

MORE HOMES DIVISION GUIDANCE NOTE



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To: All Local Authorities
All Registered Social Landlords

Subject: Guidance for setting of Local Housing Strategy (LHS) targets to support the delivery of more Wheelchair Accessible housing.

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This note contains guidance for local authorities on the setting of Local Housing Strategy (LHS) targets to support the delivery of more Wheelchair Accessible housing.

It should be read in conjunction with [Local Housing Strategy Guidance 2014](#) and supports the broader Public Sector Equality Duty requirement to ensure that equality issues are fully considered in all local authority activity and for this assessment to be kept under review.

Local authorities are reminded to make the Equality Impact Assessment available on the local authority web site to comply with the Equality duty.

If you have any queries about the content of this Guidance Note, please contact either Lisa.Bullen@gov.scot or John.McCorrie@gov.scot

1. Background

[A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan](#) sets out the Scottish Government's approach to policy for disabled people and how it intends to meet its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and is part of a broader programme to support a fairer Scotland.

It recognises the role that appropriate housing can play in supporting disabled people to live full and independent lives, to work, to play, and to be active members of our communities.

Specifically the Delivery Plan includes the following action (62):

“to work with local authorities, disabled people and other stakeholders to ensure that each local authority sets a realistic target within its LHS for the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures and reports annually on progress”.

Ministers are committed to the delivery of more homes across all tenures that are wheelchair accessible and suitable for wheelchair users to live in. The 2018 Programme for Government committed to issue this guidance to support local authorities in setting targets to achieve an increase in supply.

Increased supply will provide more choice and flexibility for disabled people and their families and contribute to the creation of a fairer and more equal society. The houses that we build now will support this and future generations and help to improve the experience of disabled people in accessing suitable homes in the areas they want to live.

2. Responsibility

The responsibility for setting housing target(s) for wheelchair accessible homes sits with the local authority as the statutory authority for housing of all tenures but should be taken forward as a corporate responsibility as it will require input from other services such as Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), Social Work (where children's services have not been delegated to HSCPs) and land use planning to help with service planning and implementation. Any target set out in the LHS is therefore expected to have the full support of the authority to ensure it will be implemented effectively.

3. Definition of Homes Suitable for Wheelchair Users to live in

There is currently no universally agreed housing standard to define housing for wheelchair users to live in. Often terms such as Wheelchair Accessibility or Wheelchair Liveability are used to refer to properties that are suitable for wheelchair users to live in and to distinguish them from properties that may be accessible for wheelchair users to visit and / or capable of being adapted for wheelchair users.

In this guidance we want to be clear that the provision of targets to support the delivery of Wheelchair Accessible homes across all tenures means homes suitable for wheelchair users to live in and should as a minimum comply with the design criteria indicated as a 'basic' requirement for wheelchair users, as outlined in Housing for Varying Needs (HfVN) (column 'B' in 'Summary of Design Criteria'). Local authorities are strongly encouraged to include the design criteria indicated as 'desirable' (column 'D' in 'Summary of Design Criteria') wherever possible.

Where a local authority seeks to apply a higher standard than HfVN (part 1) for Wheelchair Users it would be expected to make clear its approach and to provide specific guidance on any additional aspects required. Any approach would also be expected to demonstrate VFM and deliverability (including sources of finance from all relevant partners) and be capable of being effectively monitored and reported on annually.

4. Strategic Housing Investment Plans

Local authorities were asked to provide a position statement in their most recent Strategic Housing Investment plan (SHIP) submissions (2019-2024) covering;

- What their current evidence base tells them about the requirement for wheelchair accessible housing, and any plans to develop this work further.
- The approach, if any, they have set in their Local Housing Strategy/Local Development Plan to wheelchair accessible housing including any target/ quota that the local authority currently has in place.
- The number of affordable wheelchair accessible houses they plan to deliver over the five years as part of their broader plans for specialist provision.

Future SHIPs will be used to report progress towards each local authority's target across all tenures.

5. Local Housing Strategy Guidance

The refreshed LHS guidance due for publication in summer 2019, will contain information on the requirement for a wheelchair accessible housing target, based on this guidance note. A local authority's policy and actions to meet the requirement will be a criteria within the LHS review process.

6. Timescales

All tenure housing targets are expected to be in place by the end of 2019 and Local authorities will be required to provide a further update to Scottish Ministers by October 2019 as part of its SHIP submission setting out their plans and timescales for the implementation of their approach.

Local authorities will be expected to demonstrate clear progress to the delivery of affordable housing in their 2019 SHIP submission.

7. Targets

The purpose of setting a target is to provide a greater focus and commitment to the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures, which can be evidenced through annual reporting. Progress on delivery should be monitored in both the affordable and market housing sectors with the intended outcome of providing increased choice and flexibility for wheelchair users

Local authorities can choose to have a single target, setting out the requirement for housing across all tenures or can distinguish requirements by tenure and / or sub area where this can be evidenced.

The target(s) can be expressed as a number to be delivered over a period of time or as a % requirement of either the existing provision or as a % of all new housing provision within the area.

It is important that any target set is meaningful within the local context, realistic in terms of delivery and that progress towards the delivery of the target can be measured and reported on annually by local authorities.

Target(s) should be;

- Evidenced based
- Clear about specific tenure or housing type requirements
- Clear about the area(s) it relates to
- Clear about the timescale for delivery
- Expressed clearly, as either a number or a percentage, over a 5 year period
- Meaningful, Realistic and Measurable
- Supported by guidance on how it will be applied including any relevant exemptions

Local authorities will be required to report on progress towards the delivery of its target(s) annually (through the SHIP process). It is expected that reporting would usually be based on completions and that local authorities are able to distinguish between affordable and market housing.

Local authorities will want to be satisfied that appropriate sign off procedures are in place for new build wheelchair units to ensure that the technical specifications have been met and the home meets with the required standard.

Should local authorities wish to include other information such as approvals and / or site starts where available or relevant, they are encourage to do so.

8. Evidence

Local authorities will want to have regard to both local and national evidence to help form a comprehensive understanding to inform the setting of a target.

Information that local authorities may find helpful to consider include:

- Current housing stock profile including the tenure, type and size of homes.
- Demographic profile and future demographic trends including household size and age characteristics.
- Current housing demand / requirements from wheelchair users including local information from Health and Social Care Partnerships and Social Work through partnership Strategic Plans and with particular reference to the Housing Contribution section.
- Any specific locational considerations
- Any other information including local intelligence and stakeholders including disabled people, their families and carers.

The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment will be a useful source of material. However, local authorities will also wish to have regard to additional sources of information where available.

In relation to affordable housing requirements, Local authorities will want to consider the extent to which requests for wheelchair accessible housing feature in local waiting lists. This would give an indication of the scale and nature of unmet need locally as well as being useful in identifying any trends over time. However, in using this data local authorities should be cautious about over-reliance and recognise the potential for this data set to underestimate current and future requirements. Local authorities should also take into account the extent to which recorded preferences within waiting lists may reflect the relative merits and / or perceived availability of existing stock rather than an expression of demand for particular locations or house types.

Data relating to the likely demand within the market housing sector could potentially be more difficult to identify. Local authorities will want to consider a range of factors including the flexibility of the current stock type and the extent to which it is characterised by house types such as tenement flats, that may be less easily adapted

for wheelchair users to live in as well as the current and future demographic profile of the area including current and future age profile.

9. Delivery

In setting targets local authorities will want to have regard to the approaches that they may need to put in place to support the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures.

For affordable housing funded through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, local authorities already have a strategic role that enables them to directly influence the priorities for funding (including sources of finance from all relevant partners) and delivery through the Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment plan.

For market housing delivery, local authorities will want to consider the full range of approaches that may have a role in influencing delivery. This could include influence and promotion within the sector, the development of specific design briefs and guidance as well as specific planning requirements and conditions or site allocation.