

Ending Homelessness Together Annual report to the Scottish Parliament

October 2023



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
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Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

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Foreword



**Paul McLennan MSP,
Minister for Housing**



**Councillor Maureen Chalmers,
COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing**

This annual report describes the progress made during the last year towards ending homelessness in Scotland.

The last year saw new leadership and a [fresh start](#) for the Scottish Government. It also saw local and national government in Scotland sign a landmark partnership agreement. The [Verity House Agreement](#) signals a more collaborative approach to delivering our shared priorities for the people of Scotland – priorities which include ending homelessness.

In our respective roles as COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing and Minister for Housing, we are fully committed to the vision in [Ending Homelessness Together](#) – that everyone has a home that meets their needs and homelessness is ended.

Councillor Maureen Chalmers:

“As COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing, I have been pleased to co-chair the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group with the Housing Minister. This group oversees four task and finish groups to help improve our approach

to addressing homelessness with some valuable work progressed on temporary accommodation and the prevention of homelessness.”

Paul McLennan, Minister for Housing:

“It was a great honour to be asked to take up a new role as housing minister in March 2023 and I am committed to giving housing and homelessness the support and attention it deserves. In the seven months since my appointment, I have met with a whole range of experts and people with lived and frontline experience of homelessness. I have heard moving personal stories from people who understand what works and I have been struck by the dedication and passion of those who work in the sector.

“Scotland wants to be a world leader when it comes to ending homelessness and we remain open to new ideas. As I found out during one of my very first engagements as a new minister,

Glasgow is seen as a pioneer¹ of Housing First in Europe. Turning Point Scotland imported the model from New York and the first Housing First pilot began operating in Glasgow in 2010. That innovative, collaborative spirit is Scotland's strength."

We are both rightly proud of Scotland's reputation for tackling homelessness. We have one of the strongest legal safety nets in the world for people experiencing homelessness. But ending homelessness requires more than strong legislation. It requires a partnership approach to problem-solving and a willingness to listen, learn and improve.

Our fourth report in the series comes at a time of cost of living pressures; higher inflation, rents and interest rates; and the continuing conflict in Ukraine, which has led to thousands of refugees fleeing their homes to seek a place of safety. Scotland's latest [homelessness statistics](#) mirror trends across the UK with more people making applications for homelessness assistance and many households spending far too long in temporary accommodation.

The last year has been difficult for the housing and homelessness sectors. The Scottish Housing Regulator's [thematic review on homelessness services](#) warned of an emerging risk of systemic failure in homelessness services in some areas. [SOLACE Scotland](#), which represents local authority chief executives, has highlighted the unsustainable pressure on local authority housing. It is clear that councils are making huge efforts to

deliver services for people experiencing homelessness. We are committed to working together in the best way we can so that we can respond effectively to people affected by homelessness.

In spite of these very challenging circumstances, we have made important gains since our last annual report.

- We have delivered nearly 124,000 affordable homes, including over 87,000 social homes since April 2007, and the Scottish Government is investing £752 million this year in the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. We have so far [delivered 13,354 of our 110,000 affordable homes target](#) and the number of [affordable homes completed](#) in the last year is the highest annual figure since 2000.
- We remain focused on measures to tackle the social causes of homelessness. We are investing £405 million this year in the Scottish Child Payment to lift an estimated 50,000 children out of relative poverty.
- We are [investing over £83 million in discretionary housing payments](#) this year to mitigate the UK Government's bedroom tax, benefit cap and the freeze to local housing allowance rates.
- We [reached agreement with social landlords](#) on below-inflation rent increases for 2023-24, which keeps social rents significantly below private market levels.
- We have [extended measures to protect tenants](#) and stabilise rents during the cost of living crisis.

1 [Systems Perspective Policy and Practice Guide.pdf \(housingfirsteurope.eu\)](#)

- We have [modified local connection rules](#) so that people who are homeless have the freedom to settle where they choose.
- We have promised to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 2026 and we have set out the action we will take to deliver on that commitment. This includes [making £60 million available to support a national acquisition plan](#) that will boost the supply of social and affordable housing.
- Local authorities have now provided close to 1,500 Housing First tenancies.
- We are committed to improving access to affordable rented homes. We have introduced [greater regulation in short-term letting](#) with a deadline of 1 October 2023 for hosts to sign up to the licensing scheme.
- Over [1,200 social rented homes have been brought back into use](#) to help those fleeing the war in Ukraine.
- We have announced our intention to pilot a £500,000 '[fund to leave](#)' to help women leave an abusive relationship.
- On 30 June 2023, an agreement to forge a stronger partnership between local and national government was agreed between COSLA and the Scottish Government. The [Verity House Agreement](#) sets out principles for working together to empower local communities, tackle poverty, transform the economy and provide high-quality public services.
- We have established a ministerial oversight group on homelessness to bring together ministers from across the Scottish Government to work in a joined up way to prevent and end homelessness.
- We are seeing a declining trend in repeat homelessness; a decrease in homelessness from the private rented sector; and reports of rough sleeping remain lower than pre-pandemic levels.

These are notable achievements but we still have far too many households in temporary accommodation. In the year ahead, our primary focus is on reducing that number.

We will press ahead with measures to increase housing supply and work in partnership to maximise the use of current housing stock. The Scottish Government will introduce new homelessness prevention duties this parliamentary year that will offer stronger protections than anywhere else in the UK. We will strengthen rights for tenants and offer greater security from eviction. We will bring forward a new human rights bill that will incorporate the right to adequate housing into Scots law within the limits of devolved competence.

Our ambition is for everyone in Scotland to have a safe, secure and affordable home. It is achievable. When national and local government work together on shared priorities, we can deliver better outcomes and we can end homelessness.

List of actions 2023

Theme		Action
Embed a person-centred approach	1.	Develop the evidence base on homelessness and review the homelessness data collection
	2.	Apply a gendered analysis to our actions and conduct equality impact assessments, ensuring the homelessness system meets the needs of diverse groups of women, including the needs of mothers and children
	3.	Ensure homelessness services are grounded in 'no wrong door' and person-centred principles and make homelessness assessments more flexible
	4.	Support people to access digital equipment, data and training
	5.	Raise public awareness of homelessness and challenge stigma
Prevent homelessness from happening in the first place	6.	NEW Consider and respond to the recommendations of the task and finish group on homelessness prevention
	7.	Increase focus on tenancy sustainment and establish mechanisms to avoid evictions into homelessness
	8.	Push the UK Government to reverse its welfare reforms that put people at risk of homelessness
	9.	Consider more streamlined application processes for discretionary housing payments and use information sharing powers to target people who are most in need of discretionary housing payments
	10.	Improve affordability in the private rented sector
	11.	Support the First-Tier Tribunal to improve transparency around outcomes for tenants through better use of data
	12.	Implement and review prevention pathways for groups at particular risk, including for women experiencing domestic abuse

Theme		Action
Prioritise settled homes for all	13.	Take forward work on the right to adequate housing
	14.	Complete the delivery of 110,000 affordable homes
	15.	Encourage the housing sector to bring more empty homes back into use and support local authorities to develop their empty homes services and private rented sector access schemes
	16.	NEW Reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 2026
	17.	Roll out Housing First in Scotland
	18.	Develop best practice examples of choice in settled housing and assess impacts of providing wide range of housing options in local areas
Respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens	19.	Support local authorities and health and social care partners with their efforts to provide support and accommodation for all those currently in bed and breakfast accommodation
	20.	Support local winter planning, including efforts by partners to end the use of night shelter and dormitory-style provision
	21.	Support people engaged in street begging
	22.	Prevent homelessness for those with no recourse to public funds
	23.	Learn from recent initiatives and set out a broader range of accommodation options in crisis situations
	24.	Revise legislative arrangements for intentionality and amend intentionality definition to focus more closely on 'deliberate manipulation'
	25.	Consider options to legally enforce the temporary accommodation standards

Theme		Action
Join up planning and resources to tackle homelessness	26.	Ensure National Performance Framework review includes explicit consideration of homelessness
	27.	Improve how we use Public Health Scotland data and intelligence capabilities
	28.	Further improve drug and alcohol treatment and harm reduction services
	29.	Improve join up between health, social care, housing and homelessness planning
	30.	Embed homelessness as a public health priority and ensure local authorities, housing providers and public bodies join up to prevent homelessness
	31.	Ensure the Hard Edges Scotland report continues to inform the response to severe and multiple disadvantage
	32.	Update code of guidance on homelessness and review need for a code of practice in code of guidance on homelessness
	33.	Join up housing, employment and employability support

Progress against actions to embed a person-centred approach

We continue to **develop the evidence base on homelessness** and we have begun the **review of our homelessness data collection**.

- We have commissioned research into housing insecurity and hidden homelessness to better understand those people who do not appear in Scotland's official figures. The research will be completed by May 2024.
- In July 2023, we completed a [review of methods used internationally](#) to identify people experiencing hidden homelessness.
- Our homelessness data review working group and its sub-groups continue to meet regularly to discuss the required changes to the current homelessness data collection. Views have also been sought from external stakeholders.
- We will consider the feasibility of collecting data on all protected characteristics, in line with the aims of [Scotland's equality evidence strategy 2023-25](#), so we can develop sound and inclusive homelessness policies.
- We will complete the review of our homelessness datasets by the end of 2025 and implement agreed changes by the end of 2027.

We continue to **apply a gendered analysis to our actions and conduct equality impact assessments, ensuring the homelessness system meets the needs of diverse groups of women**.

- The Scottish Government is carrying out a full suite of impact assessments, including an equality impact assessment, as part of the development of the prevention of homelessness provisions in the forthcoming housing bill.
- Scottish Government officials liaised with colleagues in the Office for National Statistics on [research on women experiencing hidden homelessness in the UK](#) to ensure Scotland's research into hidden homelessness complements the UK research.
- Recognising that domestic abuse is one of the main causes of homelessness for women, we will pilot a '[fund to leave](#)' to help women with the costs of leaving an abusive relationship.
- The [Marion Gibbs Award for Equality in Housing](#), a new Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland award,² was announced in August 2023. The award is in recognition of Marion's contribution to housing and homelessness and will celebrate organisations working to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

² The Marion Gibbs Award for Equality in Housing is sponsored by Homeless Network Scotland, the Scottish Government, Queens Cross Housing Association, North Ayrshire Council and the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research at Heriot-Watt University.

We said we would **support the homelessness system to respond more appropriately to the shared needs of mothers and children.**

We are disappointed that the number of children in temporary accommodation has risen since last year. The Scottish Government's [latest homelessness statistics](#) covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 show that the number of homeless households has increased by 10 per cent and the number of children in temporary accommodation has increased by 9 per cent. Local authorities are working hard to support people experiencing homelessness but they are still dealing with long waiting lists for social housing.

- The expert task and finish group that was asked to consider how we can reduce the numbers of households, especially those with children, staying long periods in temporary accommodation, delivered its [report](#) in March 2023.
- The Scottish Government published its [response](#) in July 2023. We are prioritising action that will have the greatest impact on reducing the number of children in temporary accommodation.
- Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland (PHS) officials have joined the peer advisory group for a piece of research commissioned by Shelter Scotland and part-funded by PHS to explore children's experiences

of temporary accommodation. The research is led by De Montfort University and is expected to conclude in summer 2024.

The Scottish Government and COSLA remain committed to **ensuring homelessness services are grounded in 'no wrong door'³ and person-centred principles.** We want to make **homelessness assessments more flexible** so that anyone who needs a service can access it in a way that suits them.

- The Scottish Government provided budgets to frontline organisations in winter 2022-23 so that outreach teams could respond immediately to people with the most acute housing needs. Nearly 500 people were supported to sustain or establish tenancies, top up prepayment meters and acquire essentials.
- The new homelessness prevention duties are set to be introduced in the Scottish Government's housing bill during 2023-24. The legislation will be faithful to the principle of 'no wrong door' to ensure people can access the help they need irrespective of where the risk of homelessness is first identified.
- The new [temporary accommodation standards](#), published in April 2023, are clear that services should be shaped by an assessment of the needs of all members of the household.

3 A 'no wrong door' model means that people at risk of or experiencing homelessness can get help regardless of the service or agency they initially connect with. A 'no wrong door' approach means creating better joined up services that put people first.

We have **supported even more people to access digital equipment, data and training.**

- Simon Community Scotland's [Get Connected 500](#) launched in May 2022 with funding from the Scottish Government and JP Morgan Chase Foundation.
- So far, 500 people experiencing homelessness have been helped to connect to the digital world.

We will continue to **raise public awareness of homelessness and challenge stigma.**

- In the year ahead, we will collaborate with Homeless Network Scotland to develop training sessions, incorporating lived experience perspectives, for Scottish Government policy makers. The aim is to promote wider government understanding of homelessness and the effects of stigmatising language.

- Since taking up his appointment in March 2023, Scotland's housing minister has raised public awareness of homelessness, shared our ambitions to prevent and end homelessness on social media [@ScotGovFairer](#) and met with homelessness charity leaders, people with lived experience of homelessness and housing conveners of local authorities. He has spoken at a number of events and parliamentary debates. These include the [Housing First Europe Partners' Event](#) in Glasgow in April 2023, a [debate on homelessness prevention and housing supply](#) in April 2023 and the official opening of [Crisis Skylight Edinburgh](#) in September 2023.



Progress against actions to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place

The best way to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The Scottish Government's [programme for government 2023 to 2024](#) included plans to introduce new homelessness prevention legislation during the 2023 to 2024 parliamentary year.

A task and finish group of the [Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group](#), co-chaired by Matt Downie, chief executive of Crisis, and Ewan Aitken, chief executive officer of Cyrenians, has completed its consideration of what groundwork is needed to ensure successful implementation of Scotland's homelessness prevention legislation. Crisis and Cyrenians organised three stakeholder engagement sessions involving 126 frontline workers to raise awareness of the proposed duties; to share good practice; and to gather feedback from frontline workers on what the ask and act duties might look like. The [report of the task and finish group](#) was published in August 2023. The Scottish Government will **consider and respond to the recommendations of the task and finish group on homelessness prevention.**

- This parliamentary year, the Scottish Government will introduce a housing bill that will create new tenants' rights and new duties aimed at the prevention of homelessness.

- The Scottish Government has welcomed the task and finish group's report and will respond to the recommendations by the end of the year.
- The Scottish Government makes £30.5 million available annually to local authorities for their work to prevent homelessness.

The Scottish Government's [programme for government 2023 to 2024](#) maintains **a strong focus on tenancy sustainment** alongside measures to protect tenants' rights and **avoid evictions into homelessness.**

- Regulations to extend the [emergency rent cap](#) in the private rented sector and additional eviction protections in the private and social rented sectors were approved by parliament in September 2023. These measures will remain in place until 31 March 2024 at the latest.
- We have [tripled our fuel insecurity fund](#) to £30 million in 2023-24 to help households at risk of self-disconnection or self-rationing of energy supply.
- The Scottish Government's £10 million tenant grant fund was in operation from September 2021 to June 2023. A [final monitoring report](#) was published in May 2023, setting out how many tenants have been helped to deal with rent arrears. It showed that local

authorities made 6,621 payments totalling over £8.8 million. We have agreed that local authorities can use the remaining funds to support other tenancy sustainment initiatives.

- Thanks to the Scottish Government's Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Act, which came into force in October 2022, private sector landlords must carry out pre-action protocols before seeking to evict tenants on rent arrears grounds. This measure aims to help landlords and tenants work together to sustain tenancies.

The Scottish Government recognises that poverty and inequality are the most significant drivers and predictors of homelessness. Social security benefits must help households to avoid homelessness where possible. While many of the important policy levers rest with the UK Government, the Scottish Government is committed to using the powers it has to tackle poverty and inequality. We support cash-first approaches and are investing significantly in discretionary housing payments (DHPs) to help households struggling with their housing costs. We will continue to **push the UK Government to reverse its welfare reforms that put people at risk of homelessness.**

- In 2023-24, we are making more than £83 million available to local authorities to spend on DHPs. We use DHPs to mitigate the impacts of the bedroom tax and the benefit cap and to help those whose benefits are restricted because of local housing allowance rates.

- The UK Government has frozen local housing allowance rates since April 2020, in spite of rising rents and living costs. [Scottish ministers continue to exert pressure on UK ministers](#) by highlighting the problems caused by the freeze for private renters on low incomes.
- Since 1 January 2023, local authorities have been [mitigating the benefit cap](#) as fully as possible. This measure particularly helps households with children⁴ as 98 per cent of all households hit by the benefit cap are families and 72 per cent are lone parent families. The Scottish Government is making £6.2 million available in 2023-24 for benefit cap mitigation.

We are working collaboratively with our local authority partners to deliver **more streamlined application processes for discretionary housing payments**. We also want to **use information sharing powers to target people who are most in need of discretionary housing payments**.

- A DHP practitioners' forum for local authority officers has been established to promote the sharing and adoption of good practice. The intention is that this will lead to greater consistency in DHP claim assessment and decision making.
- Initial meetings have dealt with the practicalities of implementing the [new benefit cap mitigation policy](#). Local authorities report that the opportunity to discuss how to resolve common problems has been very useful.

4 The benefit cap affects over 2,700 families, including over 9,400 children. Each family loses over £2,500 each year on average.

- Later meetings will consider how data supplied by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) can be used more effectively and if additional data is needed.
- In light of the different approach taken in Scotland to mitigate the impacts of the bedroom tax and benefit cap, the Scottish Government plans to develop a Scottish DHP guidance manual in the year ahead to replace the DWP guidance manual.
- In June 2023, further regulations were laid before the Scottish Parliament to [extend the Act](#) until 31 March 2024 at the latest. This final extension was [approved by the Scottish Parliament](#) in September 2023.
- The Scottish Government's [programme for government 2023 to 2024](#) confirmed our intention to introduce a housing bill to create powers for the introduction of longer-term rent controls. The bill will also create new tenants' rights and introduce new duties aimed at the prevention of homelessness.

The Scottish Government has made progress with work to **improve affordability in the private rented sector**.

- The Scottish Government brought forward emergency measures to protect tenants during the cost of living crisis. The Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022 introduced a temporary, variable rent cap and a temporary moratorium on enforcement of eviction orders, along with increased damages for unlawful evictions.
- The measures came into force on 28 October 2022, initially for a period of six months. In January 2023, regulations were laid to vary⁵ and extend the measures for a further six months.
- Since April 2023, in-tenancy rent increases have been capped at 3 per cent (private landlords can apply for a higher rent increase of up to 6 per cent to cover increases in [prescribed property costs](#), where this can be evidenced).
- The [expert group](#) set up by the Scottish Government to develop a shared understanding of housing affordability for Scotland has met three times. It is due to make recommendations to ministers in 2024.
- To inform the group's work and incorporate lived experience perspectives, the Scottish Government commissioned social research agency The Lines Between to bring together focus groups of tenants in the social and private rented sectors. The researchers explored what people understand by the term affordable housing; what constitutes a decent standard of living; and at what point housing costs become unaffordable.

⁵ The regulations expired the rent cap provisions relating to the social sector on 26 February 2023 and suspended the rent cap provisions relating to the student residential sector on 30 March 2023.

We said we would **support the First-Tier Tribunal to improve transparency around outcomes for tenants through better use of data**. The First-Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) deals with problems in private sector housing. It is designed to improve access to justice for tenants and landlords in the private rented sector. In addition to the annual report published by the President of Scottish Tribunals, the Housing and Property Chamber now provides a more detailed statistical report.

- The second [statistical report on the work of the Chamber](#) for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 was published in July 2023. It includes information on trends in tenant representation and case outcomes and possible explanations for those trends.

Work continues to **implement and review prevention pathways for groups at particular risk of homelessness**. We are prioritising work to **improve outcomes for women experiencing domestic abuse** and to support people leaving prison.

- The response offered by public services to people facing severe and multiple disadvantage is not always well-coordinated or effective. To help address this, Scotland's housing minister has convened a ministerial oversight group on homelessness. It brings together ministers from across the Scottish Government – with responsibility for drug and alcohol policy, mental wellbeing, refugees and asylum seekers, veterans and care experienced young people – to identify opportunities for better joined up and cross-portfolio thinking on preventing and ending homelessness.

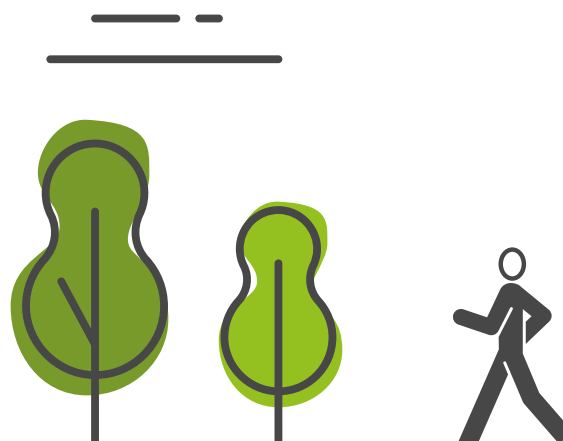
- The [Domestic Abuse \(Protection\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) received royal assent in May 2021. The provisions in the Act are intended to reduce the risk of women becoming homeless in order to escape their abuser. Part 1 of the Act will, when in force, enable the police and the courts to ban suspected abusers from re-entering the home for a period of time. Part 2 of the Act will help protect women by giving social landlords the ability to apply to the court for an order which will have the effect of allowing the landlord to transfer a tenancy to the victim-survivor. The Scottish Government is developing the necessary secondary legislation and guidance and is working with the Scottish Court Service to develop changes to court rules for Part 2, which is expected to come into force early in 2024.
- In our development of the prevention of homelessness duties, we will make it a legal requirement for social landlords to develop and implement a domestic abuse housing policy.
- In response to a recommendation in [‘Improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse’](#), we will pilot a ‘fund to leave’ to help women with the costs of leaving an abusive relationship.
- In partnership with the Scottish Prison Service and officials in the Scottish Government's justice directorate, we continue to review the implementation of the [Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone \(SHORE\) Standards](#) to ensure that the housing needs of people leaving prison are handled consistently across Scotland.

Progress against actions to prioritise settled homes for all

We want everyone to have a safe, secure and affordable home. To that end, the Scottish Government is taking action to realise **the right to adequate housing** in Scotland.

- The Scottish Government has committed in its [programme for government 2023 to 2024](#) to introduce a landmark human rights bill during the parliamentary year 2023-24. The bill will bring an enhanced focus to the implementation of social and economic rights, including the right to adequate housing.⁶
- We launched a [consultation on the proposals for a new human rights bill for Scotland](#) in June 2023. We also offered a series of public events to allow individuals and communities the chance to share their views on the bill.
- As affordability is an important element of the right to adequate housing, the Scottish Government created an [expert group to develop a shared understanding of housing affordability](#). The group will deliver its findings in 2024.
- The latest [quarterly affordable housing supply programme statistics](#) were published in September 2023 and show that Scotland has led the UK in providing affordable housing across the UK with 123,985 affordable homes now delivered since April 2007, over 87,000 of which were for social rent, including 22,994 council homes.
- Since 23 March 2022, 13,354 homes have now been delivered towards the 110,000 affordable homes target, of which 10,459 (78 per cent) are homes for social rent.
- Since 2007, Scotland has seen over 40 per cent more affordable homes delivered per head of population than in England, and over 70 per cent more than in Wales.

The Scottish Government is committed to its target of **delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032**, of which at least 70 per cent will be available for social rent and 10 per cent will be in our remote, rural and island communities.



⁶ The human rights bill will incorporate the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes a right to adequate housing as an essential part of the overall right to an adequate standard of living, into Scots law, within the limits of devolved competence. The bill will create duties on those delivering public functions to realise these rights and strengthen access to justice for rights holders.

We continue to **encourage the housing sector to bring more empty homes back into use** and **support local authorities to develop their empty homes services and private rented sector access schemes.**

The [Scottish Empty Homes Partnership](#) supports the Scottish Government with its ambitions to bring empty homes back into use.

- In its latest [impact report](#), the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) reported that 1,257 properties were brought back to use in 2022-23, bringing the total number brought back into use since the partnership was formed to 9,014.
- The Scottish Government agreed further annual funding for SEHP in 2023 to support a more strategic approach to returning homes to active use.
- An [independent audit of empty homes](#) was published in September 2023 which made 11 recommendations to help improve the scale and pace of empty homes being brought back into use. The Scottish Government is taking forward a range of actions in response to the recommendations.
- The Scottish Government and COSLA published a [consultation](#) in April 2023 on increasing council tax on second and empty homes, followed by a commitment in our [programme for government 2023-24](#) to give powers to local authorities to increase council tax by 100 per cent on second homes.

- We have announced up to £25 million over five years for local authorities and registered social landlords to acquire [affordable homes in rural areas](#) for key workers.

The Scottish Government is committed to **reducing the use of temporary accommodation by 2026.**

- Both the First Minister's [policy prospectus](#) and our [programme for government 2023 to 2024](#) include the commitment that by 2026, we and our partners will identify ways to reduce the number of people living in temporary accommodation, taking account of the [recommendations of the temporary accommodation task and finish group](#).
- We published details of the [actions we will take in response](#) to the group's recommendations in July 2023. In particular, we will:
 - invest at least £60 million through the Affordable Housing Supply programme in 2023-24 to support a national acquisition plan;
 - maintain momentum in delivering our Affordable Housing Supply Programme;
 - work with social landlords to deliver a new programme of stock management; and
 - implement targeted partnership plans with the local authorities facing greatest pressure.

- The Minister for Housing has met with the local authorities with the greatest number of people in temporary accommodation and invited them to share proposals for addressing the challenges they face. These will be used to inform targeted plans, backed by £2 million in additional funding.
- We are working on guidance for local authorities and registered social landlords on how national acquisition plan funds can be used to purchase empty and private sector homes and alleviate the pressures in temporary accommodation.
- We are taking forward work to reform compulsory purchase orders, starting with the appointment of an expert advisory group in 2023-24. We will implement new infrastructure levy regulations by spring 2026.
- We are also developing a guide on stock management to encourage local authorities and registered social landlords to make the most effective use of existing homes for homeless households. This will promote best practice on flipping⁷ and void management and will urge landlords to prioritise homeless households in their allocations policies.

The Scottish Government and COSLA want to see a greater proportion of social homes allocated to homeless households.

- Overall, social landlords let 41 per cent of homes to homeless households in 2022-23 (up from 39 per cent in 2021-22).
 - Local authorities increased the proportion of lets to homeless households to 49 per cent of all lets in 2022-23 (up from 46 per cent in 2021-22).
 - Registered social landlords increased the proportion of lets to homeless households to 35 per cent of all lets in 2022-23 (up from 33 per cent in 2021-22).
- In 2022-23, social landlords let 20,986 homes to people assessed as homeless, up by 1 per cent (230) on the previous year, although that is in the context of a decrease in all lets of 3.6 per cent.
- In August 2023, we published Scotland's [homelessness statistics](#) for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Of the 25,265 unintentionally homelessness cases that closed in 2022-23 – where contact was maintained and the outcome was known – 83 per cent (20,860) secured settled accommodation, compared with 82 per cent in 2021-22.

⁷ Flipping is the term used for switching temporary accommodation tenancies to permanent ones.

We are making steady progress with the **roll out of Housing First in Scotland**. We would like to see Housing First as the default option for people with multiple and complex needs experiencing homelessness. The three-year Housing First pathfinder taught us many valuable lessons about the benefits and challenges of scaling up Housing First in Scotland.

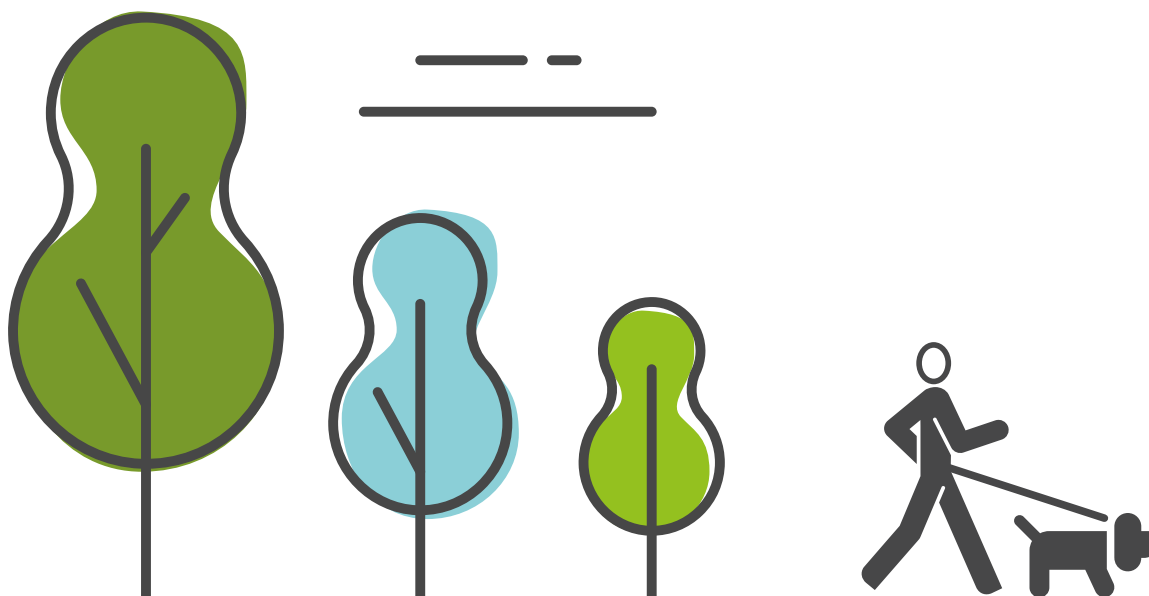
- The Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University carried out an independent evaluation of Scotland's Housing First pathfinder programme, which housed and supported 579 people. In November 2022, Heriot-Watt University published a full [report](#) and helpful [reflections](#) on the key findings.
 - Scotland's pathfinder was very effective at preventing repeat homelessness. Tenancy sustainment rates were 88 per cent over 12 months and 80 per cent over 24 months.
 - There was positive feedback from participants in the programme, with many reporting that Housing First had transformed their lives.
 - Delivering Housing First at scale is difficult but it is achievable and can deliver immense benefits for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- Since 2018-19, the Scottish Government has allocated £52.5 million to local authorities to assist them with implementation of their rapid rehousing transition plans, which includes Housing First programmes.
- By the end of March 2023, 26 local authorities were offering Housing First as part of their service provision and one local authority is developing a Housing First programme.⁸
- Homeless Network Scotland publishes a national framework, [Branching Out](#), which guides housing professionals on starting up and scaling up Housing First in Scotland. It is regularly reviewed and was last updated in March 2023.
- The Scottish Government publishes a [Housing First monitoring report](#) on a regular basis to capture all Housing First activity in Scotland. The most recent report estimated that by 31 March 2023, 1,489 people with the hardest experiences of homelessness had received keys to settled homes.
- We estimate that 93 per cent of people⁹ were still in their Housing First tenancies 12 months after entry.
- Several local authority areas have set up Housing First programmes for specific groups, including young people, women escaping domestic abuse, people leaving prison and people who have mental health problems.

8 Five local authorities are not currently planning to develop Housing First programmes because of insufficient demand or because they have alternative support programmes in place.

9 Tenancy sustainment rates are calculated by dividing the number of individuals who were still housed in a Housing First tenancy 12 months after they entered (since 1 April 2021) by the total number of individuals who have been housed at least that length of time ago and multiplying by 100. Tenants who have died are not included in the analysis.

We said we would **develop best practice examples of choice in settled housing** and **assess the impacts of providing a wide range of housing options in local areas.**

- While most settled homes offered to people who are homeless are in the social rented sector, homelessness data shows that most local authorities have secured successful outcomes by rehousing people in the private rented sector, although figures show a downward trend.¹⁰
- Thanks to funding from the Scottish Government, Scotland's Housing Network published a good practice guide for local authorities in April 2023, [Using the private rented sector to meet homelessness demand](#).
- The Everyone Home Collective released [A route forward for the private rented sector](#) in August 2023, setting out how the private rented sector could become a more accessible option for people experiencing homelessness. The Scottish Government welcomes the report and is committed to improving the way the private rented sector works in Scotland.
- The Scottish Government's new homelessness prevention legislation aims to give people at risk of homelessness greater choice and control over their housing options and outcomes.



¹⁰ The Scottish Government's latest homelessness data suggest that there is a decrease in the proportion of homeless households where the outcome is a private rented tenancy (5 per cent of outcomes for people assessed as unintentionally homeless in 2019-20 and 2020-21; 4 per cent in 2021-22; and 3 per cent in 2022-23). See chart and commentary from our [2022-23 publication](#).

Progress against actions to respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens

When homelessness cannot be prevented, local authorities aim to provide a housing-led response, which means offering accommodation and any necessary support as quickly as possible.

Scotland's most recent [homelessness statistics](#) show that there has been an increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation when compared to the same time last year. The Scottish Government continues to **support local authorities and health and social care partners with their efforts to provide appropriate support and accommodation for all those currently in bed and breakfast accommodation.**

- Scottish Government officials meet regularly with senior officers in Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and the City of Edinburgh Council to discuss progress with move on from bed and breakfast accommodation, the use of which is more prevalent in large cities.
- Glasgow City HSCP is committed to ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. It has written to all the registered social landlords in the city with a view to securing an increased number of settled homes for homeless households. Landlords have responded very positively so far.
- The City of Edinburgh Council has made clear in its rapid rehousing

transition plan that it aims to reduce the use of bed and breakfast-type accommodation and increase its stock of suitable temporary accommodation. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting local authority efforts as far as possible and is working with the council on a set of proposals.

- Following recent drug-related deaths in bed and breakfast accommodation in Glasgow, the Scottish Government is giving consideration to support for Glasgow City HSCP and other local authority areas to better assist those living in temporary accommodation who have problematic drug or alcohol use.

We continue to **support local winter planning**, including efforts by partners to **end the use of night shelter and dormitory-style provision.**

Rapid rehousing welcome centres (RRWCs) were initially established in Glasgow and Edinburgh in 2020 as part of our commitment to end the use of night shelter and dormitory-style provision. These centres provide short-term, self-contained accommodation and trauma-informed support services, with the aim of assisting people at risk of rough sleeping to move onto more settled accommodation, including Housing First. While our ambition is to transition away from these centres in the future, we

recognise that there may always be a need for a small amount of emergency or rapid access accommodation.

- In 2022-23, the Scottish Government provided funding of £207,892 towards the operation of RRWCs in Glasgow and Edinburgh over the winter months.
- In Edinburgh, the RRWC operated from 5 October 2022 to 3 May 2023, and in Glasgow, it operated between 1 December 2022 and 31 March 2023. Visitors were offered a variety of services, including health and social care support and help with housing, legal, immigration, financial and employment matters.
- The success of the RRWC model means that there has so far been no return to night shelter or dormitory-style provision in Scotland. There is widespread agreement between national and local government and the third sector that RRWCs enable people experiencing the most acute forms of homelessness to access accommodation and support in a dignified way.
- In 2022-23, the Scottish Government provided £43,200 of funding to third sector organisations in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, Dundee, Perth and Kinross and Fife for personalised budgets so that frontline staff could meet the immediate needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping.

- [Bethany Christian Trust](#) and [Glasgow City Mission](#) have published reports on the use of RRWCs in Glasgow and Edinburgh. During winter 2022-23, the Edinburgh centre supported 1,167 individuals and Glasgow supported 534 individuals. The vast majority of guests moved on to a positive destination.¹¹

We previously said we would **develop a model of frontline outreach**, which is linked to our commitment to support frontline staff in their work with people experiencing homelessness. The Scottish Government consulted with third sector homelessness organisations in late 2022 to understand what model, if any, would empower frontline staff and be of value to people using frontline services. There was no consensus on the value of a national model at that point in time. We are therefore no longer taking forward this work.

We also said we would **support people engaged in street begging**. It has long been understood that not all rough sleepers beg and not all those begging are sleeping rough. Research shows, however, that many of those involved in begging have experience of severe financial hardship, trauma and poor health.¹²

- Our ambition is for a Scotland where everyone has sufficient money to access the essentials they need with dignity. In June 2023, the Scottish Government published a [cash-first plan](#) to improve how we respond to

11 In Glasgow, 95 per cent of guests moved on to a positive destination. In Edinburgh, outcomes were tracked for 55 per cent of guests, 99 per cent of whom moved on to a positive destination. Outcomes for the remaining 45 per cent of guests in Edinburgh are not known as most individuals had no recourse to public funds and were unable to use mainstream homelessness services.

12 [Research reveals the hardships of those begging in Edinburgh - Shelter Scotland](#)

financial hardship. This includes a new £1.8 million programme to support local public and third sector partners to strengthen cash-first approaches, generating learning to inform future policy and practice.

- The Scottish Government engages regularly with representatives of homelessness organisations across Scotland to evaluate the extent of rough sleeping and begging in the areas where it is concentrated. We provide funding for personalised budgets so that frontline staff can respond immediately to people on the street with the most acute housing needs.
- [Street Change Glasgow](#) is an initiative to prevent begging, rough sleeping and homelessness. It offers a quick way for members of the public to donate via QR codes and a Just Giving page. Led by Simon Community Scotland, Street Change Glasgow has been created in partnership with Glasgow City Mission, The Marie Trust, Lodging House Mission, Glasgow City Council's Begging Strategy, industry, and those with experience of begging and rough sleeping. It has so far raised over £18,000 to help people pay for food, clothing, utility bills, household essentials and the cost of travel to appointments.
- The City of Edinburgh Council has commissioned work on street begging in the city. In April 2023, a street begging strategy co-ordinator was appointed. The postholder will consult with a range of stakeholders, including

third sector organisations, health and justice services, businesses and people involved in begging. Information will be gathered on why people beg, what might reduce reliance on begging and how services might be improved to support people who beg. This will inform a reduction in street begging strategy.

The Scottish Government and COSLA continue to do all we can within our limited powers to **prevent homelessness for those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)**. We know that people with no recourse to public funds are at higher risk of rough sleeping or destitution.

- The Scottish Government provides annual funding to Homeless Network Scotland to facilitate [Fair Way Scotland](#).¹³ Fair Way Scotland is a consortium of third sector organisations that works to ensure people with NRPF have access to living essentials, support, advocacy and third sector funded accommodation.
- A three-year evaluation of Fair Way Scotland by the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research at Heriot-Watt University has been commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. A [progress report](#) was published in August 2023. It found that:
 - UK Government immigration policy is a key driver of homelessness and destitution for this group.
 - Over 1,200 individuals used Fair Way Scotland services in year one. Of those requiring further support,

¹³ Fair Way Scotland aims to design out homelessness and destitution for people with no recourse to public funds in Scotland. The Scottish Government will continue to support Fair Way Scotland as far as is possible within devolved competence.

there is a relatively even balance between people who are appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals with restricted eligibility.

- Some groups, such as post-Brexit EEA arrivals, Roma with no interest in voluntary return and groups with complex needs, face a heightened risk of being exploited.
- COSLA has started surveying local authorities annually to better understand the scale and complexity of the NRPf condition in Scotland. In May 2023, COSLA published [analysis](#), which found that in 2021-22 councils spent at least £5.9 million to help people with NRPf at risk of destitution.
- COSLA published updated [guidance for Scottish local authorities on supporting people with no recourse to public funds](#) in August 2023.
- COSLA has coordinated a series of NRPf training events in the last year for local authority staff, including an introduction to support options for people with NRPf (delivered by the [UK NRPf Network](#)) and a session on benefits for EEA nationals (delivered by the [Child Poverty Action Group](#)).
- COSLA has published an [online webinar](#) on migrants' rights and entitlements on the [Migration Scotland](#) website.
- COSLA continues to host quarterly meetings of the national NRPf Scotland Network for local authorities to share good practice.

- The Scottish Government funds a range of advice and advocacy services¹⁴ to help people to stabilise their immigration status.

We said we would **learn from recent initiatives** and **set out a broader range of accommodation options in crisis situations**.

This action was proposed by the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group](#) while we were dealing with a global pandemic. Scotland is now supporting Ukrainians to rebuild their lives in Scotland following the illegal invasion of Ukraine. We learned a lot about responding to homelessness during the pandemic and we have drawn on these lessons in our approach to the next phase of Scotland's Ukraine response.

- The Scottish Government and local authorities provided an immediate place of safety to thousands of people from Ukraine. In September 2023, we published a [new strategy](#), in collaboration with the Scottish Refugee Council and COSLA, to help Ukrainians settle into communities and find longer term housing.
- We are distributing £30 million to councils to support people into sustainable housing alongside £3.2 million to support the staffing of resettlement teams. While this funding will help councils prevent homelessness for people from Ukraine, councils are able to exercise full discretion and may support other groups in housing need.

¹⁴ The Scottish Government funds an immigration advisor working in COSLA; an advice service for EU citizens in Scotland provided by the [Citizens' Rights Project](#); and an immigration advice service provided by [Settled](#). The Scottish Government has also extended funding for the [Scottish Refugee Council](#) to provide legal advice to people facing homelessness and destitution.

- More than £1.5 million is being made available to third sector organisations to support people from Ukraine.
- The Scottish Government's £50 million [Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund](#) has helped bring over 1,200 empty properties back into use and has now been extended to 31 March 2025. Many of these homes will be retained as social housing stock when no longer required by people displaced from Ukraine.
- The Scottish Government's [homelessness statistics](#) do not currently show a disproportionate impact for households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness a result of the change to local connection rules. In 2022-23, 2 per cent (705) of households assessed as homeless were reported as having a local connection with another local authority. This is a lower proportion than the cases that were reported as having a local connection with another authority in 2021-22 (815, 3 per cent).¹⁷

We said we would **revise legislative arrangements for intentionality and amend the intentionality definition to focus more closely on 'deliberate manipulation'**.

Local authorities currently have discretion rather than a duty to look into the reasons why a person became homeless. The next stage of this work – to narrow the definition of intentionality to focus on deliberate manipulation – has been paused while we focus on other priorities. Very few households are assessed as intentionally homeless¹⁵ but we remain committed to reducing barriers to enable people to get the support they need at the earliest opportunity.

- As of 29 November 2022, local authorities no longer have the power to refer an applicant to another local authority in Scotland¹⁶ on the grounds of their local connection.

- Informal data collection on the impact of the change to local connection rules is providing a picture of movement across the country in between formal statistical publications. The quality and the consistency of the data returned has been variable to date and we are working with local authorities to rectify this. We will also continue to work with the local connection solutions group to resolve identified issues for local authorities.

We will consider **how the temporary accommodation standards framework can be legally enforced.**

- The Scottish Government published a new [temporary accommodation standards framework](#) in April 2023.
- The Scottish Government will consider how the standards framework can be legally enforced, as well as determining an implementation date.

15 Of the 32,242 homeless households in 2022-23, 31,732 (98 per cent) were assessed as unintentionally homeless, with the remaining 510 assessed as intentionally homeless.

16 The power to refer applicants with a local connection to an authority in England and Wales remains.

17 The latest statistics only include data for the period to 31 March 2023.

- In the period before the standards framework becomes legally enforceable, local authorities will have time to make improvements to their temporary accommodation supply, provide the necessary training for their staff and ensure new processes are implemented in line with the revised standards. The practical application of the standards by local authorities during this period may identify changes needed to the standards before legal enforcement.



Progress against actions to join up planning and resources to tackle homelessness

Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#) is our vision for the nation we want to be. We said we would **ensure the National Performance Framework review includes explicit consideration of homelessness.**

The Scottish Government is currently reviewing the national outcomes. This is required by law every five years.

- As part of this review, the Scottish Government published a [consultation](#) in March 2023 to seek views on what matters most to communities in Scotland.
- We engaged with representatives of the housing and homelessness sector as part of the consultation process.
- We are now exploring ways to better represent housing and homelessness in the revised national outcomes, due to be published in 2024.

We said we would **improve how we use Public Health Scotland data and intelligence capabilities.**

- Public Health Scotland is collaborating with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to link homelessness application data to health and social care data. Work will begin with a small number of pathfinder areas but the aim is to make this data available to all areas to inform where best to target support for people experiencing multiple and complex needs.

We continue to **improve drug and alcohol treatment and harm reduction services.** The Scottish Government remains focused on getting more people in to the form of treatment which works best for them.

- We saw a [record fall in the number of drug misuse deaths](#) in 2022 (1,051 compared to 1,330 in 2021 – a reduction of 21 per cent). This is the lowest annual total since 2017.
- The latest statistics on homeless deaths were published in November 2022 and showed that [drug misuse deaths of people experiencing homelessness fell](#) for the first time in 2021. However, drug misuse was still the cause of over half of all deaths for people experiencing homelessness.
- The Scottish Government continues to drive implementation of the medication-assisted treatment (MAT) standards. All health boards, integrated joint boards and local authorities have returned delivery plans and will be regularly reporting on progress to the Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy.
- Scotland's Lord Advocate announced in September 2023 that people using a [safer drug consumption facility in Glasgow](#) would not be prosecuted, which means the pilot project, which aims to reduce the harm associated with drug misuse, can now go ahead.

- In recognition of the need for [better recovery provision for women](#), particularly those with childcare responsibilities, the Scottish Government has made more than £5.5 million available over this parliamentary term, to support the establishment of two houses in Dundee and Central Scotland run by Aberlour. These facilities are designed to support women and their children through recovery.
- We are also setting up a group to explore what pathways are in place for substance-using women during pregnancy and the early years, and we will develop good practice guidance to support local areas to meet the needs of women and their infants.

We said we would **improve the join-up between health, social care, housing and homelessness planning**. As the Scottish Government co-designs the National Care Service, we want to hear from as wide a range of people as possible with experience of community healthcare and social care services.

- In order to address gaps in our engagement to date, the Scottish Government is awarding [new funding to third sector organisations](#) so that the people they work with can have their say on how future services should look. Simon Community Scotland will receive £5,000 in 2023-24 to ensure that the perspectives of those with experience of homelessness are heard.

- To demonstrate the cross-cutting nature of the National Care Service, the chief executive of Simon Community Scotland, Lorraine McGrath, will co-chair the [National Care Service National Forum 2023](#) along with Shea Moran, who has lived experience of homelessness.

We said we would **embed homelessness as a public health priority and ensure local authorities, housing providers and public bodies join up to prevent homelessness**. We recognise that a home is essential to a person's health and wellbeing. This point was reinforced in the [report of the homelessness prevention task and finish group](#).

- The Scottish Government will bring forward housing legislation to introduce prevention of homelessness duties this parliamentary year. The new duties are designed to improve the way local authorities, housing providers and public bodies co-operate to prevent homelessness. The duties will include the requirement that public bodies, such as health and criminal justice services, ask about housing situations to identify a risk of homelessness and then act on that information.

The [Hard Edges Scotland](#) report continues to inform how the Scottish Government responds to the severe and multiple disadvantage that some people face in Scotland.

- In light of the strong links between poverty, welfare and housing, the Scottish Government convened a roundtable on child poverty in September 2023 for stakeholders from the housing, homelessness and debt advice sectors. Attendees provided constructive input on what is working well and what needs to change to meet statutory child poverty targets.
- The Scottish Government recognises that ending homelessness cannot be achieved by one ministerial portfolio. To that end, the Minister for Housing has set up a ministerial oversight group on homelessness to bring together ministers from across the Scottish Government to work in a joined up way to prevent and end homelessness. It held its first meeting in September 2023.

We said we would **update the code of guidance on homelessness** and **review the need for a code of practice in the code of guidance on homelessness**.

- We remain committed to reviewing the [code of guidance on homelessness](#) once the homelessness prevention duties have been introduced, and we will review the need for a code of practice addendum to the code of guidance in future.

We said we would **join up housing, employment and employability support**.

The Scottish Government and COSLA remain committed to building on the progress already made through delivery of No One Left Behind. No One Left Behind is the approach to transforming employment support in Scotland. It has a crucial role in achieving Scotland's vision for economic transformation and tackling child poverty. Through No One Left Behind, we are making the employability system more responsive to the needs of people and to the changes in labour markets.

- No One Left Behind will facilitate greater join up of local service provision, driving a no wrong door approach for people who may need to access multiple services concurrently.
- Work is being carried out in partnership with local authorities to consider ways to improve specialist employability support delivery through No One Left Behind ahead of Fair Start Scotland referrals ending in March 2024.
- The Scottish Government's [Housing First monitoring reports](#) developed to capture Housing First activity across Scotland also record positive outcomes as a result of Housing First tenancies, including training and employment.



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