

Short Term Actions to Respond to Scotland's Housing Emergency **Agreed by COSLA Leaders on Friday 31st January, 2025**

Background

The housing sector in Scotland is at a critical junction. Rising costs, regulatory changes, and the ongoing Housing Emergency necessitate a co-ordinated and strategic response. Our focus must be on ensuring sustainable, affordable and high quality housing for individuals and families in our local communities, while addressing the immediate needs of those in temporary accommodation and the long-term goals of housing development and planning.

This document outlines a series of actions designed to enhance governance and policy development, financial and investment strategies, temporary accommodation, collaborative efforts and provide some housing solutions. By implementing these measures, we aim to create a resilient housing system that meets the diverse needs of our communities and supports the well-being of residents.

*The new actions developed by COSLA's Housing SIG are shown in bold. While the others are existing joint actions with the Scottish Government and partners to provide alignment and coherence.

1. Governance, Policy Development and Legislation

- A governance structure is agreed for the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) between COSLA and the Scottish Government that involves e.g. monthly reporting on progress by the Scottish Government and oversight of any decisions on funding involving local authorities.
- Submissions on the Housing Bill at Stages 2 and 3 of its passage through the Scottish Parliament are taken forward by COSLA.
- A realistic implementation period for the Housing Bill is established, along with adequate resources to local authorities.

2. Financial Support and Investment Strategies

- The cost of Temporary Accommodation is ascertained to better understand how it is being funded including rent charging, housing benefits and housing benefit loss.
- Scottish Government provide multi-year settlements for RPAs to facilitate improved housing investment strategies.
- Scottish Government commit to adequate new burdens funding for local authority homelessness services arising from the Housing Bill.
- The Affordable Housing Supply Programme along with other funding streams for housing is reviewed with the Scottish Government to allow greater flexibility e.g. for the provision of key worker housing, acquisitions and supporting community trusts.
- Local authorities strive to ensure AHSP funding is fully spent during the next financial year.

3. Collaboration and Engagement

- Scottish Government work in a collegiate way with Local Government in the management of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme through sharing information, e.g. outturn reports and workings for new future homes, as well as advise local authorities of their RPAs for 2025/26 and publish the analysis of SHIPs.
- Work is taken forward with relevant partners (including Registered Social Landlords) to identify the current and future housing needs of New Scots and barriers around housing for some groups, including those at risk of destitution who are not entitled to statutory housing or homelessness services.
- The performance of Registered Social Landlords is considered by Local Government and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) to ensure they provide appropriate support to councils for homeless applicants.

4. Enhancing Housing Solutions and Temporary Accommodation

- The use of Affordable Housing Supply Programme homes or grants are considered for better quality temporary accommodation.
- Work is progressed with the KLTR by Local Government to identify vacant properties across local authority areas suitable for the Ownerless Property Transfer Scheme that can be made habitable.
- The Scottish Government publish an analysis of homeless applicants not in temporary accommodation based on existing data.
- A focus on the delivery of smaller units in city centres for single adults is taken forward to deliver more housing, e.g. MMR that is linked to wider AHSP investment.
- Work is continued with the Scottish Government on the Housing Investment Taskforce.
- Work is continued with the Scottish Government to demonstrate an improvement on void performance.
- The risks to safety for people in temporary accommodation, in particular for women and children are better understood by Scottish Government and Local Government, in order to agree effective support and protection services.