support needs beyond their need for housing which can be met in mainstream housing [\[ref 27\]](#).
- Of the 50% who do have support needs, most of this can be met by housing support services provided at home in mainstream housing [\[ref 27\]](#).
- Around 10-15% would be considered best-fit for Housing First [\[ref 28\]](#).
- Around 2-5% would be considered best-fit for supported housing [\[ref 4\]](#) [\[ref 26\]](#)

The need for support can also diminish over time once settled housing is secured. Health and homelessness research from Andrew Waugh in 2018 [\[ref 30\]](#) showed that over 70% of people never returned to the homelessness system after they had settled housing. Scottish Government homelessness data also shows the long-term reduction in repeat homelessness in Scotland.

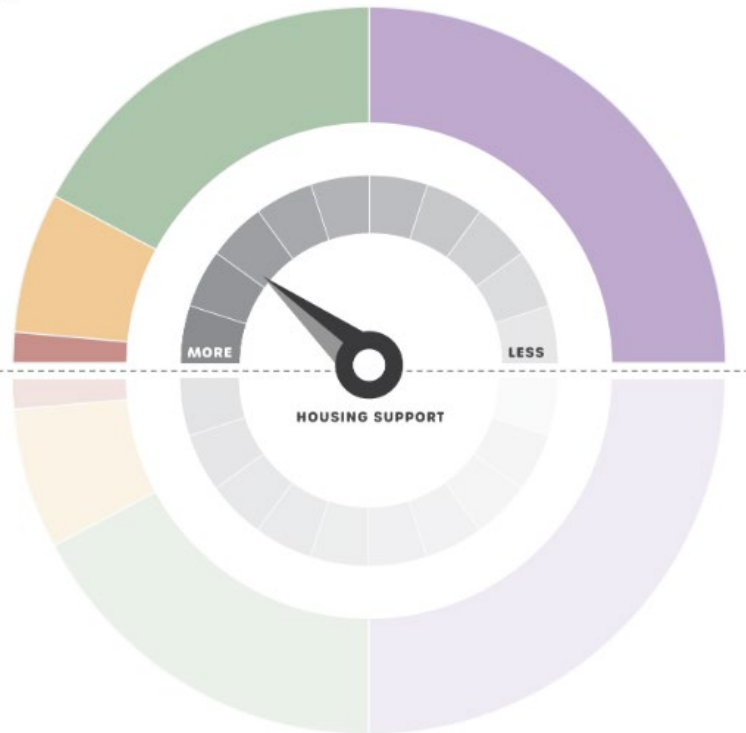
*According to the evidence sources listed above, the weighting of housing support that people want can be illustrated as follows:*

## RAPID REHOUSING

when homelessness has not been prevented

- Mainstream housing no floating support
- Mainstream housing with floating support
- Housing First
- Supported with on-site support

**PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**  
before it happens



# case in point:

## transitional community based supported housing

**Service Provider** Queens Cross Housing Association

**Service Name** Queens Cross Wellbeing

**Location** Glasgow

This service provides transitional supported housing for young people aged 16-25 with experience of homelessness or care and consists of accommodation for 10 young people in a

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shared residential setting, 3 transitional flats and 40 secure tenancies where young people are supported in their own homes.

[Queens Cross Wellbeing](#) avoids a staircase model by enabling young people to go into accommodation that matches their needs. Young people within the residential setting and transitional flats are funded for 19 hours of support. Young people in their own tenancies are funded for 7 hours of support. Support is provided 24/7 no matter what part of the service young people are in. Night service support is critical as often young people need support outside of normal working hours. In addition to being a support provider the service provides enhanced housing management to help young people set up a tenancy, claim housing benefit, maintain rent payments, access support for repairs and maintenance, and receive support if there are anti-social behaviour issues.

The service demonstrates broader outcomes around personal growth, employment and helping young people develop social skills and emotional resilience. The service aims to help reduce interaction with the criminal justice system and develop tenancy sustainment skills until young people are able to manage independently.

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The Care Inspectorate recognised the quality of care and support, and management and leadership, grading the service 6- excellent. Young people in the service reported how the supported accommodation had made a difference to their skills:

*“Before I came here, I didn't know how to cook or wash. Staff really helped me. They helped to budget. I used to spend my money the day I got it. I'm much better now at managing this. I think along with all the other things they've helped me with, I could manage my own house.”*

*“I had my own tenancy, but I couldn't keep it, so I came here. The staff are extremely helpful. Always available and very nice people.”*

*“I’m very happy with my support. I like it here. It’s not where I thought I’d be, but the staff are extremely helpful. They got me on a course, and I got a bike that I helped to refurbish. It gets me around.”*

The Care Inspectorate report makes clear that the service is supported by a committed and passionate team of staff. The Inspection also picked up on the culture of self-evaluation within the service that meant that the young people using the service had a key role in shaping provision. The service has an Investor in Young People accreditation and invited young people to lead assessment of the support. The Care Inspectorate reported that this meant the service delivered tailored support and ‘excellent outcomes for each young person.’

The service is part funded through the local Health and Social Care Partnership, in addition to Housing Benefit funding which covers the eligible service charge. It provides an example of high quality supported exempt accommodation focused around the different needs and expectations of young people.

## **7. Recommendations**

The overall goal is to provide high-quality supported housing as a settled housing option for the small number of people who don’t want or can’t sustain mainstream housing. And to break down ‘care group’ silos and stigma in how this is provided at a local level, underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing support needs and fair funding models that enable access to employment and opportunity.

*The future role of supported housing as a response to homelessness in Scotland can be summarised as:*



- A settled, not temporary housing option for a small number of people who don't want or haven't sustained a mainstream housing option.
- Maximising security of tenure, toward models that use Scottish Secure Tenancies or Private Residential Tenancies.
- Adequate capital and revenue funding models to mitigate the 'benefit trap' created by high rents that prevent people's access to employment or learning opportunities.
- Jointly planned and commissioned by strategic housing authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships, with the local authority retaining overall responsibility for people who enter the homelessness system.
- Located in the community with routes to services from all parts of housing, health and social care – breaking the legacy of 'homeless' supported housing.
- Be self-contained homes with own bathrooms and cooking facilities, with an element of common and/or office space with easy access to support on-site or nearby.

**This represents a new direction of travel that will need changes to the way that supported housing is commissioned, and a transformative programme that enables social landlords to remodel or re-provision existing models of supported housing.**

This direction of travel will be challenged by the current over-reliance on rent to contribute to the overall housing-related costs of supported housing services. Complex DWP funding rules also create an acute 'benefit trap', a major disincentive to employment or learning opportunities and a barrier to residential rehabilitation services.

**But these challenges are not insurmountable.**

The task and finish group recommends the following steps are taken to bring supported housing more confidently into the range of housing options for people affected by homelessness in Scotland:

### **7.1 For Scottish Government**

- Adopt a policy that consolidates the role and aspirations for supported housing as defined in *section 6* of this report.

- Review where the Affordable Housing Supply Programme can create opportunities for capital funding to be reinvested in the reprovisioning or refurbishment of existing supported housing and supplement this scope with a grant programme. Dedicated capital funding will be needed to make this work.
- Enable the sufficient funding levels to support new models of supported housing as a settled housing option for previously homeless households at a local level. This will need to include a discretionary fund to ensure that people who want to ‘earn or learn’ are not prevented by the funding mechanisms from doing so anymore.
- Launch and support a dynamic, joint leadership network for HSCP chief officers, local authority chief housing officers and chief executives and housing association chief executives. We need collective leadership for integrated planning and commissioning around core elements of housing, health and social care – including supported housing, prevention duties, Housing First, complex care and community living.
- Reclassify supported housing as a settled housing option into which a local authority can discharge their homeless duty in specific circumstances and providing it meets specific standards.
- The local strategic assessment of housing support needs introduced in the Housing (Scotland) Bill should be coproduced with people with direct experience of using health and social care services and with practitioners working in direct support and advice roles in housing associations and across the third and independent sectors.
- Develop a standardised approach to identifying support needs at the person-level which corresponds with the strategic tool at the local area level. This will greatly assist a strategic assessment of housing support needs to be undertaken routinely.
- The new guidance for local authorities and partners to undertake a strategic assessment of housing support needs in their area should include the 2-5% guide range for supported housing recommended in this report.
- Use the fuller framework of the proposals for a National Care Service to examine and to remove the limitations that current funding arrangements for supported housing place on people’s lives and aspirations.
- Engage with an influence the DWP’s current review of Housing Benefit regulations and supported housing.

## **7.2 For Local Authorities and Health & Social Care Partnerships**

- Adopt a standardised approach to identifying support needs at the person-level which corresponds with a strategic tool at the local area level. This should include the 2-5% guide range for supported housing described in this report.
- A joint strategic plan for supported housing between local authority housing and homelessness teams and HSCPs. This should bridge RRTP and HSCP strategic and delivery plans, be based on a local strategic assessment of supports needs and involve delivery partners in housing associations and third and independent sectors. Plans should embrace innovation in joint planning, commissioning and delivery.
- Adopt a progressive funding model of affordable rent to cover housing related costs alongside adequate funding through the general local authority fund, housing support and HSCP funding to cover care and support costs. The aim of this is to reduce the reliance on high rents to fund supported housing.
- Adopt ethical commissioning and procurement practices and longer-term contracts with delivery partners in housing associations and across the third and independent sectors. This should sustain a skilled and resilient workforce and enable a flexible approach which recognises that individual support needs may fluctuate over time.

## **7.3 For Housing and Support Providers**

- Consider the extent to which what is currently provided meets the future role of supported housing described in section 6.2 of this report and what could be remodelled or reprovisioned to be structured around a human rights approach.
- Work with the local authority and HSCP on an integrated plan for supported housing in the area, contributing to a strategic assessment of housing support needs and assessment of supported housing provision.
- Safeguarding is a significant factor for all forms of shared or congregate housing; balancing safety with autonomy and choice is inherently challenging in communal settings, but aspiring to do this well must be a core component.

## **7.4 Common themes**

This report is the final in a suite of four thematic reports commissioned by the Scottish Government and COSLA Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group. It follows the temporary accommodation group in March 2023 [\[ref 1\]](#), the prevention group in August 2023 [\[ref 2\]](#) and the measuring impact group in December 2023 [\[ref 3\]](#).

As such, the supported housing task and finish group took the opportunity to highlight the common themes and priorities observed across the work of all four groups. We did so because the work to prevent and resolve homelessness is mutually reinforcing – when we are competent in one key part of the system, it has a positive impact elsewhere. For example, adequate housing supply will make it easier to discharge prevention duties, reduce the reliance on temporary housing and enable us to target supported housing more accurately.

*The common factors that can help to prevent homelessness, reduce temporary accommodation, align supported housing and monitor impact on homelessness are:*

- That more social and affordable housing is central to all efforts to prevent, resolve and monitor impact on homelessness adequately.
- That the transition to Rapid Rehousing is not yet off the starting blocks and there is a need to review and weight funding frameworks for local authority homelessness services.
- Greater collaboration between local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships is needed. Specifically, Housing Contribution Statements should detail what care and support provisions are the responsibility of HSCPs and what are the responsibility of local authority housing teams.
- We can better use evidence and data to inform funding decisions. And we need to improve data on support needs – individual and local strategic assessment.
- The role of the regulators are key to improvement in homelessness services, specifically the Scottish Housing Regulator and Care Inspectorate.
- UK Government welfare benefit policy impacts on homelessness in Scotland.

## appendix (i) Group Membership

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<b>Co-chairs:</b>	Maggie Brunjes Eileen McMullan	Homeless Network Scotland Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
<b>Secretariat:</b>	Michelle Major Janice Higgins	Homeless Network Scotland Homeless Network Scotland
<b>In attendance:</b>	Janine Kellett Kerry Shaw	Scottish Government Scottish Government
<b>Membership:</b>	Karen Barr Janeine Barrett Yvette Burgess Tony Cain Mike Callaghan Grant Campbell Helen Carlin Ann Craig Sharon Freeman Gail Gourley	Rowan Alba North Ayrshire Council CCPS Scotland ALACHO COSLA Homeless Network Scotland Common Ground against Homelessness <i>formerly</i> Glasgow City Health & Social Care Partnership Queens Cross Housing Association <i>formerly</i> Trust Housing Association

David Marsland	Crossreach
Lorraine McGrath	Simon Community Scotland
Patrick McKay	Turning Point Scotland
Fiona Morrison	Hillcrest Homes
Gary Neil	Rock Trust
Sherina Peek	<i>formerly</i> ALACHO
Anthony Ross	All in For Change
Louise Smith	Queens Cross Housing Association

<b>Expert</b>	Claire McKay	West Dunbartonshire Council
<b>Contributors:</b>	Anthony Morrow	Sanctuary Housing Association
	Charlotte Talbott	Emmaus UK
	Dr Beth Watts-Cobbe	Heriot-Watt University
	Stephen Wishart	<i>formerly</i> Shelter Scotland

*Special thanks to local authority leads for completing the survey on supported housing, which contributed to a much fuller understanding and helped shape recommendations.*

*And to Mhairi Harley, SFHA and Ed Pybus and Jamie Milne, Homeless Network Scotland, as the co-chairs' co-authors of the group's final report and recommendations.*

appendix (ii) **Summary of expert contributions**

## **Emmaus | Working Communities**

A secular international movement working to tackle poverty and social exclusion with over 400 communities and groups in over 40 countries. Emmaus addresses the most pressing problems in local contexts and in the UK is predominantly a 'working community' model. To highlight:

- For a small number of people, it can provide a safe, supportive environment, usually for a short period and to assist some 'time out' or transition. People can find a sense of purpose in the social enterprise as well as skills development.
- Emmaus communities provide companionship, community and solidarity through living as a community, friendship, and work with a social purpose where excess profit is routed into the wider community. Communities are coproduced and co-delivered.
- The main funding streams supporting Emmaus communities are enterprise income and housing benefit. Communities can also fundraise for big capital projects. All communities

build cross-subsidy financial models to allow beds to be available for people who do not qualify for Housing Benefit, e.g. people with no recourse to public funds.

### **Simon Community Scotland | Managed Alcohol Programme**

The service was introduced to Scotland in 2021 and provides a 10-bed trauma-informed service to support men who are homeless and alcohol dependent and who do not wish to stop drinking. This harm reduction approach is evidence-based and gives people an opportunity to:

- Live in a safe place that they call home.
- Control their alcohol intake through an agreed alcohol plan with on-site support.
- Engage with a range of primary care services that improves health and wellbeing
- Reconnect with family and friends and participate in a range of activities including music tuition and digital inclusion.

Simon Community Scotland works in collaboration with the Scottish Government, University of Stirling, NHS and third sector to improve people's quality of life. The service has demonstrated a reduction in A&E admissions, alcohol consumption, street drinking, antisocial behaviour, alcohol withdrawals and seizures - and in feelings of stigma, isolation and marginalisation.

### **Recovery Housing | Sanctuary Housing Association**

Sanctuary Housing Association are leading conversations on how to maximise the full potential of RSLs to support people to sustain mainstream housing. This expert contribution helped the task and finish group to consider the role of housing associations to support people in their own tenancies who might otherwise lean toward a shared or supported housing option. Or to actively assist transitions through community or residential care for people in recovery from addiction while ensuring mainstream housing is sustained.

The concept of Recovery Housing is primarily preventative, about supporting people to maintain mainstream tenancies while accessing different types of support, specialist support, residential rehab, and community-based support. The contribution highlighted the following key points:

- The importance of integrated funding across housing, health, and social work to enable housing outcomes that are supported for people who want that.

- The need to ensure that there are no adverse implications when accessing specialist support and especially that a person’s tenancy is not at risk by using the dual housing support fund to cover housing costs when residential rehabilitation is accessed.
- Using a targeted approach to engage with people in tenancies at risk of failure and using the knowledge within housing to encourage engagement with community supports.
- The role of the landlord should be more evident when enabling transitions through community or residential care.

appendix (iii) **Current Provision and Estimate Demand**

This estimate annual demand spans a 2-5% range of people who make a homeless application to the local authority each year. The Shared Spaces research [\[ref 4\]](#) triangulated data sources to set the percentage range. The number corresponds to Scottish Government homeless data [\[ref 26\]](#).

Local Authority	Number of buildings	Places available number range	Estimate Annual Demand Range	
			<i>Minimum number of people</i>	<i>Maximum number of people</i>
Aberdeen City	2	50+	36	88
Aberdeenshire	0	<i>n/a</i>	20	50
Angus	1	16 - 25	13	31
Argyll & Bute	2	7 - 20	11	26
Clackmannanshire	0	<i>n/a</i>	12	30



Dumfries & Galloway	<i>not known</i>	<i>not known</i>	26	63
Dundee City	<i>not known</i>	<i>not known</i>	29	72
East Ayrshire	2	22 - 40	22	55
East Dunbartonshire	0	<i>n/a</i>	9	22
East Lothian	5	38	14	35
East Renfrewshire	0	<i>n/a</i>	9	23
Edinburgh	29	404 - 602+	71	176
Eilean Siar	0	<i>n/a</i>	3	7
Falkirk	4	48 - 75+	25	61
Fife	<i>not known</i>	<i>not known</i>	55	136
Glasgow	38	813	135	336
Highland	1	6 - 15	28	70
Inverclyde	0	<i>n/a</i>	6	15
Midlothian	7	91 - 145+	12	29
Moray	2	12 - 30	12	29
North Ayrshire	<i>not known</i>	<i>not known</i>	22	55
North Lanarkshire	2	22 - 40	39	96
Orkney	1	<i>not known</i>	3	7
Perth & Kinross	2	<i>not known</i>	15	37
Renfrewshire	3	38 - 65	19	47
Scottish Borders	0	<i>n/a</i>	16	39
Shetland	0	<i>n/a</i>	3	6
South Ayrshire	5	40 - 85	18	44
South Lanarkshire	1	6 - 15	51	126
Stirling	0	<i>n/a</i>	12	29
West Dunbartonshire	5	30 - 75	25	61
West Lothian	3	18 - 45	25	63

appendix (iv) Reference List

The list of documents referenced in this report are:

1. [Final Report of the Temporary Accommodation Task & Finish Group](#) | Scottish Government
2. [Final Report of the Preventing Homelessness Task & Finish Group](#) | Scottish Government
3. [Final Report of the Measuring Impact Task & Finish Group](#) | Scottish Government
4. [Shared Spaces Research and Policy Position](#) | Homeless Network Scotland; Indigo House
5. [Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans Annual Report 2020-21](#) | Scottish Government
6. [Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#) | Scottish Government
7. [Housing to 2040](#) | Scottish Government

8. [National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework](#) | Scottish Government
9. [Housing First National Framework](#) | Homeless Network Scotland and Scottish Government
10. [Article on Avoidance Strategies Research](#) | I-SPHERE at Heriot-Watt University
11. [Ending Homelessness Together Plan 2020](#) | Scottish Government
12. [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group Reports](#) | Scottish Government
13. [Scotland's National Performance Framework](#) | Scottish Government
14. [The Wellbeing Economy Monitor](#) | Scottish Government
15. [Housing in Scotland: Current Context and Preparing for the Future](#) | ALACHO and SOLACE
16. [National Acquisition Programme: Information](#) | Scottish Government
17. [Scottish Budget 2024 to 2025](#) | Scottish Government
18. [The Economic and Social Benefits of Housing Support](#) | CACHE
19. [Housing Support Workers in Scotland](#) | HSEU
20. [The Universal Credit Regulations 2013](#) (schedule 4, para 29) | UK Government
21. [Housing Benefit Guidance for Supported Housing](#) | DWP
22. [Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act](#) | UK Parliament
23. [Single Housing Benefit Extract management information for caseload review](#) | DWP
24. [Valuing control over one's immediate living environment](#) | Heriot-Watt University
25. [Anne's Law Factsheet](#) | Care Inspectorate
26. [Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation: Final Report](#) | Heriot-Watt University
27. [Homelessness in Scotland 2022-23](#) | Scottish Government Statistics
28. [Scotland's Transition to Rapid Rehousing](#) (appendix 3) | Indigo House
29. [Quality Frameworks \(various\)](#) | Care Inspectorate
30. [Health and Homelessness in Scotland](#) | Scottish Government

*The acronyms used in this report are:*

<b>AHSP</b>	Affordable Housing Supply Programme
<b>ALACHO</b>	Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers
<b>CACHE</b>	UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pension
<b>EHT</b>	Ending Homelessness Together
<b>HARSAG</b>	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group

<b>HNDA</b>	Housing Need and Demand Assessment
<b>HPSG</b>	Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group
<b>HSCP</b>	Health and Social Care Partnership
<b>HSEU</b>	Housing Support Enabling Unit
<b>I-SPHERE</b>	Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research at Heriot-Watt
<b>LUHC</b> department)	Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (UK Gov committee and
<b>NRPF</b>	No Recourse to Public Funds
<b>RRTP</b>	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
<b>RSL</b>	Registered Social Landlord
<b>SFHA</b>	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
<b>SHIP</b>	Strategic Housing Investment Plan
<b>SHR</b>	Scottish Housing Regulator
<b>SOLACE</b>	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers
<b>SST</b>	Scottish Secure Tenancy
<b>SSST</b>	Short Scottish Secure Tenancy