



# **Literature Review: Tackling Homelessness in Scotland**

**A review of the evolution of the  
approach to homelessness in Scotland**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the research

In August 2020 Rocket Science was commissioned by The Salvation Army to conduct research into the homelessness funding landscape for Scotland. The research aims to better understand:

- How homelessness funding is currently being spent, and whether the reduction in funding is a result of money being spent in other areas (e.g. adult social care) or is due to a shift to other types of provision
- Whether funding trends will affect the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan, particularly in the context of the estimation by local authorities that rehousing transition plans will cost close to three times the £50 million budget set by the Government
- What the impact of Covid-19 will likely be, including the effects of the pandemic on the levels of homelessness and the related policy decisions
- What an adequate budget should be that accounts for this rise of people in emergency housing, while ensuring that the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan remains on track. This will help The Salvation Army influence the budget process in Scotland.

As part of this research, Rocket Science are conducting a desk review aimed at developing a clear overview of homelessness in Scotland, including challenges and opportunities, changes in policy and welfare reform in recent years, and emerging trends, especially in light of Coronavirus (Covid-19).

The overall purpose of this review is to enable a comprehensive understanding of where the key risks, challenges and opportunities around tackling homelessness are. This in turn will inform the development of an adequate budget, which can successfully tackle homelessness in Scotland.



## 1.2 Methodology

The desk review is aimed at providing an overview of homelessness in Scotland, recent and future trends, as well as the impacts associated with Covid-19. We have drawn on the following sources for this research:

- Key Scottish Government legislation around homelessness of the past 20 years
- Key policy papers on the approach to tackling homelessness in recent years
- Papers and reports on the impact of welfare reform and of Covid-19
- Local Housing Strategies and Homelessness Strategies for the 32 Scottish local authorities
- Wider publications by third sector and research organisations (e.g. Crisis, Shelter, Social Bite, European Social Policy Network, Housing First Hub Europe)
- National statistics on homelessness for Scotland, England, and international case studies

This review paper is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2 - Homelessness Policy in Scotland**, reviews the key moments in the evolution of policy and legislation around homelessness in Scotland for the last 20 years
- **Chapter 3 – Local Housing and Homelessness Strategies**, provides a summary overview of the common themes and approaches to addressing homelessness across the 32 local authorities.
- **Chapter 4 – Housing and Homelessness Ecology in Scotland and England**, provides an overview of the composition and scale of the housing and homelessness ecology in Scotland and, where possible and relevant, provides direct comparison with the equivalent services in England
- **Chapter 5 – International Approaches to Homelessness**, provides an outline of international practice in policy approaches to homelessness through a number of case studies. The case studies selected for review include Australia, Finland, Denmark, Ireland and France.



## 2. Homelessness Policy in Scotland

This chapter provides an overview of key Scottish Government legislation around homelessness of the past 20 years, as well as key policy developments in the approach to tackling homelessness in recent years.

### 2.1 The evolution of policy and legislation

In Scotland, most Scottish residents that applies for homelessness support from their council has an entitlement to permanent accommodation if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness in the next 90 days (Housing Scotland Act 1987), as long as they are unintentionally homeless<sup>1</sup>. This is different from England where the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) establishes a shorter period of 56 days for those threatened with homelessness (previously 28 days).

Previously, a homeless applicant also had to demonstrate 'priority need' (e.g. age, health condition, etc.) as set out in the 2003 Homelessness Act, but this requirement was abolished in 2012 in Scotland, while it remains in force in England. However, the widening of entitlement to homelessness support is not matched by an adequate stock of either temporary or permanent housing. For this reason, the number of people staying in temporary and precarious accommodation in Scotland has grown notably in recent years (10,281 households at 31st March 2014 compared to 10,989 in 2019)<sup>2</sup>, with length of residency often reaching several months (184 days on average)<sup>3</sup>.

To better understand homelessness in Scotland, it is key to understand the legislative framework which governs homelessness policy. In the past twenty years, homelessness legislation and policy has undergone a number of transformations:

- **The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** required that local authorities, as part of their statutory duties, assessed the extent of homelessness across their areas and devised strategies to prevent and address homelessness. These duties were successively incorporated in Local Housing Strategies (LHSs) following Scottish Government guidance from 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> The main group of people who may not be eligible for assistance are people from abroad who are not British or Irish citizens and/or don't have full rights to live here because of their immigration status.

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government, Statistics on homelessness in Scotland, accessed 28/08/2020

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



- **The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003** brought an additional transformation with the removal of distinctions between homeless households based on ‘priority’ and ‘non-priority’ need (but this came into force only through the Abolition of Priority Need Test Order 2012). The duty to provide temporary and settled accommodation was extended to all homeless households rather than just those considered vulnerable, with children or other specified circumstances – as is still the case in England and Wales
- **The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010** introduced a new duty for local authorities, requiring them to undertake support needs assessments for all households that applied for homelessness support and were unintentionally homeless and those that had evidenced support needs (i.e. threatened with homelessness)
- **The Housing and Regeneration Outcomes Framework** produced by the Scottish Government in 2011 linked housing outcomes to the National Outcomes for Scotland. The document which the framework is built on, “Homes Fit for the 21st Century”, set out the vision and action plan for housing to 2020. The main principles of the framework are: housing vision, all people in Scotland live in high quality, sustainable homes that they can afford and that meet their needs, and the regeneration vision, a Scotland where the most disadvantaged communities are supported and where all places are sustainable and promote well-being. To achieve these visions, the strategy aims to provide a framework for creating a well-functioning housing system, with high quality sustainable homes that meet people’s needs, as well as improving availability and choice of houses.
- **The Scottish Housing Charter** introduced in 2012 focuses on the improvement of the quality and value of services provided by registered social landlords (RSLs), in support of the national aim to create a safer stronger Scotland established by the Scottish Government.
- **The Homelessness (Abolition of Priority Need Test) (Scotland) Order 2012** brought an additional transformation, abolishing the ‘priority need’ test, established in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, when assessing homelessness duty. This produced an improvement in the rights of people experiencing homelessness, granting increased access to temporary and permanent accommodation.



- **The Scottish Government's 'Ending Homelessness Together' fund** introduced in 2017, unlocked £50 million to fund and support homelessness prevention initiatives over five years. The main aims of the strategy are to eradicate rough sleeping, transform the approach to temporary accommodation, and bring an end to homelessness in Scotland.

The approach outlined so far indicates that homelessness policy and legislation in Scotland has undergone a series of transformations. From the decision to abolish the priority need test, to the introduction of the duty on local authorities to lead support needs assessments, and the 'Ending Homelessness Together' fund, changes in policy have gradually transformed the conceptualisation of homelessness and increased the efforts invested towards tackling this issue.

Scotland's approach to homelessness has also diverged in many respects from England's approach since devolution. England's homelessness strategy has been mostly governed by the Housing Act 1996 until recently. The act outlines the local authority's duty depending on whether applicants are homeless or threatened with homelessness in priority need, and not intentionally homeless. A local authority in England would only have full rehousing duty towards their client if all three of these criteria were met. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 represented a historic change for homelessness policy in England. It made substantial changes to local authorities' homelessness duties, particularly around providing advisory services, preventing and relieving homelessness, and mitigating the stringency of the 1996 Act.

However, despite these changes and the commitment of £72.7 million to implement the 2017 Act, there are widespread concerns in England around the lack of changes in the enforcement of the priority needs test and around the insufficiency of the committed funds to meet the level of need. Concerns around committed funding have been similar in Scotland.



## 2.2 Transformative approaches in homelessness policy

Beyond the timebound policy changes outlined previously, three additional transformative elements contributed to shaping Scotland's approach to homelessness in recent years.

1. The first is the gradual introduction of a **'Housing Options' approach** across all local authorities. This approach, introduced in 2010, supports applicants who are at risk of homelessness to identify options available to them, including council housing, housing association and private housing options. It can also include advocacy and mediation, such as with landlords or family (i.e. when familial breakdown is involved), support with underlying issues (e.g. debt, health) and providing information and signposting. The Housing Options approach is guided by the 2016 Scottish Government and ALACHO (Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers) guidance for local authorities to support its implementation. Housing Options provides a 'twin-track approach' whereby this provision sits alongside statutory homelessness duty, without diverting applicants down one track or another.<sup>4</sup>
2. Following the introduction of the Housing Options approach, in 2010 five **Housing Options Hubs** (Ayrshire and South; Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders; North and Islands; Tayside, Fife and Central; West) were created across Scotland, to oversee the rollout and implementation of the approach. These Hubs include all the 32 local authorities and their aim is to strengthen partnership working to develop the Housing Options model in order to enable the exploration of a wide range of available options. Prevention activity under the Housing Options approach has been recorded through the 'PREVENT1' statutory recording tool. The tool indicates that the prevention activities to date have been relatively 'light touch' Housing Options interventions in many cases, limited to active information and signposting, and very often culminating in a statutory homelessness application.
3. A further transformative element is the **Housing First** initiative. Initially modelled on a successful programme from the United States, Pathways to Housing, Housing First was designed as a pilot in Glasgow in 2010 to address the high levels of repeat homelessness among people with complex needs. The innovative aspect of this approach lies in placing homeless people with complex needs into independent tenancies, without having to undergo treatment or pass through transitional housing programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> Shelter, June 2016, [Changes To Homelessness Law And Practice In Scotland, Wales And England](#)



A stronger focus on the importance and success of the Housing First approach came following the final report from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group in 2018, which asserted the importance of Housing First to a rapid rehousing approach. The same year, a Housing First Pathfinder was initiated by Social Bite across 5 cities with £9.5m funding, over 3 years. In 2019, the Scottish Government became the main funder of a larger £10m Housing First Pathfinder programme to March 2022.

After the progressive introduction of the Housing First initiative, in 2013, a further change came through the requirement on local authorities to conduct a **'housing support' assessment** for homeless households, which the council believes could benefit from such service. The assessment looks at the needs of all household members. It may include a review of mental or physical health needs, or difficulties to live independently. The local authority then arranges for these needs to be supported, through signposting to other services, or providing support to manage the person's tenancy.

The introduction of the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG)** marked another evolution in the Scottish Government's approach to homelessness. In 2017, the Government set up HARSAG to produce recommendations on the actions and solutions needed to eradicate rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation, and ultimately end homelessness in Scotland. In 2018 HARSAG's report **'Ending Homelessness'** was published and made 29 recommendations, including that homelessness is a public health priority and should be prioritised by all areas of government and the wider public sector, third sector, and community partners.

The action plan following from the report established:

- The introduction of the Homelessness Prevention Duty for all local authorities, and many public bodies and delivery partners
- A national shift towards Rapid Rehousing as the main approach to homelessness and the scaling up of Housing First approaches for those with complex needs
- Revised arrangements on local connection and intentionality as part of statutory entitlements to homelessness support, removing the client's connection to the local area as a requirement for granting support and narrowing the definition of intentionality to focus on instances of 'deliberate manipulation' of the homelessness system
- Measures to improve the quality of temporary accommodation and restricting the time spent in bed and breakfasts and other 'unsuitable accommodation'
- A more diverse range of 'settled' and 'emergency' housing options for homeless people and those at risk, including 'community hosting' models



- A 'national outreach model' to empower frontline workers and enabling a systems change where there is 'no wrong door' for homeless people and a more 'flexible' approach to where statutory assessments are conducted

As part of the Action Plan of the policy agenda led by HARSAG, the Scottish Government has introduced a new Affordable Housing Supply programme which aims to provide 50,000 new affordable homes by 2021. As part of this, the Government asked every local authority to produce and implement a **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)** and has provided on average £24million over three years to facilitate this, for a total of £827.1 million. The Government is anticipating that the target of 50,000 units, 35,000 of which are to be social rented, will be met by 2021. The end of the Right to Buy scheme has served to preserve the amount of social housing stock, so the new properties being built will represent a real increase in social housing and affordable housing lets.

The transformations in policy and practice over the last ten years highlight a progressively rights-focused and person-centered approach to homelessness, which moves away from reactive approaches to focus on preventative and collaborative strategies, instead providing a more holistic focus on clients' circumstances and needs, and a greater push towards the creation of more affordable and permanent accommodation options. This is also evidenced by the fact that in the four years to 2019, the Scottish Government has delivered over 80% more affordable homes per head of the population than in England, 147 homes per 100,000 population, compared with 80 in England in the same period. In addition, in the same period there have been eight times more social rented properties delivered in Scotland per head of population than in England - 93 homes per 100,000 population in Scotland compared to 11 in England.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Scottish Government, February 2020, [Investing in affordable homes](#)



## 2.3 Key considerations and challenges

### 2.3.1 Low affordability and growing private rented lets <sup>6</sup>

The Scottish economy has maintained low levels of economic growth, cash house prices are still 25% below their pre-2008 peak in real terms, and access to the housing market has been increasingly restricted for over ten years. Additionally, the number of lets in the social rented sector has declined between 2013 and 2018, in part due to the limited stock of housing but also due to issues related to restrictive allocation policies concerning ‘tenancy readiness’ and ‘rent in advance’ when assessing the needs of homeless applicants. At the same time, the number of homeless applicants has risen and local authorities across Scotland are encountering increasing challenges in providing council and housing association tenancies.

The current challenges are further complicated by the growth of the private rented sector, which has been happening at rapid rates for the past 20 years. While all age groups under 75 are now more likely to be in the private rented sector than they were 20 years ago, the biggest proportionate increase in private tenants has been among 25-34 year olds. Furthermore, around one in four lone parents are private tenants. Due to the volatility in income that these groups face, they are among the highest risk groups for homelessness.

Tenancy reform in response to these changes, such as the shift of tenancy disputes from sheriff courts to tribunal systems to decrease costs and control over excessive rent rises, has mitigated some of the risk and aimed to increase security of tenure by reducing the scope for “no fault” evictions. However, these measures are not sufficient to prevent homelessness from being a high risk for these groups.

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<sup>6</sup> Crisis, February 2019, [The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2019](#)



### 2.3.2 The complexities of temporary accommodation

There is support by a range of stakeholders across the largest cities in Scotland<sup>7</sup> for the introduction of enforceable standards for temporary accommodation, the increasing inadequacy of current measures is widely recognised. The quality and suitability of all forms of temporary accommodation vary considerably across local authorities, and generally single people face systematic disadvantage in accessing temporary furnished flats as opposed to other forms of temporary accommodation.

There is also widespread recognition that currently temporary accommodation measures do not take into account specific households' needs, and that the Scottish Government should invest more in monitoring the suitability of temporary accommodation allocations beyond the current focus on Bed and Breakfast use (e.g. overcrowded families in temporary furnished flats, people with multiple needs struggling to maintain recovery or avoid reoffending, people with children struggling to observe curfews or no visitors policies).<sup>8</sup>

There are variations between the issues encountered by people in rural and urban areas when it comes to temporary accommodation. Overcrowding tends to be one of the main challenges in cities, while in rural areas it tends to be that people often have to move miles from their home town or village to access temporary accommodation, leaving behind support networks, or sleeping rough or sofa surfing locally to avoid this.

The high weekly charges for temporary accommodation can act as a disincentive to employment in the long-term, which can lock people out of employment. For this reason, there is encouragement for the Government to develop measures that systematically address this issue. However, there are also concerns that a stronger focus on introducing higher standards for temporary accommodation may reduce capacity and resources for the implementation of the RRTP and that it may cause disinvestment by providers who are unable to align with the standards, if not managed carefully.

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<sup>7</sup> Social Bite, October 2017, [Eradicating 'Core Homelessness' in Scotland's Four Largest Cities](#) - the research comprised six focus groups with service providers across four cities in Scotland (two each in Edinburgh and Glasgow, one in Dundee and one in Aberdeen covering Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire). Focus group participants represented local authorities, health and social care providers, hostels and other temporary accommodation (TA) providers, and a wide range of agencies supporting people with multiple and complex needs. In all, 46 organisations participated in the study

<sup>8</sup> Homeless Network Scotland, March 2018, [Can we fix Homelessness in Scotland? Aye we can](#)



Additionally, although there is recognition that Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) are the least suitable form of temporary accommodation and should only be used as a 'last resort' by local authorities, there is also an acceptance that there is currently a very high use of B&Bs due to limited supply of alternative accommodation. There are concerns that the maximum of seven days rule for all household types across Scotland will be very hard to implement in high B&Bs using areas (Glasgow, Edinburgh, North and South Lanarkshire) in the short-term, given current resources. A better approach could be to ensure that, where the use of B&Bs for longer periods of time is inevitable, residents have access to facilities they need (food storage, cooking and laundry facilities).

### **2.3.3 Hidden challenges in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) agenda <sup>9</sup>**

In terms of the rapid rehousing and Housing First proposals by the Scottish Government, local authorities have generally welcomed these changes as they are supportive of existing efforts to shift local policies and practices in a progressive direction. However, some local authorities, particularly those in pressured housing markets such as Glasgow and Edinburgh and those in rural areas such as the Highlands, have some concerns around the effective implementation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group led policy agenda.

One widespread concern is the challenge posed by the shortages in social housing supply to the effective implementation of rapid rehousing policies. Another is resistance by elected members and housing association boards where there is a strong culture of 'tenancy readiness'. Although a cultural shift to enable the scaling up of Housing First is required, it is important to acknowledge that other types of services are still important and will suit some people.

There are then general concerns that funding will not be sufficient to effect the radical changes sought through the Ending Homelessness Action Plan and that the initial momentum around increasing social and affordable housing supply will not be sustained beyond 2021. Some stakeholders feel that certain recommendations, such as reviewing temporary accommodation standards, need a long timeframe and may lack a clear set of targets or deadlines for their achievement.

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<sup>9</sup> Crisis, February 2019, [The Homelessness Monitor: Scotland 2019](#)



### 2.3.4 Housing First Pathfinder

The Housing First Pathfinder Programme is a £9.5 million programme administered by the Corra Foundation. It was launched in April 2019 and was designed to address some of the issues outlined above, learn from practical delivery, and ensure the success of the future roll-out of Housing First across the 32 local authorities. The Pathfinder is being delivered in:

- **Glasgow:** led by Turning Point Scotland in partnership with Simon Community Scotland, The Salvation Army, and Loretto Care
- **Edinburgh:** led by Cyrenians in partnership with Turning Point Scotland, Rock Trust, Streetwork, Bethany Christian Trust, Gowrie Care, and Barony Care
- **Dundee:** led by Transform Community Development in partnership with The Salvation Army, Dundee Survival Group, and Addaction
- **Aberdeen:** led by Aberdeen Cyrenians in partnership with Aberdeen Foyer, Turning Point Scotland, Aberdeen City Council Housing Support Department and Aberdeenshire Council
- **Stirling:** led by Loretto Care in partnership with Barony Care

Figures published by Homeless Network Scotland paint a positive picture of the Pathfinder Programme to 31 October 2020: of the 354 tenancies offered across the five cities, 310 people are still in their tenancies. Of the 44 tenancies (12%) that have ended, 21 were not successfully sustained and 23 were ended due to other reasons (e.g. death of the tenant or a long-term prison sentence).<sup>10</sup> Nobody has been evicted from their home.

Table 1 overleaf shows the number of tenancies sustained monthly in each of the Housing First Pathfinder areas. The total number of new tenancies per month shows a clear dip between April and July 2020, suggesting a slowing of progress, which can be attributed to the effects of Covid-19. Numbers have begun to pick up again in subsequent months, with the highest number of new tenancies over the period occurring in October 2020. The data also shows large variations in the extent to which local authorities have been able to fulfil the initial Pathfinder targets set (both for Quarter 2 of 2020, and up to March 2021). This is likely due to a combination of factors (explored in more detail later on), including a lack of adequate housing supply in some local authority areas, particularly Edinburgh.

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<sup>10</sup> Homeless Network Scotland, October 2020, [Housing First Track - Progress to October 2020](#)



#### Key

	Represents a figure below average/target
	Represents a figure around the average/target
	Represents a figure above average/target

Pathfinder area / month	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr / May 20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Q2 2020 target	March 2021 target
Dundee	37	39	44	44	44	48	49	51	56	74%	56%
Edinburgh	40	47	51	53	55	60	65	70	78	38%	28%
Glasgow	102	110	117	116	116	118	127	133	140	59%	44%
Aberdeen/shire	29	31	31	39	46	48	55	62	69	77%	58%
Stirling	8	9	9	9	9	9	10	11	11	55%	55%
Total progress	216	236	252	261	270	283	306	327	354	57%	43%
New tenancies per month		20	16	9	9	13	23	21	27		

**Table 1: Housing First Pathfinder tenancy sustainment<sup>11</sup>**

### 2.3.5 The impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on homelessness. The Scottish Housing regulator data for June 2020 indicated that the number of people who applied to local authorities as homeless increased by 18% to 2,923, while the number of households in temporary accommodation increased to 13,875. In June, rent arrears for tenants of social landlords increased by £3.75m. The figures also show a 40% increase in applications for crisis grants from the Scottish Welfare Fund, with a 43% increase in expenditure compared to June 2019. Almost a third of households (31%) across Scotland have reported a drop in incomes since March 2020.<sup>12</sup>

To respond to the emergency, the Scottish Government announced £350 million of Communities funding in March 2020, including an additional £45 million for the Scottish Welfare Fund, and £70 million for a Food Fund. In addition to funding, the **Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill 2020** increased eviction notice periods for up to six months for private and social tenants to provide security to households facing financial hardship in the months during and following lockdown.

<sup>11</sup> Information in the above table has been taken from the Housing First Pathfinder monthly trackers, available here: <https://homelessnetwork.scot/housing-first/pathfinder/tracker/>

<sup>12</sup> Shelter Scotland, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020, [Shelter Scotland Briefing Paper: Local Government and Communities Committee](#)



During the lockdown in March 2020, the Government provided funding to ensure that rough sleepers had access to temporary accommodation to ensure they could socially distance and self-isolate, which was not possible in night shelters. This followed a similar approach in England, where councils were given £3.2m in March to provide emergency shelter for 5,400 homeless people through the 'Everyone In' scheme, with many housed in hotels.

The Covid-19 crisis also sped up the introduction of **the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Act<sup>13</sup>**, which came into force on 6th May 2020. The new Order requires that local authorities do not use Unsuitable Accommodation (i.e. B&Bs) for more than seven days to accommodate homeless people. However, local authorities are also allowed, under circumstances of need, to breach the Order until the end of January 2021<sup>14</sup>, to ensure clients are housed. As a result, increasing numbers of homeless people have been housed in bed and breakfasts (790 people at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020) and hostels (1,450 people at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020) with average permanence of 184 days.

Beyond direct funding to homelessness action, in May 2020 the Government introduced a fund for landlords whose tenants may be unable to pay the rent. The aim of the fund is to support landlords and minimise the financial impact caused by the extension of notice periods, as established in The Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill 2020. However, as the Scottish Association of Landlords indicated, the loans are only available to landlords with up to five properties, potentially excluding landlords with the highest need for support.

In terms of social housing, the Government is preparing the introduction of the **Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Bill** which, if implemented in its current form, gives Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) nine months to submit their accounts, rather than six months. This Bill is meant to mitigate some pressures that housing associations face due to Covid-19. However, housing associations may still lose income from tenants who cannot use digital methods of payment and usually pay in cash.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 amendment: BRIA. Online: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/amendment-homeless-persons-unsuitable-accommodation-scotland-order-2020-bria/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://homelessnetwork.scot/2020/09/03/changes-to-the-unsuitable-accommodation-order-in-scotland/>

<sup>15</sup> SPICe Spotlight, May 2020, [The impact of Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) on the housing sector](#)



Additionally, the stall in the development and completion of new properties may also cause a reduction in income for Housing Associations. Due to the crisis, some social landlords, including local authorities and housing associations, have suspended allocations of properties and have stopped mutual exchanges, whereby tenants could swap properties with one another. However, these changes may cause significant delays and put vulnerable groups at risk, such as those with mobility or health issues, as well as creating a backlog within the housing sector.

Beyond direct government action, Shelter Scotland, has devised a three-point action plan to address homelessness during the Covid-19 crisis. The proposal was accepted in principle by the Scottish Government in July 2020, and it is centered around <sup>16</sup>:

- Extending the emergency coronavirus powers to prevent evictions until at least April 2021.
- Further committing to an ambitious affordable housebuilding programme for the next three years with a target of 53,000 affordable homes, 37,100 of which should be for social rent.
- Strengthening a rights-based approach to housing, supporting people to affirm their rights, and providing a strong regulatory framework to protect them. This includes introducing a new human rights bill with the right to good quality, safe and affordable housing.

The consequences of the impact of Covid-19 are still hard to assess in full. Several councils say there will be a budget gap to deal with, due to the additional resources required to deal with Covid-19, which may have a long-term impact on future service provision<sup>17</sup>. This creates questions and concerns around barriers that may likely arise to housing development due to a lack of funding and infrastructure programmes for new development. In particular, the re-direction of funding towards Covid-19 priorities will likely cause a stall in the RRTPs across the majority of LAs, putting a halt to one of the major developments in homelessness policy in Scotland.

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<sup>16</sup> Shelter Scotland, June 2020, [3-Point Plan](#)

<sup>17</sup> Shelter Scotland, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020, [Shelter Scotland Briefing Paper: Local Government and Communities Committee](#)



### 2.3.6 Data quality

There are a number of issues with the homelessness data in Scotland. Homelessness statistics data reported to Scottish Government is inconsistent. For example, some local authorities that deal with large numbers of homelessness applications have lots of 'not offered', while others have very small numbers or none at all. The Scottish Government report that while there could be some genuine differences in local provision and/or practice between areas that naturally lead to large variations in the numbers of 'not offered', there could also be different ways of recording and reporting the information between local authorities. It is also possible that the definitions are not being used consistently (e.g. some could include all types of presentations and others include only some).

The Scottish Government also report inconsistencies between HL2<sup>18</sup> and HL3<sup>19</sup> and a concern that differences between the HL2 and HL3 returns have gotten considerably larger in the last year. For example, additional types of accommodation being reported in HL3 claims, that are not included in HL2 claims, suggesting that there are different definitions or sets of accommodation being reported across returns.

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<sup>18</sup> Number of households in temporary accommodation, the number of those in unsuitable accommodation as defined by the Order, and the number of those in accommodation which breaches the Order

<sup>19</sup> Placement level information on temporary accommodation



## 3. Local Housing and Homelessness Strategies

This chapter provides a summary of how the 32 local authorities in Scotland approach addressing homelessness, and key priorities and challenges faced. Availability of Homelessness Strategies varies between local authorities, with some having detailed strategies, while others incorporate it into their general housing strategy. In some cases, recent information is not easily accessible. It is important to note that local authorities themselves have also highlighted many of the issues that appear in the literature review through their Local Housing Strategies.

However, the key themes, opportunities and challenges that local authorities include in their strategies are generally common across the whole of Scotland, with variation around the articulation of each approach. Therefore, the research outlined below provides an initial overview of the common cross-regional themes emerging from the review of the 32 strategies.

### 3.1 Current Approaches

#### 3.1.1 Homelessness Prevention

Preventative action to homelessness across local authorities presents broadly similar approaches, with some local variations often dependent on the level of need. These generally include:

- Dedicated Homelessness Prevention Teams, Housing Support Officers, as well as third sector partners to deliver support such as information and advice, debt counselling, housing support and assistance to support clients to have the skills to manage their tenancy
- Provision of low level housing support and Intensive Tenancy Management and longer term support, for people with more complex issues or those struggling to maintain tenancy of their homes, as well as mediation, tenancy health checks and tenancy sustainment
- Management of rent deposit, through the Deposit Guarantee Scheme, to prevent homelessness under the Housing Options approach and to reduce the number of households requiring temporary accommodation



- Support to access Housing Options guidance and plans, through dedicated interviews, accessible online forms and provision of personalised housing options plans for tenants
- Support needs assessments for households with complex needs and referrals to partner agencies (e.g. Adult Services, Education and Children's Services, Health).

### 3.1.2 Temporary Accommodation

The approach to temporary accommodation adopted by local authorities varies locally. While some operate supported accommodation facilities and rely in part on the council's own stock, the majority rely more heavily on the private sector. Using the council's own stock is the most successful approach, with cost reductions of up to 80% compared to the use of B&Bs as well as decreased disruptions for clients, who are supported to transition into these accommodations permanently.

However, the logistics of this approach to providing settled accommodation is challenging given councils' limited stocks and the time it can take to increase supply. Out of 11,665 people in temporary accommodation in March 2020, representing a third of all homeless applicants for the year, 61% were moved into social sector accommodation, but a notable 12% were moved to hostels and 7% were in B&Bs, with a further 20% in other types of accommodation. The use of B&Bs was particularly high in Highland (25%), East Lothian (21%), Glasgow City (14%), and Stirling (13%). Hostel use was high in Inverclyde (30%), Edinburgh (16%), and Glasgow (13%). The average time spent in temporary accommodation was 184 days.<sup>20</sup>

Current policy sets out that B&Bs and hostels should only be used as a form of emergency accommodation and are classified as unsuitable for longer stays, as they do not provide any basic living facilities, such as kitchens or laundry. However, many local authorities, as indicated above, rely on the extended use of emergency accommodation even for longer-term accommodation due to severe supply shortages in suitable social sector accommodation. The high use of unsuitable temporary accommodation is a common theme across councils with low stocks and high demand and there are concerns both in terms of budget pressures and impacts on clients living in these accommodations.

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<sup>20</sup> Scottish Government, August 2020, Homelessness in Scotland (2019-20)



### 3.1.3 Partnership

Across local authorities there is an emphasis on the importance of strong partnerships to prevent and alleviate homelessness:

- There is a strong presence of multidisciplinary working and strategic groups (e.g. Health and Homelessness, Registered Social Landlords, Integrated Alcohol and Addiction Teams, Health and Care Partnership Board, Housing Options Hubs).
- Joint work with specialised services focuses on how best to provide the appropriate support to enable specific vulnerable groups at high risk of homelessness to find and better sustain settled accommodation. This includes working with services specialising in mental health and alcohol dependency, young people and care leavers, prison discharges, and women and domestic abuse.
- LAs are increasingly seeking to work with other agencies to use a partnership approach to letting and managing tenancies, as well as working closely with social landlords and private sector landlords to prevent and address housing crises. Collaborations include nomination agreements with registered social landlords and lease agreements with private landlords, as well as joined-up work with third sector organisations such as Shelter and Cyrenians to provide advice and support and promote tenancy sustainment, and signposting and referral to agencies such as adult services, education, health and social care and children's services.

## 3.2 Key Priorities

The research reviewed the 32 Local Housing Strategies and Homelessness Strategies available for each Scottish local authority. It should be noted that most strategies were introduced between 2016 and 2018 and usually adopted a five-year plan, which is due to be updated in the next years.

Therefore, a range of priorities which are outlined below may have been implemented or changed at the time of writing this review. A table with links to each strategy is included in Appendix 1.



### **3.2.1 Person-centered approaches**

Across local authorities, a key priority is to develop person-centered approaches to homelessness services. This includes providing a holistic approach to housing support services and assessments which consider the full spectrum of needs of people requiring support, and work in collaboration with other agencies supporting applicants. Councils recognise the importance of person-centred needs assessment and risk assessment to achieve more effective outcomes.

### **3.2.2 Housing First**

Most councils are in the process of reviewing their current approaches to models of temporary accommodation, with a focus on providing more options for direct access to settled accommodation for homeless people, reducing the reliance and time spent in temporary accommodation. Across councils, there is a reiterated focus on transitioning to a Housing First model.

### **3.2.3 Preventative measures**

Local authorities include strengthening preventative approaches among their top priorities. This includes ensuring referrals for housing support are made at the appropriate time to avoid homelessness and that individuals who require additional assistance to find or remain in their homes receive timely support.

Across councils there is also a perceived need to develop better understanding of the particular issues, for example social isolation and loneliness, issues affecting young people, as well as specific issues affecting vulnerable groups such as women, and ex-offenders, to improve preventative approaches. In 2019, under 35s accounted for 57% of homelessness applicants, while women accounted for 46% of all applicants, and people who had been discharged from prison accounted for 6% <sup>21</sup>.

A further action in this area includes enabling the consistent use of the Housing Options approach, to ensure service users' accommodation needs are fully met, by implementing robust processes to assess suitable options following Government guidance.

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<sup>21</sup> Scottish Government: Homelessness in Scotland: 2018-2019 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2018-2019/>



### **3.2.4 Tenancy sustainment**

Developing policies for improved tenancy sustainment and to reduce the repeat risk of homelessness is a further key priority. This includes focused action to investigate the factors and reasons involved in clients failing to sustain or abandoning their tenancy, such as working with clients to determine and respond to reasons for repeat homelessness.

### **3.2.5 Private rented sector use**

Local authorities across Scotland are placing increasing focus on directing resources towards promoting the use of the private rented sector, to reduce demand on social housing and homeless services. This priority revolves around improving access and removing barriers to private renting, ensuring affordable lets and rent incentives, and providing services which enable people to live in their own home for as long as possible.

### **3.2.6 Sustainable temporary accommodation**

A key priority for councils is also developing policies for sustainable temporary accommodation. This includes expanding the supply of social sector accommodation and reducing the use of hostels and B&Bs, to provide good and adequate supply of stock and good value for money. As part of this priority, councils aim to improve monitoring of temporary accommodation provision to ensure suitable and high quality accommodation is available to those who require it (e.g. furnished and within a community) and assessing rent levels to guarantee affordability while ensuring sustainability for the council. This priority also includes working with partners, such as RSLs, to develop new options and long term supported accommodation, and reducing the time that clients spend in temporary accommodation.

### **3.2.7 Support for vulnerable people**

Local authorities have identified a need to improve the existing processes for supporting vulnerable people at risk of or facing homelessness. This includes ex-offenders, women and women with children, looked after children, care leavers, and young people.

As part of this priority, councils are focusing on ensuring that standards are met (e.g. 'Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' (SHORE) for prison leavers) and exploring further options, such as shared tenancies and concierge support. Additionally, local authorities are developing approaches to increase multi-agency efforts to improve youth housing protocols and co-ordination of services in relation to youth homelessness and clients with multiple and complex needs (e.g. mental health, addictions)



Single mothers accounted for 17% of all homelessness applicants in 2019, and for 38% of all female applicants. Many local authorities are also partnering with Domestic Abuse services and rates of applications caused by violent and abusive disputes have been increasing in recent years (from 10.9% in 2012 to 13.1% in 2019).

### 3.2.8 Addressing social and health inequalities

Reducing impact of social and health inequalities on people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless is a further priority for councils. This focuses particularly on developing partnership approaches with Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) and public health bodies to identify and address the health needs of homeless clients. Some councils have also conducted joint housing, health and social care needs assessment together with the local HSCPs.

## 3.3 Key Challenges

Across local authorities, the principal challenges identified for the future delivery of the Local Housing Strategies (LHSs) and Homelessness Prevention Plans, include:

- **Lack of suitable accommodation for single people and families**, with supply of new affordable housing in recent years not being sufficient to meet the need.
- **Length of time spent in high-cost temporary accommodation**. Some councils remain dependent on B&B and hostels for temporary accommodation, particularly Edinburgh, Highland, and Glasgow, with increasing use of such accommodation and households staying for longer periods (267 days on average, 2020), due to increased waiting times for re-housing.
- **Complex needs**. The number of clients with multiple and complex needs has been increasing in recent years, from 34% in 2012 to 51% in 2019, with one in five applicants presenting two or more needs<sup>22</sup>. Across most LAs there is a lack of specialist support services for these, which often delay permanent tenancy allocation and threaten tenancy sustainment. Existing supported accommodation services, which are mainly structured around the needs of older people and people with disabilities, are not designed with these groups in mind, which many times also present mental health problems (1 in 4) and/or addictions (1 in 10), and there is a gap in service provision.

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<sup>22</sup> Scottish Government: Homelessness in Scotland: 2018-2019 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2018-2019/>



- **Increased financial pressures**, which are requiring councils to reshape their commissioned housing support (e.g. towards Rapid Rehousing and Covid-19 response) and rethink the use of more expensive facilities (e.g. B&Bs), creating significant challenges in delivering Local Housing Strategies and achieving their priorities within designated budgets.
- **Cost and insecurity of the private rented sector (PRS)**, particularly in areas such as Angus, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, Midlothian, and North Lanarkshire and where there is a lack of alternative affordable housing options to move on to. In particular, the introduction of the Private Sector Tenancy in 2017 had a further impact on the private rental market and who it caters for.



## 4. Housing and Homelessness Ecology

This chapter provides an overview of the composition and scale of the housing and homelessness ecology in Scotland and, where possible and relevant, provides direct comparison with the equivalent services in England. Table 2 below outlines the main components of the housing and homelessness service structure, including temporary accommodation, supported accommodation, social housing, Housing First, and rapid rehousing, providing a summary description of each service and headline data for Scotland and England. The table includes data on current type of provision, demand and supply for services.

Type of service	Description	Scotland	England
Temporary Accommodation (TA)	Temporary accommodation (TA) is comprised of emergency or interim accommodation and longer-term temporary accommodation. Emergency accommodation includes hostels or B&Bs, with either shared or no basic living facilities, such as kitchens or laundry. Longer-term TA includes furnished flats, or hostels that have support designed to help clients with particular needs (e.g. mental health difficulties). Many councils across the UK rely on the extended use of emergency accommodation even for longer-term accommodation due to severe supply shortages of suitable accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2019 there were 11,665 people in TA in Scotland</li><li>• Of these 31% (3,570 people) were with children</li><li>• Of all those in TA, 61% were in social sector accommodation, 12% were in hostels, 7% were in B&amp;Bs, and 20% were in other type of accommodation</li><li>• Use of B&amp;Bs was highest in Stirling (25%) and South Ayrshire (21%)</li><li>• Use of hostels was highest in Falkirk (58%) and Argyle and Bute (49%)</li><li>• Time spent in TA was 184 days on average</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2019 there were 93,000 people in TA in England</li><li>• Of these 68% (63,610 people) were with children</li><li>• Of all those in TA, 57% were in private sector accommodation (both those leased by the local authority and privately managed), 22% were in council housing, 9% were in B&amp;Bs, 7.5% were in hostels, and 5% were in other type of accommodation</li></ul>



<b>Housing First</b>	<p>Housing First is an intensive support model focused on supporting homeless people with complex needs to live in their own homes independently and gives them control over the type of support that they receive. Housing First is different from rapid rehousing and housing-led services, which are low intensity services also aimed at rehousing people rapidly but are aimed at clients with low support needs. The service provides housing as soon as possible, without requiring clients to demonstrate that they are 'housing ready' (i.e. able to live independently or with only low levels of support).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scotland led the development of Housing First in the UK, with the approach first introduced in 2010 through the Turning Point Scotland in Glasgow.</li><li>• The service was extended to five major cities (Aberdeen/shire, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Stirling) in 2018, and supported over 800 over two years through the £10 million Housing First Scotland Pathfinder Programme</li><li>• Between April 2019 and June 2020 Housing First supported 270 people in Scotland, with an 88% tenancy sustainment rate</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The first Housing First project in England started in 2012 in the London Borough of Camden</li><li>• England reported 32 services supporting 350 people at any given time as at the end of 2016. Most services were provided by local partnerships or voluntary sector organisations.</li><li>• In 2017, the Government committed £28 million to fund three Housing First pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, and the West Midlands.</li></ul>
<b>Supported Accommodation</b>	<p>Supported housing is any housing scheme where housing, support and sometimes care services are provided in an integrated way. This can include support with physical and mental health, addictions, managing benefits and developing life skills. Data on the right includes data for homeless individuals and families, people with mental health issues, vulnerable young people (16-25), people with addictions, people who experienced domestic abuse, ex-offenders, refugees, vulnerable adults with multiple and complex needs, and single parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2019 14,500 supported accommodation units were occupied by vulnerable or homeless people in Scotland (29% of all those in supported accommodation)</li><li>• The incidence of provision of supported housing for single homeless people is higher in Scotland (10%) than in England (5%). This is mainly attributable to the abolition of the 'priority need' test in Scotland</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2019 111,000 supported accommodation units were occupied by vulnerable or homeless people in England (22% of all those in supported accommodation)</li></ul>



<b>Homelessness Support</b>	<p>Homelessness support often takes the form of assessments of circumstances and needs, both for people facing or at risk of homelessness. Assessments are carried out by the local authority where the applicant resides. They involve a face to face interview with a housing officer and since the introduction of the Housing Options approach in Scotland, they also include an information and advice process which enables housing officers to work with other services to help people before they reach crisis point. Where duty of support is identified (of prevention or relief) assessments can terminate with the provision of housing support and referral to other support services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2019-20 there were 38,000 applications for homelessness support in Scotland</li><li>• The highest number of applications were registered primarily in councils with large urban areas - Glasgow (16%), Edinburgh (9%), Fife (7%), and North and South Lanarkshire (6% respectively)</li><li>• In 2019, out of 27,000 cases where duty to support was identified in Scotland, 10,150 received support (38%)</li><li>• A remaining 32% were assessed and found to not require support, 23% received no assessment and no support, 5% were assessed and found to require support but support was not provided</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2019-20 there were 304,300 application for homelessness in England</li><li>• Of these 95% (288,480 people) were identified as needing a prevention or relief duty</li><li>• Of those identified as needing a prevention or relief duty, 28% (81,500 people) were assessed through prevention duty and secured accommodation</li><li>• A further 21% (61,930 people) were assessed through relief duty and secured accommodation</li><li>• For the majority of remaining applications, contact was either lost or the 56 day period elapsed and applicants were passed on to relief (following prevention) or main (following relief) duty</li></ul>
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## Rapid Rehousing

Rapid Rehousing is the strategic approach which informs the Housing First programme and wider housing-led approaches. It is focused on providing settled, mainstream housing outcomes, as quickly as possible for people with multiple needs beyond housing. In Scotland, all local authorities have been required in 2017 to introduce five-year RRTP to outline how they will redress the balance of housing and support options that are available, and how quickly they are accessed. In England, the Rapid Rehousing Pathway was launched as part of the Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018. The pathway specifically supports rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping, access settled housing.

- The Scottish Government will provide £24 million over three years to local authorities across Scotland to implement RRTP starting from 2019
- All Scottish local authorities submitted a RRTP (with a five-year plan) to the Scottish Government in 2019
- Within the RRTP local authorities have detailed the baseline position of temporary accommodation supply for their council, assessed the support needs of homeless households, their five-year vision for settled housing options, and the resources required to deliver the plan including any funding requests made of the Scottish Government
- In England, the Rapid Rehousing Pathway was launched as part of the Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018
- The strategy is aimed at increasing the provision available for rough sleepers, and those at risk of sleeping rough, in 108 areas across the country, for a total of 31 Rapid Rehousing hubs
- The Government provided £41 million for 31 Somewhere Safe to Stay hubs, around 260 Navigator posts, 260 supported lettings staff delivering schemes in 82 areas, 42 dedicated Local Lettings Agencies



<p><b>Social Housing</b></p>	<p>Social housing comprises homes provided by housing associations or a local council. Social tenants rent homes from and pay rent to the housing association or local council. Social houses are defined by their greater affordability compared to private renting the more secure, long-term tenancy that they provide. There has been an ongoing shortage of social housing stock in the UK, as there is a mismatch between demand and supply which has become increasingly acute in recent years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As of 2020, there are 160 registered social landlords across all Scottish local councils</li><li>• Social rented housing stock totalled 594,000 dwellings in Scotland in 2017, 23% of all dwellings</li><li>• In 2018-19 of the completed new builds in Scotland, 6,564 were classified as social rents, 967 as affordable rent, and 2,023 as affordable home ownership</li><li>• Of the 9,554 units completed in 2018-19, 69% were for social rent</li><li>• A model introduced by the homelessness charity Crisis in 2015 estimates an affordable housing requirement in Scotland of 12,014 dwellings per annum over five years (2016-2020). Current supply provides only around 80% of the required stock.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As of 2020, there are 1,626 registered social housing providers across England</li><li>• Social rented housing stock in England reached 4.13 million dwellings in 2018, 17% of all dwellings</li><li>• In 2018-19, 57,185 new affordable houses were built in England. Of these 53% were classified as affordable rent and 30% as shared ownership, while 11% were social housing</li><li>• A 2020 House of Common briefing paper found that annual new build would need to increase by around another 24% by the mid-2020s to meet the government's target, and by another 43% to reach the 340,000 per year called for by Crisis and the NHF to meet affordable housing needs</li></ul>
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**Table 2 Overview of the housing and homelessness ecology in Scotland and England [Source: Rocket Science analysis of [Homelessness in Scotland](#) and [Statutory Homelessness in England data](#)]**



## 5. International Approaches to Homelessness

This chapter provides an outline of international practice in policy approaches to homelessness through several case studies. The case studies selected for review include Australia, Finland, Denmark, Ireland and France.

The rationale for selection of these case studies is the following

- **Australia** is among the countries with the highest rate of homelessness out of all countries with advanced welfare systems. A cohesive national approach to tackling homelessness was only developed recently by the Australian central government and it has been accompanied by an injection of funding of \$6 billion in 2019-20. Australia also provides a relevant example for policy comparison as it generally follows a liberal welfare model, similar to that of England and to some extent Scotland.
- **Finland and Denmark** are the two countries where government approaches to addressing homelessness have been most successful in the past two decades and particularly in recent years, following the adoption of a Housing First model. In these countries, the Housing First approach has become the mainstream approach to addressing the issue of homelessness. The success of the model is particularly evident in Finland, where homelessness has decreased by 45%. Finland and Denmark provide relevant examples of good practice.
- **Ireland and France** are two countries where homelessness strategies have been less successful in recent years, particularly around prevention. However, they also represent examples where homelessness action is starting to acquire a new momentum and where innovative developments are starting to take place and show early positive outcomes. Ireland and France provide relevant examples of improving practice.



## 5.1 Australia

Australia is among the countries with advanced welfare systems with one of the highest rates of homelessness, after Germany, counting 50 homeless people for every 10,000 people. Homelessness has increased by 14% between 2011-2016. One in five homeless people are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and almost one in three are immigrants. In particular, 44% of the homeless population that receives accommodation is placed in severely overcrowded dwellings (51,088 people).<sup>23</sup>

In 2017 Homelessness Australia, the national advocacy body for homelessness in Australia, called for a national homelessness strategy built around six key principles<sup>24</sup>:

- Developing a strategy that takes best practice to scale through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the National Affordable Housing Agreement.
- Building a streamlined access to services by strengthening pathways to support and assist people in need to access effective and evidence-based service responses.
- Making Housing First the homelessness response across Australia, by establishing it as the foundation to allocation policy across social housing programmes and providing a supply of social housing to meet demand.
- Ensuring that ongoing funding is allocated for Rapid Rehousing programmes, particularly for women and children affected by domestic and family abuse.
- Providing specific funding to Specialist Homelessness Services to strengthen support services to minimise tenancy failures and develop a national output measure to monitor evictions into homelessness from social housing providers.
- Delivering integrated services focusing on early intervention, particularly addressing the specific needs of young people, women and children, the elderly, and disabled people. This includes integrating service delivery responses across child protection, youth justice, disability and youth homeless services, as well as between housing and aged care health services.

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<sup>23</sup> Homelessness Australia, 2016, [Homelessness Statistics](#)

<sup>24</sup> Homelessness Australia, April 2017, [A National Homelessness Strategy: why we need it](#)



While state and territory governments have primary responsibility for housing and homelessness in Australia and use their own budgets to address homelessness through their Homelessness Strategies, in response to Homelessness Australia's strategy proposal, the Australian Central Government has invested more than \$6 billion in 2019-2020 for housing support and homelessness services <sup>25</sup>. This includes around \$4.6 billion on Commonwealth Rent Assistance, to assist eligible Australians meet their rental costs and more than \$1.5 billion through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). The NHHA, ensures that homelessness funding is ongoing and indexed, helping government improve funding for homelessness and resulting in \$125 million funding being set aside for homelessness services in 2019-20, which will be matched by states and territories.

Through the NHHA the Australian Government also improved accountability around reporting on homelessness, as states and territories are required to have publicly available housing and homelessness strategies, as well as data collection and reporting tools. Homelessness strategies for each state are required to address the needs of priority groups listed in the NHHA and reduce the incidence of homelessness among these groups. The priority groups are women and children affected by family and domestic violence, children and young people, Indigenous Australians, people experiencing repeat homelessness, people exiting institutions and care into homelessness, and older people.

The Government has also committed up to \$118 million over five years to the Reconnect programme, which is a dedicated programme to assist young people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. Services provided by the programme include support to find stable accommodation, family mediation, staying in school, finding employment, and participating in local communities. The programme also provides counselling, group work, and practical support to the whole family.

Additionally, \$78 million has been committed for safe places for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. This includes \$60 million for a grants programme for organisations working with homeless women to provide new or expanded temporary accommodation. This programme is expected to create up to 450 safe places, supporting up to 6,500 women and children. It also includes \$18 million to continue supporting states and territories through the Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes programme, which provides security updates and safety planning.

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<sup>25</sup> Australian Government Department of Social Services, October 2019, [Homelessness](#)



In the 2017-18 Budget, the Government also announced a package of initiatives to develop alternative sources of capital for social and affordable housing, this includes:

- \$30 million for Social Impact Investment initiatives, of which \$10.2 million will be used over 10 years to improve housing and welfare outcomes for young people at risk of homelessness.
- \$6 million over four years in Homes for Homes, an initiative that encourages property vendors to donate 0.1 per cent of the sale proceeds of their property to fund social and affordable housing projects across Australia. The Commonwealth funding will support development of organisational capability to deliver the Homes for Homes initiative.

Due to the recent implementation of the new strategy, there is limited data to evidence progress to date, but there are initial indications of successful implementation from 2018-19 data, showing that 290,300 clients were assisted in the year, equating to a rate of 116.2 clients per 10,000 population, or 1.2% of the Australian population.<sup>26</sup>

## 5.2 Finland <sup>27 28</sup>

Finland is the only country in Europe where homelessness has been decreasing for the past two decades, with a decrease of 45% between 1995 and 2018. According to the statistics produced by the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA), in 2018 there were 5,482 homeless people in Finland, compared to over 11,000 in 1998. Remarkably, long-term homelessness decreased by 35% between 2008 and 2015 and the use of emergency and temporary accommodation (shelters, hostels, temporary supported housing) fell by 76% between 2008 and 2017 (to only 229 people in 2018). The reduction has been mainly due to the widespread adoption of preventative measures and replacement of older models of congregate and communal supported housing with Housing First and housing-led models.

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<sup>26</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, December 2019, [Homeless and homelessness services](#)

<sup>27</sup> European Social Policy Network, 2019, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe A study of national policies

<sup>28</sup> Housing First Europe Hub, 2019, HOUSING First IN EUROPE An Overview Of Implementation, Strategy And Fidelity



The main explanation for this phenomenon is a shift in emphasis in social and healthcare policy, particularly the adoption of a long-term homelessness strategy based on the provision of permanent affordable housing, on specialised support for the most vulnerable and on prevention services. The main drivers for these notable achievements have been the ongoing emphasis on tackling homelessness through long-term strategic national programmes, a policy approach based on collaborative work between NGOs, municipalities and central government, a sustained focus on the provision of permanent affordable housing and consistent provision of specialised support for the most vulnerable people.

Finland's success is in part attributable to the adoption of an approach to temporary accommodation that uses ordinary housing and high-intensity support. The Housing First model has been adopted in Finland since 2008 and it has been built around a strongly human rights-oriented approach. As a result, Finland has given priority to this housing-focused approach in the provision of all its services to homeless people. Initially, Housing First was introduced using a congregate approach, which converted existing large homelessness shelters and other buildings into dedicated apartment blocks. As the strategy developed, a wider programme of newbuild and scattered-housing services was introduced, using a mix of Housing First and housing-led approaches.

Today, the whole homelessness prevention and provision system is based on the Housing First principle, and shelters have been replaced by rental housing units. In Finland, the focus is on long-term homelessness, which means that Housing First is often working with people with mental health problems, although this group includes individuals who may not have a psychiatric diagnosis, but to whom Housing First is available because they have not been able to exit homelessness using other services.

Currently, the National Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland (AUNE) 2016-2019 focuses primarily on homelessness prevention and provides €78m in funding. The AUNE targets groups at the highest risk of homelessness, including people in debt, young people, families, people leaving care, those suffering from mental health problems, addictions, immigrants and asylum seekers, and ex-offenders. The aim of the programme is to produce 2,500 new houses for homeless people while also providing more customer-oriented, preventive and cost-effective services.



Two major streams of funding are used for the development of the Housing First model: The ARA (The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland) operating under the Ministry of Environment provides funding for the provision of affordable housing; and the STEA (Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations) provides funding for the development of projects and for the acquisition of scattered housing for homeless people.

Beyond its strong policy and strategic focus on preventing and combating homelessness, Finland also has a robust social housing sector. The Y-Säätiö (The Y-Foundation), a partnership between the municipality of Helsinki, the Finnish Construction Trade Union, the Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries, the Finnish Red Cross, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the municipality of Tampere and the municipality of Vantaa, is the fourth largest landlord in Finland. It provides social housing to people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless across more than 50 cities and municipalities.

Despite these achievements, Finland also faces some challenges. In particular, in big cities the need for affordable rental housing is still not being met. This is mainly due to funding mechanisms lacking sufficient resources to fund the necessary capital expenditure (e.g. funding for social housing). Additionally, despite the wide network of provision and support, an ongoing challenge is the lack of knowledge and ability to apply for support of many homeless people, who often find navigating the landscape and different forms of support challenging.

## 5.3 Denmark <sup>29</sup> <sup>30</sup>

In Denmark homelessness has seen a 33% increase between 2009 and 2017, despite general economic improvement in the country for the same period and the introduction of key policies on homelessness. Several factors may help explain this increase: above all, housing price increases and reductions in minimum income benefits, which particularly affected young people. Additionally, there has been a gap in recent years between demand for homelessness services and available funding. While the number of homeless people rose by 14% from 2013 to 2017 (reaching 6,138 people), municipal expenditure on socially vulnerable people fell by 3% to €940 million in 2017. Furthermore, the number and share of homeless people with a mental illness has increased while the psychiatric sector has undergone budget cuts in recent years.

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<sup>29</sup> European Social Policy Network, 2019, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe A study of national policies

<sup>30</sup> Housing First Europe Hub, 2019, HOUSING First IN EUROPE An Overview Of Implementation, Strategy And Fidelity



Despite the increase in homelessness, the proportion of homeless people as part of the population is still comparably low when seen against other European countries. The main reason for this is that Denmark, similarly to Finland has had a sustained strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness in recent decades, with a strong focus on the national implementation of the Housing First model as the main approach to tackling homelessness and the use of the American model intensive home support methods, especially Critical Time Intervention (CTI), Intensive Case Management (ICM) and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT). Both approaches are part of the housing support services offered by municipalities throughout the country. Housing First was introduced through the national homelessness strategy in 2007 and became the overall principle in Danish homelessness strategy programmes since.

Their Housing First approach is structured around two models. The first is through the so-called §110 institutions, based in the §110 of the Social Services law, which provide sustained housing support in combination with temporary and sometimes permanent accommodation. The §110 requires municipalities to offer homeless people activation support and care in addition to temporary accommodation. §110 institutions include hostels, transitional homes, and outreach programmes (ACT, CTI and ICM), while measures include holistic support ranging from financial advice to housing search and housing training, as well as taking people to medical appointments. Employability support is also offered, as well as housekeeping support. The second model is more centrally tied to the municipality and is often provided in the form of a dedicated centre for socially vulnerable people. It should also be noted that public housing in Denmark has a key role in meeting housing need with municipalities allocating up to 25% of vacancies in public housing to people in acute need.

In Denmark, the National Strategy Against Homelessness is regularly evaluated by two external organisations, and a biannual mapping of homelessness is undertaken by the Danish Centre for Social Science Research (VIVE). The evaluations have highlighted that Housing First and the three housing support methods (ACT, CTI and ICM) are successful in helping homeless people to both access and sustain tenancies. Additionally, a cost-benefit analysis of ICM and CTI showed that CTI provided added value already after first year of intervention.



A further innovation to the Danish model came in 2018, when the socio-economic investment model, SØM, was launched. The model is similar to an SROI calculator, where intervention costs and budgetary impacts are calculated as well as the effects of social interventions. The tool provides estimates to calculate the economic and social impact of interventions for different target groups. In such a way, the tool indicates to local and national government the short and long-term effects of social programmes. Using this model, in June 2018, €4,360,543 were committed to fund projects that increase municipalities' incentives to invest in more preventative and holistic approaches to homelessness. Municipalities are supported through initial investments, and to develop a business case for the implementation of Housing First, with intensive floating support and other evidence-based solutions.

However, there is still progress to be made in Denmark, as it is estimated that only 11% of the homeless people for whom Housing First is a suitable option are being reached by the service, while the majority remain in temporary accommodation, whose population has remained static in recent years.

## 5.4 Ireland <sup>31</sup> <sup>32</sup>

Homelessness in Ireland has increased by 232% between 2014 and 2020, reaching 8,720 people in June 2020 and recording the highest increase in homelessness in the shortest period of time across all Europe <sup>33</sup>. Among the main factors to which the increase is attributable are the rapidly rising rents and absence of effective rent control mechanisms, the limited supply of affordable accommodation, and the progressive disinvestment in social housing. Recent evidence particularly highlights the growth of family homelessness in Ireland, which is tied to unaffordability and insecurity of tenure, with an increasing number of families being evicted from privately rented accommodation following receipt of a Notice of Termination (NOT) and leaving family or friends' accommodation due to relationship breakdown or overcrowding.

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<sup>31</sup> European Social Policy Network, 2019, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe A study of national policies

<sup>32</sup> Housing First Europe Hub, 2019, HOUSING First IN EUROPE An Overview Of Implementation, Strategy And Fidelity

<sup>33</sup> Focus Ireland, Homelessness, available at: <https://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/about-homelessness/>



The national homelessness strategy in Ireland, 'Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness' is a €6b five-year action plan (2016-2021) aiming to increase the overall supply of new homes to 25,000 per annum by 2020, deliver an additional 50,000 social housing units in the period to 2021, and meet the housing needs of an additional 87,000 households through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme and the Rental Accommodation Scheme. However, to 2018, half-way through its life cycle, the plan had delivered less than half (48%) of the target build for the five years.

In Ireland the increase in homelessness in recent years has also seen an equivalent increase in funding for the provision of homelessness services. However, a significant proportion of funding is going towards Family Hubs, emergency and temporary accommodations set up in recent years to replace the use of hotel and B&Bs and offer greater stability. The Hubs are a form of co-location and collective living, with common facilities and services. However, the Hubs rely to a large extent on private accommodation, particularly in Dublin, where need is highest. As a consequence of the high cost and relatively low effectiveness of this provision, funding has been depleted but levels of homelessness have not decreased. The amount of funding going towards social housing was also increased, but the increase was minimal compared to the targets set out in the national strategy.

In terms of the implementation of the Housing First model, in Ireland, there was only one official Housing First service until 2019, with additional Housing First-type projects led by the third sector. The recent adoption of Housing First at a national level means that the approach has not yet been reflected in most regional practices. In terms of funding, government-funded Housing First is found only in Dublin, where initial experiment with Housing First began in 2011. In 2014, the Dublin programme was expanded from 35 tenancies to 100 but focused on long-term rough sleepers rather than on people with complex needs. The service was then further expanded to 300 places in 2017, and the services began to work with long-term homeless people in homeless shelters. A further development came in 2018, when the Irish Government created the post of National Director of Housing First and published the Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018-2021 later that year. There are now several Housing First regional project contracts being put out by the lead local authorities for each region and which will be funded by central government.



In terms of preventative measures, tenancy sustainment and resettlement support are two main approaches in Ireland. However, a preventative approach is not yet well established in Ireland's response to homelessness. For example, in Dublin, in 2016 over €96m were invested on providing services for homeless people, but less than 5% of this amount was spent on prevention, tenancy sustainment and resettlement support.

Overall the Irish approach has received widespread criticism for lacking effectiveness in providing comprehensive and flexible support, for the negative impacts of Family Hubs, the lack of prevention-oriented services, and the inadequacy of the provision of social housing (from 12.5% of the total housing stock to 8.7%, between 1981 and 2011). However, there is evidence of positive outcomes for the Dublin Housing First regarding the retention of housing (85%) which suggests positive prospects once the provision of Housing First will be expanded to all regions. However, sustained positive outcomes will only be possible if Ireland will overcome the restrictions posed by current funding mechanisms, which are arranged on a time-limited basis with contracts running over 3-5 years.

## 5.5 France <sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup>

In France homelessness has increased by 47% between 2014 and 2018, reaching an estimated 143,000 homeless people and making it the third country with the highest number of homeless people in Europe, after Germany and the United Kingdom. In part this is due to the shrinking of the social housing sector, where stock has reduced from 128,000 in 2016 to less than 100,000 in 2018. The issue is also somewhat due to the poor homelessness prevention measures that exist in France. In particular, although policy establishes that individual or collective evictions should be followed by a rehousing proposal, in reality, this procedure gets rarely implemented.

Additionally, since the 2018 Finance Act, budget cuts in France have amounted to an annual €1.5b and this has had a notable impact on housing and homelessness services. Reform of the financing model for the housing and social reinsertion centres (Centres d'Hébergement et de Réinsertion Sociale, CHRS), which provide temporary support in rooms or scattered accommodation for single people and families, has also put additional pressure on housing services and prevented them from reforming their approach towards a housing-led models.

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<sup>34</sup> European Social Policy Network, 2019, Fighting homelessness and housing exclusion in Europe A study of national policies

<sup>35</sup> Housing First Europe Hub, 2019, HOUSING First IN EUROPE An Overview Of Implementation, Strategy And Fidelity



A further complicating factor in the issue of homelessness in France, is that beyond the housing and social reinsertion centres, which offer support tailored to people's needs and promote their socioeconomic reintegration and independence, there is a major reliance on B&Bs as forms of temporary accommodation. This has been reported to be a serious concern affecting both single people and families with children. This issue is particularly severe in the Paris area, where families can live in a single and overcrowded room for up to several years, as there is a major housing shortage. To tackle this issue the Government introduced a three-year plan to reduce the use of B&B stays in 2016, but reforms have only led to stagnation in the trend rather than any notable reduction.

France has recently started the wider roll-out of the Housing First services, following the successful completion of the *Un chez soi d'abord* experiment which was implemented from 2011 onwards across four cities. The original pilot was a high-fidelity version of the Pathways to Housing model of Housing First services and the Canadian At Home/ Chez Soi programme and was overseen by Inter-ministerial Delegation for Housing and Access to Housing (DIHL). Following the evaluation of the pilot, the French Government decided to extend the model to 20 major cities and run a five year programme between 2018-2022. France relies on a robust network of collaborative organisations, both public and non-governmental, for the promotion and implementation of the Housing First approach, including providing training and support for their members.

The Ministry for Territorial Development, which is responsible for both general rehousing programmes and for the Housing First programme, has set up and oversees the monitoring mechanism for. Since wider roll out only started in 2019, there is still limited evidence around results, but early evidence shows that several areas have set up steering groups and signed agreements with local providers. Additionally, rentals through intermediate parties and the allocation of social housing for homeless people leaving a shelter have increased, while over 1,300 new places have been opened in boarding houses.



## Appendix 1 – LAs Housing and Homelessness Strategies

Local authority	Date	Link
Aberdeen City Council	2018-2023	<a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy</a>
Aberdeenshire Council	2018-2023	<a href="#">Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
Angus Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">Angus Local Housing Strategy</a>
Argyll and Bute Council	2016-2021	<a href="#">Argyll and Bute Local Housing Strategy</a>
City of Edinburgh Council	2020-2025	<a href="#">Strategic Housing Investment Plan</a>
Clackmannanshire Council	2018-2023	<a href="#">Clackmannanshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	2017-2022	<a href="#">Outer Hebrides Local Housing Strategy</a>
Dumfries and Galloway Council	2018-2023	<a href="#">Dumfries and Galloway Local Housing Strategy</a>
Dundee City Council	2016-2021	<a href="#">Not Just A Roof!</a>
East Ayrshire Council	2019-2024	<a href="#">East Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
East Dunbartonshire Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">East Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
East Lothian Council	2018-2023	<a href="#">East Lothian Local Housing Strategy</a>
East Renfrewshire Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">East Renfrewshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
Falkirk Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">Falkirk Local Housing Strategy</a>
Fife Council	2015-2020	<a href="#">Fife Local Housing Strategy</a>
Glasgow City Council	2015-2020	<a href="#">Glasgow Homelessness Strategy</a>
Inverclyde Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy</a>
Midlothian Council	2019-2024	<a href="#">Midlothian Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan</a>
North Ayrshire Council	2018-2022	<a href="#">North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
North Lanarkshire Council	2016-2021	<a href="#">North Lanarkshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
Orkney Islands Council	2014-2019	<a href="#">Orkney Islands Homelessness Strategy</a>
Perth and Kinross Council	2016-2021	<a href="#">Perth and Kinross Local Housing Strategy</a>
Renfrewshire Council	2016-2021	<a href="#">Renfrewshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
Scottish Borders Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy</a>
Shetland Islands Council	2011-2016	<a href="#">Shetland Islands Local Housing Strategy</a>
South Ayrshire Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">South Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
South Lanarkshire Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">South Lanarkshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
Stirling Council	NA	NA
Highland Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">Highland Local Housing Strategy</a>
Moray Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">Moray Local Housing Strategy</a>
West Dunbartonshire Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy</a>
West Lothian Council	2017-2022	<a href="#">West Lothian Local Housing Strategy</a>

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