

Housing to 2040: Consultation on Policy Options

SUBMISSION FROM SOCIAL WORK SCOTLAND, TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

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Social Work Scotland is the professional body for social work leaders, working closely with our partners to shape policy and practice, and improve the quality and experience of social services. We welcome this opportunity to comment on the draft housing vision for 2040¹ and the underpinning principles for future housing policy.

Q1. Earlier this year we published our draft vision and principles. Do you have any comments on the draft vision and principles? Please be specific and identify what you would change and why

Social Work Scotland agrees that a whole systems approach to housing is crucial, focused on ensuring holistic, rights-based support is available for individuals, children and families when they need it. Only in this way will Scotland enable people to live healthy, secure and productive lives, characterised by good relationships and sense of purpose.

We also strongly support the assertion that good housing has a substantial role to play in meeting the Scottish Government's National Outcomes, including child poverty and homelessness. Indeed we believe good housing also supports priorities specified in the Adult Social Care Reform programme, specifically 'places of care' being encouraged as independent living in community settings.

We agree with the reflections made by Professor Clapham of the University of Glasgow, in his assessment of the principles as being vague and open to interpretation². In order to strengthen a whole systems approach to housing, we believe it is critical to give greater emphasis to the *care and support priorities* (tending towards prevention) rather than health (tending towards late stage interventions). Research into housing has long argued for 'a social work approach to housing'³, in recognition of the fundamental role that housing has on individual and community wellbeing. This was highlighted recently by the Independent Care Review, which had:

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-to-2040/>

² <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/191205-housing-visions-2040-DC.pdf>

³ STEWART, G., & STEWART, J. (1992). Social Work with Homeless Families. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 22(3), 271-289. Retrieved February 20, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/23709313

[...] *'consistently heard that financial and housing support were some of the greatest concerns from children and families... when the economy hurts children and adults, and housing and social security systems fail to provide the protection from harm needed to compensate, increased pressures on family life can increase the odds of interacting with the care system.'*⁴

In addition to 'rural proofing' the vision and principles of Housing to 2040, we suggest that the care and support needs of ageing rural communities, isolated individuals and families (particularly in the Highlands and Islands) are considered in more detail. Social work and care will be central to supporting people to stay independent and well in suitable housing, so regardless of the built environment, infrastructure to offer social care services and support to individuals and families may be limited, or provided in alternative ways⁵. Solutions which work in more urban areas or communities may not be appropriate in other areas, and the vision and principle (while striving for equality for individuals) should not dampen innovation and local adaptation (indeed it should encourage it)

Alongside 'health' we would like to see sustainable care and support identified as a specific driver for Housing to 2040. Social Work Scotland has been working with partners and the Scottish Government to look at key resourcing challenges facing social work and social care⁶, and which are affecting both practice and future recruitment across the workforce. Our collective capacity to address poverty and child protection concerns (for which housing is also a key factor) was also raised in the Independent Care Review⁷. Alongside the drivers identified for population and health, it is clear Scotland will continue to face rising demand for professional, skilled care and support, and without the sustainability of this provision, the success of this vision and its principles are unlikely to be met.

The principles 5, 13 & 14 have clear overlaps with the aims set out in the Scottish Government's Adult Social Care reform programme. That programme states that [social care support] "is about supporting people to live independently, be active citizens, participate and contribute to our society, and maintain their dignity and human rights"⁸. Housing which meets the needs of our ageing population by location and accessibility, and which acknowledges the increase in single person households, is absolutely central to this. However, we feel that Housing to 2040 could be both more explicit and nuanced about the centrality of adequate housing in meeting the care needs (maybe even human rights) of people with dementia, complex physical disabilities, flexible care and support needs, and intergenerational families. Crucially, the 'places of care' identified in the Adult Social Care Reform programme should not necessarily be envisaged as care homes. Housing to 2040 is the place in which Scotland should articulate how it will enable people to stay in their own

⁴ The Promise: <https://www.carereview.scot/destination/independent-care-review-reports/>

⁵ <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/rural-social-work-scotland>

⁶ <https://socialworkscotland.org/statement-on-resources/>

⁷ The Promise: <https://www.carereview.scot/destination/independent-care-review-reports/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-care/reforming-adult-social-care/>

homes and communities for as long as it is in their best interests to do so, maintaining their relationships and identity, enhancing their wellbeing.

For reference, Architecture and Design Scotland have conducted extensive work on age friendly places⁹ and on redesigning town centres to provide opportunities for more intergenerational and inclusive living. Developing closer links between housing provision and social care, as identified in 1.5, may support this, and the vision overall should focus on building sustainable communities through an integrated, Whole System approach.

Finally, we would like to see the complexity¹⁰ of these issues better acknowledged in the constraints and principle section. Taking a Whole Systems approach is the right thing to do, but to be successful Housing to 2040 must surface and address the complexity head on, attending to the many interconnected and interdependent systems – health and social care (and within that, social work) being just one. Presenting the context as simpler than it really is will only increase the risk of failure.

Q2. Do you have any comments on the scenarios and resilience of the route map or constraints? These are set out in sections 3 and 4 of Annex C.

We note the financial constraints section of Annex C, and believe that it illustrates an inherent tension between the vision and reality. We would like to see more robust and data driven assessment to support some of the market-shaping principles particularly.

Under Constraints 4.3, we suggest that, rather than separating out ‘accessible and age appropriate’ homes, this specification be included into *all* future housing requirements, to reduce or remove the ‘bottleneck’¹¹ in access to appropriate housing, experienced by many people, and which has profound impacts on other parts of the system – health, education, social work and social care, criminal justice. Given the population projections for Scotland, housing accessibility will become a pressing concern before 2040.

A 2018 study undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that ‘The need for accessible housing will increase as the population continues to age. In Scotland, the number of people aged 75 and over is projected to increase by 23 per cent between 2010 and 2020, and by 82 per cent between 2010 and 2035 (Scottish Government, 2011). The demand for wheelchair-accessible housing is expected to increase significantly: a projected 80 per cent increase in the population of wheelchair users by 2024, with an increase in unmet needs from 17,226 to 31,007 households (Horizon Housing, 2018).’¹² As colleagues from Inclusion Scotland often note, with increases in life expectancy and demographic trends, nearly everyone will be a disabled person for part of their life. To

⁹ <https://www.ads.org.uk/age-friendly-places/>

¹⁰ <https://futurecities.catapult.org.uk/2019/05/14/blog-systems-thinking-and-housing/>

¹¹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/housing-and-disabled-people-scotland-hidden-crisis-long-summary.pdf>

¹² [IBID](#)

accommodate that future population, a focus on intergenerational and lifetime homes that are adaptable, flexible, inclusive and affordable must not just be part of the vision of Housing to 2040. It must be at its centre. Evidence from the University of Stirling's 2018 Housing and Ageing report¹³ supports this approach and outlines some of the challenges in creating stronger links between health and social care and housing to support people more holistically.

Q3. Do you have any proposals that would increase the affordability of housing in the future?

N/A

Q4. Do you have any proposals that would increase the accessibility and/or functionality of existing and new housing (for example, for older and disabled people)?

N/A

Q5. Do you have any proposals that would help us respond to the global climate emergency by increasing the energy efficiency and warmth and lowering the carbon emissions of existing and new housing?

N/A

Q6. Do you have any proposals that would improve the quality, standards and state of repair of existing and new housing?

N/A

Q7. Do you have any proposals that would improve the space around our homes and promote connected places and vibrant communities?

We support the further development and incorporation of learning from Age Friendly Places, as published by Architecture and Design Scotland¹⁴, and, as stated above, believe that a more holistic approach to community, incorporating accessibility and flexibility more unilaterally into the built and planned environment, will provide Scotland with a more equitable housing system in future.

¹³ https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/HousingAndAgeingReport.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.ads.org.uk/age-friendly-places/>

Q8. Any other comments?

N/A

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

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