



# Policy Position

The future role of supported housing to prevent and respond to homelessness in Scotland

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# 1. Why the focus, and what is it?

## The context and the problem

This paper positions the policy direction for supported housing as a response to homelessness in Scotland in the context of the Scottish Government and COSLA Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan<sup>1</sup>, including the Rapid Rehousing policy. This has the vision that Housing First should be the first response for people with severe and multiple needs, or highly specialist provision with small, supported environments if mainstream housing is not possible or preferable.

The wider context includes new proposed duties on the wider public sector to prevent homelessness earlier with 'Preventing Homelessness in Scotland'<sup>2</sup>, and the Scottish Government's longstanding National Health and Wellbeing outcomes<sup>3</sup> which has a focus on people living independently at home, or in a homely setting in the community.

The role of supported and shared housing has been clarified through widescale research with people whose choice or circumstances meant mainstream housing was not an option (whether in the short or long term), and those working in the housing, homelessness and care sectors in Scotland. The Shared Spaces Research Findings are available separately<sup>4</sup>. This research considered what supported and shared housing as a *settled* option should ideally be, if it is to make a positive contribution to preventing and resolving homelessness.

Shared Spaces considers the settled housing options for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who can't and/or who don't want to sustain a mainstream tenancy. The recent evaluation of the Housing First Pathfinders in Scotland<sup>5</sup> found around 9% of people were not able or didn't want to sustain a Housing First tenancy. Their circumstances are likely to be those with overlapping severe and complex needs with

a strong theme of trauma experienced, mental health issues, substance use and interaction with the criminal justice system, experiences as set out in the Hard Edges research<sup>6</sup>. Their circumstances are not definitive, and all responses to homelessness must be person centred.

Shared Spaces is about *settled* housing which is stable and suitable for individual needs. The Preventing Homelessness in Scotland<sup>7</sup> recommendations define 'stability' and 'suitability' where housing should be available for at least 12 months and be either a Scottish Secure or Short Scottish Secure tenancy (SST/SSST), an owner-occupied home, a Private Residential tenancy (PRT), or other forms of tenancy such as occupancy agreements or permission to occupy. The recommendations also moved the discussion on to consider supported housing as a means for preventing homelessness as well as responding 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."*

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1 Ending Homelessness Together High-Level Action Plan (2018) and Updated Action Plan (2021) Scottish Government

2 Preventing Homelessness in Scotland (2021), Prevention Review Group

3 National Health and wellbeing framework (2015) Scottish Government

4 Shared Spaces: Final Report (2021), Indigo House, Homeless Network Scotland

5 Johnsen (S) et al (2021) Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation, First Interim Report

6 Bramley G et al (2019) Hard Edges Scotland, Lankelly Chase and The Robertson Trust

7 <https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/244558/preventing-homelessness-in-scotland.pdf>

## The type of accommodation in scope

This table sets out the general types of accommodation currently provided as a response to homelessness in Scotland, what each is commonly known as, the facilities that are shared, whether it is typically used as a temporary or settled housing option, and whether any choice who it is shared with is available.

Supported and shared ‘accommodation’ is the term used here to infer temporary housing, whereas we use supported and shared ‘housing’ to mean a settled housing option.

Accommodation Type	‘Also Known As’ examples:	What is shared own room, with shared:	Duration	Choice in who shares
<b>1. Shared and Supported</b> <i>Support always on-site</i>	<b>a. Supported Accommodation</b> <i>(purpose built and core and cluster model with self-contained flats, and scattered flats close to the ‘core’)</i>	Shared kitchen facilities, shared living area. Usually own shower/ toilet. Sometimes may include models where the ‘core’ may also support scattered flats nearby.	Temporary, Transitional	No
	<b>b. Community Hosting/ Lodgings</b>	Kitchen facilities, living area, shower/toilet.	Temporary, Transitional	Some
	<b>c. Peer Flatmates/ Other Flat shares</b>	Kitchen facilities, living area, shower/toilet.	Settled	Some
	<b>d. Hostel</b>	Shared kitchen facilities, living area, shower/toilet.	Temporary	No
	<b>e. Rapid Access</b>	Shared kitchen facilities, living area, shower/toilet.	Temporary	No
<b>2. Shared and Supported</b> <i>Floating support</i>	<b>a. Hotel Rooms</b>	Kitchen facilities, living area. Usually own shower/toilet.	Temporary	No
	<b>b. B&amp;Bs</b>	Kitchen facilities, living area. Sometimes own shower/ toilet.	Temporary	No
	<b>c. Shared flats</b>	Kitchen facilities, living area. Sometimes own shower/ toilet.	Temporary	No
<b>3. Shared not Supported</b>	The Shared Spaces research could not find examples of this where no support is provided as a homelessness response, and professional stakeholders saw no place for it for people with support needs.			

<b>Accommodation Type</b>	<b>'Also Known As'</b> <i>examples:</i>	<b>What is shared</b> <i>own room, with shared:</i>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Choice in who shares</b>
<b>4. Supported not Shared</b>  <i>Mainstream housing with floating support</i>	<b>a. Housing First</b>		Settled	n/a
	<b>b. Housing Support</b>		Settled	n/a
	<b>c. Furnished Flats</b>		Temporary	n/a
<b>5. Supported housing not shared</b>  <i>Core and cluster Mainstream supported housing with care and support on site.</i>		Possibly a small amount of common shared space but primarily used by care and support staff. This is a housing model with care and support on site where residents have their own self-contained housing. Shared common space may include gardens.	Settled	n/a

Shared housing with no support is not part of the Shared Spaces discussion. In general, the Shared Spaces research found very little appetite for sharing options from people that have experienced homelessness – most were clear that sharing was not their preferred housing option, and certainly not shared bedrooms and bathrooms. Most professional stakeholders did not envisage shared housing that is not supported as an optimum solution for those with complex needs.

This paper is concerned with the policy direction for the accommodation and housing types listed in **1a-c** and **5** to clarify its use in targeted, specific circumstances.

### **The type of accommodation not in scope**

Shared Spaces, and this policy direction, excludes:

- Residential rehabilitation services – by their nature these are a health led responses, and should lead to a settled housing option at a later point, whether mainstream housing or a supported housing option.
- Hostels, B&B, and other similar models of shared and supported temporary accommodation – for which Rapid Rehousing has clarified policy to reduce and end the use of.
- Mainstream, self-contained housing with visiting support, including Housing First – also clarified by Rapid Rehousing.

## 2. The Way Forward

### Transformation programme

We recommend a transformation programme toward supported housing being provided as a *settled* housing option for a *small* number of people using homelessness services who need or want long term care *on-site*.

This should be a health and social care led response; joint planning and commissioning with local authority housing strategy departments will consider need in the local area, review existing supply and consider how that need should be met. This may be through a combination of:

- Households being housed in existing HSCP commissioned services.
- Conversion/upgrading of existing temporary supported housing to settled supply.
- New-build supply commissioned by HSCPs/ strategic housing authorities which may meet a *mix of complex needs* in an area, not just people who have experienced homelessness.

The overall goal is to break down silos in provision and provide a high-quality supported housing environment with sustainable funding models commissioned through joint planning to enable settled lives, de-stigmatised from the current temporary 'homeless accommodation' system. Combined with Housing First, this can provide the range of housing options for the group of people identified in the Hard Edges Scotland research.

### Underpinning principles

To maximise **choice** and **security of tenure** wherever possible so that people can live at home or in a homely setting, while recognising that for some households this may not be the most important factor influencing their housing choice. And to ensure that people can **access support** in the way they want. These are also the underpinning principles of Scotland's National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes.

### The future role

**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 within 6-months, and who don't want and/or can't sustain a mainstream tenancy, including with Housing First support.**

An exception may be shared, supported accommodation provided for young people. This might be considered 'transitional' but not necessarily temporary or primarily a health and social care response. There are positive examples around the use of supported lodgings (being hosted, like fostering), peer flatmates and the shared, supported elements of Accommodation Type 1, above.

**A direction of travel is away from shared, supported accommodation to meet temporary accommodation duties. This is especially relevant for people with low or no support needs as it is not an outcome or cost-effective form of accommodation.**

Where supported accommodation does remain part of the types of temporary accommodation on offer locally, consideration should be given to how it can be converted into a settled option with an increased security of tenure, and property and service redesign to support independent living. Using the table above, this option would generally apply to conversion of Accommodation Type 1a transforming to models more like Supported Housing option 5.

## Broad Legal Scope

Under the recommendations made by the Prevention Review Group, settled supported housing would be a **legal housing option** to discharge duties owed under homelessness and homelessness prevention law, provided it is available either a secure tenure, or available for a minimum of 12 months and meets the relevant suitability requirements. The household would have to provide their written consent for duty to be discharged into this kind of accommodation if it is anything other than a secure tenancy.

- *If the accommodation is anything other than a secure tenancy, the accommodation must have appropriate facilities for settled living, including 24-hour access; a private bedroom; a private toilet and washing facilities; access to kitchen facilities; and a statement of rights and responsibilities in relation to the accommodation.*
- *The exception in relation to private bathrooms is where a young person is sharing in supported lodgings where it may not be possible to have a private bathroom. The Shared Spaces research showed that most people were clear that sharing bedrooms or bathrooms was not their preferred option.*

**Security of tenure** – the aim is to maximise security of tenure. However, tenure could feasibly vary with different models of provision with either secure tenancy agreement, or an occupancy agreement. It is anticipated that given the health and care needs of these households, supported housing will provide either regulated Housing Support, or regulated Care and support. In the case of regulated care and support, the resident will also have rights under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act – ensuring physical, lifestyle and care standards are met.

- *Maximising security of tenure* remains an underpinning principle that recognises issues with Occupancy Agreements necessitated to work in the interests of the accommodation provider, not the resident. Supported models that provide a tenancy agreement (whether Scottish Secure, or Private Residential Tenancy) should be prioritised in planning and commissioning decisions. In the case of supported lodgings there may also be licence agreements/permission to occupy in place.

- *Cultural change* – in addition to maximising security of tenure, there must be a cultural shift in service approaches for previously temporary services that have been converted to the new model to ensure it is person-centred and does not replicate previous institutional approaches.

### When it would be used

- As a health and social care led response for:
  - People who lack capacity to comprehend a standard tenancy agreement and/or the consequences of failing to meet its conditions (due to severe learning difficulties or alcohol related brain damage, for example).
  - People whose health or social care needs exceed what can realistically be provided in mainstream housing, including 24-hour support.
  - A person can choose to opt out of supported housing even if they meet 3a and 3b.

### OR:

- As a housing/homelessness led response for people who do not meet 3a/b, but who:
  - Expressly *do not* want (or have not sustained) mainstream housing, including Housing First.
  - Expressly *do* want shared or supported accommodation.
  - Is a young person under 25 who has given their consent to stay in shared, supported accommodation.
  - 4a and b is also dependent on the person being assessed as needing this type of accommodation.
- While **residential rehab** is not in scope as it does not provide a settled housing outcome, it is important to align with the ongoing policy developments to reduce drug-related deaths in Scotland and ensure shared spaces is considered through the frame of **harm reduction**, ranging from service models that support abstinence to active drug use.

### 3. How much is needed

#### Shared Spaces

The number who will benefit from shared spaces is understood to be small, a range of between approximately 2-5% of people who have rights to housing under homelessness legislation each year. That is approx. 550-1400 people a year, across all parts of Scotland.

Given the small scale of need for supported housing for this specific group of households, we expect their housing needs will be met within other mixed supported housing commissioned by HSCP and housing partners wherever possible.

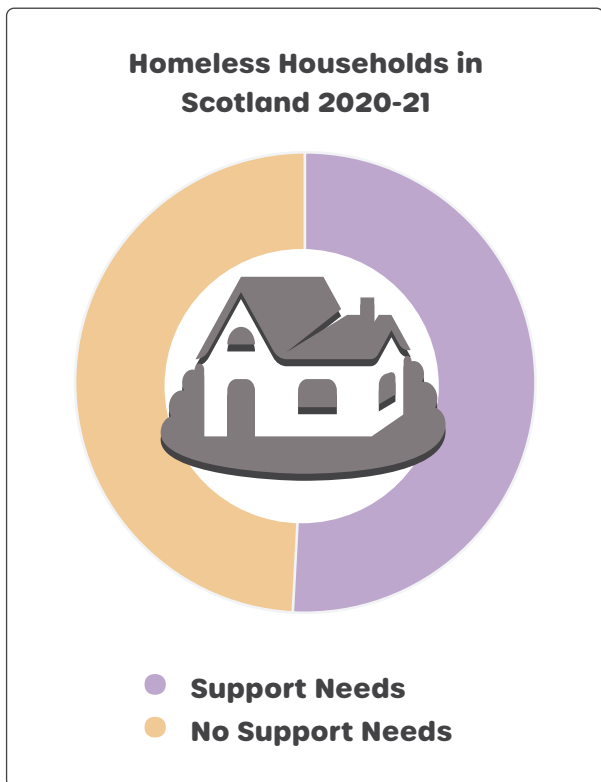
*This is based on key informant’s estimates during the ‘Shared Spaces’ qualitative research fieldwork from Indigo House (2021). And data analysis from ISPHERE at Heriot-Watt University, including data drawn from Scottish Government HL1 data set to develop a profile of severe and multiple disadvantage in Scotland.*

#### Rapid Rehousing

How does this scale fit in the broader context of rapid rehousing?

- Around half of households who experience homelessness in Scotland also have support needs:

- For the half of households **with no** support needs, Rapid Rehousing means to resettle people in mainstream housing as quickly as possible, reducing the time spent in temporary accommodation.
- For the other half of households **with** support needs, Rapid Rehousing means to resettle people in mainstream housing as quickly as possible, with floating support:
  - Within this group, there are a smaller number of people that need intensive floating housing support, as provided by the Housing First approach.
  - And a smaller number of people that need a different housing option, with support on-site and in the circumstances described at section 2.



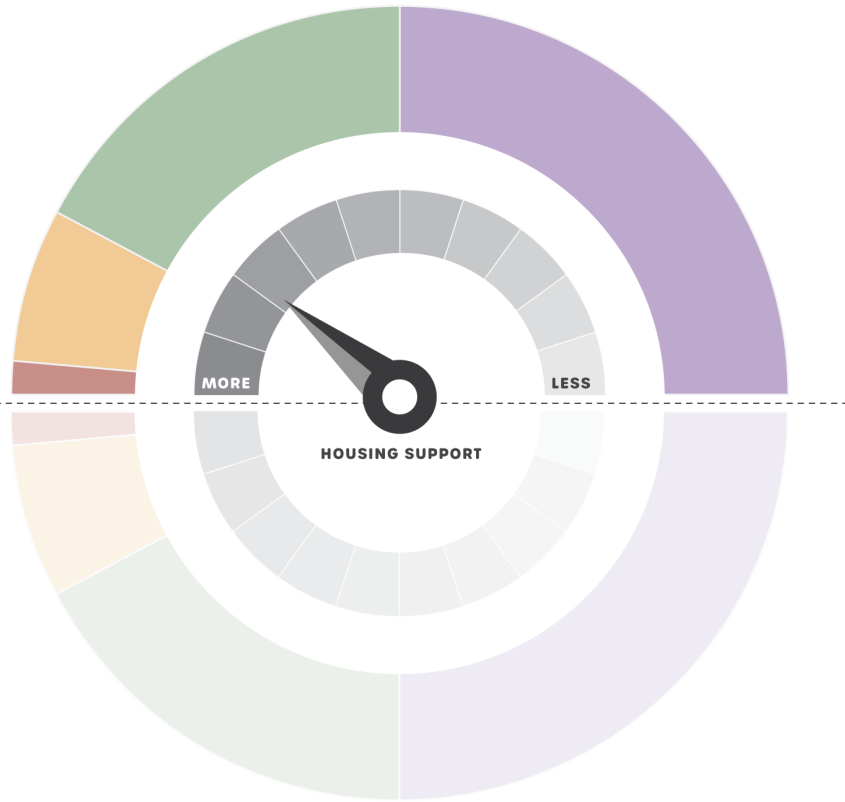


The scale of demand can be illustrated as:

**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

**Prevention**

We can both prevent and respond to homelessness using housing options that are best aligned with the level of health and social care support that the household wants:

The implementation of proposed new **prevention duties** is likely to lead to more people with health and social care needs coming forward for assistance before homelessness happens.

It is important that those assessed as having care needs can access what they need without ending up in homelessness crisis. It is also important to ensure that ‘no wrong door’ doesn’t mean that the service people come through has sole legal or cost responsibility.

## 4. How it should be delivered

### Supported housing

The ideal key features of supported housing are around **core and cluster models** which promote independence whilst providing the care and support on-site safely, and in a cost-effective way:

- Self-contained, individual properties, homely, with residents having their own bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens. This also encompasses the need for a culture and careful service design centered on rights and independence, rather than a shared institutional approach or feel.
- A 'core and 'cluster' of self-contained housing, the advantage of which is the combination of rights, independence, safety and also service delivery and financial efficiency for the provider where the costs of intense 24/7 on-site care and support could be more efficiently delivered when residents are in relative close proximity. The core would be the place where care and support staff and services are delivered from, with the cluster could be a block of flats and/or a cluster of flats scattered in a community supported by the nearby 'core' care and support hub. This model is relevant in both urban and rural areas where location of care and support staff can benefit both those living in a cluster of tenancies in one building, and other tenancies scattered in the local community.
- Small, with up to 14 properties, but the smaller the better while still enabling viable care and support service provision.
- Skilled and flexible support – trauma informed, high level and relevant skills which are properly valued, and the care and support could travel with people if they moved – particularly relevant in a scattered core and cluster model.

- Integrated in the community, so that it avoids stigmatisation of 'homelessness'. People with intense care needs coming from homelessness experiences should be able to live in supported housing options with other people with high care needs coming from different backgrounds and experiences. There should no silos or concentrations of 'homeless people' living in 'homeless accommodation'.

It is not envisaged that a supported housing solution for those with high care and support needs is shared, other than some communal garden spaces, or where residents may meet with care and support staff, or minimal amounts of communal social space. The Shared Spaces research showed the most people were clear that sharing was not their preferred housing option, and certainly not shared bedrooms and bathrooms. A small number of people indicated they would like some areas to meet others, share experiences and to have company.

## Rowan Alba's Thorntree Street:

### Settled Supported Housing

Rowan Alba provide a service in Edinburgh ('Thorntree'), established in 2004. It provides support and accommodation for men age 50+ coming off the streets or having lived precariously in their own tenancy or the private rented sector.

All these men of the residents have addiction issues and some have alcohol related brain damage. Many have difficulty managing money and find it hard to live independently, being vulnerable to financial, emotional and physical abuse: they have histories of multiple and extreme disadvantage.

There are eight studio flats and four two-bed flats within a small building that also has a communal garden, canteen lounge and dining room. Residents have a full Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) with Bield Housing Association which own the properties. Rowan Alba provide the housing support and care at home services for tenants. The service is funded through rent (housing benefit) and Edinburgh City Council homelessness revenue fund. HSCP Care at Home money now also contributes to costs because the service has been demonstrated to be keeping people out of hospital. Staff describe how when people came to the project they breathe a sigh of relief about having a roof over their head and then they can start to address their issues when they are ready. It isn't referred to it as a project, but as a home for life. There is a three- or four-month period of adjustment, in which people realise that they are not going to be thrown out.

In this settled place, people start to recognise illnesses that have been undetected and with the wraparound support in place, they begin to work on their health. Men are also supported with money and paying their bills. There isn't a risk of losing their home because of any of these financial matters. Thorntree Street has accommodated 80 men since the project began with an average length of stay seven to nine years. During that time there has been only one eviction, which was for a very serious assault. However, in the last year alone there have been eight non-Covid related deaths. Two people left voluntarily because they no longer had a problematic relationship with alcohol. *"It's about them living their lives the way they want to"*.

## Shared spaces for young people – community hosting and peer flatmates

The Shared Spaces research showed that most people experiencing homelessness do not want to share facilities. But examples of community hosting and peer flatmate models show where young people with moderate support needs can successfully flat or house share with support provided by the host resident owner/landlord or by a peer flatmate.

## Rock Trust:

Rock Trust provide shared housing for young people with moderate support needs in 3 or 4 bed flats with a live-in supportive flatmate. The supportive flatmate is normally a social care or social work student who is similar in age to other residents and who gains relevant experience and free accommodation. Young people have an occupancy agreement and can stay for up to two years. East Lothian Council also have a similar project called My Place' which is a pilot project which involves care-experienced young adults move in with a student or other adult mentors.

## 5. How it should be funded

The main funding approach is through rent (with or without service charges), combined with local authority funding for Housing Support, and HSCP funding for care and support elements.

### Rent and service charges

Rent covers the cost of providing, managing and maintaining the housing provision. Depending on the type of provision and associated service there may also be a service charges which covers items such as meals, water, fuel, communal space and facilities. Eligible rent and service charges can be claimed through Universal Credit or Housing Benefit (UC/HB) if payment is a condition of occupying the property and the charges are eligible – these cover a range of activities that allow tenants/occupants to maintain their accommodation<sup>8</sup>. Housing support and care is not eligible for UC/HB costs. However, there may be enhanced housing management services provided which are UC/HB eligible which may help people maintain their property<sup>9,10</sup>. In the case of new housing development for social rented housing which may be supplied for supported housing, the capital cost of the new build is covered through a combination of Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Grant and borrowing<sup>11,12</sup>. Rent pays for the borrowing costs, as well as all the other housing management and maintenance costs.

Sharing schemes such as as supported lodgings are also based on rental charges and if the resident is eligible for rent support (UC/HB) this can be claimed by the lodger or host landlord direct.

### Local authority funding for Housing Support

The purpose of local authority funding for Housing Support is to help fund registered housing support services which enable independent living. Housing Support services are normally commissioned by local authority housing or homelessness services<sup>13</sup>. The ring-fencing of Supporting People funding was removed in 2007 and since then has been part of local authorities general services funding. Interviewees confirmed that funding Housing Support has been gradually reducing with greater reliance now placed on ‘enhanced housing management’ services, funded through rent and/or service charges which is HB/UC eligible. Interviewees noted this can be crucial funding and where it is withdrawn can result in support being removed altogether.

### Health and Social Care Partnership funding

Supported housing commissioned by HSCPs (for example core and cluster for people with learning and physically disabled, people with mental ill-health) is most commonly funded by rent for the housing costs provided in partnership with housing association or local authority housing (UC/HB eligible which may or may not include enhanced housing management services), with HSCP funding the care and support costs. This type of housing may be let as a secure tenancy or occupancy agreement<sup>14</sup>.

8 There are different rules for ‘Exempt’ and ‘Specified Accommodation’ which attracts higher levels of Housing Benefit funding.

9 For example, a staff member may be responsible for maintaining security and concierge systems which may support people to live in that secure environment.

10 DWP rules determine what is eligible

11 Borrowing is in the form of private finance for housing associations or local authority Housing Revenue Account borrowing for local authority housing

12 Commissioning new supply of affordable housing is governed through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan process led by local authority housing strategy teams, in consultation with local housing associations and Scottish Government.

13 Registered housing support services are regulated under the Care Inspectorate Health and Social Care Standards, and through the Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 with Housing Support defined through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 updating the previous provision in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Housing Support services include any service which provides support, assistance, advice or counselling to an individual with particular needs with a view to enabling that individual to occupy, or to continue to occupy, residential accommodation as the individual's sole or main residence.

14 As noted above several HSCP consultees noted the preference for secure tenancies in line with the move away from registered residential models towards independence in the community, although the reasons for occupancy agreement still being used in these housing contexts is unclear. This is also true of housing providers some of which use occupancy agreements, most commonly in temporary accommodation context.

Where the provision is residential care (not a housing model of provision) this is funded directly through HSCP/resident contributions governed through the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. However, the general policy direction of social care in Scotland is away from acute hospital and residential care homes, and for social care to be provided at home or in homely settings to provide independent living in the community. Care assessments may determine a need for intermediate care where housing with care, care homes and community hospitals may provide local step up / step down intermediate care to provide a reablement approach before people move into or back their own home with relevant care packages.

### Combined and bespoke approaches

Housing providers gave examples of supported housing which is housing or homelessness service commissioned and funded mainly through a rent and service approach but which also attracted local authority Housing Support funding, and separate HSCP funding for example where outcomes demonstrated contribution to health and social care outcomes. It was found that the funding is generally silo'd, with examples provided of supported housing projects working separately with Housing Support commissioners and with HSCP commissioners to put together a patch work of funding to meet project needs on a case by case basis. Some housing associations have also chosen to 'rent pool' across their whole housing stock to cross subsidise and make supported housing projects feasible. This is an individual organisational approach and not one that could be adopted by all housing associations or local authority housing. However, there were some exceptions found of very positive commissioning relationships between housing departments and HSCPs, particularly where new supply has been recently jointly planned and commissioned (See East Ayrshire case study below).

The research has explored the pros and cons of using rent and service charge model for supported housing. In terms of the advantages, using a housing approach enables the housing costs to be paid for through rent, and gives the opportunity to optimise a rights based approach

which maximises security of tenure (where a secure tenancy is used). This is also consistent with an independent living approach and social care responses. However, the way in which the funding framework for supported housing in Scotland (and across the UK) has developed means that funding has become *individualised* – it is reliant on maximising rents and service charges through enhanced housing management costs, and therefore funding through UC/HB. This has also served to minimise general local authority and HSCP funding<sup>15</sup> intended for the general population for housing support and social care, not the *individual*. The result can be very high charges that are unaffordable for residents if they are not claiming UC/HB, and the approach lacks transparency between true housing costs (paid for through rent) and housing support and care costs.

These issues and the principles of funding were also explored by HRSAG<sup>16</sup> in the context of temporary accommodation, but the issues are the same whether for temporary or permanent housing provision. It discussed the fact that funding of temporary housing is financed by the individual homeless household through rent, or UC/HB and in turn the UK Government Treasury. In this case HRSAG argued that all the financial responsibility of providing good quality temporary accommodation should be 'citizen' funded rather than individually funded i.e. through the local authority general fund finance, which is funded by Scottish Government Grant Aided Expenditure.

Supported housing correctly should use rent to pay for housing costs, but the distinction going forward should be transparency between rents and care costs and what is included. An alternative approach for supported housing would be to make clear distinctions between housing costs which would be paid for through rents by the individual (whether subsidised or not), and care and support costs which would be paid for through general local authority and HSCP funding. Rents should be benchmarked to local affordable rents so that these are actually affordable for residents, especially for those in paid work or seeking work, in line with the suitability recommendations made by the Preventing Homelessness in Scotland report.

15 Housing Support funding is resourced by local authority General Fund which covers all day-to-day revenue expenditure incurred in providing services to the general local population. The General Fund is financed by a combination of Scottish government grants, council tax and fees and charges. HSCP funding is resourced by Scottish Government grant.

16 Transforming the use of Temporary Accommodation in Scotland (2018), HRSAG

## **APPENDIX: Research Advisory Group**

*Research was led by Indigo House, commissioned and funded by Homeless Network Scotland with funding contribution from Action for Children, Turning Point Scotland and Crisis, all of whom were members of the Research Advisory Group.*

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