

Bield, Hanover (Scotland) and Trust Housing Associations response to the Scottish Government Consultation:

Draft Regulations relating to Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 – Set 1

Bield, Hanover (Scotland) and Trust (BHT) welcome this opportunity to respond to the first set of draft regulations relating to the Scottish Government's Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014.

In our response we outline our disappointment at the lack of consistent recognition afforded to and the visibility of housing and housing associations within the draft regulations and ask that "Housing support services, aids and adaptations" be removed from the functions that must be delegated to an Integrated Authority.

BHT represents three of the largest Scottish providers of housing, care and support services for older people, with developments across the country. As national specialists, we are committed to ensuring that the needs of this growing and increasingly diverse proportion of Scotland's society are fully recognised. Independent research has repeatedly shown that appropriate housing and care services, such as those offered by housing associations, not only enables individuals to live independently for longer, but affords individuals greater levels of health and wellbeing. We have long campaigned for better recognition of the changing role played by housing associations in the debate on integrating adult health and social care, particularly with regard to delivering person centred care at home and unlocking bed blocking.

We welcome the proposed national health and wellbeing outcomes, which reflect the contributions housing associations, are already providing to Scotland's older population by promoting independent living; providing localised, personalised preventative services; and maintaining information about older people's housing capacity and options, with the aim of improving individual health and wellbeing.

It is clear that housing associations will play a central role as the integration proposals move forward. The general view is that overall demand for Very Sheltered Housing and Extra Care Housing will increase over the next decade, in line with the expected demographic changes. It is therefore essential that housing is represented in all integration strategies and processes to ensure the most effectively and efficient integration solutions are progressed.

We ask that the Government considers our suggested recommendations and notes our support for the proposed amendments put forward by the SFHA to the first set of draft regulations.

We hope that you find this response useful. We would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have about our response or the draft regulations more generally.

Yours sincerely,



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Helen Murdoch
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Bob McDougall
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Answers to selected questions

Annex 2(A) Proposals for Prescribed functions that must be delegated by Local Authorities to the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 (Section 1(7))

The delegation of the functions listed within the Schedule of the Act as they relate to the provision of services for older people, which includes Housing Support services, aids and adaptations and Re-ablement services, equipment and telecare is to be welcomed.

We would encourage the Scottish Government to recognise the complexity of housing support. Currently 'housing support' has multiple different definitions, which are dependent upon the context it is being used in. As such, we believe that there is a need to establish a clear definition and parameters of what 'housing support' constitutes within the context of this guidance. Failure to do this, could, we feel, unintentionally lead to an erosion of housing's input and influence on future policy direction despite the recognition of our sectors importance to the delivery of the integration agenda.

In relation to adaptations, the huge change agenda facing the new integrated authorities risks housing associations losing valuable input and influence over future service direction and prioritisation. While we acknowledge the policy intention is to create a fairer and more equal access to current and future adaptation services by giving both health and social care services a stake in getting this important services correct, the regulations as currently drafted risks a fragmentation of service provision and transparency.

We would suggest that the reference to "Housing support services, aids and adaptations" within those functions that "must" be delegated to an Integration Authority be amended to those functions that "may" be delegated. The risks inherent in the early days of the new structures will see new bodies taking responsibility for areas with which they have limited experience and as a result may lead to the non-prioritising of issues or not sufficiently understanding the nature of the work.

By amending the draft regulations in this way we believe it would better ensure that housing associations are treated as equal partners in the delivery of the integration agenda. Once the integration bodies are operational, we would not necessarily be against further amendment that could see "housing support services, aids and adaptations" brought back under powers that "must" delegated at an appropriate juncture.

Annex 4(A) Proposals for National Health & Wellbeing Outcomes relating to the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014

In principle we welcome the Scottish Government's proposed national health and wellbeing outcomes. This is particularly pertinent in relation to Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4, which focus on the need to deliver patient focused care and support services and the importance of promoting independent living where possible.

We already provide varying levels of person focused care and support to older people, many of whom have disabilities, long-term conditions, or are frail. Our service includes a focuses upon the provision of effective preventative measures, such as adaptations, to ensure that individuals are able to live independently for longer, mitigating against the need and associated costs for what can often be inappropriate hospital admission. We believe that the new Integrated Authorities must fully draw on this experience in order to deliver the national outcomes.

Furthermore we believe that there needs to be a clear understanding and monitoring of the purpose and success of each of these outcomes at both a national and local level. This requires further guidance on the breadth and detail of the required consultation across key sectors to effectively monitor success/failure. The current draft proposals do not include information on how this is to be achieved.

From a housing perspective, we would suggest that the SFHA be asked by government to act as a central reference point for the sector to ensure that both commercial and non-commercial housing is equitably and fairly represented in this process.

Additionally, it is vital that a consistent outcome focused framework is established that ensures a balance is obtained between national prescription and local flexibility. Failure to allow for sufficient local flexibility will hamper an Authorities ability to deliver local and innovative solutions for the desired outcomes.

Annex 5(A) Proposals for the Interpretation of what is meant by the terms health and social care professionals relating to the Public Bodies (Joint working) (Scotland) Act 2014

While we acknowledge the inclusion of those responsible for the provision of housing related support services within the prescribed definition of those bodies that constitute 'social care professionals', we are disappointed at the lack of recognition afforded to housing associations and other non-commercial providers of social housing and care services.

Acknowledgement of housing and housing associations was consistently recognised throughout the parliamentary process. This recognised their important role in delivering the integration agenda, through enabling persons to live independently for longer and the associated value for money the sector offers. However, despite this recognition, housing is now barely visible in these draft regulations.

If the integration agenda is to be a success, the importance of the housing sectors contribution needs to be consistently recognised throughout all integration strategies and processes. Failure to give housing this visibility risks the sectors' contribution being relegated to merely symbolic.

We would, therefore, ask that housing associations and other non commercial social housing providers and non commercial social care providers be included in the prescribed bodies referenced in these draft regulations.