



## **Evidence Base**



## **Local Housing Strategy 2025-2030 Consultation Draft**

## Introduction

[The Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) places a statutory duty on councils to produce a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) supported by an assessment of [housing need and demand](#). The [Scottish Government's Local Housing Strategy Guidance 2019](#) has been followed in the production of the strategy.

The Local Housing Strategy is a five-year strategy sets out the strategic vision of Aberdeen for the delivery of housing and housing related services. The Local Housing Strategy considers local and national priorities which, along with stakeholder consultation, which has helped shape the strategic priorities aimed to be achieved across all tenures of housing in Aberdeen.

The Local Housing Strategy builds on Aberdeen City's previous Local Housing Strategies and supports the Scottish Government's strategy detailed in [Housing to 2040](#) and the priority actions in the Joint Delivery Action Plan, which forms the monitoring framework that supports the Local Housing Strategy.

Since the previous Local Housing Strategy there have been a series of economic, political and environmental challenges, including the global COVID-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis and in the context of a national housing emergency. All of this occurring at a time when local authority finances are under significant pressures.

## Vision

The vision for the Local Housing Strategy reflects the city's core vision in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan: "a place where all people can prosper."

The Local Housing Strategy sets out the strategic vision and priorities for the future delivery of housing and housing related services. It identifies the specific commitments made by the council and its key partners to deliver the strategic priorities within the Local Housing Strategy.

The vision for housing is:

**The people of Aberdeen live in good quality, safe, sustainable and affordable homes in thriving communities that meet their needs.**

## Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities have been established through stakeholder consultation, and informed by the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#). These strategic priorities aim to promote equality in housing, help reduce poverty, provide high quality housing, and to develop actions to reduce fuel poverty and reverse the effects of climate change.

The Local Housing Strategy aims to deliver seven overarching strategic priorities in relation to:

**Priority 1: Adequate supply of housing**

We will support a sufficient supply of housing to meet the varying needs of the people of Aberdeen.

**Priority 2: Placemaking and Communities**

We will use a place-based approach to encourage lesser heard voices to shape their communities and the community offering, focusing on the unique circumstances of a particular place and involving local people in decision making.

**Priority 3: Homelessness**

We will support a proactive housing options approach and will work collaboratively to provide a person-centred service to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

**Priority 4: Promote independent living in communities**

We will use a multi-agency approach, technology and other innovations to enable the people of Aberdeen to live as independently as possible, for as long as possible in their community.

**Priority 5: Promote health through housing**

We are committed to reducing health inequalities by providing affordable, accessible, high quality and energy efficient homes that enhance people's health and wellbeing.

**Priority 6: Housing quality and energy efficiency**

We will improve the condition of existing homes across all tenures and improve their energy efficiency to help to alleviate fuel poverty and address climate change and support a just transition to net zero.

**Priority 7: Private rented sector**

We will support a well managed private rented sector

The strategic priorities form the foundation of the Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy 2025-2030 Delivery Action Plan. This provides the monitoring and evaluation framework in relation to delivery of the each of the key priorities. Performance indicators agreed jointly with key stakeholders and monitored by the Strategic Priority Group annually.

## Social Determinants of Health

The World Health Organisation states that any factors combine together to affect the health of individuals and communities and whether people are healthy or not, is determined by their circumstances and environment. Public Health Scotland published a briefing paper on “[Healthy housing for Scotland](#)” which sets out the link between housing and health. To a large extent, factors such as where a person lives, the state of the environment, genetics, income and education levels, and relationships with friends and family all have considerable impacts on health.



Figure 0.1: Social Determinants of Health - Main factors

Whereas the more commonly considered factors such as access and use of health care services often have less of an impact. Figure 0.1 highlights the main factors which make up the social determinants of health.

The social or wider determinants of health are the non-medical factors that influence people’s health outcomes. These are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping daily life that include the broad social and economic circumstances which together influence the health of the population.

## Aberdeen Context

### Location

Aberdeen is an urban local authority located in the northeast of Scotland and is the country’s third largest city. It is the regional centre for employment, retail, culture, health and higher education. It is also the region’s transport hub with road, rail, sea and air links.

Aberdeen City extends to 185.7 km<sup>2</sup> (71.7 square miles) and shares its boundaries with Aberdeenshire. The Local Housing Strategy covers the area outlined in Figure 0.2.

Aberdeen is home to two leading research universities, Europe’s largest medical hub including Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Royal



Figure 0.2: Map of Aberdeen area  
Source: Aberdeen City Council.

Cornhill Hospital along with the Rowett Research Institute, and Northeast Scotland College, one of the largest in Scotland.

It has some of the most affluent areas of Scotland based on house prices such as Rubislaw, Cults and Bielside where the average house price is £590k according to Rightmove, the average house price for Aberdeen was £137k according to ONS. However, Aberdeen has some deprived areas as well, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. (SMID) Aberdeen has a number of areas identified as deprived including Woodside, Tillydrone and Middlefield.

### Urban/Rural Split

The Aberdeen Housing Market Area stretches well beyond the city boundaries as highlighted in purple in Figure 0.3 below. The definition of a Housing Market Area is “a geographical area where the demand for housing is relatively self-contained”.

Figure 0.3 - Map of Aberdeen City including the wider housing market area



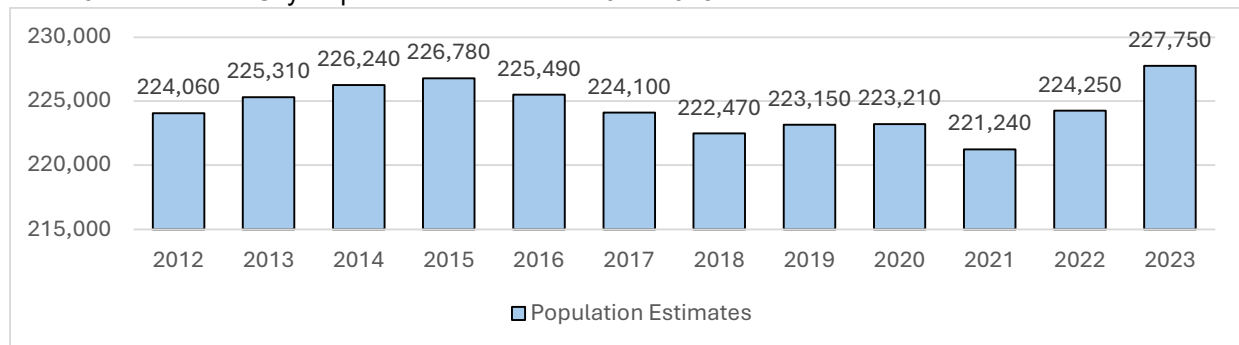
Source: Aberdeen City Council

## Population

The population of Aberdeen experienced steady growth in the early 2010s as seen in Table 0.1 below. The downturn of the oil and gas sector in 2015 saw the population in the city begin to decline. Since then, it has fluctuated, reaching its lowest point in 2021. This may be attributed to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, the population figure seems to have made a significant recovery, exceeding pre-COVID levels.

It is important to note that these estimates were provided by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and are based on 2020 projections. The scheduled update of the 2022-based projections are not due to be published by NRS until early 2025. The estimated population projection for 2022 of 224,190 closely aligns with the figure reported as part of the 2022 Census of 224,109, indicating the accuracy of this projection.

Table 0.1: Aberdeen City Population Estimates – 2012-2023



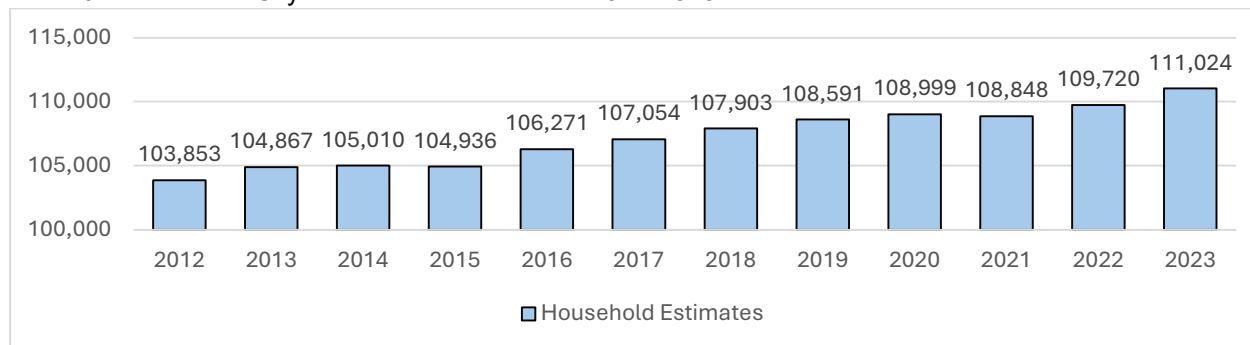
Source: National Records of Scotland, Population Estimates, Time Series Data (July 24)

## Households

In contrast to the population fluctuations, data from the National Records of Scotland (NRS) shown in Table 0.2 below indicates the number of households in the city has increased at a comparatively consistent rate between 2012 and 2023 with a slight annual growth most years. Results from the Census 2022 indicated the total households in the city was 109,374, which closely aligns to the estimate provided by NRS for the same year.

The latest available data in relation to population and households suggests that both figures are rising in the city.

Table 0.2: Aberdeen City Household Estimates – 2012-2023



Source: National Records of Scotland, Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland (June 24)

## Housing Need and Demand

The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, published in January 2024, provided a summary of the key issues identified in each section of the document that would be considered in the development of the next Local Housing Strategy and Local Development Plan produced by both local authorities respectively.

For Aberdeen City, key issues of particular importance included increased demand for larger family homes, a requirement for additional specialist provision accommodation, the effects of international migration and a low demand for property types such as tenement blocks and multi-storey properties. While this is not an exhaustive list of the issues identified in the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#), these issues provide examples of the key challenges being faced by the council and other housing providers in the city. These have been considered by Aberdeen City Council when developing the priorities of this Local Housing Strategy in collaboration with Registered Social Landlords and other local stakeholders.

Supporting chapters have further information on the Aberdeen context that is relevant to each of the strategic priorities.

## National Context

### Housing to 2040

The Scottish Government's [Housing to 2040](#) vision is for everyone in Scotland to have a safe, high-quality home that is affordable and meets their needs in the place they want to be. In line with this national vision, the Aberdeen Local Housing Strategy 2024-2029 provides a range of housing priorities and seeks to compliment this vision.

Supporting chapters have further information on the national context that is relevant to each of the strategic priorities.

## Local Housing Strategy Achievement 2018 - 2023

Significant progress has been made in relation to delivery of strategic outcomes identified in the Local Housing Strategy 2018 - 2023. A summary of some of the key achievements is given below:

### Strategic outcome 1: Housing Supply

- 3,097 social homes delivered which includes 1,130 from Aberdeen City Council plus 433 buy-back homes.
- 394 Mid-Market Rent homes
- Upgrade of the Gypsy/Traveller site at Clinterty to ensure it meets current regulations

### Strategic outcome 2: Homelessness

- The implementation of the Housing First Model in 2021
- The roll out of the Housing Options toolkit which completed in 2024
- The introduction of the Housing for Care Leavers procedure in 2020
- The introduction of the Foyer's Nightstop Service in 2023
- In 2023 Aberdeen became one of the six flagship locations for Homewards project which is part of HRH Prince and Princess of Wales Royal Foundation that aims to end homelessness.

### Strategic outcome 3: Independent living and specialist provision

- The supply of wheelchair accessible housing has increased by 112 homes since 2018/19. A further 67 homes were delivered to housing for varying needs, accessibility standard and 26 specialist provision housing as been delivered through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.
- The Strategic Housing Investment Plan has a minimum 15% target for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes. (The current Strategic Housing Investment Plan projects that 365-wheelchair accessible or specialist provision homes will be delivered between 2025/26 – 2029/30, which is in line with the 15% target.)
- Increased the provision of interim housing options to support people who are delayed discharge in hospital. An additional 25 places have been provided in sheltered and very sheltered accommodation. This is in addition to the 21 places already provided. This model has eased the flow from hospital settings.
- Increased the provision of specialist provision housing for people with learning disabilities/mental health issues in partnership with Sanctuary Scotland and Hillcrest at North Anderson Drive and Newton of Charleston providing 16 new tenancies.
- Working in conjunction with Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership to produce the [Complex Care Market Position Statement](#) and [Mental Health and Learning Disability Residential and Supported Living Market Position Statements](#) that inform the market of current and future need, and detail opportunities for new provision or re-provisioning.



#### **Strategic outcome 4: Private rented sector**

- Quarterly Newsletters issued to Private Landlords providing landlords advice and guidance within the sector.
- Introduction of the Private Landlord Support Officer post within the Private Sector Housing Team in 2023. The post provides enhanced advice and support to private landlords and tenants. In 2023, the Landlord Support Officer dealt directly with 65 landlords who required advice, and the main theme was around legislative queries and tenancy management issues.
- Re-instatement of the Landlord Forums online, consisting of key speakers from the Scottish Government, Landlord Accreditation Scotland and Under One Roof. These forums cover a variety of topics such as property maintenance, tenancy management and legislative updates within the Sector.

#### **Strategic Outcome 5: Fuel poverty and climate change**

- Engaging a consultant to assist in the completion of the public engagement and the preparation of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy.
- Achieving over 8,500 Home Energy Scotland interactions, Home Energy Scotland interacts via a range of ways with residents in the Northeast including by telephone or digital service, home visits, at events either public facing over via employee engagement, the online competition or via targeting campaigns.
- 350 referrals made to Warmer Homes Scotland a government funded project to assist private households who are struggling financially. This is to make their homes warmer and easier to heat, where the owners' circumstances and property are suitable. 129 of the referrals led to an installation happening either for insulation or heating.
- The Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap was approved in 2022 setting an approach to a net zero city by 2045. Supporting the Routemap is a Buildings and Heat Strategy (2022), covering energy efficiency and decarbonising heat.
- Aberdeen Adapts the city Climate Adaptation Framework was refreshed in 2022, this includes buildings and infrastructure as one of the 5 priority themes.
- Phased delivery of Gold Standard specification Aberdeen City Council homes under the Council house-building programme. This included the hand over of new homes at Cloverhill. The programme is increasing connections to lower carbon district heating and to zero carbon renewable technology.

#### **Strategic outcome 6: House Condition – Social Sector**

- Improved understanding of the energy profile of the Council's housing stock. The stock is now 93% compliant with the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.
- Expansion of the district heating network which includes new build developments at Wellheads (383 homes), Auchmill Road (92 homes), Summerhill (369 homes), and 6 Multi Storey Blocks (324 homes).
- Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHESS) has achieved stages 1 to 4 in the strategy these are 1 Policy and Strategy, 2 Data and Tools Library, 3 Baseline Tools and Strategic, Zoning, 4 Generation of initial Delivery Areas

### **Strategic outcome 6: House Condition – Private Sector**

- Implementation of 10% sampling, where private landlords are requested to provide copies of safety certification as part of the Landlord Registration application process. In 2023, 419 properties were sampled and certification checked. This assists in ensuring privately rented properties are adhering to current standards.
- Proactive visits to tenement properties are conducted to highlight communal areas for improvement/repair as a preventative measure to maintain property condition. Between 2020 – 2023, a total of 1,202 properties have received a pro-active visit. In some cases, private owners are written to and advised of property repairs required.
- The Missing Share process was reviewed and information available to the public made clearer with an application form available. The Council promotes Novoville (a shared repairs App) that encourages owners to manage communal repairs.

Any outstanding actions have been incorporated in this Local Housing Strategy and the associated Joint Delivery Action Plan for 2025 - 2030.

### **Integrated Impact Assessments**

Equality issues have been considered throughout the development of the Local Housing Strategy. The approach taken has been to ‘mainstream’ equalities issues across all aspects of housing including planning for new housing, housing management, allocations and homelessness. Mainstreaming equalities is about systematically considering equality and diversity at all stages and across all areas of activity. Understanding and reflecting that some people’s views may not readily be heard via the use of traditional engagement methods.

An Integrated Impact Assessment will be undertaken and monitored throughout the lifetime of the Local Housing Strategy to consider any unintended consequences for the people of Aberdeen, particularly for groups who may be seen as vulnerable or marginalised. The assessment will also allow the council to consider steps that can be taken to mitigate the risks to the people of Aberdeen.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

A Strategic Environmental Assessment is being carried out as required under the [Environmental Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#). This will determine the impact of the strategy and if there are likely to be any significant environmental effects. This is a dynamic assessment that will evolve over the period of the strategy development.

## Consultation

The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) requires local authorities to consult on their proposed Local Housing Strategy. Similarly, statutory Equality Duties on public bodies require involvement, consultation and engagement with as wide a range of local people as possible.

The development of the vision and strategic priorities was developed in consultation with members of the Strategic Priority Groups that are made up of key stakeholders. These have informed the development of the evidence base.

Further consultation on the draft strategy is planned in line with the Consultation and Engagement Plan.

## Priority 1: Adequate supply of housing

### Introduction

This chapter recognises the importance of good quality, sustainable and affordable housing. It sets out our strategic vision for housing supply across all tenures to meet projected need and demand.

The delivery of an adequate supply of housing, that is of the right type and size to meet current and future needs is central to creating balanced, sustainable, and mixed communities. Challenges resulting from the economic downturn, increased building costs and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to have an impact on the housing market.

This chapter is informed by the [Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) and sets out the housing need and demand required for the city over the next 20 years. It identifies the key issues and actions required in relation to the supply of housing.

### Strategic Priority

**We will support a sufficient supply of housing to meet the varying needs of the people of Aberdeen.**

This strategic priority for the duration of this Local Housing Strategy was developed in consultation both with internal and external stakeholders for this sector. This outcome encapsulates the approach that stakeholders wish to see over the next five years.

## Aberdeen Context

Significant progress has been made with the delivery of affordable housing in recent years; however, demand still outstrips supply across the city. The Housing Need and Demand Assessment is the evidence base required to calculate local housing and land requirements over the next 20 years.

### Local Outcome Improvement Plan

Table 1.1 below details the [Aberdeen's Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#) 2016-2026 (LOIP) stretch outcomes that hold particular relevance to housing supply. Table 1.1 is not an exhaustive list of every potential link to these topics in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, however it includes several of the improvement project aims/key drivers that relate to housing supply that can contribute to the achievement of the stretch outcomes.

Table 1.1: LOIP Stretch Outcomes and Improvement Project Aims Relevant to House Supply

Stretch Outcomes	Improvement Project Aims/Key Drivers
1. 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/or not be able to heat their home by 2026.	Increase to 92% the number of homes that meet an EPC rating of C or better by 2026.
10. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026	Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families, and groups.
12. Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief, and non-recurring with a longer-term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.	Increase accessibility to a wider range of housing options to people at risk of homelessness.
13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate	Reducing emissions across the city through delivery of Aberdeen's Net Zero Vision & Route-map.

Source: Aberdeen City Council Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026, Refreshed Version (2024)

Housing supply can contribute to Stretch Outcome 1 through the provision of new housing which is built to high energy efficiency standards. This can also contribute to Stretch Outcome 13 as an increased number of energy efficient properties will result in a lower overall carbon footprint for the city and contribute to the delivery of [Aberdeen's Net Zero Routemap](#).

The supply of good quality, sustainable and affordable housing can also contribute to the achievement of Stretch Outcome 10 and 12 by increasing the housing options available to vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Ensuring that there is an adequate supply of good quality housing, particularly to vulnerable groups, can help to reduce the level of homelessness and contribute to an overall improvement of healthy life expectancy in the city.

## **Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 (HNDA3)**

The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) is completed jointly with Aberdeenshire Council. Both local authorities worked with housing market partners to produce the HNDA 3 which was signed off as 'robust and credible' by the Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) in January 2024.

To assist local authorities with the HNDA process, the Scottish Government has developed an HNDA tool which produces an estimate of the additional housing units needed at a local authority and housing market area level.

The HNDA tool projects the number of new households who will require housing by using household projections produced by the National Records of Scotland. The tool also considers the number of existing households who need to move to more suitable housing.

Several economic scenarios were modelled, each with a different set of variables that were input into the HNDA tool to provide a range of estimates of future housing need in the city. The differing variables in the scenarios included level of migration, income growth and the tenure split in the city. The HNDA tool then calculates housing affordability and provides total future housing requirements over a twenty-year period, split by tenure.

## **Aberdeen Local Development Plan**

Planning authorities must prepare a local development plan for their area. This shows how local places will change into the future, including where development should and should not happen.

The [Aberdeen Local Development Plan](#) was adopted in June 2023 and is used to guide decisions on planning applications alongside [Aberdeen Planning Guidance and Supplementary Guidance](#) and National Planning Framework 4.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 changed how Local Development Plans are structured and presented. With the implementation of National Planning Framework 4, there are now national planning policies that cover the whole of Scotland and are used to guide decisions on planning applications alongside the Local Development Plan. Local Development Plans have a focus on local policies and are more place and spatial based than previously. There is no requirement to repeat national planning policies within the Local Development Plan, as both National Planning Framework 4 and the Aberdeen Local Development Plan are used to assess and determine planning applications.

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan focusses on outcomes to ensure it delivers for people and places. It is place-based, relevant, accessible, and useful to people with an interest in their place. To ensure the Aberdeen Local Development Plan is deliverable, it is place-based, and people focused and takes an "infrastructure first" approach. This involves the consideration of infrastructure implications at every stage of the planning process, and it encourages, promotes, and facilitates development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis.

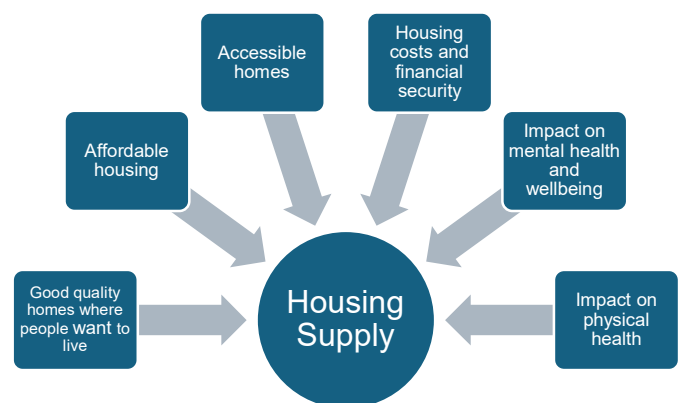
The Local Development Plan delivery programme is expected to establish a deliverable housing land pipeline for the “local housing land requirement.” It provides a transparent view of the phasing of housing allocations so that interventions that enable delivery, including infrastructure, can be planned. The pipeline is expected to cover the short (1-3 years), medium (4-6 years) and long term (7-10 years).

The Local Development Plan is required to allocate deliverable land to meet the “local housing land requirement” in locations that create quality places for people to live. Areas that may be suitable for new homes beyond 10 years also have to be identified. The locations where new homes are allocated should be consistent with local living including, where relevant, 20-minute neighbourhoods and an infrastructure first approach.

Diverse needs and delivery models should be taken into account, as well as allocating land to ensure provision of accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers and Travelling Showpeople where need is identified.

## Social Determinants of Health – Housing Supply

Housing is recognised as an important social determinant of health. Poor quality housing such as those with damp, mould or inadequate heating can lead to various health issues and negatively impact on wellbeing. The same can be said for people who experience homelessness, overcrowding and accessibility issues. The adequate supply of good quality housing that is affordable and secure has significant positive effects on health outcomes. Efforts to increase the supply of social housing can also improve quality standards have the potential to reduce health inequalities.



## National Context

The national legislative framework for housing supply in Scotland is designed to ensure that everyone has access to good quality, affordable housing that meets their needs. Key components of this framework include:

[Housing to 2040](#) sets out a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. It aims to deliver the Scottish Government’s ambition for everyone to have a safe, good quality and affordable home that meets their needs in the place they want to be.

[National Planning Framework 4](#) outlines the Scottish Government’s intention to encourage, promote and facilitate the delivery of more high quality, affordable and sustainable homes, in the right locations, providing choice across tenures that meet the diverse housing needs of people across Scotland.

The [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) and the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) aim to integrate housing and planning systems to increase the speed and efficiency of the planning process. Local Development Plans are expected to identify a local housing land requirement for the area they cover. This is to meet the duty for a housing target and to represent how much land is required. To promote an ambitious and plan-led approach, the local housing land requirement is expected to exceed the 10 year Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement. The Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement is the minimum amount of land, by reference to the number of housing units, that is to be provided by each planning authority in Scotland for a 10-year period. The Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement is expected to be exceeded in each Local Development Plan's Local Housing Land Requirement. Deliverable land should be allocated to meet the 10-year local housing land requirement in locations that create quality places for people to live. Areas that may be suitable for new homes beyond 10 years are also to be identified. For Aberdeen, the 10-year Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement is 7,000 units.

The [Affordable Housing Supply Programme](#) comprises a range of funding mechanisms to enable affordable housing providers to deliver homes for social rent, mid-market rent, and low-cost home ownership.

The [Local Government Finance \(Unoccupied Properties etc.\) \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#) allows local authorities to charge increased Council Tax on certain homes that have been empty for more than 12 months.

These legislative measures, along with various policies and funding programmes, work together to support the delivery of housing and housing-related services across Scotland.

## **Housing Supply Targets**

The Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 provides the evidence-based estimate of how much additional housing will be required to meet all future housing need and demand in the city.

The Local Housing Strategy, using the HNDA as an evidence base, provides the starting point for setting Housing Supply Targets (HST) within the Local Housing Strategy.

The Housing Supply Target (HST) sets out the estimated level of additional housing that can realistically be delivered. This will be developed with stakeholders throughout the consultation process.

These targets will be further refined as part of the consultation process with stakeholders.

## **Strategic Housing Investment Plan**

The core purpose of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) is to set out strategic investment priorities for affordable housing over a 5-year period to achieve the outcomes set out in the Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The SHIP reinforces the

local authority as the strategic housing authority and details how investment priorities will be delivered. The SHIP should:

- Set out the investment priorities for affordable housing
- Demonstrate how these will be delivered
- Identify the resources required to deliver these priorities
- Enable the involvement of key partners.

Over the lifespan of the previous Local Housing Strategy, 3,097 affordable housing units were delivered in Aberdeen City as part of the SHIP, as seen in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Affordable Housing Completions 2018/19-2023/24

Developer	Type	No. of units
Aberdeen City Council	Social Rent – Buy-Backs	433
Aberdeen City Council	Social Rent	1,130
Aberdeen City Council	Mortgage to Rent	1
Barratt Homes	LCHO	4
Castlehill	Social Rent	68
Castlehill	Mid-Market Rent	6
Grampian	Social Rent	43
Grampian	Mid-Market Rent	64
Hillcrest	Social Rent	644
Hillcrest	Mid-Market Rent	156
Langstane	Social Rent	32
LAR	Social Rent	9
LAR	Mid-Market Rent	4
Muir Homes	LCHO	1
Osprey	Social Rent	1
Places for People	Social Rent	98
Places for People	Mid-Market Rent	92
Places for People	Shared Equity	35
Sanctuary	Social Rent	203
Sanctuary	Mid-Market Rent	72
Scotia	LCHO	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,097</b>

Source: Aberdeen City Council, Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2025-30

Table 1.3 below shows the distribution of affordable housing completions by tenure over the lifespan of the previous Local Housing Strategy. 2,228 were new social rent properties which is around 72% of all units delivered, with the majority of these being delivered by Aberdeen City Council and then Hillcrest Housing Association.



Table 1.3: Affordable Housing Completions 2018/19-2023/24 by Tenure

Tenure	Total Units Delivered
Mortgage to Rent	1
LCHO	6
Shared-Equity	35
Mid-Market Rent	394
Social Rent – Buy Backs	433
Social Rent	2,228
<b>All Tenures</b>	<b>3,097</b>

Source: Aberdeen City Council, Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2025-30

The SHIP and its investment priorities are aligned with the strategic priorities of the Local Housing Strategy 2025-2030. The delivery of affordable housing through the SHIP has the potential to contribute to the achievement of all of the strategic priorities of this Local Housing Strategy, with the exception of the Private Rented Sector strategic priority.

The SHIP 2025/26-2029/30 has the potential to provide 2,427 new affordable homes over the lifespan of this Local Housing Strategy. If all homes were delivered, this would significantly help meet housing need and demand across the city and help to address the housing emergency that was declared in Aberdeen in September 2024. There are, however, several constraints which may have a detrimental impact on the number of affordable homes delivered in the coming years.

A combination of factors including inflation rates and the invasion of Ukraine affecting access to supply markets in Russia, Ukraine, and surrounding area, have led to a cycle of market and price volatility and shortages across many commodities which has had a negative impact on the delivery of capital projects and budgets. Whilst price volatility appears to be levelling off, there is still a significant increase in the cost of materials and contractors.

There is uncertainty regarding funding sources for future affordable housing projects which has a detrimental effect on the ability to plan for affordable housing provision in the coming years. There has also been a reduction in grant funding through the affordable housing supply programme which has led to Aberdeen City Council being unable to proceed with sites, particularly those that do not fall under a Section 75 legal agreement. There has also been an increase in developers who are reluctant to plan for delivery of affordable housing through Section 75 agreements and would choose to provide a commuted sum which will require careful management and consideration.

Although the current landscape presents various challenges, Aberdeen City Council will continue to utilise available funding from a variety of sources and work with key stakeholders in order to maximise the delivery of affordable housing in the city.

## Housing Demand

The HNDA 3 presented evidence to suggest that housing supply in the city does not meet current levels of demand. In the social sector, the majority of households on Aberdeen City Council's waiting lists are waiting for 1-bed properties with around

60% of all applications, as shown in Table 1.4 below. Demand for 2-bed and 3-bed properties is considerably lower with, approximately 22% and 14% of the waiting list respectively, however there are significantly lower levels of 3-bed homes which means that whilst there is lower demand, the length of time a household is waiting can be significant. This also applies to those who need 4-bed and larger as there is fewer exiting stock of this size.

Table 1.4: Aberdeen City Council Waiting Lists by Bedroom Size\*

Total Applicants	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	7 Bed
6,554	3,958	1,445	913	213	24	1
100%	60.4%	22.1%	13.9%	3.3%	0.4%	0.02%

Source: Aberdeen City Council Waiting List as of 31 March 2024 \*percentages rounded to one decimal place

Data was also included in the HNDA 3 in relation to demand for property sizes that Registered Social Landlords in the city are experiencing, as shown in Table 1.5 below. This data was sourced from These Homes, a choice-based lettings platform used by several housing associations in Aberdeen City.

Table 1.5: Registered Social Landlord Applicants by Bedroom Size\*

Total Applicants	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed+
10,371	4,959	2,964	1,783	529	136
100%	47.8%	28.6%	17.2%	5.1%	1.3%

Source: These Homes data (2024)<sup>1</sup>

Scottish Household Survey data suggests that the number of bedrooms per dwelling in the social sector is insufficient to meet demand for 1-bed properties in Aberdeen, with 33% of social housing being properties of this size, as shown in Table 1.6 below. The proportion of 1-bed social properties in the city is around half of the proportion of applicants for 1-bed properties on Aberdeen City Council's waiting lists.

Although demand experienced by RSLs for 1-bed properties is lower than Aberdeen City Council, it is still considerably higher than the proportion of social housing in the city. Demand for 2-bed properties, similarly to Aberdeen City Council's waiting lists, is significantly lower than the proportion of 2-bed properties in the city.

Table 1.6: Number of bedrooms per dwelling in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire

	% Owner-Occupier				% Social Housing				% Private Rented			
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Aberdeen City	11%	32%	38%	19%	33%	53%	14%	-	40%	48%	11%	2%
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>6%</b>

Source: Scottish Household Survey (2019)

The HNDA 3 suggested an undersupply of 1-bed properties in the social sector, as well as an oversupply of 2-bed properties. With the exiting social sector stock being

<sup>1</sup> These Homes operate within the Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Council areas and the figures shown are for the whole area. They are unable to provide details for applicants only registering an interest in Aberdeen City areas.

unable to meet demand from those requiring 1-bed properties, this may place additional pressure on temporary accommodation, particularly where households are unable to afford the private rented sector.

The data also suggests that existing housing stock may be unable to meet the demand of those requiring larger family homes. 6% of RSL applicants require 4-6 bed properties according to These Homes data, and 3.7% of Aberdeen City Council's waiting list is for 4 and 5 bed properties. There is a very low proportion of 4-bed+ properties in the social sector, meaning that this demand is unlikely to be met by social housing providers unless additional larger homes are delivered through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

Evidence was presented in the HNDA 3 to suggest that families arriving as part of refugee, asylum seeking and resettlement groups may increase demand on larger family homes in the city. Arrivals from these groups may continue at the current level or even grow in the near future, as discussed in the Independent Living chapter of this Local Housing Strategy, potentially resulting in a sustained demand for larger family homes from these groups. There was also a growing trend identified in the HNDA 3 for international students to arrive in the city with their families, further increasing the demand for these properties, however immigration rules surrounding this have now changed which should ease some of the future pressures.

While there is a shortage of certain property sizes and a suggested oversupply of others in the city, Aberdeen City Council recognises that there is a need for a diverse supply of housing built in the future which will assist in developing sustainable, mixed communities for the people of Aberdeen. The council will work with property developers to ensure that current stock insufficiencies in the city are remedied in a way which is deliverable and promotes community living.

## **Self-Build/Custom Build**

Aberdeen City Council has a self-build register which can be found on the council's website. It includes a link to fill in the register and details of the published register. The register is refreshed every two years, after which time the Council will contact those on the list to check if they wish to remain on it, or alter any details held. The published register is updated monthly and is open to view on the [website](#). The published list contains a name, location required, what type of plot, number of plots required, house type, and intended build start time. This information is used to develop planning and housing policy and guidance for Aberdeen.

A planning application for 19 plots was approved in June 2024 in the west of the city which means that anyone hoping to build their own property could start work without the need for land acquisition or planning permission from the council.

## **Empty Homes**

Aberdeen City Council recognises the key role that privately owned empty homes play in meeting housing need and demand and have two full time Empty Homes Officers in place to work with owners of long-term empty properties to help bring

them back into use. Empty homes can cause significant challenges not only for homeowners but also for residents, local authorities, and other relevant stakeholders. There can be significant disrepair and blight which has a negative impact on the local environment and quality of life for neighbours. From a wider community perspective, empty homes can have a negative effect in terms of place, undermine regeneration efforts and prevent common repairs from taking place. Furthermore, properties which are inactive within the housing market do not contribute to economic activity within communities and do not help with homelessness prevention or meeting housing needs within Aberdeen city. The definition of a long-term empty home is a privately owned residential property that has been empty for six months or more and is liable for Council Tax.

In the Aberdeen City Council area, empty homes have been classified using the following definitions:

- **Long term empty properties:** These are dwellings that have been empty for 6 months or more and are liable for council tax. The most recent figures published by the Scottish Government show that there were 5,793 long term empty properties in the Aberdeen City Council area in 2023.
- **Unoccupied exemptions:** These are properties which are empty and exempt from paying council tax. The most recent figures published by the Scottish Government show that there were 2196 unoccupied exemptions in the Aberdeen City Council area in 2023. There is no requirement for a property to have been empty for more than 6 months before it can be included in this category.
- **Second Homes:** Homes which are furnished and lived in for at least 25 days in a 12-month period but not as someone’s main residence. The most recent figures published by the Scottish Government show that there were 686 second homes in the Aberdeen City Council area in 2023.

Table 1.7 illustrates the number of long-term empty dwellings in Aberdeen City, and the areas within the local authority with the highest concentration of long-term empty dwellings.

Table 1.7: Long-Term Empty Homes

Area	Long Term Empty homes	Total stock	% of homes that are long-term empty homes	% of housing stock In local authority	% of long-term empty homes in local authority
Aberdeen City	5,631	124,368	4.53%	17.72%	1.56%
Area 1 City Centre West	463	3,429	13.5%	2.76%	8.22%
Area 2 George Street	356	5,025	7.08%	4.04%	6.32%
Area 3 Garthdee	298	2,852	10.45%	2.29%	5.29%

Source: National Records of Scotland (June 2023)

Table 1.8 below shows the scale of long-term empty homes in Aberdeen City is found to be in the city centre and south of the city. These areas are important due to the desirable central landmarks that the citizens of Aberdeen look to live in for reasons such as employment, studying, primary/secondary schools, train/bus

stations, and shopping. Tackling these priority areas can play a key part in meeting the demand and need for housing which is identified in the Local Housing Strategy.

Table 1.8: Number and Percentage of Long-term Empty Homes by Local Authority and Housing Market Sub Area

Area	Long Term Empty Homes 2021	Long Term Empty Homes 2022	Long Term Empty Homes 2023	% Increase/decrease Year 2	% Increase/decrease Year 3
Aberdeen City	6,024	5,785	5,631	3.97 % decrease	2.66% decrease
Area 1 City Centre West	602	463	463	23.09% decrease	23.09% decrease
Area 2 George Street	563	389	356	30.91% decrease	36.77% decrease
Area 3 Garthdee	123	168	298	36.59% Increase	142.28% Increase
Scotland	43,787	44,612	46,294	1.88% Increase	3.77% Increase

Source: National Records of Scotland (June 2023)

Table 1.8 above also shows there has been an overall decrease in the number of long-term empty properties in Aberdeen City as a whole. The areas above are those with the highest concentration of long-term empty properties in Aberdeen. The number of empty properties in City Centre West and George Street have also reduced from 2021-2023. In Garthdee, however, there has been an overall increase in the number of long-term empty properties. One reason for this might be the oversupply of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation. Aberdeen is home to several university and college campuses and Garthdee is close to Robert Gordon University.

City Centre West and George Street are close to Northeast Scotland College and the University of Aberdeen. According to the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) there has been a 23% increase in the total number of students across all campuses in Aberdeen. However, there is more online/outreach courses which have mitigated the pressures on student accommodation. Furthermore, the HNDA indicates that there is sufficient supply of purpose-built student accommodation in the city, this meaning that there is potentially a decline in students who are looking to utilise homes within the private rented sector.

To address the significant amount of long-term empty properties in Aberdeen city, the Empty Homes Officers utilise a range of tools to help owners bring their properties back into use. The key successes are:

### **Matchmake to Rent Scheme**

This aims to introduce homeowners who are looking to rent their empty property who are on Aberdeen City Council's housing waiting lists. This scheme requires the property to meet the repairing standard. Properties that do not meet the repairing

standard will not be eligible for this scheme but can be referred on to the Matchmake to Sell Scheme.

### **Matchmake to Sell Scheme**

This scheme aims to introduce long-term empty homeowners who are looking to sell their property with people who are looking to purchase an empty property. The scheme can be used whether the property requires some form of repair work, or the property is in a condition that is ready to move in.

The scheme is free of charge for those wishing to advertise their empty properties in Aberdeen City and offers increased exposure by highlighting it on the visitors of Aberdeen City Council's Empty Homes website. The scheme is also non-exclusive: The property can remain for sale or to let with an estate agent and the sale can continue through this agent if a 'match' is made via the scheme.

### **Genealogists**

The Empty Homes Team have partnership agreements with two genealogist companies, Fraser and Fraser and Finders International. The Empty Homes Officers will also discuss with relevant departments within Aberdeen City Council to gather contact information on an owner. The working relationship has been a key component for tracing owners, or relatives of owners for the Empty Homes Officers to begin communication with the owners to provide the assistance to bring their empty homes back into use.

### **Advice and Information Service**

The Empty Homes Team provide information about the range of options available to help owners select the solution that is right for them. The Empty Homes Officers look at what can be done about problematic properties, and those where the owner has no intention of returning a property to use.

### **Value Added Tax (VAT) Discounts**

The Empty Homes Officer can provide a VAT (currently 5%) letter for properties that have been evidenced as being empty for two years and the owner wants to bring it back into use. The discounts are set out in [Buildings and construction \(VAT Notice 708\)](#).

Furthermore, the Empty Homes Officer can also supply a VAT letter for a property that has been evidenced as being empty for ten years or more and is intended to be brought back into use as a dwelling, these types of properties may be eligible for zero rated VAT.

### **Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs)**

As a last resort, the Council will seek to address disrepair, dereliction and in some cases where there are significant amounts of Council Tax debt by the means of a compulsory purchase order. A CPO is a legislative power that allows the local authority to take enforcement action to purchase. This process may be the correct

route of action to take if the owner has not engaged with the relevant services such as the Empty Homes Team and has made no effort to bring their properties back into use or to pay their debt.

### **Council Tax Generation**

Further to the above measures Aberdeen City Council also utilises [The Council Tax \(Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2016](#) which allow local authorities to charge increased Council Tax on certain homes that have been empty for one year or more. To encourage owners to bring their empty property back into use the Council Tax team can apply a 100% Council Tax levy. An additional Council Tax levy may be charged to properties that have been empty for one year or more without being actively marketed for sale or rent, and two years or more if being actively marketed. The Council Tax levy will remain applied to a long-term empty property until it is brought back into use. As of 01 April 2024, Aberdeen City Council along with 28 other local authorities can now choose to apply up to double the rate of council tax on second homes to encourage those with second homes to bring these back into full use. The additional 100% Council Tax levy will be applied to each long-term empty property on an ongoing basis until the property is brought back into use.

The power contained in the Regulations is intended as an additional tool to help local authorities encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use, both to increase the supply of housing for those who need homes and to reduce the blight on communities caused by houses being left empty and allowed to fall into disrepair. These Council Tax monies are used to fund the Empty Homes Officer posts and contribute towards the council's new build housing programme.

### **Addressing Local Housing Need**

Empty homes activity contributes to increasing housing supply to meet the demand for affordable and market housing in Aberdeen City. Bringing empty homes back to use can also support Aberdeen City Council to meet its statutory duty to prevent homelessness wherever possible and to mitigate the impact of homelessness where it cannot be prevented and to increase provision of specialist housing units across categories such as wheelchair accessible homes. Where the private rented sector plays a large part in market housing provision, long term empty homes may be of interest to private investors. Equally where supply has outstripped demand for privately rented properties, former rental properties may be of interest for buy back or acquisition schemes in Aberdeen city. This section will be updated when the review of the buy-back scheme has been completed.

### **Key Issues**

- Competing priorities, a lack of resources such as grant investments for empty homes, balancing operational workload issues with new projects, initiatives, and reporting requirements. Furthermore, small number of empty homes brought back into use annually compared to costs/time involved in doing so.
- Challenging cases where homeowners cannot be traced, or ownership is in dispute can be extremely time consuming. Furthermore, the inability to use Compulsory Purchase Orders due to costs involved in purchase and/or legal resourcing being limited to pursue cases.

## Key Actions

- Increase the supply of housing across all tenures
- Work with owners of empty homes to bring their properties back into residential use.
- Develop, maintain and monitor robust empty homes data and information.
- Raise awareness of empty homes as a wasted resource and develop effective partnerships with key housing-related stakeholders both locally and nationally.
- As a last resort, address disrepair and dereliction in empty homes through enforcement activity available through other Council services.

## Priority 2: Place Making and Communities

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the role of housing in placemaking and developing sustainable communities. Placemaking is a collaborative approach that fosters a sense of belonging, which helps to create vibrant, inclusive, and resilient communities.

Engaging local people in decision making processes ensures developments are tailored to their specific circumstances, creating environments that are not only functional but also enjoyable and meaningful. Successful placemaking relies on strong partnerships between various stakeholders, including local authorities, community groups, and private sector partners, ensuring that the diverse needs of the community are met and resources are used effectively.

The Placemaking Standard tool is a valuable resource for assessing the quality of a place and identifying areas for improvement, providing a structured framework for evaluating various aspects of the built environment. This has been used extensively in the development of the [Local Outcomes Improvement Plan \(LOIP\)](#), which informs the Local Housing Strategy.

The [City Centre and Beach Masterplan](#) outlines a vision for the regeneration of the city centre and beachfront areas. Overall, the plan envisions “a revitalised Aberdeen with well-designed housing and vibrant town centres that contribute to the city’s economic recovery and long-term sustainability”. This strategy recognises the important role of housing in the delivery of this aim.



## Strategic Priority

**We will use a place-based approach to encourage lesser heard voices to shape their communities and the community offering, focusing on the unique circumstances of a particular place and involving local people in decision making.**

This strategic priority for the duration of this Local Housing Strategy was developed in consultation both with internal and external stakeholders for this sector. This priority encapsulates the approach that stakeholders wish to see over the next five years.

## Aberdeen Context

### Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)

The [Local Outcome Improvement Plan \(LOIP\)](#) outlines several key aspects relating to placemaking and housing. It recognises housing as a critical component in creating a prosperous place where people want to live, encouraging community involvement in developing sustainable communities. The LOIP identifies a number of strategic outcomes and stretch outcomes in relation to placemaking shown in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: LOIP Stretch outcomes and improvement projects relating to placemaking

Stretch Outcome	Key Drivers
<b>Stretch Outcome 10</b>	
Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.	Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups.
	Provide individuals and communities with the social resources needed to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation
	Encouraging the adoption of healthier lifestyles through a whole family approach
<b>Stretch Outcome 12</b>	
Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief, and non-recurring with a longer-term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.	Reduce the number of evictions and increase the percentage of people supported to sustain their tenancy across private and social landlords.
	Increase education and skills relating to tenancy management and housing rights for young people.
	Increase accessibility to a wider range of housing options to people at risk of homelessness.
<b>Stretch Outcome 13</b>	
Focuses on addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of	Reducing emissions across the city through delivery of Aberdeen's Net Zero Vision and Route Map.

the changing climate	Contributing to the delivery of Aberdeen Adapts by developing a bottom up approach to community resilience to encourage greater ownership and independent action towards understanding communities' risks from climate change and adapting them to it.
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Source: Aberdeen City Council Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026 (2024)

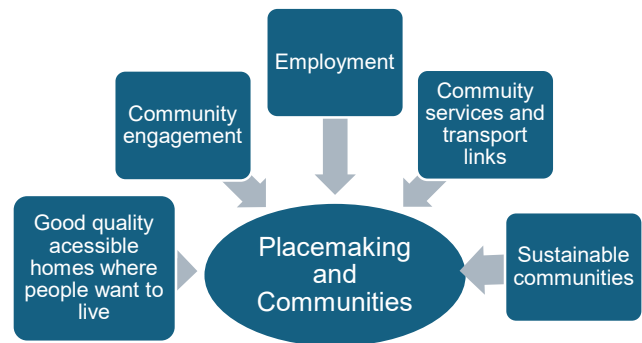
## Aberdeen Local Development Plan

Planning authorities must prepare a local development plan for their area. This shows how local places will change into the future, including where development should and should not happen.

The [Aberdeen Local Development Plan](#) was adopted in June 2023 and is used to guide decisions on planning applications alongside [Aberdeen Planning Guidance and Supplementary Guidance](#).

## Social Determinants of Health – Placemaking and Communities

The social determinants of health play an important role in the placemaking and community. These determinants include economic stability, quality and accessibility of housing, community engagement, education, transportation and access to health and social care services. Taking a holistic approach to ensure the provision of housing that is high quality and affordable can reduce health inequalities and enhance wellbeing.



## National Context

The national legislative framework for housing supply in Scotland is designed to ensure that everyone has access to good quality, affordable housing that meets their needs. Here are some key components of this framework:

[Housing to 2040](#) sets out a vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. It aims to deliver the Scottish Government's ambition for everyone to have a safe, good quality and affordable home that meets their needs in the place they want to be.

The [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) and the [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) aim to integrate housing and planning systems to increase the speed and efficiency of the planning process. The overall intent is for the planning system to encourage, promote and facilitate the delivery of more high quality, affordable and

sustainable homes, in the right locations, providing choice across tenures that meet the diverse housing needs of people and communities. This includes identifying a generous supply of land for housing and through the delivery programme establish a deliverable housing land pipeline. NPF4 acknowledges that good quality homes are at the heart of great places and contribute to strengthening the health and wellbeing of communities. It supports high quality, sustainable homes that meet the needs of people throughout their lives. In particular, it supports proposals for new homes that improve affordability and choice by being adaptable to changing and diverse needs, and which address identified gaps in provision. In summary, to deliver the right type and mix of homes in the right locations.

## **National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 - Placemaking Principles**

National Planning Framework 4 outlines the importance of placemaking and notes the following definition: “Placemaking is the process of creating good quality places that promotes people’s health, happiness and wellbeing. It concerns the environment in which we live; the people that inhabit these spaces; and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people and their surroundings. Placemaking is a collaborative approach involving the design and development of places over time, with people and communities central to the process.”

To ensure placemaking is embedded within decision making, six qualities of successful places are highlighted as being paramount for spatial strategy and for development proposals. The six qualities of successful places are to be used to assess all development proposals; so development in both existing and new communities will be critiqued against the six qualities.

The six qualities of successful places within National Planning Framework 4 are:

**Healthy:** Supporting the prioritisation of women’s safety and improving physical and mental health.

**Pleasant:** Supporting attractive natural and built spaces.

**Connected:** Supporting well connected networks that make moving around easy and reduce car dependency

**Distinctive:** Supporting attention to detail of local architectural styles and natural landscapes to be interpreted, literally or creatively, into designs to reinforce identity.

**Sustainable:** Supporting the efficient use of resources that will allow people to live, play, work and stay in their area, ensuring climate resilience, and integrating nature positive, biodiversity solutions.

**Adaptable:** Supporting commitment to investing in the long-term value of buildings, streets and spaces by allowing for flexibility so that they can be changed quickly to accommodate different uses as well as maintained over time.

Quality placemaking has been at the core of planning in Aberdeen for a number of years. All development must ensure high standards of design, create sustainable

and successful places and have a strong and distinctive sense of place which is a result of detailed contextual appraisal. Proposals are required to ensure:

- Quality architecture, craftsmanship and materials
- A well-considered layout, including biodiverse open space, high quality public realm and landscape design
- A range of sustainable transportation opportunities ensuring connectivity commensurate with the scale and character of the development.

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023 also notes criteria for successful placemaking. Although these differ slightly to the criteria noted at a national level through National Planning Framework 4, both sets of criteria are used to make decision on placemaking for both existing and new communities. Successful places will sustain and enhance the social, economic, environmental, wellbeing and cultural attractiveness of the city.

A design strategy will be required to be submitted as part of the planning process that demonstrates how a development meets these qualities. The design, scope and content will be proportionate to the scale and/or importance of the proposal. [Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Aberdeen Placemaking Process](#) provides guidance where the production of planning briefs, development frameworks and masterplans are required.

Aberdeen City Council has developed a series of planning briefs, development frameworks and masterplans in conjunction with landowners and developers. These long-term placemaking documents cover greenfield and brownfield sites within the city. They encompass a range of scales, from large mixed used communities, to business and industrial land, through to the redevelopment of single buildings. The documents provide an overview of the places to be created based on the context of the specific site, whilst ensuring distinctiveness and identity, and good internal and external connections. Phasing and infrastructure requirements are also outlined. Placemaking is ingrained within the documents.

Further to this, National Planning Framework 4 promotes and encourages the development of local living, whereby connected and compacted neighbourhoods can allow people to meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or by using sustainable transport methods. An understanding of the make-up of a place is required to meet this ask. New and existing communities being planned together in terms of homes and key local infrastructure will be fundamental to achieve local living.

### **Partnership Working**

Creating the Local Development Plan 2023 relied on partnership working and local community engagement. Partnership working internally with different teams across Aberdeen City Council and externally with key agencies, community councils, Aberdeen's citizens and other organisations led to the successful adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan in June 2023.

Finalising the content of the Local Development Plan 2023 relied on a number of non-statutory and statutory engagements and consultations. Initial themes on “how Aberdeen could be by 2040” and the positive and negative aspect of Aberdeen were explored during the Pre-Main Issues Report, before options on how changes could be implemented and potential policy approached were consulted on during the Main Issues Report. The creation of polices and allocation of development sites involved collaborative working, before a final consultation on the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan took place. Determining planning applications also requires partnership working and local community engagement though consultation and neighbour notification. The outcome of these conversations along with assessing developments against the placemaking policies of National Planning Framework 4 and the Local Development Plan 2023 ensure the best outcomes when creating or improving places.

## Place Standard Tool

The [Place Standard Tool](#) provides a framework to assess the quality of places. It supports community engagement and community planning, and was used to gather input from citizens and stakeholders, to identify areas for improvement and the stretch outcomes included in the [Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#) (LOIP), which forms the part of the evidence base for this strategy. Housing and Community was identified as one of the five highest ranking themes, along with natural space, identity and belonging, feeling safe, and play and recreation.

The tool uses 14 themes, scored on a scale of 1 – 7, where 1 means ‘lot of room from improvement’ and 7 ‘very little room for improvement’. Housing and Community scored 4.0. Along with a quantitative score, the Place Standard Tool also asks qualitative questions to elicit more information on things that are good and things that need to improve. The Housing and Community comments are detailed in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2: Place Standard Assessments, Housing and Community Comments

Theme	Good now	Improve for the future
Housing and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good range and mix of housing available.</li> <li>• Good community with good neighbours, and has a good community spirit and range of reasonable facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability and affordable housing options</li> <li>• General maintenance of housing, and insulated and energy efficient housing</li> <li>• Disadvantaged areas should be the focus of more green and community spaces</li> <li>• Improvements to appearance/maintenance of neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour (adults) focus of tenants/in community</li> <li>• Improving community spirit/social integration/reduce isolation through increasing events and activities for all</li> <li>• Too much house building, lack of quality and space and amenities in new developments</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many empty homes</li> <li>• The type of housing available was not necessarily suitable for what people need i.e. not enough social housing.</li> <li>• Increases to, and improvements for, making neighbourhoods 'look' better</li> <li>• Some areas have too many "private lets" or "short term lets which can have a negative impact on community</li> </ul>
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Source: Aberdeen City Council (2023)

## City Centre

The city centre is the commercial, economic, social, civic and cultural heart of Aberdeen. The Local Development Plan supports a strong and thriving city centre to deliver transformational projects identified in the [City Centre and Beach Masterplan](#).

Regeneration of city centre sites and other brownfield sites throughout the existing built-up area for appropriate uses is encouraged in the Local Development Plan.

The long-term ambition is to make the city centre in Aberdeen a more attractive place to live in; a healthy place where people want to live, work, and socialise. The aim is to create a city centre that takes advantage of under-utilised space and brings vitality by creating the conditions for a change in, or new uses for buildings.

Significant investment is taking place in the city centre as part of the City Centre and Beach Masterplan. Encouraging city centre living is a key part of this and actions have been taken to stimulate development. In September 2018, approval was given for the introduction of a waiver on affordable housing in the city centre. City Centre Living is supported by both the National Planning Framework 4 and the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023.

Since the affordable housing waiver has been introduced, 1,034 homes have been approved, 53 applications are pending a decision and a further 417 homes have been completed. Prior to the interventions, planning applications for 37 homes (1 application) was submitted between January - September 2018, 18 homes (2 applications) during 2017, and 42 homes (1 application) were submitted during 2016. The data therefore shows that there has been a direct increase in the number of applications for homes submitted and consented within the city centre since the introduction of the interventions has resulted in existing buildings being converted into residential use in the city centre.

## Town Centre First Approach

The Town Centre First Approach to help centres adapt positively to long-term economic, environmental and societal changes and by encouraging town centre living. The Town Centre First Principle asks that government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities put the health of town centres at the heart of decision making. It seeks to deliver the best local outcomes, align policies and target available resources to prioritise town centre sites, encouraging vibrancy, equality and diversity.

Significant footfall generating developments will be located according to the town centre first approach and proposals sequentially assessed against the network of centres as outlined in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023, and National Planning Framework 4. As can be seen from Table 2.3 below, the current network of centres consists of a regional centre (city centre), two town centres, five district centres, 32 neighbourhood centres and five commercial centres.

Table 2.3: Regional, Town, District, Neighbourhood and Commercial Centres

Regional Centre	Town Centre	District Centre	Neighbourhood Centre			Commercial Centre
City Centre	Rosemount	Danestone	Bielside	Haudagain	Rosemount	Garthdee
	Torry	Dyce	Braehead Way	Holburn	Slattie Park	Kittybrewster Retail Park
		Middleton Park	Bucksburn	King Street	Scotstown	Links Road/ Boulevard Retail Park
		Rousay Drive	Byron	Kingswells	Seafield	Denmore Road
		Berryden	Chatton Place	Kittybrewster / Clifton	Seaton	Bridge of Don Retail Park
			Cornhill	Lang Stracht	Sheddocksley	
			Cove	Leaside Road	St Swithin Street	
			Cults	Mastrick	Urquhart Road	
			Culter	Hayton	Victoria Street, Dyce	
			George Street	Mannofield	Woodside	

Source: Aberdeen Planning Guidance 2023: Hierarchy of Centres

## Key Issues

- Understanding the place-based issues of Aberdeen’s communities, while ensuring the six qualities of successful placemaking are paramount in decision making.
- Facilitating a town centre first principle for the city centre.
- Supporting a local living strategy in conjunction with the place principle.

## Key Actions

- Work with partners to achieve the ask of delivering high quality, affordable and sustainable homes, in the right locations, and providing choice across tenures that meet the diverse housing needs of people and communities.
- Continuing to support the redevelopment and regeneration of the city centre and encourage city centre living.
- Support wider place-based planning for infrastructure and services.

## Priority 3: Homelessness

### Introduction

This chapter details the approach taken by Aberdeen City Council and its partners to provide housing options and advice, working towards preventing and alleviating homelessness across the city while ensuring high quality housing support is available.

Over the last 20 years, there has been a noticeable change in emphasis in successive strategies regarding homelessness, aligning with the shifts in legislation and national guidance. While the focus was previously on increasing the provision of temporary accommodation and the lack of affordable housing, this has shifted to providing a person-centred service in the prevention and alleviation of homelessness, recognising that homelessness is often a symptom of other complex issues.

Aberdeen City Council is dedicated to addressing homelessness through a comprehensive and proactive housing options approach. The objective is to ensure that every resident has access to appropriate housing support, preventing homelessness and ensuring it is a rare, brief, and is not repeated. It is recognised that a person-centred service tailored to individual needs, supported by collaboration with various stakeholders is essential.

### Strategic Priority

**We will support a proactive housing options approach and will work collaboratively to provide a person-centred service to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.**

This strategic priority for the duration of this Local Housing Strategy was developed in consultation both with internal and external stakeholders for this sector. This priority encapsulates the approach that stakeholders wish to see over the next five years.

### National Context

Scotland has been at the forefront of progressive homelessness legislation and policy, with the [Housing Scotland Act 1987](#) and subsequent amendments setting the standard for homelessness prevention and support. The introduction of the [Homelessness etc.\(Scotland\) Act 2003](#) significantly strengthened the rights of homeless people and placed a duty on local authorities to provide permanent accommodation to all unintentionally homeless households.



The Scottish Government's approach to homelessness is underpinned by the [Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan](#), which focuses on prevention, providing rapid rehousing, and ensuring that homelessness is brief and not repeated. This is supported by the [Ending Homeless Together Monitor](#).

The Scottish Government developed the [Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan](#) in collaboration with local authorities, third-sector partners, and people with lived experience of homelessness. The plan was created in response to recommendations from the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group](#) (HARSAG) and aims to prevent homelessness, provide rapid rehousing, and ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. It focuses on prevention, person-centred approaches, and cross-sectoral collaboration to tackle homelessness across Scotland. The plan is part of a long-term commitment to transform homelessness services.

These documents detail strategic priorities and indicators to measure progress towards ending homelessness in Scotland. The action plan is underpinned by equality and human rights and includes a total of 98 actions that align to the 5 key drivers to end homelessness. The plan was most recently updated in October 2020, with new actions identified and the introduction of a monitor in 2024 to measure the impact of the plan. Key points include:

- A focus on 5 key drivers to end homelessness, these are embedding a person-centred approach, prevent homelessness from happening in the first place, joining up of planning and resources to tackle homelessness, respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens, prioritise settled homes of all.
- Indicators are selected based on relevance, validity, distinctiveness, practicality, clarity, credibility, and public interest. This ensures that the data collected is meaningful and can effectively track progress towards ending homelessness.
- The monitor outlines specific indicators and data sources to measure progress. These include metrics on social and affordable housing supply, poverty levels, and the number of homelessness applications and assessments. The monitor emphasises the importance of collaboration between local authorities, health and social care partnerships, social landlords, and third-sector organisations to achieve the strategic priorities.

The housing options approach, introduced in the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), emphasises early intervention and comprehensive support to prevent homelessness before it occurs.

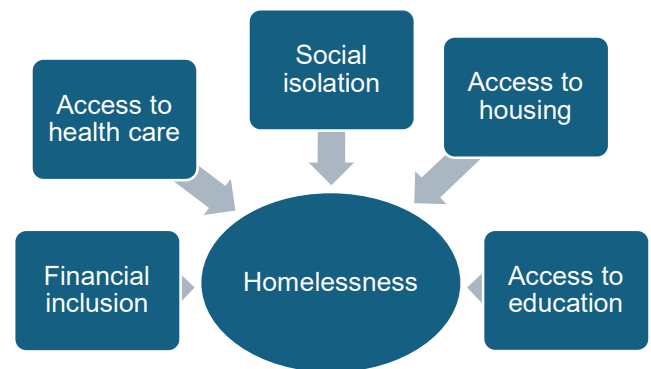
[The Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) Scotland Order](#) also extended the duty on local authorities to ensure that those experiencing homelessness have access to suitable accommodation and it details the criteria that this must meet. Any breaches in this are reported monthly to the Scottish Government.

[Homeless Persons \(Suspension of Referrals between Local Authorities\) \(Scotland\) Order](#). This order suspended the ability of local authorities to refer homeless applicants to another local authority area based on the applicant's local connection. The change was part of Scotland's ongoing efforts to make homelessness services more accessible and to remove barriers that could prevent individuals from receiving the assistance they need, regardless of their connection to a particular local authority area. The aim was to ensure a more person-centred approach to homelessness support, emphasising the individual's needs over geographic considerations.

## Social Determinants of Health

The [Healthy Housing for Scotland](#) document focuses on the intersection of housing and health, highlighting the importance of providing healthy, safe, and affordable housing for all. Key points include:

- The emphasises that housing conditions have a direct impact on health and well-being. Poor housing can lead to various health issues, including respiratory problems, mental health issues, and chronic illnesses.
- Goals to improve housing quality, increase the availability of affordable housing, and ensure that housing policies support health and well-being.
- Specific actions include improving the quality of existing housing stock, building new affordable homes, and integrating health considerations into housing policies and planning.
- Highlights the need for robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress and ensure that housing initiatives effectively contribute to improved health outcomes



Health challenges are often exacerbated in homeless populations who frequently face unstable and inadequate living conditions. Addressing homelessness requires not only providing shelter but also ensuring that the housing is of high quality and conducive to good health.

In Aberdeen, aligning the Local Housing Strategy with the principles outlined in the "Healthy Housing for Scotland" report is crucial. By ensuring that housing provided to those at risk of homelessness meets high health and safety standards, the city can help mitigate some of the health disparities faced. Furthermore, integrating health considerations into homelessness prevention strategies can reduce the burden on health services and improve overall well-being for individuals transitioning out of homelessness.

This approach not only supports those at risk of homelessness but also contributes to broader public health goals by addressing the underlying causes of health inequalities related to poor housing conditions.

## Aberdeen Context

Aberdeen faces unique challenges due to its economic landscape, housing market dynamics, and demographic trends. The city's housing market has experienced fluctuations, with recent economic uncertainties impacting residents' ability to maintain housing.

The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires statutory community planning partners to work together to achieve improved outcomes and reduce inequalities resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. As required by the Act, Community Planning Aberdeen meets this duty through the development and delivery of the [Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) 2016-26](#). (LOIP)

The ten-year plan sets out priority local outcomes which member organisations are committed to improve for and with local people. The city wide LOIP is underpinned by three area-based Locality Plans, as well as member organisation's single system plans.

The recent rise in homelessness applications highlights the need for robust prevention and support mechanisms, the recent refresh of the LOIP saw the addition of stretch outcome 12, key drivers are showing in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: LOIP Stretch outcomes and improvement projects relating to homelessness

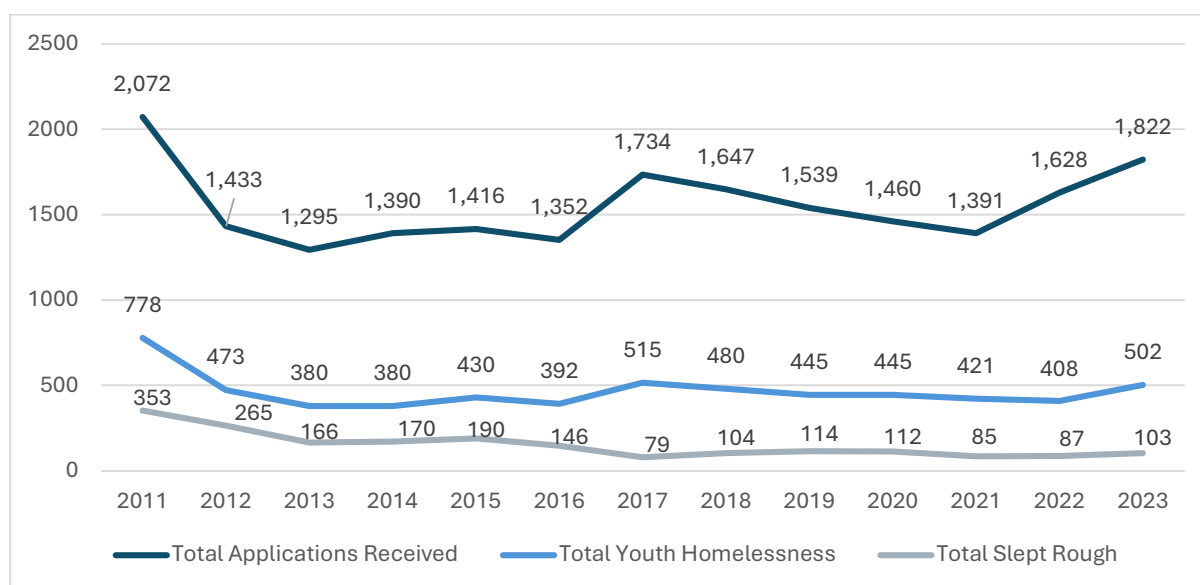
Stretch Outcome 12	Key Drivers
Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief, and non-recurring with a longer term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.	Reframing perceptions of homelessness.
	Universal prevention of homelessness and addressing root-causes.
	Ensuring adequate supply of housing across all tenures and homes are the right size, type and location.

Source: Aberdeen City Council Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026 (2024)

## Local Data

Aberdeen City Council monitors the number of homeless applications it receives, see Figure 3.1 below. The 2023/24 period saw applications from households applying as homeless in Aberdeen City to be at their highest level in 12 years after a sustained period of decline. Applications have risen by almost a third since 2021. Data released by the Scottish Government show that Aberdeen City experienced the third largest increase in homeless applications across Scotland in 2022/23 with 166 households per 10,000 applied as homeless which was higher than the national average of 152 per 10,000.

Figure 3.1 Number of Homeless Applications Received



Source: Aberdeen City Council - Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2023)

Single member households continue to be overrepresented within the homeless applicant profile. In 2023/24, 72% of applications received were from this group, up 4% on the previous 3 years where rates remained static at 68%, however these rates were atypically low, in comparison to typical historical patterns within the city.

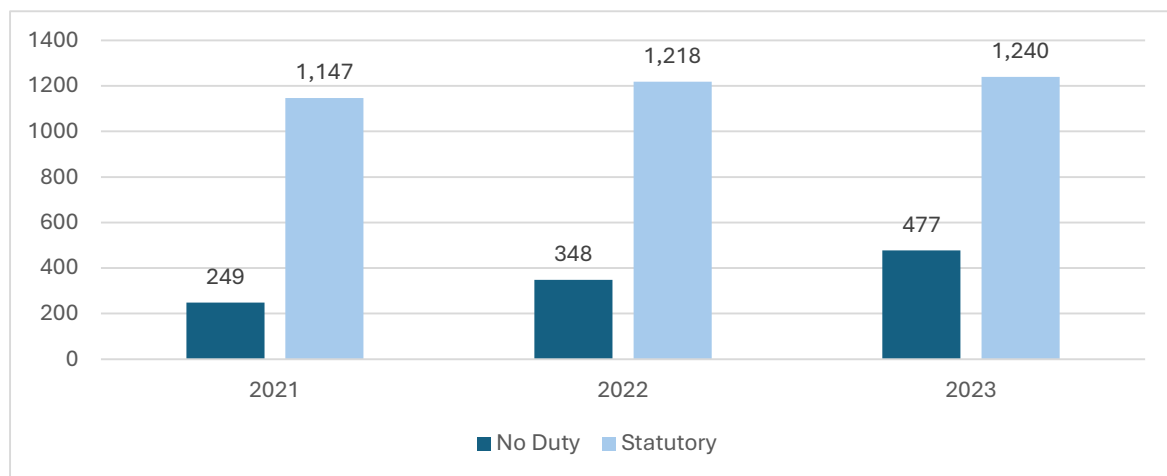
Youth applicant levels rose to 28% in 2023/24, up 3% on the previous year and the third highest of all local authorities across Scotland. Historically, rates have varied between 25% and 30% annually and are consistently higher than the national average which in 2022/23 was 22%.

Over a quarter (30%) of applications received in 2023/24 came from households who were not residents of the city, 11% of whom came from households who were last settled in neighbouring Aberdeenshire.

In contrast to the increases seen above, the proportion of applicants assessed and presenting with at least one support need has declined from the 67% recorded in 2019/20 to 39% (496) in 2023/24. The number of applicants requiring support with mental health continued to rise in 2023/24 with 17% (214) of the population indicating an unmet need at the time of application. Support for mental health now accounts for just under half of the homeless population assessed as in need of support.

Despite the increase in applications over the last 3 years, levels of homelessness are falling. In 2023/24, 72% of applicants assessed were determined to be statutory homeless, the lowest level seen in eleven years and a fall of 10% compared with 2021/22. Figure 3.2 below shows the number of applicants assessed with a 'no homeless duty' or 'statutory duty' between 2021/22 – 2023/24. The increase in applicants being assessed with no homeless duty is driving this change, rising by 92% between 2021/22 and 2023/24. At 8% the number of households assessed as statutory homeless has grown at a much slower pace than the overall rate of applications received.

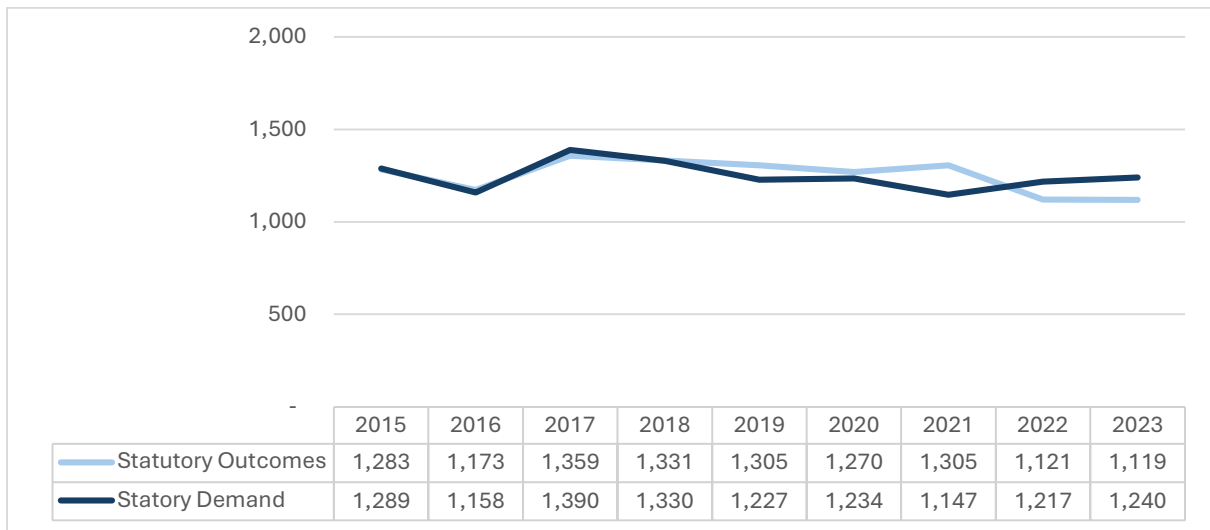
Figure 3.2 Number of Statutory and Non-Statutory Homeless Applicants



Source: Aberdeen City Council, Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2023)

Figure 3.3 below shows that the number of outcomes being secured for statutory homeless households between 2015/16 and 2023/24 each year were in keeping with or exceeded levels of new homeless demand.

Figure 3.3 Homeless Demand and Outcomes, number of cases



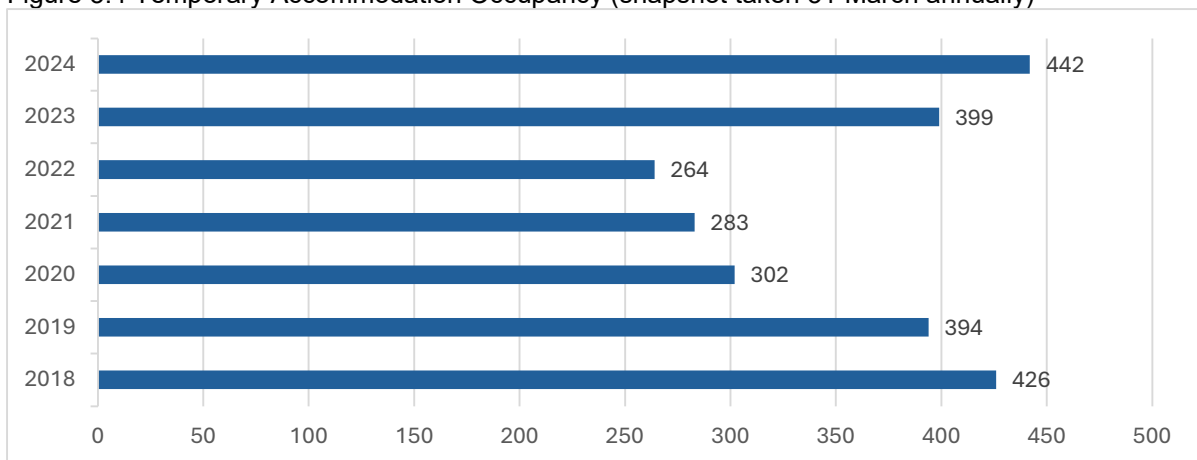
Source: Aberdeen City Council, Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2023)

Since 2022/23 statutory homeless case closure rates have slowed whereupon new demand has outstripped outcomes by a ratio of 10%. The slowdown is attributable to a fall in households securing a local authority tenancy where outcomes in 2023/24 are down 20% when compared with 2021/22.

Due to the increase in demand on the homeless service, demand for temporary accommodation also grew, leading to a 22% upturn in the number of applicants requiring and provided temporary accommodation between the 2021/22 period and 2023/24 period.

Figure 3.4 below shows a snapshot of temporary accommodation occupancy on 31 March 2024 and shows the significant increase in the requirement for temporary accommodation experienced over the last few years, where there are now more homeless households accommodated than there was five years earlier.

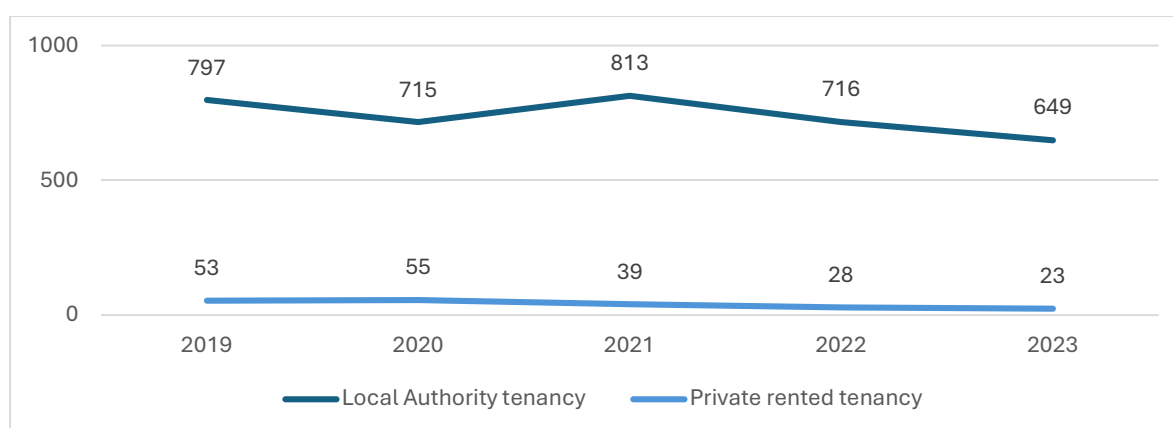
Figure 3.4 Temporary Accommodation Occupancy (snapshot taken 31 March annually)



Source: Aberdeen City Council, Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2024)

With a lettable stock capacity of over 23,000 properties, Aberdeen City Council is the largest supplier of social housing in the city and the primary provider of permanent accommodation to homeless households. At the end of the 2023/2024 period, homeless general need allocation rates were operating at 38%, the lowest level recorded throughout this period. Figure 3.5 below shows statutory homeless households securing accommodation in the private rented sector also fell by 41% during this period.

Figure 3.5 Homeless Applicants Tenancy Outcomes



Source: Aberdeen City Council, Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2023)

After a period of decline and stagnation, market rents in the city began to rise again in 2022/23, once again making it more difficult for households to access the private rented sector. Table 3.2 below provides a breakdown of current market rent compared with the local housing allowance rates for the city.

Table 3.2 Average Rent Comparison for Aberdeen City in comparison with Local Housing Allowance.

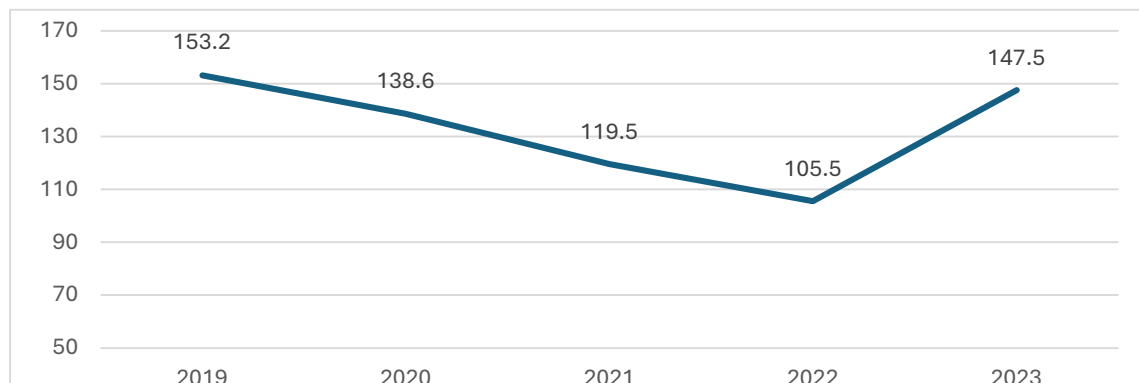
Bedsizes	Average Market Rent (Monthly)	Local Housing Allowance (Monthly)	Local Housing Allowance Shortfall (Monthly)
1 bedroom	£527.00	£423.84	-£103.16
2 bedrooms	£757.00	£593.35	-£163.65
3 bedrooms	£1,108.00	£747.93	-£360.07
4 bedrooms	£1,610.00	£997.27	-£612.73

Source: Aberdeen City Council data Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2023)

Due to the recent surplus created, the gap between supply and demand continues to grow. Estimates suggest that as of 2024, there is a supply shortage of approximately 556 properties required to bridge the gap and ensure all homeless rehousing demand is met in full each year. The slowdown is now beginning to affect the

homeless journey see Figure 3.6 below, with a 42-day increase recorded in 2023/24. The 2023/24 period saw operating times at their slowest level since 2019/20.

Figure 3.6 Aberdeen City Council's Homeless Journey Time



Source: Aberdeen City Council – Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2023)

Due to the backlog of open cases that has developed, it is predicted that the homeless journey will continue to increase over the coming years as these households successfully secure rehousing outcomes. On 31 March 2022 there were 240 statutory homeless applicants waiting to be rehoused, on 31 March 2024, this had increased to 408 with an additional 179 waiting to be assessed.

## Key Issues:

### Rising Demand for Homelessness Services:

- Evidence of an increasing number of homeless applications and demand for temporary accommodation.
- The limited availability of social housing, particularly for high demand bedsit and 1-bedroom properties. The reduction in the funding for the affordable housing supply programme significantly impacts on ability to increase the provision of social housing.

### Economic Pressures:

- Lack of clarity around long term guarantee's regarding discretionary housing payments and the introduction of benefit caps and benefit sanctions impact the underlying drivers of homelessness.
- Prisoners in Scotland face significant challenges in sustaining tenancies due to the limited options available during incarceration, particularly for those serving longer sentences. Housing support through Universal Credit continues for up to six months if the individual has an active claim and is either on remand or serving a short sentence. However, new claims cannot be initiated while in prison, and support ceases for sentences longer than six months, increasing the risk of rent arrears and eviction.



- Rising living costs and economic instability affecting housing affordability.
- The cost-of-living crisis and cessation of emergency legislation put in place to protect tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Complex Needs of Homeless Individuals:**

- While there has been a notable decrease in the proportion of applicants presenting with support needs in recent years, a significant number of individuals continue to face complex challenges. Issues such as mental health difficulties, substance use, and other personal vulnerabilities remain prevalent among those experiencing homelessness in Aberdeen. Providing tailored support to address these underlying issues is essential to improving long-term housing outcomes and reducing the risk of recurring homelessness.
- Need for coordinated and accessible support services.

### **Provision of Temporary and Supported Accommodation:**

- Ensuring sufficient supply and quality of temporary accommodation.
- Transitioning from supported accommodation provision to a Housing First model where applicants are supported in secure tenancies as opposed to being held in insecure supported accommodation.

### **Current Approach to Homelessness**

Aberdeen City Council monitors the number of homeless applications it receives and has identified key trends and challenges. The rise in the number of applications which result in the council having a duty to rehouse has placed further pressures on the demand for social housing, particularly bedsit and 1-bed properties. Aberdeen City Council is heavily reliant on the use of its own stock to discharge its duty in full to unintentional homeless applicants. The majority of homeless applicants qualify for general needs housing, which places further restrictions on the availability of stock to meet demand.

### **Reason for Homeless Presentation**

Table 3.3 below shows that homelessness can happen for various reasons. The most common reason in Aberdeen is due to being 'asked to leave', which matches the theme across Scotland, where it accounted for 26% of applications in 2023/24.

While demands for homeless assistance is increasing, the underlying drivers for making an application remain relatively unchanged. The main cause for submitting a homeless application is still individual/households having to leave their accommodation due to relationship breakdown, presenting due to abuse, or presenting due to harassment. Households applying for the below reasons accounted for 64% of all applications in 2023/24.

Table 3.3 Top Reasons for Homeless Presentations

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Asked to leave	348	345	401
Dispute within household – violent/abusive	207	178	211
Dispute within household/relationship breakdown nonviolent	301	334	355
Fleeing non-domestic violence	67	46	74
Harassment	48	76	122

Source: Aberdeen City Council – Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2023)

In line with this increase there has also been an 11% increase in the number of households becoming homeless from parental home, relative, family or friends during this period. While there has been an increase in numbers, the proportion of applicants becoming homeless from these accommodation types has fallen from 49% in 2021/22 to 42% in 2023/24.

Alongside this reduction there has been a slight shift in households becoming homeless from permanent accommodation which has increased across all accommodation types and accounted for 44% of all applications received in 2023/24, up 4% on 2021/22. Table 3.4 below shows the changes over a three-year period.

Table 3.4: Type of accommodation homeless referrals

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Own property – Local authority tenancy	209	241	296
Own property – owning/buying	57	64	77
Own property – private rented tenancy	209	321	304
Own property – RSL tenancy	92	101	117

Source: Aberdeen City Council -Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2024)

The increase among this group coincides with an upturn in the number of applicants experiencing financial difficulties, which has almost doubled during this period, rising from 64 in 2021/22 to 136 in 2023/24. The cost-of-living crisis and cessation of emergency legislation put in place to protect tenants during the COVID -19 pandemic have contributed towards this incline.

## Housing Options Approach

The Scottish Government set out guidance in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 that the focus should be the prevention of homelessness through a housing options approach. All applications for council housing are screened through the online housing options checker and proactively contacted by the council's Housing Access Service to identify potential issues that could lead to homelessness. The success of any housing options approach will be determined by the knowledge, skills, attitude, and understanding of those delivering services and the overall organisational awareness of the housing options approach. Staff receive ongoing training to ensure their knowledge is up to date, enabling them to deliver effective housing services for all customers.

The [Housing Options Toolkit](#) has been launched across Scotland to provide comprehensive guidance and resources for local authorities and housing professionals. This initiative aims to improve the consistency and quality of housing advice, offering tailored support to individuals facing housing challenges. By promoting early intervention and prevention of homelessness, the toolkit plays a key role in enhancing housing options and improving long-term outcomes for people at risk of losing their homes across Scotland.

Developing a flexible prevention service that meets the needs of all households at risk of becoming homeless will remain a key theme to future service development. Housing Options and Prevention activity is monitored through the 'Prevent 1' Scottish Government statistical return. Table 3.5 below shows the number of approaches for housing options advice initially reduced from 2017/18 period to 2021/22 period but increased in the following years.

Table 3.5: Number of approaches for housing options advice in Aberdeen

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of PREVENT1 cases recorded	4,574	3,911	3,261	2,925	2,920	3,167	3,077

Source: Aberdeen City Council, Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2024)

## Partnership Working

Partnership working includes entering into nomination agreements with Registered Social Landlords where they have vacancies or making Section 5 referrals which place a duty on the Registered Social Landlord to house a homeless household within their housing stock. Aberdeen City Council has nomination agreements with several registered social landlords, most of which operate a choice-based lettings model to allocate 50% of their vacant properties to applicants from the council's waiting lists. The choice-based lettings and homelessness protocol adopts a proactive approach to housing applicants with priority need and aims to meet the

statutory obligation to allocate a minimum of 50% of properties referred to within the protocol.

The [Royal Foundation's](#) new programme [Homewards](#) was launched in the UK in 2023 with Aberdeen selected as one of 6 areas of the UK to demonstrate that it is possible to end homelessness. In Aberdeen City Council's bid, it was stated that a better understanding of some of the underlying causes of homelessness is required to allow work to be built together with our communities to provide a response to this. At each location, Homewards are supporting local partners to form locally led coalitions of committed individuals, organisations, and businesses who will work together to create and deliver a tailored plan to prevent homelessness in their areas, based on local needs and local expertise.

Homewards will support its six flagship locations by:

- Providing access to an unprecedented network of best-in-class expertise, partners and funders at a local and national level to unlock new ideas and further investment.
- Providing up to £500,000 of flexible seed funding in each location that can be accessed to support the delivery of their action plan.
- Appointing a local lead to support the locations to drive forward their coalitions and Action Plans and spot new opportunities; and
- Working with an independent research partner that will support with capacity building, evaluation and sharing what works throughout the programme.

## **Homeless Prevention**

Aberdeen City Council aims to help people stay in their existing accommodation or make a planned move into alternative accommodation. Homelessness prevention can resolve uncertainty for families more quickly. Tools used to prevent homelessness include discretionary housing benefit payments, mortgage rescue schemes, and a rent deposit scheme. Developing a flexible prevention service that meets the needs of all households at risk of becoming homeless will remain a key theme for future service development.

In March 2022, the housing service transformed to a new way of operating and merged the previous roles of Housing Support Officer and Housing Officer. The role of a Housing and Support Officer within Aberdeen City Council is central to preventing homelessness by offering tailored, person-centred support to vulnerable individuals. The Housing and Support Officers are qualified with (or working towards) an SVQ Level 3 and are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and can work to ensure tenants can sustain their tenancies by providing practical assistance and addressing any challenges early on. By focusing on trauma-informed care and smaller caseloads, officers can dedicate more time to those needing additional support, helping to prevent homelessness before it escalates. Housing and Support Officers also collaborate with other agencies to ensure a holistic support system, aimed at improving the overall quality of life and preventing long-term reliance on public services. This new structure is part of a broader strategy by

Aberdeen City Council to improve housing outcomes and reduce homelessness by focusing on early intervention and support tailored to individual needs.

## **Prevention Fund**

Aberdeen City Council's prevention approach includes:

**Prevention Fund:** Financial resource to help prevent homelessness, providing assistance such as:

- Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.
- Travel expenses to prevent homelessness, such as paying for an applicant to return to an area where they have accommodation available.

**Financial Inclusion Team:** Provides a free and impartial money advice to residents of Aberdeen.

## **Empowering Customers**

The starting point for delivering housing options services is looking at a customer's rights, needs, and aspirations, as well as the local authority's duties towards them. Whatever housing options are pursued, this decision must be made by the customer and be fully informed and supported by services.

Effective and efficient housing options require suitable online technology, allowing customers to access information about their housing options online and in accessible locations. Self-assessment tools enable customers to input their individual circumstances and produce a tailored list of housing options for their circumstances.

In 2023, Aberdeen City Council introduced a Choice Based Lettings system to allocate properties. Properties available to let are advertised through the Aberdeen City Council website, and applicants can register an interest in the properties they wish to be considered for by bidding through the Housing Online portal. Due to the difficulties around digital access when experiencing homelessness, along with having a priority need, applicants are registered for up to 10 automatic bids per week, which are placed on their behalf on any suitable properties available.

Properties are advertised on a 7-day cycle with a closing date for bids marked against each property. During the cycle, applicants can register their interest in up to ten properties, with the option to withdraw or change their bids until the closing date. Following the closure of the advert, a shortlist is drawn, listing all applicants who registered an interest. The applications are ordered based on their assessed priority, and the applicant with the highest priority will be considered for the property.

Where an applicant is unable to manually place a bid, due to reasons such as a lack of digital access or ability, an 'auto bid' can be set on their application so that up to 10 bids are placed on their behalf each week on any properties that meet their

housing needs. Those applicants who are going through the homeless process are also placed on 'auto bid' after 21 days of their application going live to ensure that any properties that meet their needs are identified and an offer of accommodation made. While this aims to assist those who may struggle to place bids, it does not stop applicants from making their own bids on properties they feel would be suitable.

## **Private Sector Housing Options**

Working with private landlords to raise the standard and availability of private rented accommodation across the city gives customers greater choice in the type and location of their housing. Aberdeen City Council aims to develop stronger links with local estate agents and landlords to provide up-to-date information on the availability of housing in the area. Initiatives include help with the deposit needed to secure privately rented properties, which is a cost-effective method for delivering assistance.

A Private Landlord Support Officer (PLSO) post was recruited to within Aberdeen City Council in April 2023. Since then, the post has been a success where specifically the postholder is liaising with private tenants and landlords, ensuring each are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Aims of the post include:

- Establishing relationships with key stakeholders
- Tenant support and advice -raising awareness of tenants' rights in the Private Rented Sector
- Landlord support and advice - Providing advice and guidance on tenancy management
- Improving the standard of private rented accommodation
- Assisting with the prevention of homelessness from the Private Rented Sector

## **Planning for Known Milestones**

Effective partnership working is essential to ensure a joined-up approach to planning for known milestones, such as looked after children leaving care or those leaving institutions like prison or hospital.

### **Care Leavers**

Aberdeen City Council's Corporate Parenting Policy ensures that the needs of children and young people are at the centre of decisions around housing and any housing support offered to families. A Care Experienced Young Person Housing & Support Officer Role was recruited for in April 2021 and provides housing support and advice to Care Experienced Young People (CEYP). The aims of this role are as follows:

- Building networks between housing and social work
- Meeting with young people before they start housing transition and developing a relationship
- To assess support needs and support networks before moving
- Liaise with housing staff when there are issues around tenancy management
- General housing support – tenancy set up, removals, utilities, furnishings
- Developing housing resources for CEYP
- Housing Support for unaccompanied minors coming to Aberdeen
- Managing emergencies

**Leaving Prison:** Aberdeen City Council works closely with the Scottish Prison Service to prevent homelessness and provide support to prisoners on their release. A full-time staff member is based at HMP Grampian to support prisoners in managing their housing situation and planning for their release. The SHORE protocol is followed to prevent prisoners from becoming homeless on release.

**Housing Support:** Aberdeen City Council provides a range of commissioned housing support services, including:

- **Foyer Accommodation Based Support**  
This provides supported accommodation for 27 Young People within a supported block in Trinity Court. The service also provides resettlement support for young people for a short period after their service within supported accommodation has ended.
- **Foyer Nightstop**  
This provides a service for young people who are threatened with becoming homeless. It provides short-term support within host homes for young people who are unable to stay in their family home.
- **Instant Neighbour Furniture Storage and Removal**  
This service provides storage facilities for the property of those who are in temporary accommodation. It also provides removal services for those who are changing their address such as decants.
- **The Furnishing Service (TFS)**  
TFS provide domestic furniture. This is used for the Furniture Leasing Scheme and for the furnishing of temporary accommodation.
- **Instant Neighbour Furniture provision**  
Instant Neighbour provide reused furniture for the Furniture Leasing Scheme. They are the local representatives of Circular Communities Scotland, who hold the contract at a national level.
- **Outreach Housing Support Service:**  
Contract provides medium to long term housing support to those either at threat of homelessness or going through the homeless process. Support is also provided to those in mainstream council tenancies who have been identified as needing longer term housing support need by their housing and

support officer. While the service supports those with other needs (mental health, financial, criminal justice etc), support is tailored to maintaining and sustaining tenancies. As such, identified support needs must be relevant or in the context of tenancy support. The contract is provided by Turning Point Scotland and supports in the region of 500 individuals across the course of a year.

- **Housing First Service:**

Contract provides long term, open ended and intense housing support to statutory homeless individuals with a history of cyclical homelessness and multiple complex needs. This includes but is not limited to issues with alcohol and other drugs, offending behaviour and anti-social behaviours. Those referred are considered by a multi-agency triage panel and referrals are not made direct to the Housing First team. Those referred must be statutory homeless at the point of referral and must have access to public funds to be considered. The service is provided by Turning Point Scotland.

## **Domestic Abuse**

Aberdeen is shifting towards a more holistic approach to domestic abuse support with less of a focus on refuge accommodation itself but rather ensuring that safe and suitable accommodation is provided, along with the appropriate support for the individual.

Aberdeen City Council approved the [Domestic Abuse Policy](#) in March 2021 which was later reviewed in 2023. The policy applies to current and prospective tenants and includes actions to increase awareness and training of staff and allows for perpetrators of domestic abuse to be rehoused away from the family home. Rehousing perpetrators in this way will provide an alternative to disrupting families by allowing them to stay in their own home preventing homelessness whilst the police and courts take appropriate action against the perpetrator.

There is a Delivering Equally Safe Funded Development Officer in post who is currently reviewing public protection policies to ensure that they have a gendered/equally safe lens applied to them. This includes housing policies, and the domestic abuse policy has already been reviewed with plans being made to review other relevant policies and strategies. This will ensure that services responses take into consideration the different experiences of women in not just housing and homelessness but in other public protection spheres.

Housing is a key partner at Aberdeen's Violence Against Women Partnership. The VAWP's Improvement Plan is directly influenced by Equally Safe and includes a specific action around access to suitable accommodation for women experiencing domestic abuse. Gender based violence and wider gender equality training will be offered to all Housing staff, with an aim of making this mandatory.



## **Secure Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE Standards)**

Prior to transitioning towards rapid rehousing, the number of applicants becoming homeless on release from prison was increasing, rising by 32% between 2016/17 – 2018/19. The RRTP identifies this as a key controllable area and in accordance with SHORE protocol sets out a range of strategic actions to prevent prisoners from becoming homeless on release. During 2019/20, the first year of transitioning towards rapid rehousing a 17% reduction in homeless applications among this group was achieved.

Coinciding with the early release of prisoner scheme announced early in 2020/21, the number of applicants becoming homeless from prison more than doubled during the first quarter, further fuelling the bleak homeless outlook painted for 2020/21. However, subsequent movements mirrored the general homelessness direction and by the end of 2020/21 a total of 62 applications were received, 21% (16) fewer than in 2019/20. Due to the progress made, applications from this group have fallen by a third since transitioning towards a rapid rehousing model commenced. A degree of caution should be urged here as there are examples of prisoners being released and placed in temporary accommodation on discretionary grounds and not recorded as homeless.

Homeless services, Housing, Criminal Justice, Prison and Alcohol and Drug Statutory Partners meet weekly to discuss potential releases. When COVID-19 restrictions started to ease at HMP Grampian, the Case Management Board (CMB) was re-established, this changed to a weekly meeting where planning for releases is co-ordinated, and the group also reviews the previous weeks releases to ensure that contact has been made with all people leaving prison. This is currently seen as complementary to the successful CMB held by HMP Grampian involving multiagency partners 8 weeks prior to release.

Aberdeen City Council Operational Delivery Committee also approved changes to the Allocations Policy to ensure that people experiencing homelessness from prison are afforded a higher priority to increase the likelihood of a permanent accommodation offer being made and a suitable property being ready for them upon liberation.

As part of this commitment to delivering on the Scottish Government SHORE standards, a project is being developed with the aim of reducing, by 90%, the number of people released from prison into Aberdeen City without suitable accommodation by 2026. This builds on the existing process which aims to reduce use of temporary accommodation stock and have persons released from custody signing for a mainstream tenancy once their sentence ends.

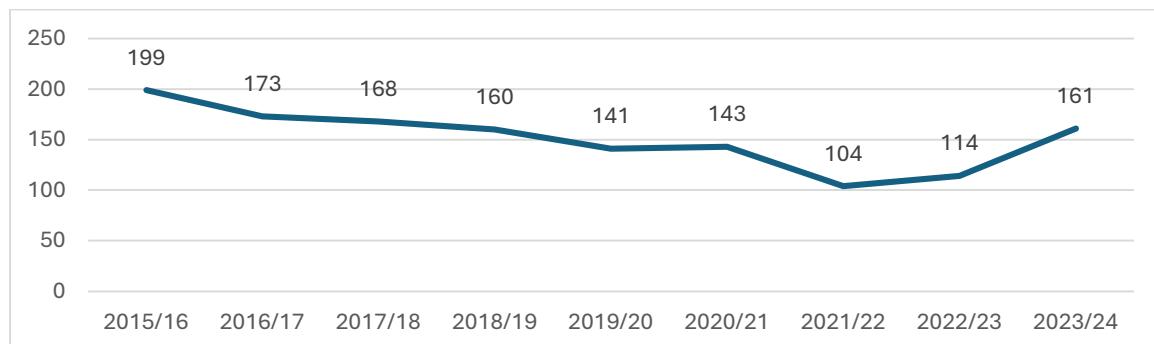
## Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

A main focus of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is to resolve homelessness into secure, suitable and sustainable accommodation for those who are unintentionally homeless. This will solve their homelessness and hope to prevent it ever occurring again.

2022/23 proved to be a very challenging year where a seismic shift in the homeless landscape was observed. Driven primarily by increases in demand, performance across the 4 key rapid rehousing areas slipped, pushing levels back closer to the pre-transition levels where they first began.

The primary aim of rapid rehousing is to provide a secure, settled housing outcome for all unintentional homeless households as quickly as possible. Aberdeen City Council identified this as a key strategic area prior to the shift in national policy and has seen the average homeless journey time fall since 2015/16, see Figure 3.7 below. Despite the rise, performance is still significantly lower than the 287 days achieved nationally in 2022/23, Aberdeen City Council were among the top three performing authorities.

Figure 3.7: Homeless Journey Times



Source: Aberdeen City Council – Quality Assurance and Performance Management (2024)

## Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter sets out clear standards and outcomes for homeless people or those threatened with homelessness. Aberdeen City Council reports annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator on performance against the Charter, including the sustainability of new tenancies. In 2023/24, the report showed that 87% of new tenancies to applicants who were assessed as statutory homeless were sustained for more than a year.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the effectiveness of this strategy, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be implemented:

- **Quarterly progress reports:** Detailed progress reports will be published every quarter, highlighting key performance indicators, milestones achieved, and areas needing improvement.
- **Annual reviews:** Comprehensive annual reviews will be conducted to assess the impact of initiatives, gather feedback from stakeholders, and make necessary adjustments to the strategy.
- **Continuous improvement:** By collecting and using feedback from residents, service users, and stakeholders to continuously improve services and approaches.

## Key Actions

Aberdeen City Council's key actions include:

- Reducing demand for temporary accommodation through a successful housing options and prevention approach.
- Ensuring the entire homeless journey is no more than 100 days.
- Utilising private rented sector and Registered Social Landlord housing to discharge accommodation duties where appropriate.
- Continuing work with Homewards
- Continuing working on Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

## Priority 4: Promote Independent living in communities

## Priority 5: Promote health through housing

### Introduction

This section straddles two priorities, promoting independent living in communities and promoting health through housing. It recognises the significant role that housing plays in supporting people to live independently and supporting good health outcomes.

This chapter examines the key issues and actions required to support people with particular needs, considering the housing needs of people in the following groups:

- Children and young people
- Older people
- Social care users
- Ethnic minorities
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Gypsy/Travellers
- Travelling Showpeople
- Armed forces communities
- LGBTQIA+ community

This chapter will identify the key issues and actions required in relation to specialist accommodation that supports independent living and considers the needs of members of groups listed above. This chapter has close links and interdependencies with Priority 3: Homelessness.

## Strategic Priority

### Priority 4: Promoting Independent living in communities

**We will use a multi-agency approach, technology and other innovations to enable the people of Aberdeen to live as independently as possible, for as long as possible in their community.**

### Priority 5: Promoting Health through housing

**We are committed to reducing health inequalities by providing affordable, accessible, high quality and energy efficient homes that enhance people's health and wellbeing.**

These priorities for the duration of this Local Housing Strategy was developed in consultation both with internal and external stakeholders for this sector. This priority encapsulates the approach that stakeholders wish to see over the next five years.

## National Context

This section has particular relevance to the delivery of the outcomes relating to:

- [Housing to 2040 sets out the Scottish Government's vision for housing in Scotland to 2040 and a route map to get there. The aim is to deliver access to safe, good quality homes that meet people's needs.](#)
- [The National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes framework sets out the nine health and wellbeing outcomes which apply to integrated health and social care. Outcome 2 states "People, including those with disabilities or long term conditions, or who are frail, are able to live as far as reasonably practicable, independently and at home or in a homely setting in their community".](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010 provides the legislative framework that protects people from discrimination. The Act covers several key areas including protected characteristics \(age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation\).](#)
- [Guidance for setting of Local Housing Strategy \(LHS\) targets to support the delivery of more Wheelchair Accessible Housing \(2019\) outlines the need to ensure that a proportion of new housing is designed to wheelchair accessible standards.](#)
- [Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations](#) outlines the responsibility of NHS Scotland, local authorities, integration authorities, housing and education partners.
- [Public Health Scotland, Healthy Housing for Scotland](#) sets out how housing can influence health and wellbeing. It supports the implementation of Housing 2040.

## Aberdeen Context

This chapter supports the targets set out within the [Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Strategic Plan, 2020 - 2025](#)<sup>2</sup>. The Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Strategic Plan includes the Housing Contribution Statement, outlining the priorities for adult health and social care services in Aberdeen.

This chapter is informed by Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership’s Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision, Market Position Statement 2024 – 2034. This sets out current provision and identifies short, medium, and long term future needs.

[Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership Technology Enabled Care Plan 2023-2025](#). Technology Enabled Care (TEC) plays a key role in supporting independence and keeping people safe at home. The Plan sets out the priority areas to be addressed including helping people ensure their current homes meet their needs, enabling appropriate adaptations and encouraging the use of TEC.

This chapter links to the outcomes identified in [Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016 - 2026](#) (LOIP). It is particularly relevant to the delivery of Stretch Outcome 10 outlined in Table 4-5.1 below. The provision of good quality, accessible and affordable housing can enhance good health and can contribute to this outcome.

Table 4-5.1: LOIP Stretch Outcomes relevant to independent living

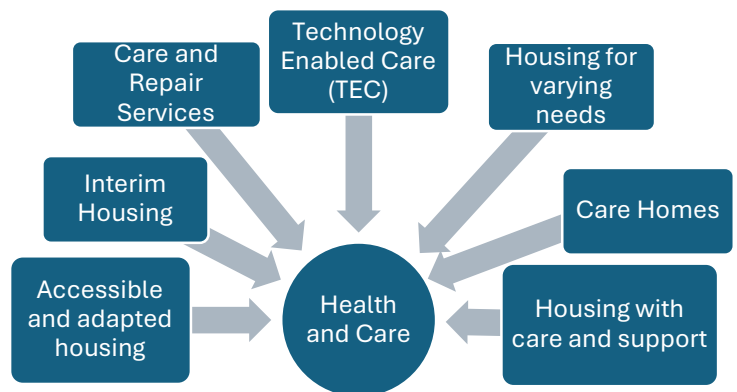
Stretch Outcome 10	Key Drivers
Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.	Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups
	Provide individuals and communities with the social resources needed to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation
	Encouraging the adoption of healthier lifestyles through a whole family approach

Source: Aberdeen City Council Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026 (2024)

<sup>2</sup> The Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership’s Strategic Plan incorporates the Housing Contribution Statement.

## Social Determinants of Health – Health and Care

The social determinants of health model highlights the importance that housing and support service play in improving health outcomes. Poor quality or inappropriate housing can lead to poor mental health, exacerbate long-term conditions, and increase the risk of challenging behaviours. Factors such as housing that is warm and accessible, housing with care and support services that meet people's needs and support mental health and wellbeing are considered throughout this chapter.



## Health and Social Care Partnership

The [Public Bodies \(Joint Working\) \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) provided the framework for the establishment of Health and Social Care Partnerships across Scotland. Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP) was formed in 2016 following publication of the [Integration Scheme](#) which sets out the delegated functions the partnership is responsible for. Housing functions that have been delegated to the partnership include the provision of adaptations in council housing and private sector housing<sup>3</sup> and garden maintenance for vulnerable people. Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership also commission some housing support services and Care and Repair services in the city.

The [Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision, Market Position Statement 2024 – 2034](#) sets out the vision, commitment, and expectations for accommodation for people with specialist requirements. The document looks at current provision, short term needs and longer term, future needs which have been used to inform this chapter.

Getting it Right for Everyone ([GIRFE](#)) proposes a multi-agency approach to health and social care, focusing on support from young adulthood to end-of-life care by providing a person centred approach to care. It builds on the success of Getting It Right for Every Child ([GIRFEC](#)). Aberdeen City is one of the GIRFE place-based pathfinder areas.

## Care and Support

Care and support provided in the right place, at the right time can enable people to live independently for longer. To meet the needs of an ageing population and the increase in the number of people living with long-term, disabilities and sometimes complex conditions requires a range of services and accommodation solutions.

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<sup>3</sup> Registered Social Landlords receive adaptations funding directly from Scottish Government.

## Older people

The number of older people living in Aberdeen is increasing. As people age, they may experience difficulties with day-to-day activities, mobility, or frailty that impact on their ability to live independently and they may require alternative housing that meets their varying needs.

Table 4-5.2 below shows the difference between the average life expectancy and average healthy life expectancy for males and females living in Aberdeen based on data from 2019 - 2021. It indicates a significant period of around 18 years where people may not experience 'good health' and may require additional support, adaptations, or alternative housing that can accommodate their health and support needs.

Table 4-5.2: Life expectancy averages, Aberdeen

	Male	Female	Average
Average life expectancy	76.9 years	81 years	79 years
Average healthy life expectancy	60.2 years	61.4 years	60.8 years
Difference	16.7 years	19.6 years	18.2 years

Source: Healthy Life Expectancy in Scotland 2019 – 2021, National Records of Scotland <sup>4</sup>

It is projected that there will be a 16.1% increase in the number of people aged 75 years and over by 2038. Scotland's Census (2022) reported that the percentage of the population aged 55 years and over and living alone in Aberdeen was 9.8%.

Whilst some people may require specialist accommodation with support<sup>5</sup>, many can remain living independently in mainstream housing with appropriate support, aids, or adaptations.

## People living with dementia

People living with dementia may require specialist accommodation and support. This can be provided at home, in specialist housing or in a care home setting.

The Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision, Market Position Statement identified around 250 people with a medical diagnosis of dementia who are known to, and actively being supported by health and social care services. It also highlights the increase in the number of younger people, aged under 65 living with dementia indicating a need for specialist housing provision that enables independent living for this cohort of people.

The [Housing and Dementia Practice Framework](#) was launched in 2019. Aberdeen City was one of the first organisations to sign up to the framework and undertook a self-assessment that has influence the work to achieve a tenure neutral approach to the delivery of adaptations and incorporate dementia friendly design principles into

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<sup>4</sup> Updated data for average life expectancy, published by NRS covering the period 2021 – 2023 shows average life expectancy for male was 76.9 years and female 80.9 years. Comparable data for health life expectancy is not available for the same time period.

<sup>5</sup> Specialist accommodation includes housing for varying needs (amenity, sheltered, very sheltered and extra care housing)

new build houses, for example clear signage, good lighting and the use of contrasting colours to help people navigate their homes.

## **Care Homes**

The [Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision, Market Position Statement 2024 – 2034](#) reports that demand for care homes is declining nationally<sup>6</sup>. This may be due to a preference to remain at home with support and the availability of housing options such as very sheltered and extra care housing.

In Aberdeen, the number of registered places has reduced by 18%, which is higher than the national average. There are 30 care homes registered to support people aged 65 years and over and are operating at near capacity. The majority have dementia care units. The Market Position Statement concludes the combination of reducing demand and rising nursing care costs is likely to see an increase in the need for specialist housing provision to support independent living models.

## **Housing for Varying Needs**

The housing for varying needs stock in Aberdeen includes amenity (amenityPlus with telecare<sup>7</sup>), sheltered housing, very sheltered and extra care housing. Castlehill Housing Association and Hanover Scotland also have independent living/enhanced housing management services. Table 4-5.3 below gives a breakdown of the stock in Aberdeen.

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<sup>6</sup> [Public Health Scotland, Care home census for adults in Scotland.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Aberdeen City Council only



Table 4-5.3: Stock breakdown for Housing for Varying Needs – Aberdeen City.

Classification of Housing	Number of Units	% of total Stock	% stock per classification
Aberdeen City Council – amenity/amenityPlus (with telecare)	241	7.64%	100%
All amenity/amenity Plus	241	7.64%	100%
Aberdeen City Council – sheltered housing	1,873	59.37%	90.97%
Registered Social Landlord – sheltered housing	186	10.17%	9.03%
All sheltered housing	2,059	65.26%	100%
Aberdeen City Council – very sheltered housing/extra care	110	3.49%	39.29%
Registered Social Landlord – very sheltered housing <sup>8</sup>	170	5.39%	60.71%
All very sheltered/extra care	280	8.87%	100%
Registered Social Landlord - enhanced housing management service	253	8.02%	100%
All independent living/enhanced housing management service	253	8.02%	100%
Private Sector – retirement housing (estimate)	322	10.21%	100%
All Private Sector	322	10.21%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,155</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Housing Strategy, Aberdeen City Council (2024)

Living in housing with the right support has been shown to produce better health outcomes for people, reduce loneliness and isolation, improve psychological health, and reduce the need for input from health and social care professionals, hospital stays and long-term care.<sup>9</sup>

The support provided in sheltered housing and independent living models can include onsite support staff, warden call type systems, while very sheltered housing and extra care housing may offer additional services such as meals provision and personal care.

A review of housing for varying needs stock is ongoing. Analysis of current supply and demand and suitability of the infrastructure will inform future provision. This also

<sup>8</sup> Includes VSA Extra Care Housing

<sup>9</sup> [Health and Social Care Cost Benefits of Housing Older People](#)

provides a opportunity to rethink how care and support services could be provided in this type of housing in the future.

Initial feedback suggests that there continues to be an overprovision of sheltered housing, which is being managed through the special letting's initiative. Demand for very sheltered/extra care housing remains consistent. Work is underway to ascertain the benefits of a more flexible hybrid model where support can flex up or down in accordance with the tenants' needs would provide a 'home for life' and better outcomes for individuals.

### **Key issues:**

- Consultation feedback suggested that some of the existing sheltered housing stock is not suitable or desirable to applicants.
- Feedback from tenants suggests the special lettings criteria has seen the tenant profile change. The variety of age range, needs and abilities has caused some issues with compatibility<sup>10</sup>.
- A review of the current provision is underway. Initial results suggest that there is scope to review criteria and redesign current stock profile to ensure it meets current levels of need.
- There is a surplus capacity within the existing sheltered housing stock but a limited provision of very sheltered housing.
- Very sheltered housing can deliver better outcomes for people and be more cost effective than the alternative care home provision.
- Evidence suggests that a more flexible hybrid model where support can flex up or down would deliver better outcomes for tenants.

### **Key actions:**

- A review of current levels of needs is underway to inform future requirements.
- A project is currently looking at opportunities to enhance very sheltered housing stock.
- Assess the opportunity to develop a more flexible independent living model of care and support.

## **Care & Repair**

Aberdeen Care and Repair<sup>11</sup> provides assistance to older homeowners and those with a disability or long-term illness to repair or adapt their homes. The ACHSCP funds the core elements of the service and additional funding is sought from a variety of charitable organisations.

The service supports independent living and provides the following services:

- Advice, information, and practical assistance relating to housing, home maintenance, repairs, improvements, adaptations, rehousing, benefits, mental health, and dementia support and operates a Trusted Trader scheme.

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<sup>10</sup> Particularly relevant for properties let under special lettings initiative.

<sup>11</sup> [Aberdeen Care and Repair – The Aberdeen Care and Repair Group](#)

- Early intervention and prevention assessment
- Small repairs (Handyman service)
- Minor and major adaptations.

### **Key Issues**

- Challenges with reaching people living in the private rented sector.
- Opportunities to expand and develop services.

### **Key Actions**

- Examine potential to develop loan scheme for modular rails/ramps

## **Technology Enabled Care**

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) is an umbrella term that describes telehealth and telecare services. This can include remote health monitoring and consultations, community alarm, warden call systems and telecare peripherals that reduce risks and support independence.

TEC plays an important role in keeping people safe at home. It is currently used in a variety of setting including amenityPlus<sup>12</sup>, sheltered and very sheltered housing, housing with support services for people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health issues and complex care needs.

Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership's Technology Enable Care Plan 2023 -2025 informs the work that is taking place to promote the use of TEC in people's homes and care settings to help them manage their health and stay safe at home.

In 2017, telephony providers announced the decommissioning of their analogue networks with a move to digital, Internet Protocol (IP). This impacts the TEC services provided in housing settings. The switch off, of the analogue signal may impact on warden call services, fire alarms, lift alarms and other TEC peripherals, including how they communicate with the Alarm Receiving Centres. To address this, alternative digital solutions are being developed and existing systems are being upgraded or replaced. The Analogue to Digital Transition (A2DT) is due to be completed by 2025.

A project group is overseeing the implementation of a new Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) and identify the risks and actions that need to be taken to ensure there is no impact or additional risks for people who currently benefit from TEC services.

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<sup>12</sup> Amenity housing with integrated telecare/warden call system.

## Key issues:

- This will impact a range of equipment and services that will require replacements or adaptors that ‘translate’ the signal from analogue to digital:
- Alarm receiving centres (ARC)<sup>13</sup>
- Warden call and telecare systems in sheltered and supported housing services
- Fire panel and lift alarms
- Cost of upgrading or replacing system will need to be met from existing budgets
- Alternative digital solutions that enable to analogue signal to convert to a digital signal are still in development.

## Key actions:

- Continue to promote the TEC in Housing Charter<sup>14</sup>
- Continue to implement the A2DT switchover, highlight risks and issues that relate to the provision of TEC services in housing settings.

## Accessible and Adapted Housing

Housing that is accessible and/or adapted plays a key role in enabling people to live independently. The range of adaptations or specialist features can vary depending on the needs of the individual.

Definition	
Accessible	Accessible housing is designed to enable people to live safely and independently. It includes features that may meet a wide range of needs. These can include but are not limited to accessible entrances to and from the property, adequate circulation space and accessible bathrooms and kitchens, wider door frames and can be easily adapted to meet changing needs. This type of housing is often described as ‘ambulant disabled.’
Adapted	An adapted property may not have been purpose built but is one that has been altered/adapted to meet the needs of the occupant. This can include but is not limited to the installation of ramped access, level access shower, lowered kitchen units, installation of stair lifts widening of doors, etc. The responsibility for adaptations is a delegated function that is the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Partnership.

<sup>13</sup> In Aberdeen the ARC is known as the Regional Communication Centre (RCC).

<sup>14</sup> Aberdeen City Council signed up to the [TEC in Housing Charter Pledges](#)

## Key Issues

The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) provided evidence showing that the demand for accessible and/or adapted properties continues to increase. Key issues identified include:

- Demographic challenges of an ageing population. Projections suggest Aberdeen will have fewer people of working age whilst the population of older people is expected to rise by 16.1% for people aged 75 and over by 2038
- Scotland’s Census 2022 identified 6.1% (13,613) of one-person households living in Aberdeen included a person aged 66 and over. This represents an increase of 18.2% since the 2011 Census.<sup>15</sup>
- There has been a 25% increase in the number of people living with long-term conditions<sup>16</sup>
- The average life expectancy of adults in Aberdeen is 76.9 years for males and 81 years for females. The average healthy life expectancy is 60.2 years for males and 61.4 years for females, indicating that many will experience a period of ill-health during their lifetime.
- Pressures on adaptations budgets due to increasing demand as the result of an ageing population and reducing budgets.
- Lack of suitable accessible housing in both private and affordable housing sector. The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) shows only 14% of all stock is adapted, see Table 4-5.4 below

Table 4-5.4: Number of adapted properties by type, tenure, and household type

Local Authority	% Adapted	Characteristics		Tenure			Household type		
		House	Flat	Owner Occupier	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Family	Other
Aberdeen	14%	12%	15%	10%	27%	N/A	24%	6%	11%

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey Results (2017 – 2019)<sup>17</sup>

- There has been an increase in the number of people with bariatric conditions who may require properties with enhanced space standards.
- Despite the increase in provision of accessible housing demand remains consistent. Analysis of Aberdeen City Council’s waiting list information is shown in Table 4-5.5 below.

<sup>15</sup> Figures not directly comparable: 2011 Census figure was based on one-person households where the person is aged 65 years.

<sup>16</sup> Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership’s Strategic Plan.

<sup>17</sup> Most recent available publication which includes data at a local authority level.

Table 4-5.5: Number of people awaiting accessible housing in Aberdeen City on 31<sup>st</sup> March annually.

House type required	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Level Access	79	109	104	173	157
Ground Floor	1,202	1,260	1,296	1,503	1,514
First floor <sup>18</sup>	171	186	192	260	260
Extra Bedroom <sup>19</sup>	80	86	113	3	3

Source: Quality Assurance and Performance Management, Aberdeen City Council (2024)

## Wheelchair Accessible Housing

The needs of wheelchair users and their families may vary. Some may use their wheelchair outdoors only whilst others require a fully wheelchair accessible property that could include low-level appliances, wider door openings, barrier free bathroom/shower access, enhanced external space, stair rails or ramps.

### Key Issues

- Demand for wheelchair accessible social housing has remained, see Table 4-5.6 below.

Table 4-5.6: Demand for wheelchair accessible housing (Aberdeen City Council only).

Demand	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1 bed	28	24	26	33	19
2 bed	25	26	16	16	19
3 bed	3	5	9	12	14
4+ bed	3	4	3	3	2
Total	59	59	54	64	54

Source: Aberdeen City Council's waiting list (31 March annually).

- Aberdeen City Council has 428 properties that are fully wheelchair accessible accounting for 1.8% of the total stock 23,255.
- The average total stock for Registered Social Landlords operating in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire is 1.8% of the total stock (102 properties from a total stock of 5,766)<sup>20</sup>
- 112 wheelchair accessible properties were delivered through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. A further 67 homes were designed to housing for varying needs, accessible standard and 26 homes were delivered for specialist provision.

<sup>18</sup> This indicates a specific 'medical' recommendation for ground floor/first property, usually applied when a family member experiences mobility issues.

<sup>19</sup> Relates to specific 'medical' recommendation for people who require additional bedroom for medical equipment or where a family member is unable to share due to neurodiversity.

<sup>20</sup> Information not split for Aberdeen City only.

- There is no national data collection or analysis showing the number of wheelchair accessible properties.
- The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) applied the methodology applied in Horizon Housing's 'Still Minding the Step?' report. It estimates that there are 3,766 wheelchair user households in Aberdeen and 737 households with an unmet need with 0.9% of all households requiring wheelchair accommodation. This demand is projected to rise in line with the growth in the ageing population.
- Data for the private sector is not available, however the report suggests there is little evidence that private developments are taking steps to meet demand.
- The Strategic Housing Investment Plan includes a 15% target for wheelchair accessible affordable housing. No target is set for the private sector due to planning colleagues being unable to enforce delivery of wheelchair accessible homes in the private sector.
- The target was set in response to analysis that showed consistent levels of demand. The impact of this decision is likely to become more evident with the delivery of sites agreed after the target was set.
- The [Scottish Government's guidance in 2019](#) produced in response to the national shortage of wheelchair accessible accommodation.

### **Key Actions**

- The affordable housing supply programme continues to deliver additional wheelchair accessible units. The delivery of these will be monitored to ensure
- The Strategic Housing Investment Plan includes plans for 376 specialist provision properties, which include a commitment for 317 wheelchair accessible properties and 59 specialist provision properties for people who require supported accommodation between 2024/25 and 2029/30.<sup>21</sup>
- Aberdeen City Council supports the Scottish Government's approach as set out in [The fourth National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#) to "work with planners and private developers to increase delivery of all-tenure wheelchair accessible housing targets."
- Setting a 5% target in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan for private sector housing will encourage private sector developers to improve the accessibility of the houses they build to improve the stock.

### **Social Care Users**

This section covers a wide range of supported, specified and housing with support services<sup>22</sup>.

#### **Children and young people**

The needs of children and young people with lifelong conditions are reflected in the Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision, Market Position Statement

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<sup>21</sup> The Strategic Housing Investment Plan is reviewed annually. It should be noted that development plans may be subject to change.

<sup>22</sup> Excluded amenityPlus, sheltered, very sheltered and extra care housing for older people.

2024 - 2034. Table 4-5.7 below shows the number of specialist housing and care placements required to meet the current, short term and long-term needs.

Table 4-5.7: Future accommodation needs of children and young people with lifelong conditions

Young people who require:	Current	Short term	Long term
Specialist residential placement	20	11	10
Specialist care packages with future need for accommodation	18	23	27

Source: Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision, Market Position Statement (2024)

Accommodation solutions for this group are linked to the wider planning around the provision of specialist housing. This data will inform future priorities identified in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).

Aberdeen City Council has a Corporate Parenting responsibility for care experienced children and young people and care leavers. When ready for rehousing, a joint assessment takes place and care experienced children and young people and care leavers are awarded an urgent/high priority for rehousing and housing support based on their needs.

### **Mental Health and Learning Disability**

The Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership’s [Mental Health and Learning Disability Residential and Support Market Position Statement 2021-2026](#) was developed in response to changing needs. A survey of mental health and learning disability accommodation was carried out in 2021. This provided an insight into the condition and suitability of the supported living and residential care services. The survey identified 71 places that were not suitable for long-term use. These will be prioritised in future re-provisioning plans.

### **Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity.**

The housing needs of neurodivergent people and people with a learning disability are highlighted within the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodiversity (LDAN) Bill consultation in December 2023.

The Bill aims to bring a focus on how public authorities’ duties around housing and independent living can best meet the needs of neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities.

This could include:

- The introduction of specialist advocacy services for housing support.
- Require strategies produced by local authorities to set out how independent living principles are embedded into allocations policies, to ensure real choice and control.
- Require Local Housing Strategies to set out how the needs of neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities are met.



- Require Integration Authorities to set out how housing, care and health services are integrated; to supports people to live independently.
- Introduce a statutory requirement for training for professionals working in health, social care, and housing services.
- Consider improvement to data collection on housing and independent living.

The full implications of the Bill will be monitored and built into future workstreams.

## **Mental Health**

The majority of people with mental health conditions live independently in their own homes, some live in supported living settings or care home facilities.

There is a strong link between mental health conditions and homeless presentations.

The Scottish Health Survey (2019) reported that around 23% of people living in Aberdeen who responded to their survey experience mental health issues. This is broadly similar to the Scottish figure of 24%.

Around 21% of homeless applications in Scotland came from people who experience mental health issues.

There are 8 care homes with 83 places for people with mental health conditions in Aberdeen. The occupancy rate in 2021 was 87%.

## **Complex Care – Coming Home Report**

The [Coming Home report](#) was published by Scottish Government in 2018 and followed by the [Implementation report](#) in 2022. These reports recognised the challenges for people with complex care needs, those who were placed in inappropriate out of area placements and hospital related delayed discharge. This can often be due to the lack of suitable accommodation. Housing built to appropriate design standards that mitigates potential risk factors with the right support can enable a safe and secure home for people with complex care needs.

The [Complex Care Market Position Statement](#) set out some key points to be considered in relation to the housing and environmental needs. As part of the Coming Home implementation work the introduction of the [Dynamic Support Register](#) has been implemented to improve monitoring of people with learning disabilities and complex care needs. This register will provide more robust data to inform current and future needs and provide greater visibility in terms of strategic planning. It will monitor those in hospital as well as ensuring greater anticipation of the need for children transitioning to adult provision.

The register currently<sup>23</sup> has 35 people who require complex care provision across Aberdeen City under the Red Category of either: 'In Hospital'; 'Inappropriate Out of Area'; 'At Risk of Support Breakdown; or 'Enhanced Monitoring'. There are also 25

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<sup>23</sup> Data as at August 2024

people being cared for out of Aberdeen who are being monitored. Quarterly data is extracted from the register and sent to Public Health Scotland.

This work meets the Scottish Government's wider ambitions around the Health and Social Care Standards – to deliver health and social care where services work collaboratively to support the wishes and needs of the individual.

Aberdeen has two specialist housing services with 24/7 support for people with complex care needs. A new site is being developed by Aberdeen City Council at Stoneywood. This will provide 8 new build, purpose built units for people with complex care needs.

### **Brian injury and neurological conditions**

A neurological condition covers any condition that affects the brain, spinal cord and/or nervous system caused by a variety of factors including genetic conditions, medical conditions, or traumatic injuries. This may lead to the need for accessible housing and/or support.

Data from the Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision, Market Position Statement identified that 75% of patients go home directly, some with support following their hospital stay.<sup>24</sup>

### **People requiring forensic mental health support**

The Independent Living and Specialist Housing Market Position Statement reported the findings of the Forensic Services Steering Group. It suggested that there was an overall lack of appropriate accommodation in Aberdeen City to support people with a Forensic Mental Health need. In addition, many of existing facilities are no longer fit for purpose. Forensic patients may also experience delayed hospital discharge. Provision of additional bespoke/purpose built accommodation would alleviate some of the issues for this group.

### **Bariatric Care**

Bariatric conditions can result in a loss of mobility and the need for additional space standards and robust fittings to enable people to live independently. Bariatric conditions typically occur in people with a BMI of 40 or higher, or those have a BMI of 35 and over and experience obesity related disease.

Two purpose built 'bariatric standard' properties were built as part of Aberdeen City Council's house new build programme and a further sheltered housing property was adapted to meet bariatric needs.

An evaluation report highlighted that tenants living in the new build properties experienced improved levels of independence and a reduction in their personal care and support needs.

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<sup>24</sup> Based on data from NHS Grampian, ARI wards 203/204 taken in 2022.

Bariatric standard accommodation comes at a significant additional development costs, which has hampered further development. A survey of occupational therapists carried out to inform the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) identified 10 people experiencing difficulties in their current environment.

### **People living with Alcohol or Substance Use**

The Independent Living and Specialist Housing Market Positions Statement highlights the need for additional residential accommodation for people living with alcohol and substance use issues.

Work has been ongoing to identify an alternative site for the reprovisioning of an existing care home to provide a specialist housing facility for people with alcohol addiction. The current care homes site has 17 places. The ambition is to provide alternative specialist housing with support to enable people to enhance their independence.

Phoenix Trust has secure funding for a new development of 23 units for residential rehabilitation with 3-year funding provided by Scottish Government.

### **Key Issues**

- A wide range of housing is required to meet the needs of people with a disability who have additional support needs. This will include the provision of wheelchair accessible housing and specialist housing with support that is designed to enable people to live safely for longer.
- The needs of people with autism (LD & neurodiversity) need to be considered. This may include the need for specialist accommodation or sensitive letting arrangements.
- A proactive model of housing support and intervention needs to be considered to avoid people being a crisis point before receiving support.
- There continues to be a lack of robust data around the number of properties that have been adapted, the level of needs in the community.

### **Key Actions**

- Clear and accessible information on housing options.
- Take action to address the shortfall identified in the Independent Living and Specialist Housing Provision Market Position Statement 2024 – 2034.

## **Non-permanent accommodation**

This section deals with student accommodation needs and intermediate care housing. Temporary accommodation for homeless people is dealt with under Priority 2: Preventing and Addressing Homelessness.

### **Student Accommodation**

Aberdeen is home to several university and college campuses. In 2022/23 there were 31,285 students were enrolled at The University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University. The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) and the recent

cross-party working group report on [Student housing options and experiences of homelessness in Scotland was published](#) by The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland highlighted the key issues facing the student population in relation to housing and homelessness.

### **Key Issues**

- There has been a 23% increase in the total number of students across all campuses in Aberdeen. However, more online/outreach courses have mitigated the pressures on student accommodation.
- The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) indicates that there is sufficient supply of purpose-built student accommodation in the city. This finding is supported in the cross-party report that suggests the ratio of student to bedspace accommodation was 1.5 suggesting a slight oversupply.
- The cross-party report indicated that in 2022/23, 35% of full time students were owner-occupiers. This is significantly higher compared to other Scottish cities like Dundee (4%), Edinburgh (6%), and Glasgow (17%).
- There has been an increase in students travelling with family members resulting in the requirement for larger properties

### **Key Actions**

- Aberdeen has a relatively balanced supply of student accommodation, with a slight over-supply of purpose-built student accommodation. There is a requirement to continue to monitor supply and work with the Planning authority in relation to the need for new purpose-built student accommodation.

### **Armed forces communities**

Aberdeen is an armed forces friendly city that recognises the service of all British Armed Forces personnel and those of the Commonwealth of Nations. The Armed Forces Covenant is based on the premise that those who serve or have served, and their families deserve respect, support, and fair treatment. The Armed Forces Covenant includes a number of key commitments including:

“We will ensure up to 1% of our 2,000 council new build houses are offered to those leaving the armed forces. With adapt up to a further 0.5% for those injured in service.”

### **Key Issues**

- The waiting list data from June 2024 shows 19 live applications from armed forces personnel, suggesting that there is no significant pressures at the current time.
- 9 new council houses have been allocated to armed forces personnel as part of the New Build Housing programme (0.9%), in line with the current policy.

## Key Actions

- Continue to monitor and review the commitment included within the Armed Forces Covenant relating to council house new build housing allocations and adaptations.

## Key workers

Key workers are employees who are considered to deliver essential services and can include doctors, nurses, teachers, police officers and may also extend to seasonal workers who are vital to private sector businesses.

## Key Issues

- The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) concluded there is no evidence to support the provision of additional key worker accommodation.
- The provision of mid-market rent (MMR) properties has improved the supply of housing for key workers in the city, as seen in Table 4-5.8 below.
- The demand for these properties has been low a resulting in a change of use for some.
- Attracting qualified staff to the city can be challenging. Anecdotal evidence suggests areas where professionals, such as Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) who are less likely to graduate or originate from the Aberdeen area may benefit from the provision of short-term accommodation that supports a transition to the area.

Table 4-5.8: Provision key workers in Aberdeen.

Housing Provider	Number of properties designed for Key Workers	Location	Comments
Sanctuary Scotland	124 units	Craiginchies	44% were let to key workers at initial allocation. (mid-market rent)
Grampian Housing Association	58 units	Burnside Village	Allocation for public sector workers. A further 43 units were 'converted' to social rent due to a reduction in demand. (mid-market rent)

Source: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 (2024)

## Key Actions

- Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian report that the numbers of key workers seeking accommodation is likely to be small.
- The requirement for additional key worker accommodation should continue to be monitored throughout the life of this strategy.

## Minority Ethnic Groups

The minority ethnic population is not a homogenous group, it is an umbrella term that comprises numerous distinct communities with their own specific needs.

A research paper by GREC: 'Accommodation Needs of Ethnic Minorities, Gypsy/Travellers and Travelling Showpeople' (2022) indicated that Aberdeen City<sup>25</sup> has a relatively high percentage of residents from a minority ethnic background, 16% compared to 10 – 12% of the wider Scottish population.

The 2022 Census results show the percentage of the population with a minority ethnic background in Scotland has increased from 4.5% in 2001 to 12.9% in 2022.

Analysis showed 1.67% of Scotland's population had a Polish ethnic background. Aberdeen has the highest percentage of population with Polish ethnic background in Scotland's council areas 4.4%. The breakdown for the electoral ward areas is shown in Table 4-5.9 below.

Table 4-5.9: Percentage of population in Aberdeen with Polish ethnic background by ward.

Area name	Percentage (%)
Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone	3.1
Bridge of Don	1.9
Kingswells/Sheddocksley/Summerhill	3.5
Northfield/Mastrick North	8.8
Hilton/Woodside/Stockethill	6.3
Tillydrone/Seaton/Old Aberdeen	13.2
Midstocket/Rosemount	2.6
George St/Harbour	4.8
Lower Deeside	0.7
Hazlehead/Queens Cross/Countesswells	1.4
Airyhall/Broomhill/Garthdee	2.1
Torry/Ferryhill	6.6
Kincorth/Nigg/Cove	4.3

Source: Scotland's Census 2022 (2024)

## Key Issues

- The GREC research paper indicated there is an over representation of people from a minority ethnic background living in the private rented sector. This is in line with national trends.
- Affordable rents, particularly in the private sector caused concern
- Ethnicity was found to be a key characteristic increasing the likelihood of homelessness.

<sup>25</sup> Grampian Regional Equalities Council (GREC).

- Energy efficiency and fuel poverty remained challenging.
- Language barriers and discrimination presented challenges for this group.
- Family size was identified as a key issue, with the need for larger family homes identified.

### **Key actions:**

- Ensure the needs of this group are considered in the development of policies and procedures.

### **Gypsy/Travellers**

The term Gypsy/Travellers can refer to several distinct groups who consider a travelling lifestyle to be part of their cultural or ethnic identity. The population size is relatively unknown. Results from Scotland's Census 2022 showed that 3,343 people in Scotland identified as 'White: Gypsy/Traveller' compared with 4,200 people in the 2011 census, a reduction of approximately 20%. This is likely to be an underestimate of the total Gypsy/Traveller population.

Area level data from the 2022 Census is not yet available<sup>26</sup>. The 2011 Census identified 279 people (6.6%) of the Gypsy/Traveller population residing in Aberdeen area, and 10.8% living in the wider Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire area.

Aberdeen City Council manage and run the Gypsy/Traveller site at Clinterty, which lies close to the border with Aberdeenshire. The site has recently undergone extensive refurbishment to bring the pitches up to current standards. The site has provision for 21 permanent pitches. There is one private Gypsy/Traveller site in Aberdeen with 8 places.

The Local Development Plan 2023 (LDP) identifies the lack of suitable, secure accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller community. Five Masterplan Zones are identified with the LDP as site with the potential to contribute towards the provision of sites as part of the affordable housing contribution. These include: Grandholme, Newhills Expansion, Countesswells, Greenferns and Loirston.

The GREC research paper indicated a preference for smaller sites of up to 10 pitches.

### **Key Issues**

- The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) highlighted the lack of reliable data to provide accurate projections of population size.
- There has been a lack of progress on the provision of additional sites despite locations being identified in the Local Development Plan.
- Gypsy/Travellers are more likely to report long-term health problems and poor educational outcomes, which can be exacerbated by their living conditions.

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<sup>26</sup> At the time of writing data was only available at Scotland wide level.

## **Key Actions**

- Continue to work with developers in relation to the five sites identified in the Local Development Plan 2023 for Gypsy/Traveller site provision.
- Ensure the needs of Gypsy/Travellers are considered within the development of policies and procedures.

## **Travelling Showpeople**

There is estimated to be around 2,000 Travelling Showpeople in Scotland. A recent data release from the 2022 Census showed 0.03% of the population identified as Travelling Showpeople. Information at a local level is not currently available.

GREC undertook research in 2022 to ascertain the land and location needs of Travelling Showpeople and inform the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#). The finding suggests that whilst the beach area provides a traditional site for larger, international shows, there is a lack of smaller site across the city. The face-to-face research suggested that access to facilities such as water, waste and power sources can be problematic.

## **Key Issues**

- Due to the transient nature of this group, it can prove difficult to estimate the true extent of the population size.
- The beach area hosts large/international shows but there is a lack of smaller sites around the city for smaller groups of Travelling Showpeople.
- Additional sites of around 10 pitches in other areas of the city may encourage smaller shows to visit the city.
- Access to water and power sources can be problematic and resolving this would meet the needs of Travelling Showpeople.

## **Key Actions**

- Reviewing opportunities for additional site provision across the city.
- Improving facilities at existing sites in relation to water/waste/power where practicable.

## **Asylum seekers and refugee resettlement**

For many years, Scotland has welcomed refugees and asylum seekers that have been displaced due to various world conflicts. The Scottish Government recognises that it is a human right to be able to seek asylum in another country. Although asylum is a matter reserved to the UK Government, the Scottish Government is responsible for several devolved matters such as access to essential services which helps to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can integrate in their new environment. Access to adequate housing is a crucial part of this, and Aberdeen City Council plays an integral role in providing this to displaced groups from various communities that arrive in the city.



The [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#) supports the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into Scotland's communities. This strategy has been recently updated in March 2024 to better reflect the current landscape surrounding these groups, which has changed significantly since the strategy was first introduced in 2013. The strategy makes reference to the importance of access to appropriate housing for displaced people when integrating into their new communities.

Aberdeen City Council supports the overarching outcomes of this strategy through its work with displaced people and will collaborate with Scottish Government, third sector organisations and other local authorities to ensure the best outcomes for these groups. 'New Scots' is an inclusive term and refers to people living in Scotland who have been forcibly displaced or are making a claim that they have a well-founded fear of persecution.

As reported in the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) there is an established New Scots community in Aberdeen City living in mixed tenure accommodation, with an estimated 30 displaced families at the time living in the private rented sector.

The housing needs of asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived into the UK through resettlement schemes was considered in the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The housing needs of these groups was explored in Chapter 5 – Specialist Provision, with both local authorities also factoring in the various displaced groups in their areas in Chapter 4 – Estimating Future Housing Need and Demand. The data used in both of these chapters is already relatively outdated due to the constantly shifting landscape surrounding displaced groups. A commitment was made in the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) for both local authorities to further consider the needs of these groups in the development of this Local Housing Strategy by utilising more recent data, particularly with regards to Ukrainian groups as there was very limited data available at the time of writing the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#).

The UNHCR<sup>27</sup> (United Nations Refugee Agency) produce an annual report on the global trends relating to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless people worldwide. Table 4-5.10 below shows the total number of people who have been displaced worldwide as of the end of 2023.

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Table 4-5.10: Total Number of Displaced People Worldwide by the end of 2023

Displaced Group	Number of Displaced People (in millions)
Internally Displaced People	68.3m
Refugees Under UNHCR's Mandate	31.6m
Asylum Seekers	6.9m
Palestine Refugees Under UNHCR's Mandate	6m
Other People in Need of International Protection	5.8m
<b>Total</b>	<b>117.3m</b>

Source: UNHCR, Global Trends in Forced Displacement (2023)

According to UNHCR, the number of displaced people has been increasing annually for the last twelve years and the increase between the end of 2022 and 2023 has been significant, as shown in Table 4-5.11 below.

Table 4-5.11: Number of Displaced People Worldwide

Period	Number of Displaced People (in millions)
End of 2022	108.5m
End of 2023	117.3m
April 2024 Projection	120m

Source: UNHCR, Global Trends in Forced Displacement (2023)

The number of displaced people increased by 8% over the course of 2023 and is projected to continue increasing over 2024. In their 2023 report, the UNHCR projected that this number would reach 120m people by April 2024. There has not been an updated number of displaced people confirmed by UNHCR, although their Global Appeal for 2024 makes reference to a projected planning figure of 130.8m displaced people<sup>28</sup>. It is likely that the number of displaced people will continue to increase worldwide, and that local authorities in the UK should anticipate and make provisions to cope with this additional demand.

The UK Home Office published statistics on the number of asylum applications made in 2023, as shown in Table 4-5.12 below. The number of asylum applications has decreased by 17% and the number of withdrawn applications has increased significantly. Despite this, the proportion of asylum decisions where protection was granted (grants of refugee status, humanitarian protection or alternative forms of leave) was 67% for 2023, resulting in the highest number of people being granted protection since records began in 1984. This rate is, however, a lower proportion than the 76% of decisions that were granted protection in 2022.

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR, Global Appeal for 2024, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/global-appeal-2024-6383>

Table 4-5.12: Asylum Applications Made to UK Home Office in 2022 and 2023

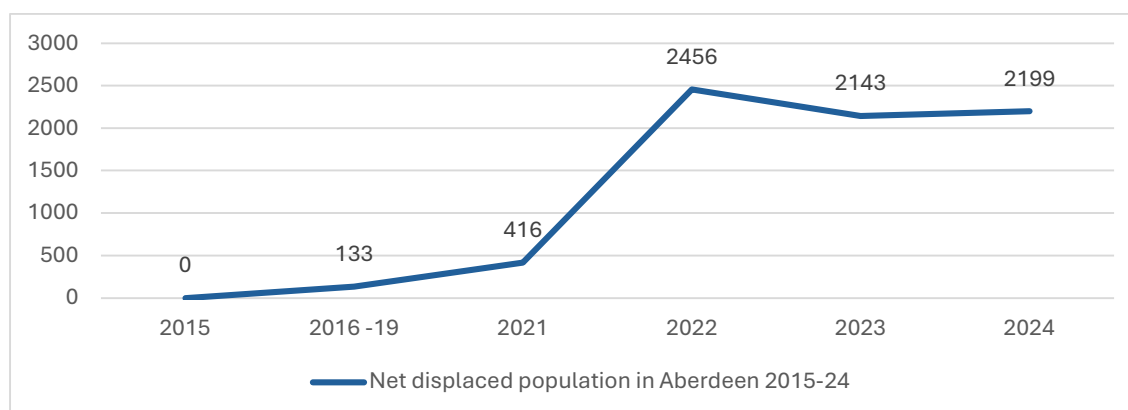
	2023	2022	% Change 2022 - 2023
No. of Asylum Applications	67,337	81,130	-17%
Number of People the Applications Relate to	84,425	99,939	-15.5%
Applications from Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	3,412	5,783	-41%
Withdrawn Applications	24,027	5,255	357%

Source: Home Office, February (2024)

While the level of asylum applications has decreased, there is still great demand from asylum seeking groups due to the proportion of these applications being granted some form of protection.

Along with other local authorities across the UK, Aberdeen has strived to meet the challenges presented by the rapid influx of displaced people seeking support and refuge and is currently home to circa 2,000 displaced people, having witnessed a ten-fold increase in arrivals over the last 2 years as shown in Figure 4-5.1 below.

Figure 4-5.1: Net Displaced Population in Aberdeen 2015-24



Source: UK Home Office and Scottish Government Funding Quarter Returns (2024)

Aberdeen City Council remains committed to welcoming and supporting displaced people and will strive to meet its agreed integration outcomes to better support people who arrive here. The vision outlined in the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy is for:

“a welcoming Scotland where refugees and people seeking asylum are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive.”

While Aberdeen City Council will continue its work to support displaced communities in order to contribute to this vision, it is important to note that the significant increase in migration potentially presents additional challenges to local authorities in a time where they are under existing pressure due to public sector spending cuts. There are several existing challenges which may be exacerbated by the increase in migration such as pressure on housing supply, increases in homelessness presentations, lack

of school places and the provision of primary care and mental health services. It is imperative that the council's efforts focus on minimising the impact of a disparity between levels of demand and capacity of services through the provision of preventative services.

Despite these challenges, Aberdeen City Council remains committed to fully supporting the UK's various humanitarian programmes, as detailed in Table 4-5.13 below.

Table 4-5.13: UK Humanitarian Programmes and their Impact on Aberdeen, August 2024

Programme	Purpose	Impact on Aberdeen
Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)	Launched in 2014, the scheme helps displaced people who have the greatest need, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk.	Circa 130 Syrian and Kurdish individuals have been successfully settled in the city since 2016.
United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)	The UKRS launched in 2021 and reaffirms the UK's ongoing commitment to refugee resettlement. The scheme is accessible to refugees who have been assessed for resettlement by UNHCR.	Aberdeen City Council is committed to providing resettled homes for 6 families.
Afghan Bridging Accommodation	<p>Accommodation procured by the Home Office to provide temporary accommodation to those arriving in the UK who were displaced a result of events in Afghanistan following the fall of Kabul in August 2021.</p> <p>Those in bridging accommodation were resettled under the ACRS or ARAP schemes.</p> <p>In May 2023, the Home Office announced the staggered closure of all bridging hotels, with the Scottish hotels closing on 31st August 2023.</p>	<p>In September 2021, 3 hotels accommodating circa 350 Afghans were set up. Aberdeen was only one of 3 LAs in Scotland who offered this provision. One hotel closed leaving 2 hotels, with 300 Afghans who resided for up to 2 years.</p> <p>Aberdeen City Council and Home Office staff worked intensively to ensure Afghan households secured long term settled accommodation across the UK.</p>
Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS1/ ACRS2/ACRS3)	The ACRS was launched in 2022 with the aim of resettling up to 20,000 people in the UK. The scheme prioritises those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan as well as people considered to be vulnerable.	A small number of families have been rehoused to date.
Afghan Assistance and Relocation Policy (ARAP)	ARAP is for Afghan citizens who have worked for or with the UK	Aberdeen City Council has committed to providing settled

Programme	Purpose	Impact on Aberdeen
	Government in exposed or meaningful roles. If deemed eligible, an offer to relocate to the UK is made.	<p>accommodation and integration support.</p> <p>However, a Home Office decision to commission Mears to procure property in local authority areas for those Afghan households evacuated to the UK from Pakistan has necessitated the allocation of further properties and support packages.</p>
Welcome Hub Accommodation	The purpose of welcome accommodation is to provide a temporary place of safety for displaced people with Scottish Super Sponsor visas on their initial arrival to Scotland.	<p>13 hotels/accommodation blocks were provided to accommodate (at capacity) circa 1,300 individuals who arrived on the Super Sponsor Scheme and required immediate accommodation.</p> <p>Over 2,000 Ukrainian Displaced People (UDPs) were placed in WA accommodated from May 2022 through to closure in April 2024. The vast majority are now settled in Aberdeen in the 500 properties refurbished with the Ukraine Long-Term Resettlement Funding.</p> <p>A further 80 ACC tenancies were also made available and RSLs provided 40 tenancies.</p>
Homes for Ukraine Sponsor Scheme	Guests are pre-matched with local hosts prior to arrival and provided with accommodation, either in self-contained properties or the host's own home.	ACC and Partners provide comprehensive integration support and administer Thank You Payments to sponsors on behalf of the UK Government.
Warm Scottish Welcome Super Sponsor Scheme (SSSS)	Displaced Ukrainian households or the local authority source a match sponsor to accommodate displaced families, either in self-contained properties or in the host's own home.	ACC and Partners provide comprehensive integration support and administer Thank You Payments to sponsors on behalf of the UK Government.
Contingency Accommodation	This accommodation is used to accommodate asylum seekers who are deemed destitute. Contingency accommodation is used due to the Home Office having statutory responsibility to provide essential living needs to all asylum seekers.	Aberdeen has contingency accommodation comprised of 2 hotels with capacity for up to 396 asylum seekers.

Programme	Purpose	Impact on Aberdeen
Full Dispersal	Full Dispersal was announced in April 2022 and Regional Plans were agreed. Local authorities were informed that they would be housing people from asylum seeking groups and become dispersal areas.	Aberdeen's allocation was for 96 dispersal properties in the city by the end of 2023. Currently, 51 bedspaces are live.  In May 2024, V2.0 of the National Accommodation Plan was introduced by the UK Government, confirming future intentions to close Contingency Accommodation in favour of dispersed accommodation.

Source: Programme details provided by UK Government, figures for Aberdeen provided by Aberdeen City Council's Resettlement Team (2024)

In 2025, the number of arrivals from displaced groups in Aberdeen is projected to increase by around 20% due to the National Accommodation Plan V2 increasing dispersed bedspaces in the city, asylum backlog decisions and further UKRS and Afghan arrivals. There is also the significant possibility of a surge of further Ukrainian arrivals due to imminent visa changes which will likely require residency in the UK as a prerequisite for extending current visas and the requirement to trigger outstanding visas which have, as yet, not been used.

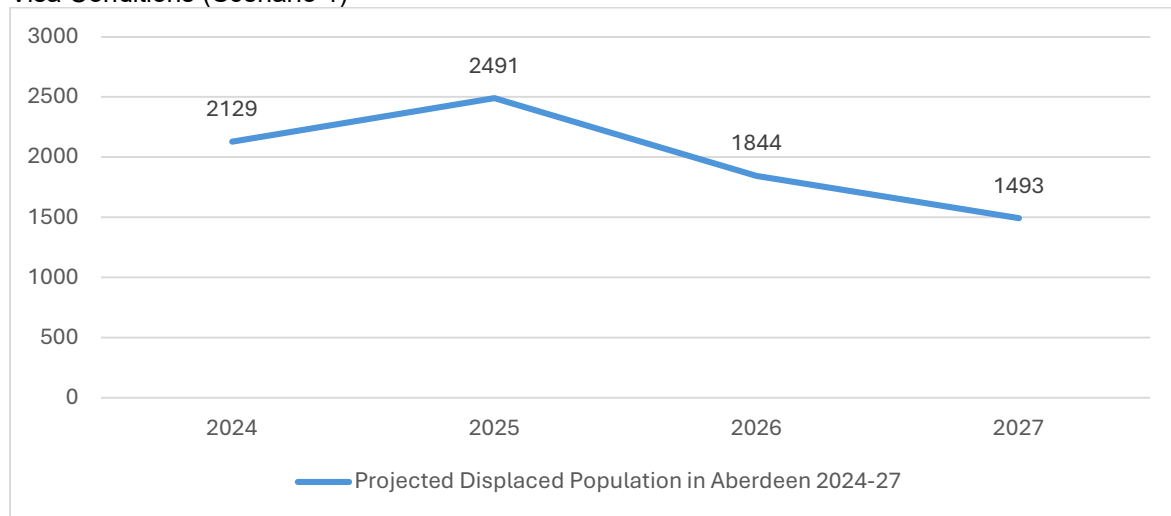
It is expected that there will be reductions in support provision to displaced Ukrainians as extension visas begin to expire, with current expiration dates for their visas dated between 2026 and 2028. The Ukrainian Government currently expects displaced citizens to return to the country once it is safe to do so. Recent research suggests that a significant proportion of displaced Ukrainians in the UK intend to remain in the country, with a survey from the Migration Observatory indicating that 68% of respondents intended to remain even when it was safe to return to Ukraine<sup>29</sup>.

As the existing Ukrainian community becomes more accustomed to life in the city and new arrivals have a wider Ukrainian community to support them, the pressure on public services from this population should reduce. Aberdeen City Council will however be required to offer full integration support to any new arrivals.

Increased demand is expected from ARAP, UKRS and asylum refugees, as well as a significant growth in the asylum seeker population. The Resettlement Team at Aberdeen City Council have estimated the projected displaced population for Aberdeen from 2024-2027 based on current schemes and visa conditions, as shown in Figure 4-5.2 below.

<sup>29</sup> ["Ukrainian Migration to the UK"](#), The Migration Observatory.

Figure 4.-5.2: Projected Displaced Population in Aberdeen 2024-27 Based on Current Schemes and Visa Conditions (Scenario 1)



Source: Aberdeen City Council Resettlement Team (2024)

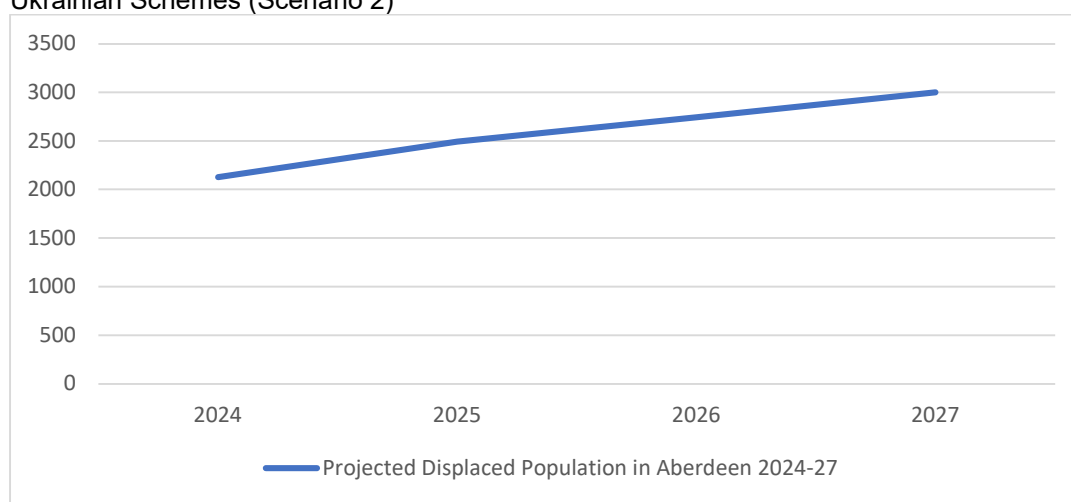
It is important to note that the above projection only takes account of existing programmes and does not take account of any future migration related to civil war, international conflict, climate or economic change or natural disasters. The assumption in this scenario is also that there will be no further extensions to visas for those from Ukraine and that those whose visas end, will return to Ukraine.

If there are no further extensions to Ukrainian visas beyond the Permission Extension scheme, as in the above scenario, then there will likely be reduced pressure on public services due to the gradual return of Ukrainians to their home country. This may also increase capacity of public services to support the Ukrainian households still residing in Aberdeen. Aberdeen City Council housing stock occupied by these households will also gradually return to general stock which will help to alleviate current housing pressures in the city.

There will however still be support required for Ukrainian arrivals from 2024 onwards, and the number of people arriving from ARAP, UKRS and asylum-seeking groups will likely result in continued pressure on public services due to these groups typically having high support needs.

Aberdeen City Council's Resettlement Team have also produced projections of the displaced population should there be further extensions to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, as seen in Figure 4-5.3 below.

Figure 4-5.3: Projected Displaced Population in Aberdeen 2024-27 Based on Further Extension to the Ukrainian Schemes (Scenario 2)



Source: Aberdeen City Council Resettlement Team (2024)

This scenario assumes that there will be further provision to those on the Homes for Ukraine scheme beyond current extensions and that the arrivals under this scheme will continue at the current rate, as well as that approximately 95% of Ukrainians living in Aberdeen will choose to remain in the city. As with Scenario 1, Scenario 2 accounts for increased demand from ARAP, UKRS and asylum refugees.

If Scenario 2 were to occur, the current pressure on public services will likely increase concurrently with the demand from displaced groups. Support will continue to be required for new arrivals as well as the Ukrainian households already residing in the city which require ongoing support. There will also likely be a delay in the return of Aberdeen City Council properties occupied by Ukrainian households to general stock. Demand from ARAP, UKRS and asylum refugees will also exacerbate pressure on public services.

There is currently great uncertainty regarding the level of demand that can be expected from these groups in the coming years and the future of these communities in the city. The above scenarios present two potential contrasting projections for how the demand from displaced communities could change in the coming years, however it is important to note that the landscape surrounding refugees, asylum seekers and resettlement is constantly evolving which makes it difficult to accurately predict the long-term impact that they will have on services in Aberdeen.

All households arriving through humanitarian routes who have recourse to public funds will be offered the service of Aberdeen City Council. Resettlement workers assess the needs of each displaced person and ensure that the service they receive supports them to achieve successful outcomes within the city. Support offered includes:

### Short-term Support

- Emergency provision to meet immediate needs in crisis situations
- Provision of temporary accommodation
- Access to the necessary basic provisions such as clothes and food



- Access to health services

### Long-term Support

- English language support
- Access to settled housing
- Access to education
- Employment support
- Building community networks and social connections
- Assisting with participation in democratic services

These services are provided in a manner which is culturally aware, and trauma informed with the goal of helping displaced people settle, integrate and work towards positive outcomes in all aspects of their life within Aberdeen. Direct household support will end once a family’s needs are assessed as being met. Aberdeen City Council will continue to provide information and advice to resettled households for as long as required.

The arrival of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASYP) also poses challenges as these individuals also typically have high support needs due to their young age and the likelihood that they have experienced some form of trauma prior to arriving in the UK. Table 4-5.14 below shows the number of UASYP that have arrived in Aberdeen as well as the route of referral.

Table 4-5.14: UASYP in Aberdeen City as of 31 December 2023

Route of Referral	UASYP
Spontaneous Arrival	3
Hotel Dispersal	21
National Transfer Scheme	25
Total	49

Source: Social work service provision for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Young People (UASYP), [CFS/24/045](#) (2024)

UASYP have the same status as other looked after children and Aberdeen City Council will fulfil its duty to provide care and support as a corporate parent to this group. UASYP can be from a wide range of age groups, however the majority of UASYP in Aberdeen are between 16-18 years of age. Aberdeen City Council has worked with RSLs and other housing providers to source accommodation for UASYP, as well as with third-sector organisations to ensure that these groups receive appropriate aftercare support.

The care of UASYP requires a multi-agency approach to ensure that support is tailored to their cultural background and any trauma they have experienced. Pathway planning is in place to allow Aberdeen City Council to support UASYP to transition from children’s homes and closely supported accommodation to live more independently with less support and eventually in their own tenancies. Aberdeen City Council is utilising all available funding from the UK Government to meet the needs

of UASYP and to provide the staffing resources to support the level of demand from this group.

### **Key Issues**

- Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire has seen a growth in refugee and asylum seeking population.
- Aberdeen City hosts the second largest population of asylum seekers in Scotland, with Glasgow hosting the highest numbers. This is expected to grow in coming years.
- There continues to be growth in demand for accommodation, particularly large family homes to meet the needs of refugee families.
- Finding permanent homes can be challenging as many families choose to be rehoused in larger cities and hubs in England where they have family connection or better economic prospects.

### **Key Actions**

- Aberdeen City Council will continue to monitor trends in displacement activity to ensure that it services can meet demand and support displaced groups to integrate in the city.
- Continue to take a cross service, coordinated strategic approach working with partners in Community Planning, NHS Grampian, Police and other council services.
- Continued liaison with Home Office, UK and Scottish Government regarding collation of data to inform future needs.
- Implement the [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: 2024](#) at a local level.

### **LGBTQI+**

The housing needs of LGBTQI+<sup>30</sup> community are diverse and multifaceted. Research suggests that the LGBTQI+ people may face discrimination and challenges in relating to finding safe and secure housing and accessing housing support services designed to meet their specific needs<sup>31</sup>.

Scotland's Census 2022 gathered data relating to trans status or history and sexual orientation. The results showed 19,990 people identified as trans or having a trans history and 184,000 people aged 16+ identified and LGB+.

Table 4-5.15 shows the areas with the highest percentage of trans people relative to the population aged 16 and over. This included Dundee (0.91%), Edinburgh and Glasgow (0.77%) and Aberdeen City (0.58%). All of these council areas have large student populations and relatively high numbers of young people

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<sup>30</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, + (representing other sexual identities).

<sup>31</sup> [Housing issues for LGBTQ+ people - Shelter Scotland](#)

Table 4-5.15: Percentage of population who identify and LGB+, Trans or have a Trans history

Council Area	% of population aged 16 and over who identify as trans or having a trans history	% population aged 16 and over who identify as LGB+
Aberdeen	0.58%	5.2%
Dundee	0.91%	6.6%
Edinburgh	0.77%	7.6%
Glasgow	0.77%	7.1%

Source: [Scotland's Census 2022 results](#) (2024)

### Key Issues:

The LGBTQI+ may face discrimination and additional challenges in meeting their housing needs. This can include:

- Younger people facing homelessness
- Older people accessing housing with care and support
- People living in the private rented sector
- Discrimination faced when buying a home (due to health related insurance questions around HIV/AIDs)

### Key Actions:

- Ensure that the needs of the LGBTQI+ community are consider in the development of services, policies and strategies.

## Priority 6: Housing quality and energy efficiency

### Part 1: House condition

#### Introduction

This chapter sets out Aberdeen City Council's approach to house condition in both the social sector and private sector across the city. The quality of housing and the maintenance of its condition can impact on the look and perception of an area as well as the health and general wellbeing of residents.

The provision of good quality housing is one of many factors that impact health inequalities, education and quality of life. This chapter will also set out in detail the two main drivers which determine the quality of social housing, namely the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

The condition of properties in the private sector is often dependent on action taken by property owners. The influence of Aberdeen City Council to improve property condition in this sector are limited, however the council's Private Sector Housing Team offers support to homeowners, private tenants and private landlords to assist in raising condition standards and resolving issues related to property condition. The council also has several policies related to property condition in this sector as required by the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#).

## Strategic Priority

**We will improve the condition of existing homes across all tenures** and improve their energy efficiency to help to alleviate fuel poverty and address climate change and support a just transition to net zero.

This Strategic Priority for the duration of this Local Housing Strategy was developed in consultation with both internal and external stakeholders for this sector. This priority encapsulates the changes that stakeholders wish to see in the sector over the next five years in order to improve outcomes for both tenants and landlords.

### National Context – Social Housing

There are two minimum levels of housing quality that all social housing must meet which are:

- [Scottish Housing Quality Standard](#) (SHQS)
- [Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2](#) (EESH2)

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard requires all social landlords to achieve a minimum level of housing quality, including energy efficiency of the home.

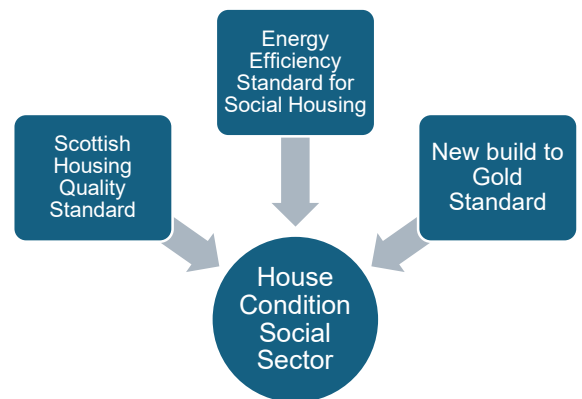
The Scottish Housing Quality Standard is set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter and progress towards meeting this target is monitored by the [Scottish Housing Regulator](#). The Scottish Government has issued Technical Guidance for social landlords. The guidance consists of annexes that lay out the detail of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard elements.

The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing sets out the minimum energy efficiency ratings that landlords are expected to meet across their housing stock. The first Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing milestone is that all social housing meet a minimum energy efficiency rating, by house type and fuel, by December 2020. The second Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing milestone is that all social housing meets or can be treated as meeting, Energy Performance Certificate Band B, or is as energy efficient as practically possible, within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent, by December 2032. Additionally, no social housing should be re-let below [Energy Performance Certificate](#) Band D from December 2025, subject to temporary exemptions.

The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing does not prescribe measures to take, as ratings vary depending on the accommodation and fuel type. It is for individual social landlords to identify the most cost-effective measures for their stock, and to determine what level of investment is sustainable, to ensure that the standard is achieved. All Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing milestones are on hold pending a review as per Scottish Government Guidance.

## Social Determinants of Health

The social determinants of health model highlights the importance of good quality affordable, and energy efficient housing in improving health outcomes. Poor quality or cold and draughty housing can lead to poor mental health and exacerbate long-term health conditions. The Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing ensure, as far as possible, that homes in the social sector are maintained to a high standard this includes repairs and improvements. These standards help to provide tenants with a safe, energy efficient, warm and comfortable environment to live in. The new build council homes are built to the “Gold Standard” which are designed with energy efficient technologies that make homes greener and cheaper to run, enhanced space standards, and increased natural light. This type of social housing provides a base where families can thrive and will help to improve the health outcomes of tenants.



## Aberdeen Context – Social Housing

### Social Housing Stock in Aberdeen

In Aberdeen there are two main types of providers of social housing, Aberdeen City Council and Registered Social Landlords. Social housing is a type of housing that is provided and managed by public bodies or non-profit organisations. It is designed to be affordable and accessible to people with low incomes or those who might struggle to find housing in the private sector.

Applications for social housing are based on housing need, with applicants prioritised or awarded points for criteria such as overcrowding or medical conditions. These criteria are usually set out in a landlord’s allocation policy.

Table 6.1.1 below, shows the social housing stock provision in Aberdeen as of March 2024. Aberdeen City Council provides most of the social housing in the city (80.44%) with the remaining 19.56% supplied by the ten Registered Social Landlords that operate in the city.

Table 6.1.1: Social Housing Stock in Aberdeen City

Landlord	Stock	Percentage of Social Stock in City*	Percentage of Total Housing Stock in City <sup>32</sup>
Aberdeen City Council	23,255	79.93%	18.69%
Ark Housing Association	14	0.05%	0.01%
Blackwood Homes	84	0.29%	0.07%
Castlehill Housing Association	1,109	3.81%	0.9%
Grampian Housing Association	1,445	4.96%	1.16%
Hanover Scotland	121	0.41%	0.1%
Hillcrest Homes	628	2.15%	0.50%
Langstane Housing Association	1,451	4.98%	1.17%
Osprey Housing	80	0.27%	0.06%
Places for People/Castlerock	206	0.71%	0.16%
Sanctuary Scotland	700	2.41%	0.56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,093</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>23.27%</b>

Source: Aberdeen City Council Survey (March 2024)

## Aberdeen City Council Housing Stock Profile

As of March 2024, Aberdeen City Council has a housing stock of 23,255. The stock is ageing, as can be seen in Table 6.1.2 below with almost 23% built more than 80 years ago (pre-1945) and a further 66% of the stock was built between 1945 and 1982 with only 11% built after 1982. The majority of the stock, built post 2002 has been tenements and flats rather than houses.

The combination of an ageing stock, a high proportion of older tenements (44%) and multi-storey blocks (17%) poses challenges in terms of ensuring these properties continue to be well maintained and meet the Scottish Government criteria in terms of Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

<sup>32</sup> Dwellings in Aberdeen 124,369 NRS 2023

Table 6.1.2: Aberdeen City Council Stock Profile and Year of Construction

	House	Tenement	High-Rise	4 in a block	Other Flat/Maisonette	Total
Pre 1919	4	1,225	0	0	0	<b>1,229</b>
1919 - 1944	237	2,210	0	1,648	0	<b>4,095</b>
1945 - 1964	3,055	2,133	252	426	211	<b>6,077</b>
1965 - 1982	1,848	3,231	3,613	29	444	<b>9,165</b>
1983 - 2002	151	365	58	9	685	<b>1,268</b>
Post 2002	228	1,048	0	48	97	<b>1,421</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,523</b>	<b>10,212</b>	<b>3,923</b>	<b>2,161</b>	<b>1,437</b>	<b>23,255</b>

Source: Aberdeen City Council (March 2024)

### Registered Social Landlords Housing Stock Profile

Registered Social Landlords, also known as housing associations, make up almost 20% of the stock of social housing in Aberdeen. Table 6.1.3 below shows the stock profile for Registered Social Landlords in the city. The largest Registered Social Landlord providers operating in Aberdeen are Castlehill Housing Association, Grampian Housing Association and Langstane Housing Association, which accounts for 70% of provision. Hillcrest Housing Association and Sanctuary Scotland make up around 23% of the total Registered Social Landlord stock. Ark Housing Association and Blackwood provide a range of specialist housing for people with a disability and Hanover Housing Association which provides housing for older people.

In general, Registered Social Landlords stock tends to be newer and more modern in design compared to Aberdeen City Council's stock. The council's housing stock also has a number of granite tenements and a large number of high-level multi-storey blocks that are typically 12 to 13 storeys high and can be challenging to maintain and to meet current standards.

The small multistorey properties owned by Registered Social Landlords are usually around 4 or 5 storeys high which may mean they are less challenging in terms of maintenance and meeting the SHQS requirements.

Table 6.1.3: Registered Social Landlords Stock Profile

Registered Social Landlord	House	Flats	High-Rise	Four in a Block	Other Flat/Maisonette	Total
Ark Housing Association	0	14	0	0	0	14
Blackwood Homes	15	36	0	0	33	84
Castlehill Housing Association	122	132	91	0	767	1,112
Grampian Housing Association	395	990	18	20	20	1,443
Hanover Scotland	10	0	44	8	59	121
Hillcrest Homes	84	0	124	12	408	628
Langstane Housing Association	30	1227	151	1	86	1,495
Osprey Housing	13	63	0	0	4	80
Places for People	0	0	0	0	206	206
Sanctuary Scotland	504	113	20	24	0	661
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,173</b>	<b>2,575</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>1,583</b>	<b>5,844</b>

Source: Aberdeen City Council, Survey (March 2024)

Table 6.1.4 below shows the stock by date of construction for Registered Social Landlords in Aberdeen. Registered Social Landlords have more modern stock generally than local authorities; currently over 70% of their stock was built after 1983, compared to Aberdeen City Council which has 11%. It is worth noting that Langstane Housing has 18.6% of its stock constructed pre 1919 in areas such as Old Aberdeen and King Street, and these will be granite tenement properties. Evidence suggests that more modern stock is generally easier to adapt and more likely to comply with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Table 6.1.4: Registered Social Landlords Stock by Construction Time

Registered Social Landlord	Age					Total
	Pre 1919	1919-1944	1945-1964	1965-1982	1983-2024	
Ark Housing	0	0	0	0	14	14
Blackwood Homes	0	0	0	3	81	84
Castlehill	0	132	0	96	884	1,112
Grampian	0	25	434	101	883	1,443
Hanover	0	0	0	121	0	121
Hillcrest	0	0	0	0	628	628
Langstane	278	1	2	0	1,214	1,495
Osprey	4	0	0	11	65	80
Places for People	0	0	0	0	206	206
Sanctuary	0	6	142	163	389	700
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>4,364</b>	<b>5,883</b>

Source: Scottish Housing Regulator (March 2024)



## **Housing Finance**

All social housing providers, including Aberdeen City Council and the Registered Social Landlords must ensure their finances are maintained in a healthy order to provide services such as repairs and maintenance, improvements and new build.

Registered Social Landlords are funded through a combination of public and private sources. The primary source of income comes from rents and service charges paid by their tenants. They can also receive grants and financial assistance from the Scottish Government to support the construction and maintenance of social housing. They can also raise funds from private finance, including loans from banks and financial institutions. This is monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator who carry out an analysis of loan portfolios as part of the annual assurance returns.

### **Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan**

Aberdeen City Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan sets out the strategy for delivering housing services for the 30-year period 2024 to 2054. The Business Plan has been refreshed and is fundamental to the success of improving the council's housing stock.

The business plan sets a broad context for financial planning and investment decisions. The business plan must ensure that the council's housing stock related priorities and programmes are supported and delivered whilst demonstrating sound financial management within existing budgets and through the use of prudential borrowing where necessary.

### **Asset Management Plan**

Aberdeen City Council's Asset Management Plan gives more detail on the investment and management of the assets within the Housing Revenue Account. The Asset Management Plan is currently being refreshed with the assistance of consultants. Any actions which come from this will be incorporated into the Joint Delivery Action Plan.

Registered Social Landlords should also have Asset Management Plans or Strategies. They are usually high level and are supported by stock condition surveys and financial projections. The Scottish Housing Regulator provides guidance to support landlords in developing their approach to developing such plans to ensure consistency the long-term viability of the landlord. RSLs will usually have a five or ten year plan which is a detailed forecast of when their properties will need upgrading, this can include new kitchens, bathrooms or rewiring.

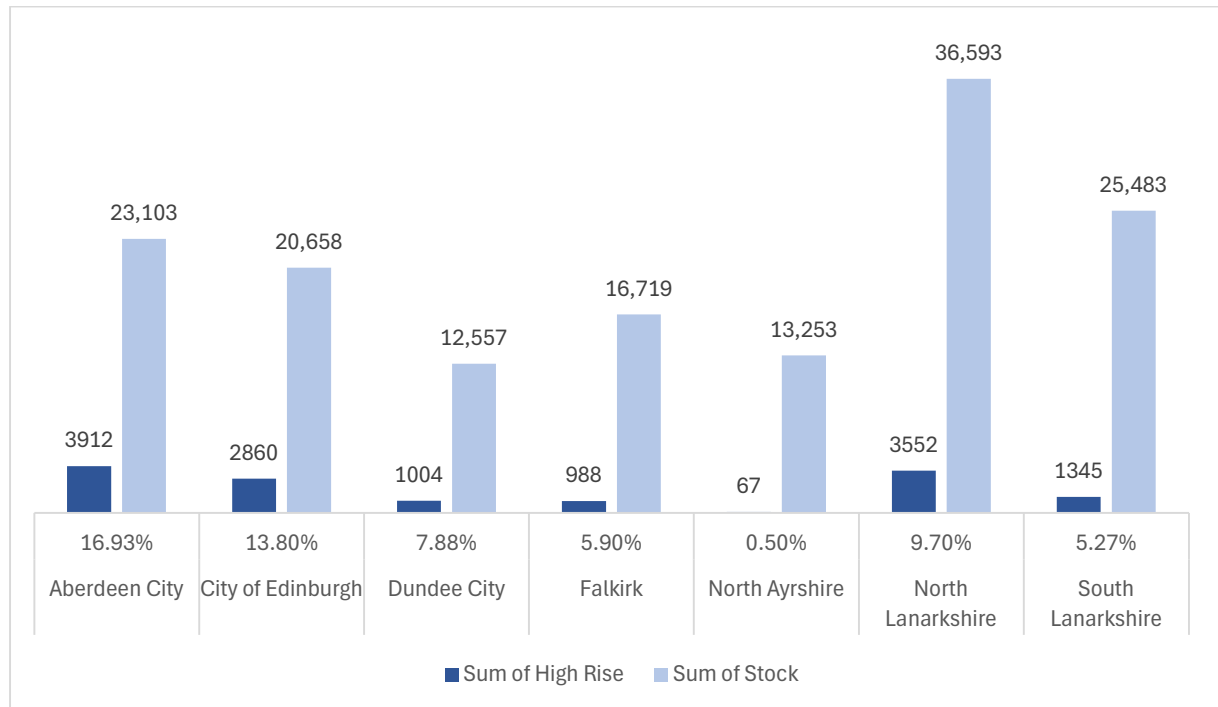
## **Challenges of Stock Profile**

### **Multi-Storey Housing**

Aberdeen City Council has a high percentage of multi-storey blocks compared to other local authorities, as shown in Figure 6.1.1 below. Aberdeen City Council's retention of its multi-storeys stock is in contrast to some of the other local authorities in Scotland who have undertaken a programme of demolition.

The design of multi-storey housing inevitably results in higher expenditure on improvements, maintenance and other building related costs. This can include high-cost elements such as replacement of lifts, repairs, maintenance and cleaning to common areas, and over-cladding.

Figure 6.1.1: Multi-Storey Stock by Local Authority, 2023



Source: Scottish Housing Regulator- All social landlords 2019/20 - 2022/23 (2024)

Eight multi-storey blocks in Aberdeen have been designated as Category A-listed buildings by [www.historicenvironment.scot](http://www.historicenvironment.scot). These concrete buildings were constructed as part of the city’s post-Second World War housing programme and are considered by Historic Environment Scotland to be outstanding examples of Brutalist architectural style. The buildings were found to meet the criteria for listing and were designated by Historic Environment Scotland on 18 January 2021. This poses challenges for the council in terms of maintenance and improvements such as over cladding and upgrades to common areas. Any alterations either to the interior or exterior requires consent, since it is imperative to preserve the character of the building

There was an update provided to Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in May 2024 on the progress of a full options appraisal of the eight-city centre multi storey blocks to consider future development and investment opportunities. Aberdeen City Council also launched a public consultation in October 2023 as part of the production of a full options appraisal for the future of the city centre multi storey blocks. The results of the consultation are still being analysed. The outcome of the preferred option will be implemented during the lifespan of this Local Housing Strategy to determine the future of the city centre blocks.

## **Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete**

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) is a lightweight construction material that was used in the construction of some public buildings like schools and hospitals and some housing between the 1950s and 1990s. It was used mostly in flat roofing, but also in some pitched roofs, floors and walls.

This construction method produced quicker results, was easier to install, and cheaper than standard concrete. Despite its name, it is very different to traditional concrete although it looks similar. It is aerated, or 'bubbly', and it has now been found to be less durable than traditional concrete.

Concerns raised nationally around the safety of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete resulted in inspections being carried out by Aberdeen City Council in August 2023. This confirmed that there were a significant number of properties in the Balnagask area of the city containing Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete. This included 366 council properties and 138 privately owned properties. Aberdeen City Council is working with the tenants and owners affected to assist with rehousing.

At a council committee meeting in August 2024, it was agreed that the optimum option is the demolition and rebuild of homes on the site. Options on new build will be reported to council in due course which will include opportunities to work with partners to meet the masterplan aspirations.

## **Assessing Social Housing Standards**

There are two main criteria by which social housing landlords assess the quality of their homes, they are the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing.

### **Scottish Housing Quality Standard**

Scottish Housing Quality Standard is a common standard for assessing the condition of Scotland's social sector housing. All social landlords have capital programmes, which are designed to improve and maintain the quality of their stock. Social housing capital programmes are funded by a package of capital receipts, borrowing and income from rents, service charges and grant funding.

Typical works within the capital programme include new heating systems, kitchen and bathroom upgrades, new windows, doors, rewiring and major structural works.

In addition to the capital programme of works, it is vital to have a cyclical maintenance programme in place to ensure common areas of properties are well maintained. It is also vital to ensure that procedures are in place in order to deliver an effective and adaptable repairs service including emergency and non-emergency repairs.

### **Assessment of Scottish Housing Quality Standard**

Dwellings are assessed on 55 different elements which are broken into five broader criteria. Failure of one of these criteria results in an outright Scottish Housing Quality Standard fail; the criteria themselves can be failed in many cases on a single

element. A full list of Scottish Housing Quality Standard criteria is available on the [SHQS website](#).

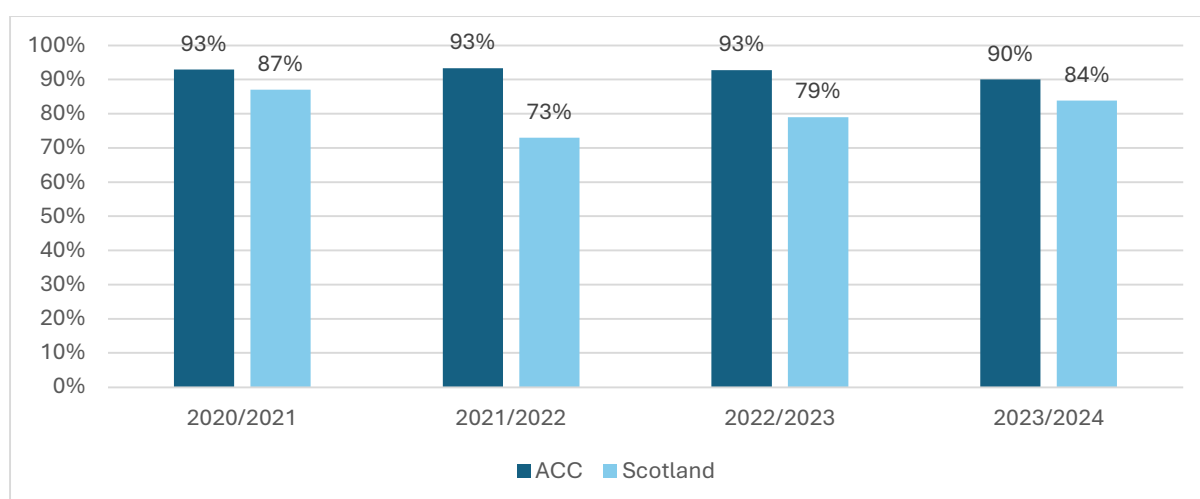
The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring the compliance of landlords in the social housing sector. There are some differences between the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Scottish Housing Quality Standard in the way data for assessing the standard is collected and reported which make the headline rates not immediately comparable.

The non-participation of tenants and owners in mixed tenure buildings has meant that full delivery of Scottish Housing Quality Standard works has not always been possible. In these instances, social landlords have used “abeyances”, for example where owners do not want work to go ahead. Social housing providers with stock in abeyance will monitor changes of tenancy and identify when ownership changes and reassess if the new owner wishes to participate in common works that would allow the social stock to meet Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

### Scottish Housing Quality Standard Compliance

Figure 6.1.2 below shows details on the percentage of homes which meet Scottish Housing Quality Standard in Aberdeen City compared to the Scottish average. This average includes all local authorities and Registered Social Landlords. Aberdeen City has performed well when compared with Scotland as a whole. Aberdeen City compliance rates have been fairly consistent and have remained above the Scottish average.

Figure 6.1.2: Percentage of Aberdeen City Council properties meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standard compared to the Scottish Average<sup>33</sup>



Source: Scottish Housing Regulator (2024)

Table 6.1.5 below shows Registered Social Landlords stock compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. In comparison to Aberdeen City Council’s stock,

<sup>33</sup> The Scottish average includes all social housing providers

the compliance rates for Registered Social Landlords are slightly higher than Aberdeen City Council and even higher when compared to Scotland as a whole. This is due in part to the relative age and type of stock, where local authorities generally have older tenement style properties and multi-storey blocks, which can make compliance more difficult.

Table 6.1.5 - Percentage of Registered Social Landlords properties meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standard

	Compliance
Ark	100%
Blackwood Homes	94%
Castlehill Housing Association	99%
Grampian Housing Association	92%
Hanover	88.5%
Hillcrest	100%
Langstane Housing Association	90%
Osprey	97.99%
Sanctuary	94%
Place for People/Castlerock	100%

Source – Scottish Housing Regulator (2024)

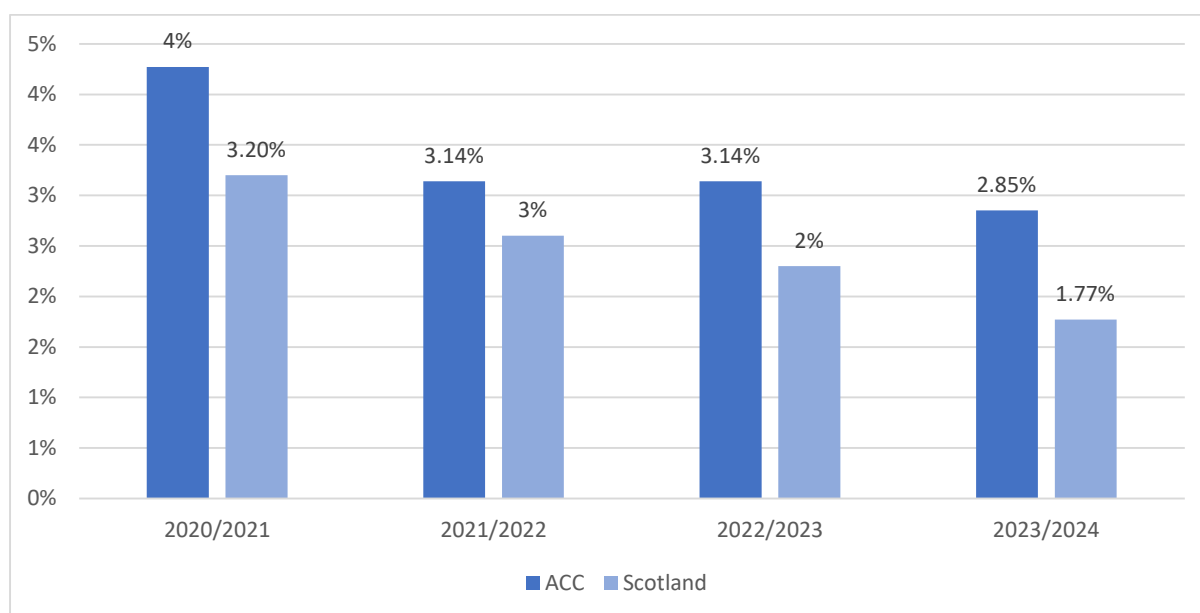
## Exemptions

Exemptions occur when properties, often due to their layout and design cannot comply with the standard. Many of these properties do not meet the standard due to the small size of the kitchen which means that they cannot meet the criteria which relates to adequate food storage. Social housing providers are not able to put a process in place for these types of property since there is nothing practical that can be done to the property to ensure it meets the standard.

Figure 6.1.6 below shows the exemptions in Aberdeen City compared with the Scottish average<sup>34</sup>. The variances shown over the period are due to the increase in stock numbers, which include new build homes and properties purchased through the buy-back scheme, along with demolitions that took place.

<sup>34</sup> The average is for all social landlords

Figure 6.1.6: Aberdeen City Council Exemptions, Scottish Housing Quality Standard



Source: Scottish Housing Regulator (2024)

All social housing providers have a rolling programme to identify properties which are non-compliant and to make any necessary improvements or repairs in order to meet the standard. Aberdeen City Council will continue to monitor non-compliant properties and will take action through the void period and to re-engage with tenants to ensure ongoing compliance with Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Table 6.1.7 below highlights the percentage of exemptions for Registered Social Landlords. Most are either zero or below one percent, however Langstane Housing Association is well above these figures. This is due to the make-up of their stock which includes some granite tenements, where it is not technically/financially feasible to bring the properties up to the required standard. There are also a small number of properties which do not meet the standard due to lack of kitchen storage, mainly in smaller flats and bedsits.

Table 6.1.7 Registered Social Landlords Exemptions

Landlord	Exemptions
Ark	0%
Blackwood	0.5%
Castlehill	0.17%
Grampian	0.55%
Hanover	2%
Hillcrest	0%
Langstane	3.58%
Osprey	0%
Place for People	0%
Sanctuary	0.41

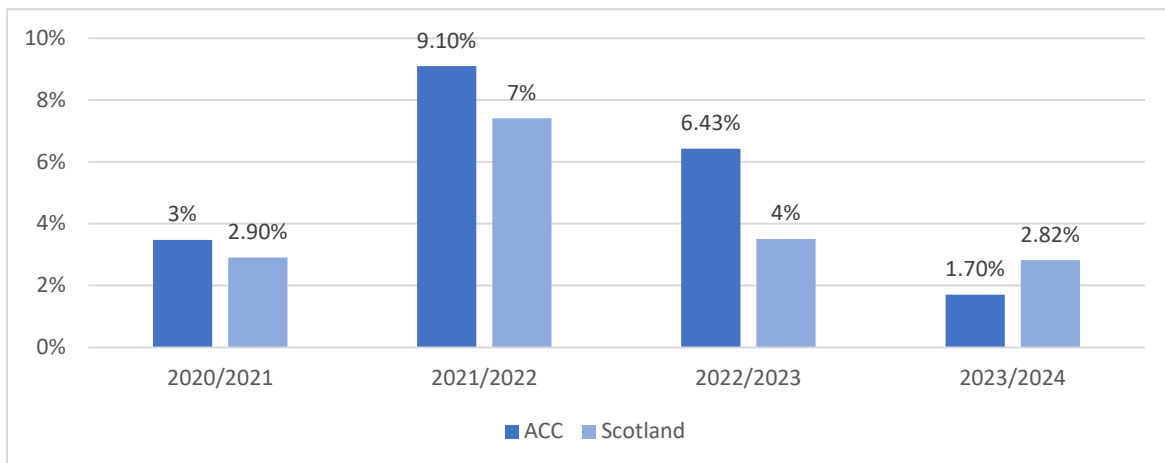
Source – Registered Social Landlords (2024)

## Abeyances

Abeyances are where the works leading to compliance have been offered but the tenant will not allow access to the property or refuses to have the work undertaken. All social landlords within Aberdeen have a procedure in place to deal with such situations. Works can be undertaken when there is a tenancy change; this can either take place during the void period or once the new tenant has moved in. The abeyances are monitored, and statistics are provided to the Scottish Housing Regulator on social housing providers performance. They are published by the Scottish Housing Regulator through the Annual Return on the Charter.

Figure 6.1.4 below shows Aberdeen City Council abeyances compared to the Scottish average. The data shows a sharp increase in exemptions for 2020/21 which was due in part to tenants refusing access or no access being provided due to COVID -19. The Scottish average also increased during this period. However, 2022/23 showed an improvement and further improved in 2023/24 where Aberdeen City Council's performance was better than the Scottish average.

Figure 6.1.4 Percentage of properties in Abeyance from the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, Aberdeen City Council



Source: Scottish Housing Regulator (2024)

Table 6.1.8 below shows the percentage of Registered Social Landlord stock which are in abeyance. The performance of Registered Social Landlords is generally better than the council. This is due in part to the nature of their housing stock which tends to be newer and with less high-rise blocks. However Grampian Housing Associations performance at 2.83% is slightly higher than other RSLs, this is due mainly to out of date or unsatisfactory Electrical Installation Condition Reports which has had a detrimental impact in achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Table 6.1.8 Registered Social Landlords Abeyances

Landlord	Abeyance
Ark	0%
Blackwood	0.1%
Castlehill	0.08%
Grampian	2.83%
Hanover	0%
Hillcrest	0%
Langstane	1.19%
Osprey	0%
Place for People	0%
Sanctuary	0.61%

Source – Registered Social Landlords (2024)

### Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing

The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2 (EESH 2) is a policy introduced by the Scottish Government to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. The main goals of the standard are to reduce energy consumption, lower fuel poverty, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

The standard was first introduced in 2014, setting a milestone for social landlords to meet specific energy efficiency targets by December 2020. A second milestone, known as Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Housing 2, was established in 2019, aiming for all social housing to meet an Energy Performance Certificate Band B rating by December 2032.

The policy is currently under review to align with Scotland’s net zero targets, with interim guidance provided to social landlords during this period. The specifications for this new standard are yet to be issued.

The current standard will contribute to the requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2019, which sets targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, and 90% by 2040.

Table 6.1.9 below shows Aberdeen City Council’s stock which meet Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing in 2023/24, including the property types and fuel sources. 23,144 Aberdeen City Council properties, or 89% were assessed as meeting the standard in 2023/24. Scotland has set a target to achieve net zero by 2045, whilst there are a large number of properties which use gas and will continue to use gas for a number of years, efforts are being made to offset carbon emissions with new technology including such as single ground source heat pumps for numerous properties and energy from waste.



Table 6.198: Aberdeen City Council Homes Meeting EESSH2 2023/24

	Gas	Electric	Other Fuels	Total
Flats	14,544	1,044	2	<b>15,590</b>
Four in a Block	2,015	29	0	<b>2,044</b>
Houses	5,333	125	4	<b>5,462</b>
Detached	48	0	0	<b>48</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,940</b>	<b>1,198</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23,144</b>

Source: Aberdeen City Council Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing Voluntary Return to Scottish Housing Network (2024)

Table 6.1.10 below shows the number of Aberdeen City Council homes not meeting the standard. The properties failing to meet the standard are a combination of non-traditional house types, granite properties, and where improvement works has been refused by the current tenant. In addition, 351 properties of the 409 electrically heated properties are within the city centre listed multi-storeys, which are part of an ongoing options appraisal. Aberdeen City Council is refreshing its Asset Management Plan for the housing stock which should provide the correct supporting detail on the long-term sustainability of the housing assets and assist in the decision-making process of what and when provides the correct investment.

The data in Table 6.1.9 and Table 6.1.10 below is currently provided on a voluntary basis to the Scottish Housing Network. **The Scottish Housing Regulator** has paused the **collection of data on Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing** from 2020/21 until after the conclusion of the Scottish Government's review of the **Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2**, to a new standard which the Scottish government is working towards.

Table 6.1.10: Properties Owned by Aberdeen City Council not meeting EESSH2 2023-24

	Gas	Electric	Other Fuels	Total
Flats	340	387	1	<b>728</b>
Four in a Block	9	2	0	<b>11</b>
Houses	591	20	1	<b>612</b>
Detached	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,351</b>

Source: Aberdeen City Council EESSH 2, Voluntary Return to Scottish Housing Network (2024)

Table 6.1.11 below shows the Registered Social Landlord stock meeting Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing. Most Registered Social Landlords have a high pass rate this is due mainly to the nature of their stock which is of newer construction with less tenements and no high multi storey blocks.

Table 6.1.11 Registered Social Landlords Stock meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing

Registered Social Landlord	Compliant	Percentage
Ark Housing Association	14	100%
Blackwood Homes	84	100%
Grampian Housing Association	1,414	97.8%
Castlehill Housing Association	1,096	98.8%
Langstane Housing Association	1,370	94.4%
Hillcrest Housing Association	628	100%
Sanctuary Housing Association	615	87.8%
Place for People/Castlerock	206	100%

Source: Registered Social Landlord Data (2024)

### Key Issues – Social Housing

- The continued provision of homes that are fit for purpose, are healthy, energy efficient, safe, and secure.
- The introduction of damp, condensation and mould as part of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard will prove challenging, so social housing providers will need to put in place plans to comply with the new regulations.
- The pending Social Housing Net Zero reporting will not be reported until 2025/26 at the earliest.
- Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete - 364 council homes not fit for occupation due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete. Tenants and owners to be re-housed and a plan to be developed for the demolition of the site and redevelopment opportunities

### Key Actions – Social Housing

- Aberdeen City Council will continue to develop plans to ensure necessary improvements are made to council stock, in order to manage and monitor damp, condensation and mould.
- Provision of training to all relevant officers along with comprehensive procedures on dealing with any identified issues with damp, condensation and mould.
- To re-house all 364 tenants, re-housing may involve the use of Registered Social Landlords, other councils and the private sector. A plan will be needed to assist in the Compulsory Purchase Orders of the 138 owner-occupied homes. Support and assistance is being provided to all that are affected by RAAC.
- Refresh the Asset Management Plan
- Refresh the Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan

### National Context – Private Sector House Condition

The National Context and Aberdeen Context for Private Sector House Condition has close links to the Private Rented Sector chapter of this Local Housing Strategy, which provides a more detailed analysis on trends and developments in this sector both nationally and locally.

The strategic aims of the [Scottish Government's Private Rented Sector Strategy](#) specifically mentions the improvement of property condition and references the importance of meeting the needs of people living in the sector and landlords who are committed to continuous improvement. The '[New Deal for Tenants' Strategy](#), which is currently in draft form, also states that one of the Scottish Government's aims for the strategy is to deliver new cross-tenure housing standards.

In the draft strategy, the Scottish Government note that the condition of properties in the private sector are not as high as other sectors. [Housing to 2040](#) details the development of a new cross-tenure housing standard as part of its route-map, with the Scottish Government specifically highlighting that "a shift towards greater partnership between Government and homeowners" is desired. The new standard is to be set in law and have no exemptions or acceptable levels of sub-standard home, signalling a strong commitment to the ambition that everyone in Scotland can have a warm, comfortable, and safe home.

## Social Determinants of Health

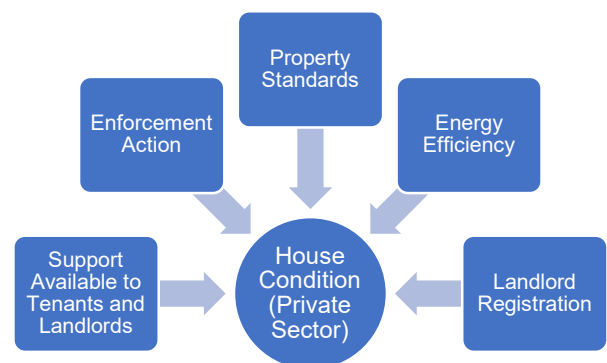
In both the social and private sector, the condition of a person's home can have a significant impact on their physical and mental well-being.

Housing in the private sector can be more likely to be in disrepair than social housing as properties are not routinely assessed against prescribed standards such as EESSH and SHQS, although they are still expected to meet the Tolerable Standard and Repairing Standard to ensure they are in a habitable condition. Where properties fail to meet these standards, the council can utilise enforcement action to ensure remedial works are undertaken, such as through the issuing of work notices.

The council also provides support to tenants and landlords in the private sector to educate them on the standards required.

Supporting stakeholders and taking enforcement action where necessary helps to improve standards in the sector, therefore having a positive impact on the health outcomes of those living in it.

Landlord registration can also contribute to positive health outcomes as it helps to ensure landlords are identifiable and can be held accountable where the condition of their property is affecting a tenant. The proposed introduction of minimum energy efficiency standards in the private sector could also improve health outcomes for stakeholders.



## Aberdeen Context – Private Housing

### Disrepair in the Private Sector

The private sector represents a significant proportion of Aberdeen City's housing stock, as seen in Table 6.1.12 below, with the total level of private sector stock being similar to the figure for Scotland as a whole. Aberdeen has a lower proportion of owner-occupied properties however, has a higher proportion of private rented and vacant/second homes. As discussed later in the chapter, house condition in the private rented sector tends to be poorer than in other tenures, and as Aberdeen has a higher proportion of these homes, there is potentially a higher level of properties at risk of being in poor condition than there is nationally.

Table 6.1.12: Private Sector Stock in Aberdeen City and Scotland, 2022

	Total Private Sector	Owner-Occupied	Private Rent	Vacant Private Dwellings or Second Homes
Aberdeen	77.0%	50.5%	20.5%	6%
Scotland	77.3%	60.6%	12.7%	4%

Source: Scottish Government, Housing Statistics: Stock by Tenure (2022)

While social housing providers must ensure that their stock meets regulatory standards such as Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing, property standards in the private sector are comparatively less stringent and homeowners have more autonomy in relation to the condition and energy efficiency of their property. This has resulted in a disparity in the condition of properties in the social sector and properties in the private sector. Properties in the private sector are still expected to meet other standards such as:

- The Tolerable Standard defined in the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#), as amended
- The Repairing Standard defined in the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#), as amended
- Obligations under the [Private Landlord Registration \(Information\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2019](#)
- Obligations under the [Tenements \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)
- The [Energy Efficiency \(Domestic Private Rented Property\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#).

Further information on how these standards and obligations affect those living and operating in the private sector can be seen in Table 6.1.13 below.

Table 6.1.13: Private Sector Property Standards and Obligations

Standards/Obligations	Relevance to Private Sector Stakeholders
Tolerable Standard	<p>It is a minimum standard which all dwellings in Scotland must meet. The criteria includes factors such as structural stability, water supply, lighting and fire detection. Where properties do not meet this standard, local authorities can exercise enforcement powers to remedy non-compliance.</p> <p>Landlords and homeowners must ensure that their properties meet this standard, while tenants and members of the public can complain if they believe a property falls below this threshold.</p>
Repairing Standard	<p>It is a minimum standard of repair which all properties let for private rent must meet, prior to and during the occupation of a tenant. The standard encompasses all elements of the Tolerable Standard, as well as additional criteria such relating to furniture, appliances, heating and power supply installations all being in good working order and safely usable.</p> <p>Landlords must ensure that their properties meet this standard and tenants can complain to Aberdeen City Council if they believe a property falls below this threshold or apply to the First-Tier Tribunal.</p>
Private Landlord Registration Requirements	<p>Those wishing to be a private sector landlord must register as a landlord by either contacting Aberdeen City Council or applying on the <a href="#">Scottish Landlord Register website</a>. Landlords should inform either of the above parties if there are any changes to their landlord status.</p>
Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004	<p>Places maintenance obligations on owners of any part of tenement buildings. The local authority has the power to pay for missing shares of communal repairs in situations where an owner is refusing to pay and this is preventing necessary works.</p>
Energy Efficiency Regulations	<p>Draft regulations which will introduce minimum energy efficiency standards for properties in the private rented sector. Landlords will be obligated to ensure their properties meet these standards before they are let.</p>

Source: Scottish Government (2024)

Some of these standards have been amended by the Scottish Government in the years since Aberdeen City Council's previous Local Housing Strategy to raise the threshold required for properties to meet them. The Tolerable Standard was last amended in 2019 and the Repairing Standard was amended as recently as March 2024, illustrating the Scottish Government's desire to improve property standards across all sectors. Reforms to tenement law are also being considered, with the Scottish Law Commission publishing a discussion paper on this in April 2024<sup>35</sup>. The paper makes recommendations to establish compulsory owners' associations in order to help tackle the level of disrepair in Scotland's tenement housing stock.

Regarding energy efficiency in the private sector, the Energy Efficiency (Domestic Private Rented Property) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 are draft regulations which were due to come into force on 01 April 2020, however their implementation was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These regulations would have required all properties in the private rented sector to have a minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating of E at the start of a tenancy from 1 October 2020, and to require a

<sup>35</sup> Discussion Paper on Tenement Law: Compulsory Owners' Associations, Scottish Law Commission, April 2024, [https://www.scotlawcom.gov.uk/files/1317/1388/6261/News\\_release.pdf](https://www.scotlawcom.gov.uk/files/1317/1388/6261/News_release.pdf)

standard of D from 2022. The intention is now for the regulations to require a minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating of C upon a change of tenancy from 2025, with remaining properties having until 2028 to reach this threshold.

Despite the recent regulatory focus on housing conditions in this sector, the onus is currently primarily on the owner of private sector properties to ensure that they are adhering to these standards and undertaking necessary repairs, as local authorities do not have the resources to inspect every individual property in this sector.

Aberdeen City Council’s Private Sector Housing Team will respond to complaints regarding property condition and mediate between landlords and tenants in the event of a dispute to achieve positive outcomes for both parties. Where a tenant feels that their landlord is not meeting the required standards regarding property condition, they can apply to the First-tier Tribunal who may assess their case and require the landlord to make the necessary repairs.

Table 6.1.14 below shows the total number of complaints made to the Private Sector Housing Team since 2021/22, including how many of these related to property condition. A form was implemented on the Aberdeen City Council website in 2021/22 to monitor and record the number of complaints being received from various sources in the private sector. Since its implementation, the distribution of complaints between both of these categories has been relatively consistent, ranging from 24-28% for management standards and 72-76% for property standards.

Table 6.1.14: Tenant Complaints Made to Private Sector Housing Team, 2021/22-2023/24

Year	Total Complaints	Management Standards	Property Standards
2021/22	25	7 (28%)	18 (72%)
2022/23	74	18 (24.3%)	56 (75.7%)
2023/24	67	18 (26.9%)	49 (73.1%)

Source: Aberdeen City Council, Private Sector Housing Team (2024)

The Private Sector Housing Team works with Landlord Accreditation Scotland to deliver best practice training sessions to landlords regarding the management of their rental properties, including issues with repairs. There are strong links between the Private Sector Housing Team and Homelessness team within the council to ensure that in cases where the tenant is at risk of becoming homeless due to a landlord not adhering to their responsibilities, the Landlord Support Officer may assist to ensure that the landlord is educated on the necessary standards that their property should meet.

Other measures that the [Private Sector Housing Team](#) will take to assist owners with repairs and maintenance include:

- Delivery of the Scheme of Assistance
- Landlord Registration
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation properties
- Licensing of Short Term Let properties.

When a property owner applies to become a landlord with Aberdeen City Council, they must meet obligations under the Private Landlord Registration (Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2019. These obligations include safety requirements such as portable appliance testing, gas safety certificates and interlinked fire alarms, as well as duties regarding common repairs and property insurance. Further information on these obligations can be found on the [Aberdeen City Council website](#). These obligations help to ensure that the condition of privately rented properties meet a sufficient standard.

The introduction of the Private Landlord Support Officer role has allowed for the implementation of safety sampling as part of the landlord registration process, where 10% of landlords who register are being asked to provide copies of safety certification in relation to their property. This allows Aberdeen City Council to proactively identify rental properties that are in poor states of repair.

Further proactive measures taken by the Private Sector Housing team to identify disrepair in private properties includes proactive visits to tenement properties to highlight communal areas which require improvement or repair. Between 2020 – 2023, a total of 1,202 properties have received a pro-active visit. If necessary, private owners are written to and advised of property repairs required.

Local authorities are also dependent on complaints from tenants or other members of the public to alert them to instances of disrepair in privately owned properties, and the required standards for these properties are relatively less demanding when compared to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. In recent years, the Scottish Government has considered the prospect of defining housing standards for the private sector, as well as a Common Housing Quality Standard that would cover all sectors.

One of the key actions in the ‘New Deal for Tenants’ draft strategy<sup>36</sup> was to establish a regulator for the private sector to enforce defined standards, while also stating that they aimed to deliver new cross-tenure housing standards by 2025. A forum has also been convened previously to discuss a Common Housing Quality Standard<sup>37</sup>, and the Chartered Institute of Housing conducted a members’ survey which indicated support for a cross-tenure standard for physical property condition<sup>38</sup>. It is clear that

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<sup>36</sup> “A New Deal for Tenants”, Draft Strategy Consultation Paper Scottish Government, December 2021, pg 5, pg 10

<sup>37</sup> “Improving Housing Standards”, Scottish Government, <https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-housing/improving-standards/>

<sup>38</sup> “The Whole Rented Sector”, Chartered Institute of Housing, 2020

there is support for higher property condition standards in the private sector and this may be introduced in the future, however at present, the timescale for achieving this and the support that would be made available to homeowners and landlords has not been clearly defined.

Aberdeen City Council will continue to monitor legislative and regulatory developments in relation to property standards in the private sector.

### Scottish House Condition Survey

The current primary source of evidence for the state of private sector house condition is found in the Scottish House Condition Survey. The Scottish House Condition Survey is the largest single housing research project in Scotland and runs from January to December each year, with key findings typically published two years later. The survey shows the proportion of properties that are in each of the various states of disrepair, with Table 6.1.15 below explaining how disrepair is defined in the survey results.

Table 6.1.15: Repair Category Definitions

Repair Category	Definition
Disrepair to a Critical Element	Critical element disrepair relates to disrepair to building elements central to weather-tightness, structural stability and preventing deterioration of the property.
Urgent Disrepair	Urgent disrepair relates to cases requiring immediate repair to prevent further damage or health and safety risk to occupants.
Extensive Disrepair	Extensive disrepair relates to cases where the damage covers at least a fifth (20%) or more of the building element area.
Any (Basic) Disrepair	Any (or Basic) disrepair relates to any damage where a building element requires some repair beyond routine maintenance. For example, a leaking tap would be considered any (or basic) disrepair.

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey (2024)

The latest survey data available is for the year 2022, however this only provides data on disrepair on a national level rather than local authority level. Local authority analysis is provided for three years and the latest data available is 2017-2019, with Table 6.1.16 below showing the levels of disrepair reported in Aberdeen City and Scotland in owner-occupied housing for this period. The previous two surveys have also been included for comparison.



Table 6.1.16: Disrepair to Owner Occupied Housing

Area	Survey Years	Any (Basic) Disrepair		Disrepair to a Critical Element	Urgent Disrepair	Extensive Disrepair
		No Disrepair	Some Disrepair			
Aberdeen	2015-17	33%	67%	53%	39%	3%
Scotland		34%	66%	47%	27%	5%
Aberdeen	2016-18	29%	71%	57%	38%	2%
Scotland		34%	66%	49%	26%	5%
Aberdeen	2017-19	25%	75%	58%	35%	4%
Scotland		33%	67%	49%	26%	5%

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019 (2024)

As seen above, while the level of basic disrepair in owner-occupied properties has remained relatively consistent for Scotland as a whole between 2015 and 2019, Aberdeen has experienced an increase in properties reporting some level of disrepair in the same period. Additionally, the proportion of properties in disrepair in Aberdeen has become considerably higher than the national level during this period, with an estimated 75% of properties being in disrepair. This trend is also apparent when measuring disrepair to critical elements and urgent disrepair, although extensive disrepair remains similar to the national trend.

Table 6.1.17 below illustrates that disrepair in the private rented sector appears to be at a higher level than in the owner-occupied sector, however this trend is echoed at a national level. Similar to the owner-occupied sector, levels of disrepair in Aberdeen across all repair categories appears to be steadily rising and is now higher than the level for Scotland as a whole.

Table 6.1.17: Disrepair to Housing in Private Rented Sector

Area	Survey Years	Any (Basic) Disrepair		Disrepair to a Critical Element	Urgent Disrepair	Extensive Disrepair
		No Disrepair	Some Disrepair			
Aberdeen	2015-17	26%	74%	58%	42%	*
Scotland		22%	78%	60%	37%	7%
Aberdeen	2016-18	26%	74%	62%	44%	10%
Scotland		21%	79%	63%	37%	8%
Aberdeen	2017-19	12%	88%	77%	48%	11%
Scotland		20%	80%	65%	38%	9%

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2015-17, 2016-18, 2017-2019 \* base sample is too small to report, or the estimate represents 2 or fewer sampled households (2024)

The increase in the figures between 2015-17 and 2017-19 has been particularly significant in terms of basic disrepair and disrepair to critical elements, while urgent disrepair and extensive disrepair has experienced relatively less change. Again, this is similar to the owner-occupied sector and suggests that while more minor repairs issues appear to be more frequent, the occurrence of major repairs issues has remained relatively consistent in Aberdeen. Despite this, the level of urgent disrepair is still significantly above the national figure.

Aberdeen City Council will continue to monitor the available data in relation to property conditions in these sectors and is working to improve property conditions in the sector by educating landlords and tenants alongside exercising its powers under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 where necessary.

## Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 - Enforcement

### Work Notices

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006<sup>39</sup>, Aberdeen City Council can serve work notices on the owners of privately owned properties in certain situations, such as if the property is considered sub-standard, unsafe or if the work is required in relation to the implementation of a Housing Renewal Area. The notice will typically require owners to bring the property back into a reasonable state of repair or improve any safety or security issues.

Aberdeen City Council must provide a specific timescale for the owners to complete the necessary improvements. If the work under the notice is not completed within the required timescale, the council may then undertake the work and recover the costs from owners once completed. The number of work notices issued between 2020/21 and 2023/24 is detailed in Table 6.1.18 below. In most cases, the work notice prompts the owners to take the necessary actions to improve their property's condition and no further intervention is required by the council.

Table 6.1.18: Number of Work Notices Served by Aberdeen City Council 2020/21-2023/24

Financial Year	Work Notices
2020/21	12
2021/22	8
2022/23	1
2023/24	7

Source: Housing Statistics Annual Return, Aberdeen City Council (2024)

The number of work notices issued by Aberdeen City Council has been decreasing in recent years due to efforts being made by the Private Sector Housing team to

<sup>39</sup> Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, s.30

communicate and co-operate with owners in relation to repairs required to improve their properties. Work notices are typically served as a last resort when owners are unwilling to co-operate and carry out the required work. The Private Sector Housing team will continue to focus on achieving improvements to properties in this sector by ensuring communication with owners is prompt, informative and offers the necessary support during the process.

### **Defective and Dangerous Buildings**

Aberdeen City Council has powers under the [Building \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#) to take action where buildings are not in a reasonable state of repair and/or pose a danger to members of the public. A range of enforcement action can be taken under this legislation, overseen by the council's Building Standards service, including:

- Engagement with the owner to communicate the work required on the building
- Serving a notice on the owner to require that the work be carried out within a specified timescale
- Ordering evictions
- Demolishing buildings where the danger is immediate.

The cost of any remedial action taken by the council in dealing with dangerous or defective buildings will be recovered from the owner(s) of the building. The powers that the council have under this legislation assist in ensuring that properties in the private sector remain in a reasonable state of repair and do not pose a danger to members of the public. A register of notices issued is made available on the Aberdeen City Council website, however the register does not specify the tenure of each property and as such there are no figures available for the number of privately owned properties where notices have been served.

### **Missing Shares**

Aberdeen City Council has further powers of intervention under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 in situations where communal repairs are required in flatted accommodation where there are multiple owners within a block<sup>40</sup>. There can be instances where the majority of owners are prepared to undertake necessary communal repairs, however one or more owners are unable or unwilling to pay their share. Non-payment or lack of co-operation can hold up much needed repairs.

In situations such as these, the council may agree to pay the missing share on behalf of an owner and recover the contribution upon completion of the work. This means that owners can then proceed with getting much needed repairs carried out to keep their property in a good state of repair. Table 6.1.19 below shows the number of missing shares paid by the council between 2020/21 and 2023/24.

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<sup>40</sup> Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 s.50

Table 6.1.19: Number of Missing Shares Paid by Aberdeen City Council 2020/21 – 2023/24

Financial Year	Number of Missing Shares Paid
2020/21	45
2021/22	34
2022/23	16
2023/24	35

Source: Private Sector Housing Team, Aberdeen City Council (2024)

The Missing Share process has recently been reviewed by the Private Sector Housing team. Information made available to the public in relation to the scheme has been improved and made clearer, with an application form now available. The council also promotes Novoville, a shared repairs app that can be used for the purposes of gathering funds from owners and receiving a missing share from the council. These measures should assist owners in managing instances of communal repairs and ensuring that their buildings are kept in a good state of repair.

## Policies for Tackling Disrepair in Private Sector Housing

Aberdeen City Council has a number of policies and strategies linked to disrepair in the private sector, specifically in relation to:

- Housing Renewal Areas
- The [Scheme of Assistance](#)
- Housing that is below the Tolerable Standard

### Scheme of Assistance

The council's [Scheme of Assistance](#) has been in place for a number of years and the document provides further detail on the types of assistance offered and the circumstances in which it will be granted. The Scheme of Assistance aims to offer a broad range of assistance that is tailored to the specific needs of homeowners, private landlords and their tenants. The Scheme of Assistance will be reviewed and updated as part of this Local Housing Strategy.

The enforcement powers mentioned previously in this chapter form part of the assistance offered under the Scheme of Assistance. With regards to repairs and maintenance, the council's Missing Shares Service is available to assist a majority of flat owners to carry out common repairs when the other responsible owners are unable or unwilling to pay their share of repair costs (common areas of a tenement or block of flats only).

Work notices may also be issued under the Scheme of Assistance to carry out repairs or improvements to a property. Aberdeen City Council can issue a work notice as part of the implementation of a Housing Renewal Area plan, or in order to bring a substandard home into a state of reasonable repair, whether or not it is in an Housing Renewal Area.

Below is a list of repairs that can be prescribed under a work notice:

**Guttering:**

- Blockage, damaged, broken

**Roofing:**

- Slates, tiles damaged, missing
- Ridge tiles
- Haunchings & pointing
- Facias & soffits
- Traditional & non-traditional dormers
- Chimney stacks & cans
- Overgrown vegetation

**Building:**

- Windows (wind & watertight)
- Doors front & back (secure)
- Door entry systems
- General fabric wind & watertight pointing etc.
- Granite tie-ins

**Housing Renewal Area**

The council's Housing Renewal Area policy was developed alongside the Below Tolerable Standard Strategy involving a similar consultation process and will also be published as an appendix to the Local Housing Strategy. The policy will be made available on the Aberdeen City Council website and will provide further information on the council's approach to the identification and implementation of Housing Renewal Areas.

Aberdeen City Council may consider the designation of a housing renewal area where a locality in the city has a significant level of housing that is viewed as sub-standard, or if the condition of specific properties is having a detrimental impact on the surrounding area. If either of these criteria were satisfied and a housing renewal area was to be considered an appropriate solution to these issues, Aberdeen City Council would consult with relevant stakeholders including owners of affected properties, representative groups within the area and any other parties who may be impacted by the designation. The purpose of the consultation would be to:

- Advise on how a housing renewal area operates and what it will mean for that particular area.
- Agree on the boundary of the area to be included.
- Agree on an appropriate action plan that will ensure that any agreed works can be carried out.
- Advise on what assistance, if any, can be provided.

Currently, Aberdeen City Council is proactively monitoring house condition in the city to determine if there are any concentrated areas of sub-standard housing in Aberdeen which would benefit from the designation of a housing renewal area. This will be carried out through the ongoing review of available evidence by the Private Sector Housing Team, Housing Strategy Team and Corporate Landlord.

Where individual properties are experiencing serious disrepair or are a blight on the surrounding area, these will be investigated by the relevant Council service and the appropriate action will be taken to resolve these issues.

If evidence emerges to suggest that a localised area is suffering from a significant level of sub-standard housing, the designation of an HRA will be investigated as a potential measure to improve the situation. Evidence that would prompt such an investigation would include:

- Complaints or concerns received from members of the public
- Relevant published data, such as Scottish House Condition Survey data
- Feedback from council officers or partner organisations

Aberdeen City Council will continually review available data and any complaints regarding housing blight and consider the designation of a housing renewal area as a solution where appropriate.

### **Below Tolerable Standard**

The council's Below Tolerable Standard policy has been developed in consultation with various internal departments and is included as an appendix to the Local Housing Strategy. The Below Tolerable Standard policy details the approach taken by the council to identifying instances of Below Tolerable Standard housing within the city and will be made available on the Aberdeen City Council website alongside the Local Housing Strategy.

Table 6.1.20 below details the level of Below Tolerable Standard housing reported in the Scottish House Condition Survey. This evidence suggests that the level of Below Tolerable Standard housing in the city is low and similar in proportion to the national figures.

Table 6.1.20: Below Tolerable Standard Housing in the Private Sector

Area	2015-2017	2016-2018	2017-2019
Aberdeen	*	1%	2%
Scotland	1%	2%	2%

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey (2024)

Aberdeen City Council will take a proactive approach to resolving instances of Below Tolerable Standard housing by investigating any reports, reviewing available data, and providing assistance to homeowners and residents who are impacted by Below Tolerable Standard housing. The Private Sector Housing team work to proactively

identify any instances of sub-standard housing in the city, which includes Below Tolerable Standard housing.

### **Key Issues – Private Housing**

- House condition in the private sector is generally poorer than the social sector due to the absence of prescribed standards on a similar level to Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.
- There is limited data available regarding property condition in the private sector, with the Scottish House Condition Survey being the primary source of evidence, however their data at a local authority level is now outdated.
- The Scottish Government have proposed to make changes in this sector which may have an impact on house condition, such as new housing quality standards, Tenement Law reforms, and energy efficiency requirements. There is currently uncertainty over how tenants, landlords and local authorities will be supported through these changes and also the implementation timelines are not clear.

### **Key Actions – Private Housing**

- Aberdeen City Council will continue to monitor developments in relation to proposals from the Scottish Government for a private sector/cross-tenure housing standards.
- The council will continue to monitor data in relation to house condition in the private sector as it becomes available and will investigate reports from members of the public regarding sub-standard private housing.
- The council's Private Sector Housing team will continue to provide education and support to both landlords and tenants to ensure the best outcomes for stakeholders in the private sector.
- The council will continue to actively participate in Scottish Government consultations in relation to reform in the private sector to ensure that potential challenges to local authorities are considered when implementing any changes.

## **Definitions**

### **Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)**

The standard for all social rented homes which social housing landlords were required to meet by 2015, taking account of Scottish Government Guidance on Exemptions and Abeyances.

### **Energy Efficiency for Social Housing 2 (ESSH2)**

This is an energy standard that all social housing meets, or can be treated as meeting, EPC Band B (Energy Efficiency rating), or is as energy efficient as practically possible, by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology, and necessary consent.

### **Scottish Housing Net Zero**

The Climate Change Act 2019 commits Scotland to net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. A zero-emission building including houses means that no greenhouse gases are emitted by it.

### **Exemptions**

These are situations where certain properties are not required to meet specific elements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard due to technical or other reasons. For example, if tenants or owner-occupiers do not agree to the necessary improvements, the property can be exempted from meeting those standards

### **Abeyances**

These are excluded from the Scottish Housing Quality Standard as they occur when it is technically feasible to make an upgrade, but a social issue prevents the landlord from doing so. This means upgrades are put on hold until the issue is resolved.

### **Below Tolerable Standard**

A term used to describe properties which fail to meet the basic minimum housing standard.

### **Housing Association**

Organisations registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator to provide primarily affordable housing for social rent. Housing Associations are also known as Registered Social Landlords.

### **Housing Renewal Area (HRA)**

An area identified as having poor housing conditions and designated for investment.

### **Mixed Tenure**

A combination of different tenure types at the same location, for example social rented housing as well as owner occupied housing within the same block or on the same development.



## **Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC)**

RAAC is a lightweight construction material that was used in the construction of some public buildings like schools and hospitals and some housing between the 1950s and 1990s.

## **Scheme of Assistance**

The Scheme of Assistance is managed by the PSH team and provides advice and practical support to private homeowners to carry out repairs and improvement to their property.

## **First-Tier Tribunal**

The First-tier Tribunal (Housing and Property Chamber) is the forum for making decisions on disputes between stakeholders in the private rented sector, such as those related to repairs or rent.

# **Priority 6: Housing quality and energy efficiency**

## **Part 2: Fuel Poverty, energy efficiency, climate change and Net Zero**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on four key themes which are interlinked and sets out the strategic framework for delivering improvements.

**Fuel Poverty:** There are four main drivers behind fuel poverty including the cost of fuel, income levels, energy efficiency of the home and understanding of how to use fuel efficiently. This chapter will highlight the issues and what is being done to reduce incidents of fuel poverty in the City including the Victorian Tenement Project, Energy Efficient Scotland-Area Based Scheme and Heat Networks.

**Energy Efficiency:** Improving the energy efficiency of homes across Aberdeen is essential not only to comply with government targets and guidelines but to have a positive impact on the residents of the city in making their homes warm, comfortable by installing measures such as cavity wall insulation and solar panels.

**Climate Change:** Climate change is a long-term change in weather patterns, including higher average temperatures and higher sea levels due to polar melting. This chapter will highlight measures to be taken to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.

**Net Zero:** refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere and the amount removed from it. The chapter will highlight the energy efficiency and clean energy actions that are contributing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the domestic sector in support of net zero targets.

Due to the close links between fuel poverty and energy efficiency a decision was made to combine these two priorities together into one section and likewise for climate change and net zero.

## Strategic Priority

**We will improve the condition of existing homes across all tenures and improve their energy efficiency to help to alleviate fuel poverty and address climate change and support a just transition to net zero.**

This Strategic Priority was developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. This priority encapsulates the approach that stakeholders wish to see over the next five years.

### National Context

The [Housing Scotland Act 2001](#) set a statutory duty on the Scottish Government to eradicate fuel poverty, as far as reasonably practical, by 2016.

The [Fuel Poverty \(Targets, Definition and Strategy\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) introduced a new definition of fuel poverty: 'A household to be in fuel poverty if more than 10% of its net income (after housing costs) is required to heat the home and pay for other fuel costs, with not enough money left for a decent standard of living. If more than 20% of net income is needed, the household is defined as being in extreme fuel poverty'. This aligns fuel poverty more closely with relative income poverty. The Act required the development of a comprehensive strategy to show how targets will be met.

The [Scottish Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy](#) sets out policies and proposals for Scottish Government, local authorities and third sector partners to help meet the Act's targets, with actions to tackle each of the four drivers of fuel poverty.

The [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Target\) Scotland Act 2019](#) sets a target for Scotland of net zero emissions by 2045. Greenhouse Gas statistics indicate buildings were the source of around 19% of emissions in Scotland in 2022, with direct fuel for home heating a primary source.

The [Scottish Government's Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) published in 2021 builds on the policies and actions set out in the [Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan 2020](#). The strategy includes a vision by 2045 for homes and buildings to be cleaner, easy to heat and no longer contributing to climate change through a pathway of reduced energy use and zero emissions heating.

Policy 2 under the [National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#) covers climate mitigation and adaptation, with a policy intent to encourage, promote and facilitate development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change.

The [Heat Network \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) sets requirements to identify and assess potential opportunity areas for district heating; and the [Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies \(Scotland\) Order 2022](#) sets requirements for councils to prepare and publish a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Delivery Plan. Work is underway to develop this at a local level.

The [Building \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2023](#) introduced the New Build Heat Standard. The Standard applies to building warrants granted from 01 April 2024 and applies to new build homes and some conversions requiring these developments to use clean heating systems, such as district heating and heat pumps, rather than fossil fuel heating, such as gas and oil boilers.

The [Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing](#) (EESH) was introduced by the Scottish Government to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. The main goals of the standard are to reduce energy consumption, lower fuel poverty, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

The draft [Energy Efficiency \(Domestic Private Rented Property\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) aims to improve the energy efficiency of domestic private rented properties in Scotland and will introduce a minimum energy performance certificate level in the private rented sector.

More recently the Scottish Government [Heat in Buildings Bill](#) and [Social Housing Net Zero Standard](#) have been proposed; incorporating minimum fabric efficiency rating to be achieved by 2033 and the requirement for zero direct emissions from heating by 2045.

[The Scottish National Adaptation Plan \(2024-29\)](#) includes an objective for New and Existing Buildings, including for new buildings to be designed to future climate; and for opportunities for adaptation to be taken during maintenance or retrofit of existing buildings.

Further emerging changes will be relevant to the decarbonisation of heat for homes, including the planned update of [Scotland's Climate Change Plan](#); the development of sectoral Just Transition Plans and changes to standards and building regulations.

## **Aberdeen Context**

Table 6.2.1 below details the [Aberdeen's Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#) (LOIP) stretch outcomes that hold particular relevance to fuel poverty, energy efficiency, climate change and net zero. This is not an exhaustive list of every potential link to these topics in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, however it includes several of the improvement project aims that relate to fuel poverty, energy efficiency, climate change and net zero that can contribute to the achievement of the stretch outcomes.

Table 6.2.1: LOIP Stretch Outcomes and Improvement Project Aims Relevant to Fuel Poverty, Energy Efficiency, Climate Change and Net Zero:

Stretch Outcomes	Improvement Project Aims
1. 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/ or not be able to heat their home by 2026.	Increase to 92% the number of homes that meet an EPC rating of C or better by 2026.
	10% of people seeking fuel poverty support are no longer in fuel poverty by 2026.
12. Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurring with a longer-term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.	Improve the effectiveness of an increased number of public, private, third and faith sector organisations contributing to preventing homelessness in Aberdeen.
	Increase education and skills relating to tenancy management and housing rights for young people.
13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.	Reduce public sector carbon emissions by at least 7% by 2026.
	To have Community led resilience plans in place for the most vulnerable areas (6) in the City by 2025 and increase by 10% the % of people who know where to find information and resources to help prepare for severe weather events by 2025.
14. Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking; 5% of people cycling and wheeling as main mode of travel and a 5% reduction in car miles by 2026.	Increase % of people who walk and wheel as one mode of travel by 5% by 2026.
	Reduce car kms by 5% by 2026.

Source: Aberdeen City Council Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026, Refreshed Version (2024)

Stretch Outcome 1 and the associated improvement project aims to mitigate fuel poverty and support citizens currently experiencing it. Fuel poverty can also contribute to a citizen's risk of homelessness, it is important that Aberdeen City Council works collaboratively with partners in this sector to increase awareness and educate citizens of the support available in relation to these areas, as seen in the improvement project aims for Stretch Outcome 12.

Stretch Outcome 13 directly relates to climate change and how Aberdeen City Council will take steps to mitigate its impact. The overall aim is to significantly reduce carbon emissions being produced in the city and ensure that the city adapts to the ongoing effects of climate change. This will be delivered through improvement project aims such as reducing the carbon emissions produced by the public sector, as well as preparing for potential future impacts of climate change such as severe weather events.

There are many links to net zero targets throughout the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, with several stretch outcomes such as 1, 13 and 14 all having links to net zero. Progress towards these outcomes will contribute to the delivery of the [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#).

The Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap sets out Aberdeen’s plan to become a net zero emissions city by 2045. It includes six themed strategies, Mobility, Circular Economy, Energy Supply, Natural Environment and Empowerment and [Buildings and Heat Strategy](#). It sets out how collaboration, innovation and the importance of a just energy transition, aimed at creating a greener, cleaner and healthier environment in Aberdeen. It sets out how collaboration, innovation and the importance of a just energy transition, aimed at creating a greener, cleaner and healthier environment in Aberdeen.

The [Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy](#) is currently being drafted and is close to completion. The four main aims are:

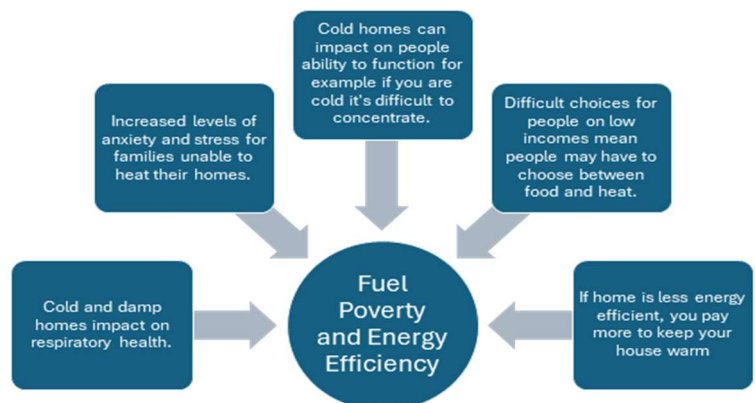
1. The continuation of the expansion of district heating network and how this will potentially link in with the existing network.
2. Where properties cannot be heated by the district heating network, alternative heating measures to be explored to allow for building level decarbonisation.
3. Ongoing projects such as Energy Efficient Scotland-Area Based Scheme; and
4. Internal city council projects such as Doric to improve building energy efficiency and alleviating fuel poverty.

A delivery plan is also nearing completion working to the same four aims as above.

## Social Determinants of Health – Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

The social determinants of health model highlights the importance that good quality and energy efficient homes plays in improving health outcomes.

Poor quality or cold and draughty housing can lead to poor mental health and exacerbate long-term conditions. High quality housing that meets people's needs and is energy efficient that will help to reduce fuel poverty and improve wellbeing are considered within this chapter. More information can be found on the quality of housing in the private and social sector in Chapter 6: House Condition.



## Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

A key priority for Aberdeen City Council is to reduce fuel poverty and improve the energy efficiency of existing housing across all tenures and ensure that new homes meet the highest energy efficiency requirements.

The Bronze Standard in building standards typically refers to a baseline level of sustainability and compliance with building regulations and must meet to comply with the [Building \(Scotland\) Regulations 2004](#). The [Domestic Technical Handbook](#)

provides guidance on sustainability this includes the details on what is required to achieve the Bronze to Platinum levels as outlined in Section 7.

New build council housing is currently built to a higher standard, the “Gold Standard” with minimum EPC - B energy efficiency rating. All new housing including Registered Social Landlords must comply with [Scottish Building Technical Standards 2022](#): Domestic, Section 6: Energy.

Improving the energy efficiency of homes will assist in achieving reduced greenhouse gas emissions, help to meet climate change targets and tackle and mitigate fuel poverty.

Aberdeen City Council’s ongoing programme for the installation of loft and cavity wall insulation within the council’s own stock continues.

These measures assist to improve the Energy Performance Certificate scoring of the property with the measures required to meet Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

The council will also continue to apply for Scottish Government grant funding. Currently this is available through the [Energy Efficient Scotland-Area Based Scheme](#) to support measures like external wall insulation to be installed on private properties that meet the Scottish Government’s criteria.

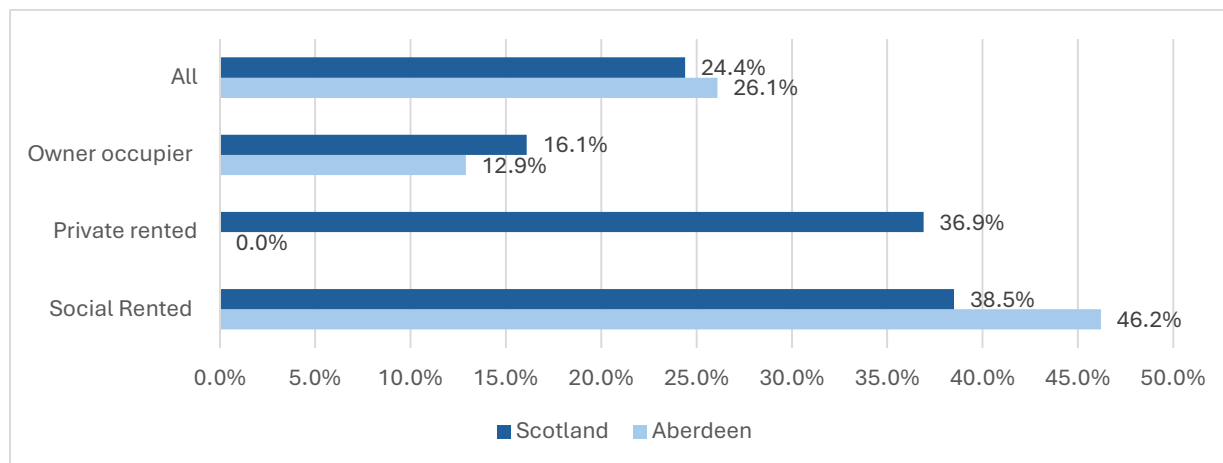
Registered Social Landlords undertake their own programme of energy efficiency measures. It is not possible to make direct comparison with Aberdeen City Council due to differences in how data is recorded.

**Definition of fuel poverty:** A household is defined as being in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, total fuel costs necessary for the home are more than 10% of the household’s adjusted net income (i.e. after housing costs), and if after deducting those fuel costs, benefits received for a care need or disability and childcare costs, the household’s remaining adjusted net income is insufficient to maintain an acceptable standard of living. The remaining adjusted net income must be at least 90% of the UK Minimum Income Standard to be considered an acceptable standard of living with an additional amount added for households in remote rural, remote small town and island areas. If more than 20% of net income is needed, the household is defined as being in extreme fuel poverty.

Fuel poverty is a particular issue facing many households in Aberdeen. Fuel poverty can affect households across all tenures. Figure 6.2.1 below shows the percentage of households in fuel poverty, by tenure, for Aberdeen and compared to Scotland. The data shows that Aberdeen has a higher percentage of households in fuel poverty compared to Scotland, 26.1% compared to 24.4% respectively. 46.2% of households living in social housing in Aberdeen experience fuel poverty compared to 38.5% nationally. 12.9% of owner-occupied households in Aberdeen is lower than the national figure of 16.1%. Private rented sector data for Scotland shows 36.9% of households are experiencing fuel poverty, which is similar to 38.5% in the social rented sector. Comparable data is not available for the private rented sector in Aberdeen due to the small sample size recorded in the Scottish House Condition

Survey. The reason for Aberdeen City’s higher percentage could be due in part to the downturn in the Oil and Gas sector which Aberdeen relies on heavily for jobs and wealth creation, this also impacts on the service sector such as retail and hospitality.

Figure 6.2.1: Percentage of households in fuel poverty in Aberdeen and Scotland all tenures.



Source: Scottish House Condition Survey: Local Authority Analysis 2017 - 2019. (2024)

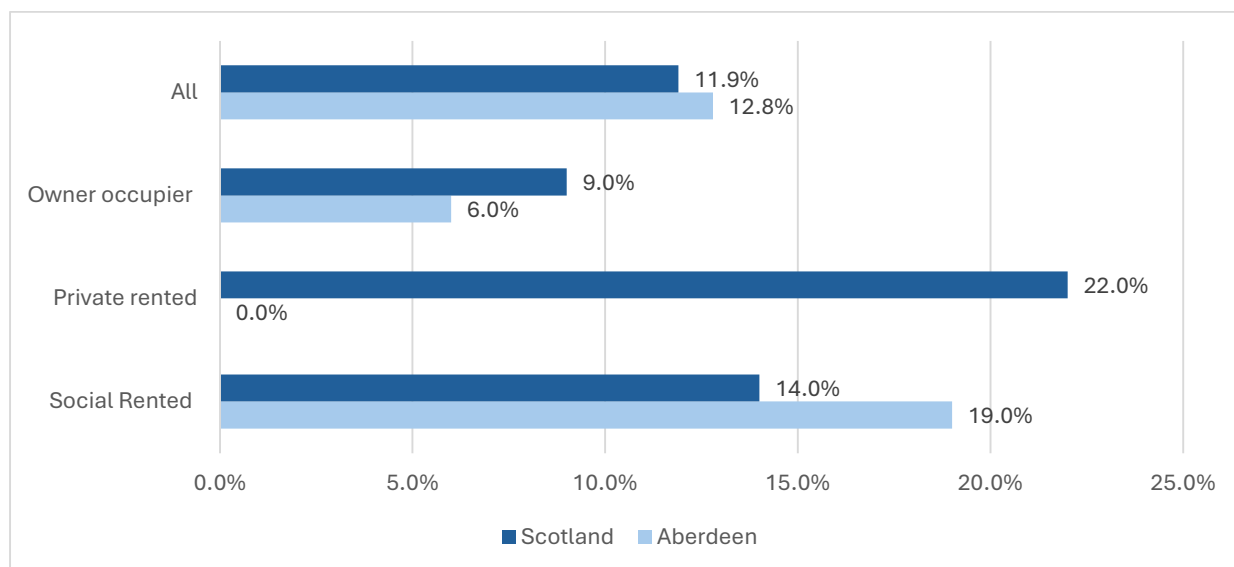
Figure 6.2.2 below shows the cross-tenure comparison for households living in extreme fuel poverty. It shows that 12.8% of households in Aberdeen experience extreme fuel poverty compared to 11.9% for Scotland as a whole. This also affects a higher percentage of social rented households in Aberdeen, 18.8% compared with 14.5% for Scotland.

In Scotland, 11.9% of households live in extreme fuel poverty, compared with 12.8% of households in Aberdeen which is comparable. 18.8% of households who live in social housing in Aberdeen are experiencing extreme fuel poverty, compared with 14.5% for Scotland. Whereas 6.4% of owner-occupied households in Aberdeen experience extreme fuel poverty, compared with 8.8% owner-occupied households across Scotland.

The colder climate in Aberdeen is a key factor contributing to the higher percentage of households experiencing extreme fuel poverty compared to other parts of Scotland. Aberdeen has also experienced a downturn in the oil and gas economy together with high energy costs and COVID-19 have had a negative impact on the city’s economy including the retail sector. Many council tenants are claiming benefits or are on low wages which has made paying the energy bill challenging. According to the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SMID) carried out in 2020, levels of deprivation have increased slightly compared to previous assessments. Aberdeen has areas that fall within the 20% most deprived in Scotland. These include areas such as Torry, Middlefield, Northfield, Mastrick and Stockethill, which have a high concentration of council homes.

As above, comparable data for the private rented sector in Aberdeen is not available due to the small sample size recorded in the Scottish House Condition Survey.

Figure 6.2.2 Percentage of households in extreme fuel poverty in Aberdeen and Scotland all tenures.



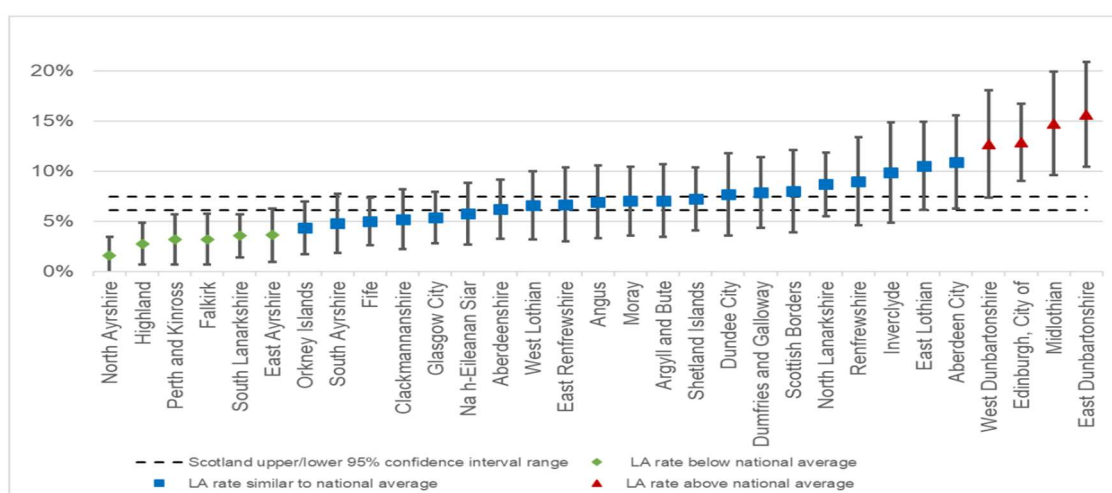
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey: Local Authority Analysis 2017 – 2019. (2024)

### Main drivers of Fuel Poverty/Energy Efficiency

One of the main causes of fuel poverty is living in a home that is not energy efficient. The most recent [Scottish House Condition Survey 2017- 2019<sup>41</sup>](#) showed that, nationally and locally, the energy efficiency of the housing stock was improving, yet fuel poverty remains high, mainly due to high fuel prices and potentially lower household incomes in the social sector.

Figure 6.2.3 below shows the percentage of dwellings with less than 100mm loft insulation (where possible) by local authority, compared to Scotland average. SHCS 2015-2017.

Figure 6.2.3 Key results of the SHCS 2015-2017



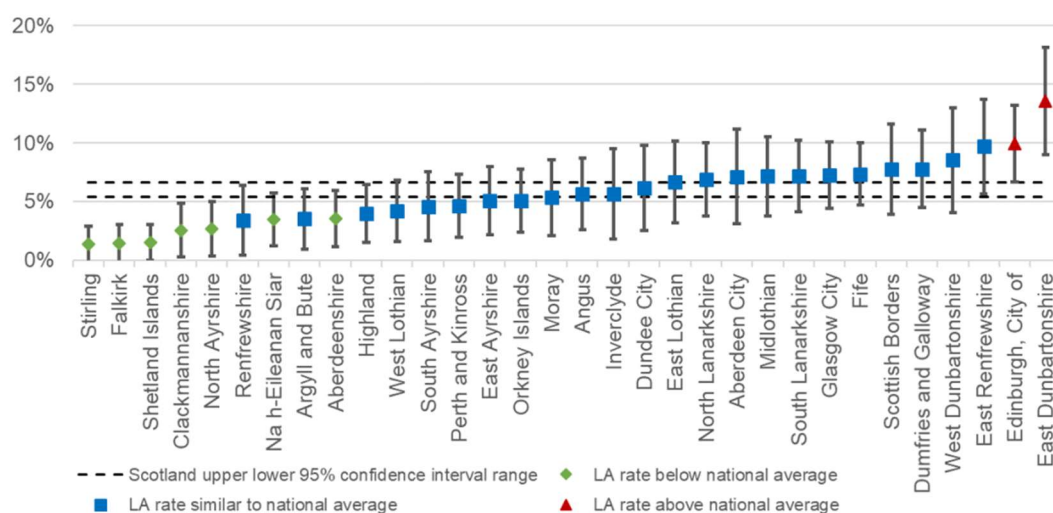
<sup>41</sup> Data collection for the Scottish House Condition Survey was affected by Covid-19, updated information showing local authority data is not expected until early 2026.



Source: Key results from the Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) Local Authority tables 2015-2017, (2024)

Figure 6.2.4 below shows the percentage of dwellings with less than 100mm loft insulation (where possible) by local authority, compared to Scotland average. SHCS 2017-2019

Figure 6.2.4 percentage of dwellings with less than 100mm loft insulation



Source: Scottish House Condition Survey: 2017-2019 Local Authority Tables (2024)

The proportion of solid wall dwellings with insulation was 16% in 2022, an increase of 5% on the 2012 figure. Likewise loft insulation has shown an increase. In 2022, 32% of lofts were insulated to a high standard of insulation (300 mm or more). Following year on year increases from the 2010 figure of 5%.

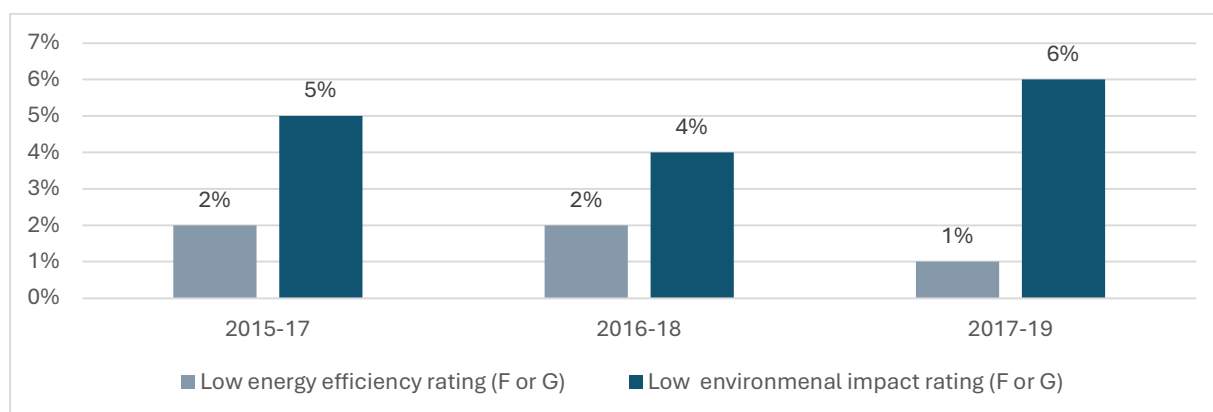
Aberdeen still faces many challenges:

- Aberdeen had one of the lowest rates of wall insulation at 45% compared with a national average of 59%.
- Almost all households in Aberdeen have full central heating systems, aligning with the national average of 96%.
- Aberdeen had a low proportion of dwelling in the lowest energy efficiency band (F or G) at 1%, which is significantly better than the national average of 4%. It also has a higher proportion of dwellings in the highest energy efficiency bands (B or C), indicating a better overall energy performance.

Figure 6.2.5 below shows the percentage change in the low energy efficiency rating and low environmental impact rating between 2015 and 2019 based on the local authority analysis for Aberdeen City carried out for the Scottish House Condition Survey.

The Environmental Impact Rating (EIR) represents the environmental impact of a dwelling in terms of carbon emissions associated with fuels used for heating, hot water, lighting and ventilation.

Figure 6.2.5 Percentage of dwellings with low energy efficiency rating (F or G) and low environmental impact ratings (F or G)



Source: Scottish House Condition Survey – Local Authority Analysis (February 2021)

### SHQS and EESSH Compliance

Social housing is assessed by two main criteria, the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing. Aberdeen City Council's performance against these criteria can have a direct impact on levels of fuel poverty and energy efficiency in the city. The Scottish Housing Quality Standard measures all aspects of housing quality, however there are parts of the criteria which directly relate to energy efficiency, e.g. ensuring that the properties meet the Energy Performance Certificate milestones outlined in EESSH for Scottish Housing.

The criteria also require properties to meet the tolerable standard, have modern facilities and be free from serious disrepair. These aspects of the criteria also have potential links to fuel poverty and energy efficiency, as failure against these could result in a property having poorer energy performance. For example, properties must have thermal insulation under the tolerable standard, and poor insulation can have a detrimental impact on the energy performance of the property.

### Aberdeen City Stock

Aberdeen City Council's performance against both Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Housing is explored further in Chapter 6: House Condition of this Local Housing Strategy. In 2023/24, 89% of the council's stock was assessed as meeting Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Housing and 90% was assessed as meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

The average for Registered Social Landlords complying with the SHQS is around 95.5% and around 97% meeting EESSH. The higher percentage for Registered Social Landlords is due in part to the newer stock which has built in items which meet or exceed the standards and are more easily updated if the standards are changed.

While a national compliance figure for Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Housing is not available, the proportion of Aberdeen City Council stock meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standard has been higher than the national figure between 2020/21 and 2023/24. Aberdeen City Council will continue working to ensure that the

compliance rate for these standards remains high and subsequently has a positive impact on the energy efficiency of its stock.

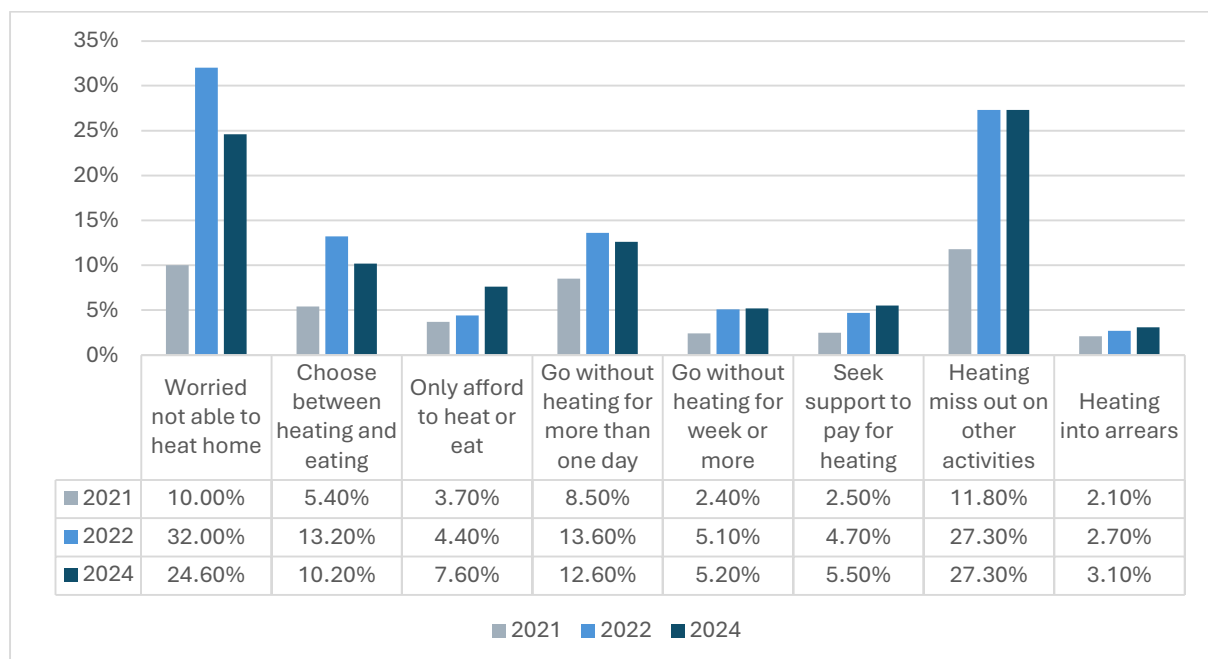
While there is currently not an equivalent standard for properties in the private sector, the [Energy Efficiency \(Domestic Private Rented Property\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) is in draft form and aim to introduce minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector. This would prohibit landlords from leasing properties which fell below a specific EPC rating. Aberdeen City Council will monitor developments in relation the implementation of these regulations, which may help to improve energy efficiency standards in the private sector.

Aberdeen is known as the ‘granite city’, since it has a large proportion of granite stone tenement flats and houses, which are more challenging to heat and install energy efficient upgrades than modern buildings. They may lack insulation causing heat loss which compromises their energy efficiency. The Aberdeen Victorian Tenement Project (AVTP) has proven successful over the years enabling basic insulation measures to be installed within privately owned and rented properties throughout the city. It has also allowed mixed tenure blocks with council tenants to be insulated.

### City Voice Survey

To provide an Aberdeen context, a series of questions around citizens ability to heat their homes were asked in the Aberdeen City Voice survey<sup>42</sup>. Figure 6.2.6 below shows the results from 2021, 2022 and 2024.

Figure 6.2.6: City Voice Questions on Financial Pressures



Source: City Voice 50, Aberdeen Community Planning (July 2024<sup>43</sup>)

<sup>42</sup> Aberdeen City Voice is a panel of Aberdeen City Residents who have agreed to give their views on a range of issues. More information can be found on [Community Planning Aberdeen](#) website.

In July 2024, 24.6% of respondents reported being worried they would not be able to heat their home compared with a peak of 32% in 2023. 27.3% of respondents said that paying for heating meant missing out on other activities which is a similar level to 2023 but much higher than 11.8% of respondents in 2022. There has also been a significant increase in the number of respondents saying they can “only afford to heat or eat,” rising from 4.4% in 2023 to 7.6% in 2024.

The results of this survey were considered by Community Planning Aberdeen’s Anti-Poverty Group and action has been taken to try and combat the circumstances which are making it difficult for the citizens of Aberdeen to heat their homes, such as the aftermath of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. The focus has been on measures which will increase household income, such as supporting people into employment and ensuring they are claiming the benefits they are entitled to. This is provided through services such as ABZ Works and the online benefit calculator.

Aberdeen City Council is also working with the charity Save Cash and Reduce Fuel (SCARF), to increase awareness of the advice and support available in relation to fuel bills and energy efficiency. Aberdeen City Council’s Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee have also allocated £1m to assist in addressing poverty in the city, with some measures targeting the alleviation of fuel poverty such as the distribution of food vouchers and winter clothing payments.

## **Income**

It is widely recognised there are four main drivers behind fuel poverty; cost of fuel, income, energy efficiency of the home and understanding of how to use fuel efficiently<sup>44</sup>.

Income levels play a key role in fuel poverty. Figure 6.2.7 below shows residence-based earnings of full-time workers between 2012 and 2022. There have been a number of challenges in Aberdeen that have impacted negatively on these average earnings. These include the financial crash of 2008 and the successive oil and gas downturns on which the Aberdeen economy was so dependent on. This has caused a large fall in the number of high-paid jobs in the oil and gas sector which has had a detrimental impact on local retail and hospitality jobs.

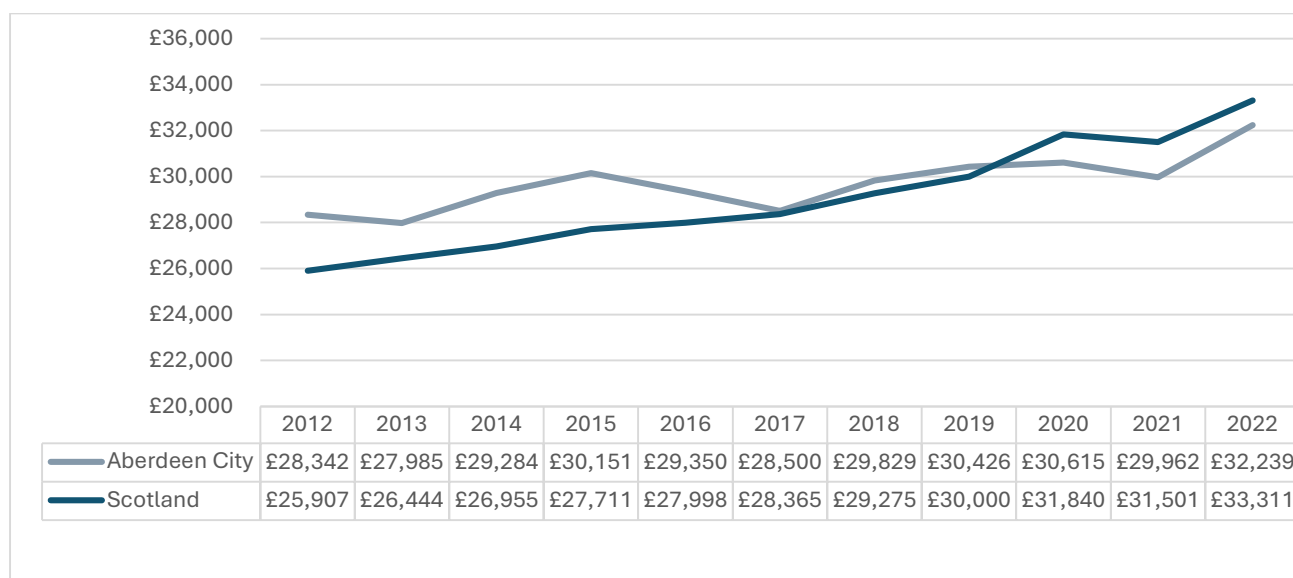
The impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have also presented challenges in a variety of sectors, although these issues were not exclusive to Aberdeen. The combination of these factors has resulted in residence-based median earnings in Aberdeen falling below the Scottish average since 2020. Income levels in the city being below the national average may result in the citizens of Aberdeen being at a greater risk of fuel poverty.

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<sup>43</sup> The survey was not carried out in 2023 so data is not available for this period.

<sup>44</sup> Scottish House Condition Survey: 2022 Key Findings

Figure 6.2.7: Annual Earnings, 2012 - 2022



Source – Office for National Statistics<sup>45</sup> (2024)

In order to eradicate fuel poverty, the aim is to reduce energy consumption in homes and promote the use of renewable energy sources and innovations. This is inextricably linked to the challenge of tackling the climate emergency. Housing is a key source of carbon emissions.

The [Energy Efficient Scotland-Area Based Scheme](#), funded through the Scottish Government, has been in existence since 2014 and has enabled the council to offer various measures throughout the city to private owners to develop and deliver energy efficiency programmes. Latterly a concentration on non-traditional built homes has allowed expensive external wall insulation measures to be installed.

The higher costs and timescale involved with carrying external wall insulation limits the number of properties that can be completed in any one year, with demand for these works higher than what can be fulfilled. Significant investment has taken place throughout the duration of the scheme as shown in Table 6.2.1 below.

<sup>45</sup> Data for 2023 will be available later this year

Table 6.2.1: Area-based schemes, allocations and final spend for Aberdeen, 2018-2023

Year	Core Funding Allocation	Final Spend
2018/19	£1,549,101.00	£1,760,106.36
2019/20	£1,652,360.00	£1,798,616.10
2020/21	£1,994,012.00	£2,174,210.41
2021/22	£2,574,178.00	£53,655.88 <sup>46</sup>
2022/23	£2,639,764.00	£2,139,917.82

Source: Scottish Government (2024)

There was a significant underspend in 2021/22, this was due to changes in regulations which impacted procurement and planning aspects of the project.

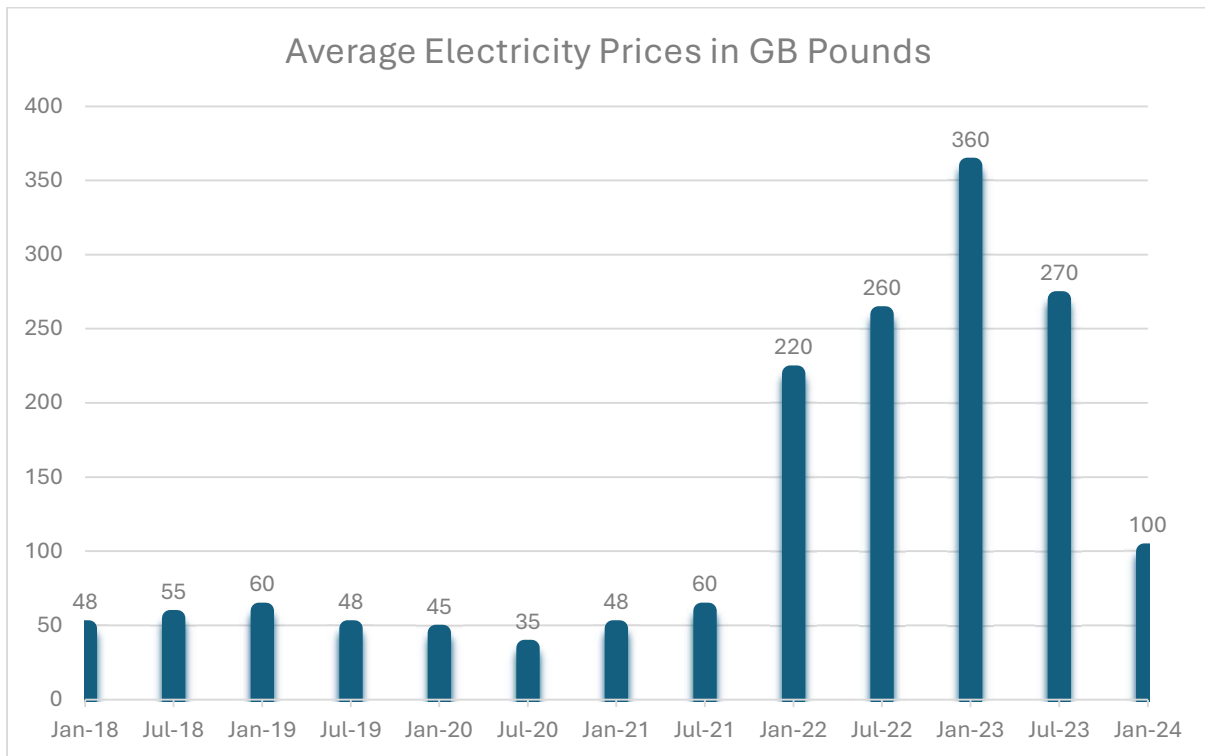
### Energy Prices

Energy prices play a major part in fuel poverty. Figure 6.2.8 below shows electricity prices from 2018. Since 2021 there has been a significant increase in both gas and electricity prices due to both COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine. This has affected the international markets for gas and oil and subsequently electricity generation. Prices began to increase dramatically in 2021 and reached their highest in 2022 before slowly lowering through 2023 and 2024. Government assistance both at UK and Scottish level have offset to some extent the dramatic increases seen during this time. However, it has still caused many to fall into fuel debt that may take years to recover from.

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<sup>46</sup> Spend across all areas in Scotland was impacted as the result of the COVID-19 restrictions.

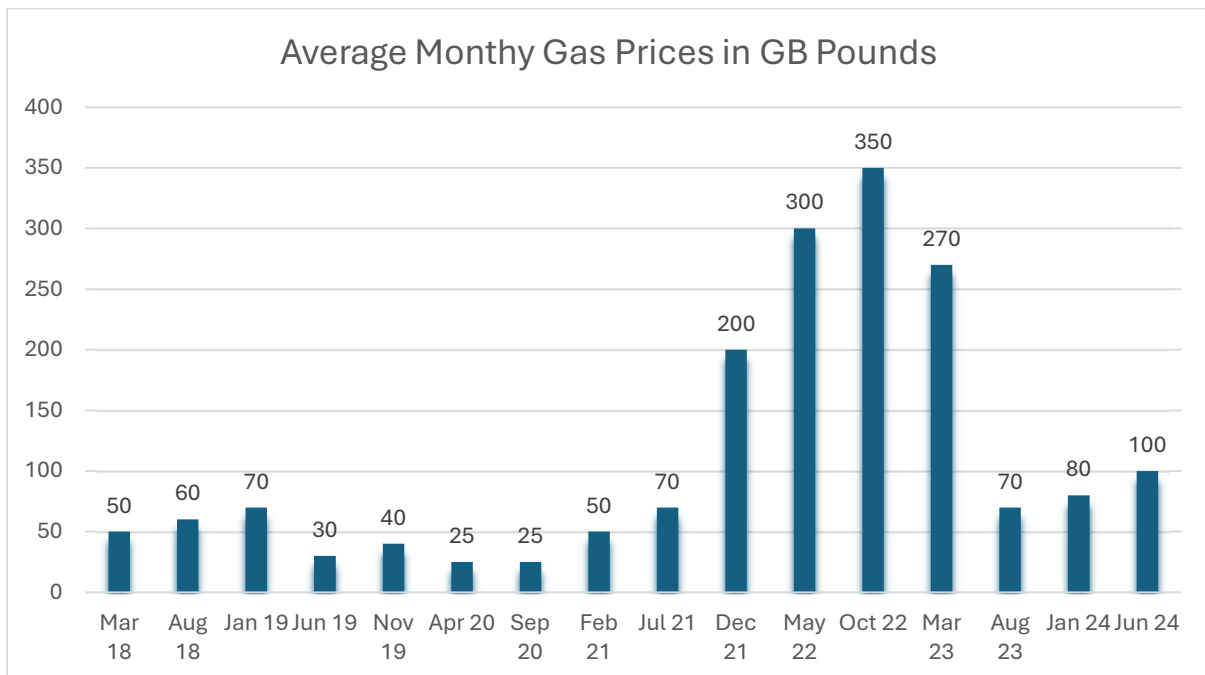
Figure 6.2.8 Monthly average electricity prices in GB pounds per megawatt-hour



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/589765/average-electricity-prices-uk/> (2024)

Figure 6.2.9 below shows the monthly average gas prices from July 2018 to July 2024 (in GB pounds per therm).

Figure 6.2.9 Average Gas prices



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1174560/average-monthly-gas-prices-uk/> (2024)

## **Save Cash and Reduce Fuel (SCARF)**

Save Cash and Reduce Fuel (SCARF) offers support and assistance to householders from all tenures across the city. This includes advice with reducing fuel bills with improving energy efficiency, mediation services with energy suppliers to resolve billing issues and benefit checks to maximise household incomes. In certain circumstances they can assist with emergency payments for prepayment meters.

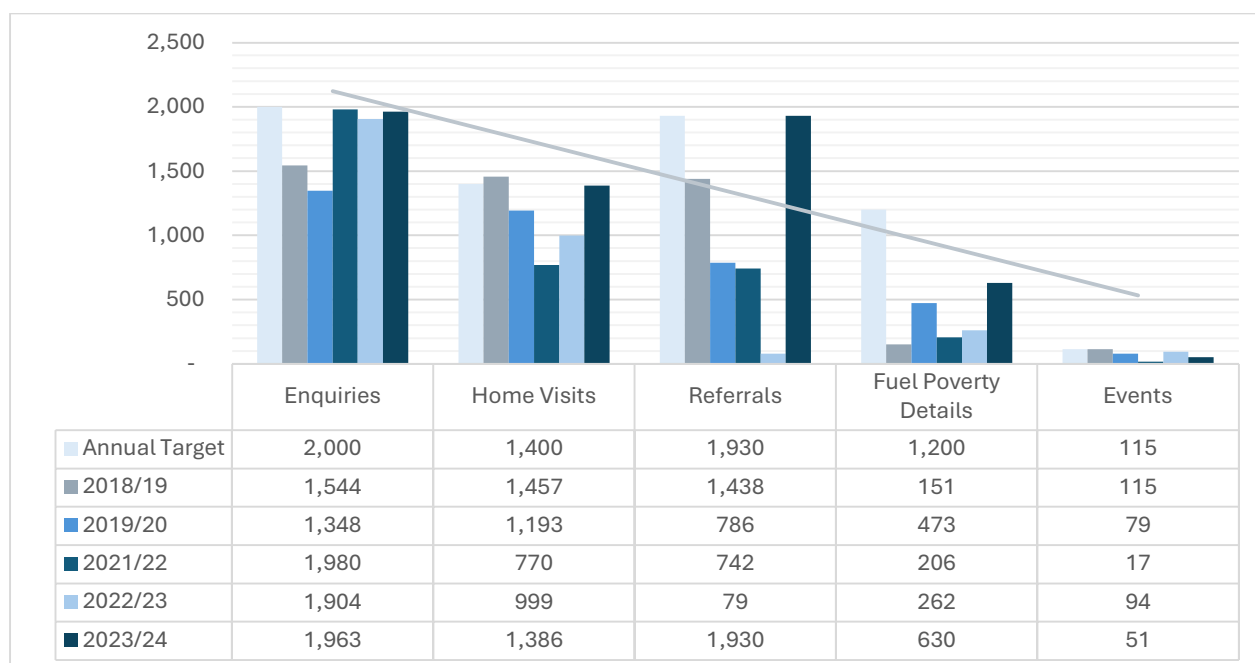
SCARF's Home Energy Advice Team provide advice on ways householders can save both on their fuel bills and their energy usage. Advisors provide tailored advice that is suitable to both the house type and financial circumstances via the telephone advice or home visits. SCARF also carry out benefit checks and can make referrals to other organisations and charities for assistance such as housing repairs and food banks. Recently dementia awareness training has been given to the advisers to raise awareness and signpost people to other agencies for support.

Figure 6.2.10 below shows SCARF's annual performance indicators from 2018/19 to 2023/24. This covers the period of COVID-19 restrictions, which severely impacted on the number of home visits that could be carried out, falling below the annual target for the period. This also impacted on the ability to collate fuel poverty data and reduced the number of events that could take place.

The number of enquiries has stayed consistent over the period, very close to the 2,000 target. 2022/23 saw a large increase in the number of onward referrals to other agencies, rising from 742 in 2021/22 to 2,542 in 2022/23. This is mostly likely related to the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions and the economic impact on families' incomes, for example through furlough schemes and potential lost employment or income. Data for 2023/24 indicates the first real signs of a recovery to pre-COVID figures.



Figure 6.2.10 SCARF's Annual Activity 2018 – 2024



Source: SCARF Annual Report<sup>47</sup> (2024)

### Key Issues – Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

- Rising energy prices have exacerbated fuel poverty, particularly impacting on low-income households. Despite recent lowering of fuel prices, fuel prices remain higher than pre-2021 levels.
- Median household income growth has been slower than the Scottish average which affects the ability to afford energy costs.
- Poor house conditions and failure to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard will contribute to higher energy consumption and associated costs.
- There continues to be challenges around implementing energy efficiency improvements across all tenures. The reasons can be due to construction or design, for example multi-storey buildings, granite buildings.
- The cost and complexity of making homes more energy efficient is becoming more challenging. Many households have already undertaken improvement works to install measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation that is relatively inexpensive leaving more costly options measures like external wall insulation and heating systems such air source heat pumps.

<sup>47</sup> Referral to other agencies data for 2018/19 and 2019/20 is not available

## **Key Actions – Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency**

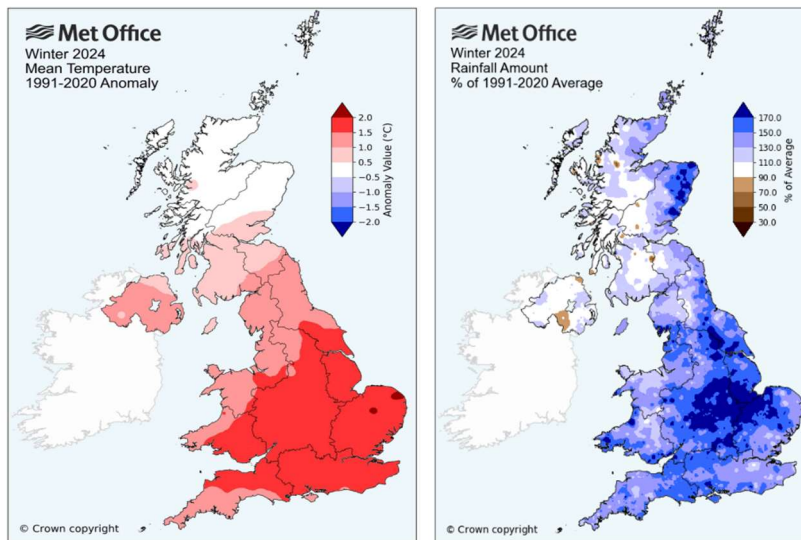
- Actively seek funding through Scottish Government and UK Government initiatives to reduce fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency and collaborate with external partners to ensure any funding is fully utilised.
- Continue to work with partner organisations, such as SCARF to provide households with advice on energy efficiency, fuel cost savings and income maximisation.
- Continue to support the Aberdeen Victorian Tenement Project to improve the energy efficiency of granite tenements throughout the city.
- Continue support for local organisations assisting with fuel poverty.
- Develop a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), which aims to improve the energy efficiency of properties within the city so alleviating fuel poverty.
- Expansion of the District Heating system.

## **Climate Change and Net Zero**

The Local Housing Strategy plays an important role in linking action on the climate emergency with mainstream housing and fuel poverty. Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. While these changes can occur naturally, human activity has been a primary driver since the industrial revolution of the 1800s. This is mainly due to the burning of fossil fuels such as oil and gas. This has led to an increase in greenhouse gases which trap heat in the atmosphere, causing global temperatures to rise, which in turn affects the climate.

Figure 6.2.11 below shows UK seasonal weather maps for Winter 2024 (December 2023, January, February 2024). For this period the northern portion of Scotland had a lower average winter temperature than other parts of the UK and along parts of the east coast rainfall was heavier than the UK average. Colder temperatures have an impact both on heat demand and fuel poverty levels, and intense rainfall can cause damage and flooding.

Figure 6.2.11 Seasonal weather maps



Source: Met Office Seasonal Assessment Winter (2024)

Met Office data indicates an average number of 40 frost days a year in Aberdeen for the period 2001-2020, compared to an average number of 53 days for 1981-2000. The average annual temperature for the city was 8.7°C, 2001-2020 and average yearly rainfall was 833mm, 1991-2020.

Climate change at a global scale drives local changes; and extreme weather events can affect citizens and buildings. Aberdeen and the surrounding area has experienced the impact of severe weather, these have included Storms Arwen (2021), Corrie (2022) and Babet (2023) which resulted in damage, power disruptions and flooding.

As well as needing to be resilient to current weather patterns, new and existing housing will need to be able to adapt to a changing climate. Projected changes in rainfall intensity and increases in temperature are identified under [UK Climate Projections \(UKCP18\)](#). These include warmer wetter, winters; a trend of hotter, drier summers, although there may be increases in heavy summer rainfall events; and a rise in sea level. The impacts from changes in climate identified under the climate projections for Aberdeen are set out in the [Evidence Base](#) for Aberdeen Adapts. Potential impacts to buildings include from flooding, water penetration, damp and condensation; in addition hotter summer temperatures may affect those with certain health conditions.

[Aberdeen Adapts: Climate Adaptation Framework 2022](#) is the city-wide climate adaptation framework, outlining five priorities and fifteen goals to support preparing for, and building resilience to, the impacts of climate change. This includes a priority of understanding risks to the Granite City's built environment, addressing climate change in the planning, build, maintenance and protection of city buildings, infrastructure and heritage.

The [Flood Risk Management Strategy \(SEPA\)](#) for the [Northeast Local Plan District](#) identifies four areas in Aberdeen City that are potentially vulnerable to flooding including Aberdeen City North, Aberdeen Central, Peterculter and Cove and Nigg

Bay. It considers current and future flood risk, indicating approximately 19,530 homes and business in Aberdeen are at current risk of flooding. The [Northeast Local Flood Risk Management Plan 2022-28](#) incorporates mitigating actions to manage flood risks in these areas.

Reducing global emissions is essential to limit levels of change in climate and the resultant impacts on people and place. This is the aim of the [Paris Agreement](#) which seeks to limit global warming to well below 2°C, whilst aiming for 1.5°C. The need to reduce emissions in support of net zero targets is reflected in a range of current and emerging legislative drivers and commitments at national and local level.

The [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap \(2022\)](#) sets out a pathway towards Aberdeen achieving net zero by 2045. It is supported by six enabling strategies on key themes including Mobility, Buildings and Heat, Circular Economy, Energy Supply, Natural Environment and Empowerment.

The Net Zero [Buildings and Heat Strategy](#) sets out the role that buildings and heat have in the Net Zero Aberdeen journey. The strategic aim is to “reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2045, through rapid decarbonisation across all sectors with many changes to the ways in which both power and heat is generated and used. The Buildings and Heat Strategy includes outcomes for improved energy efficiency of buildings, expanding low and zero emission heating and increased connections to decentralised energy, alongside outcomes for fuel poverty.

The [Aberdeen Local Development Plan](#) includes policies for low and zero carbon buildings; renewable and low carbon energy development; and heat networks.

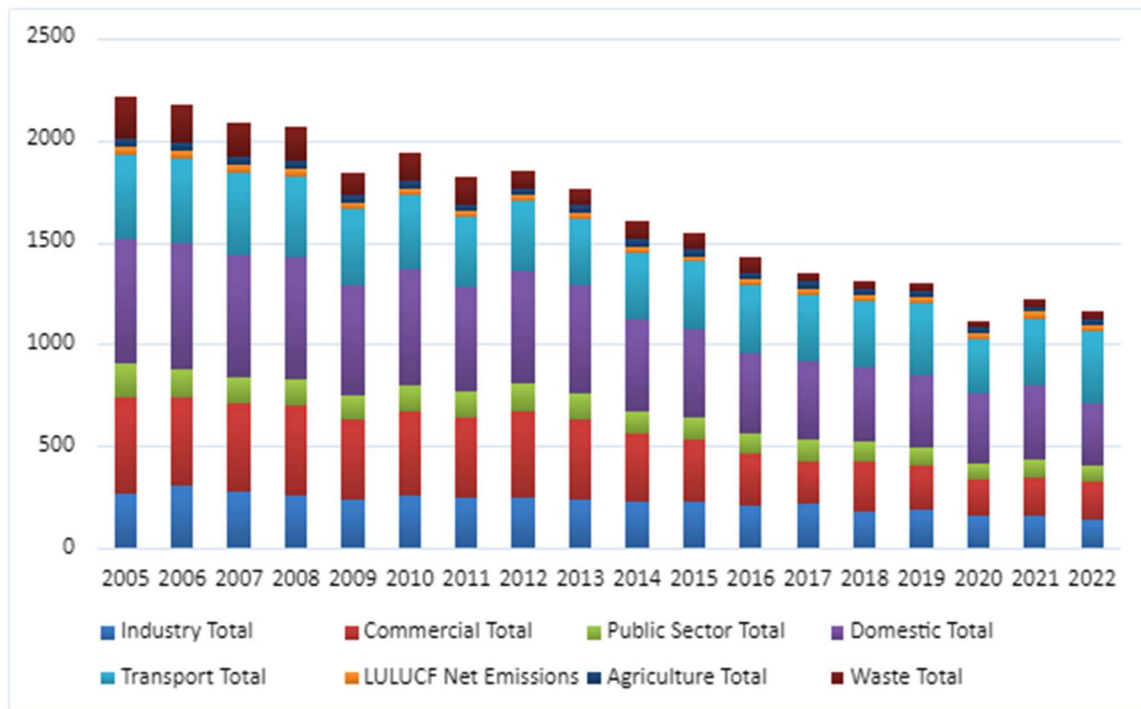
The Local Housing Strategy aims to ensure alignment across plans and strategic drivers for flooding, climate and property protection; and work to support city priorities for low and zero carbon, as well as resilient housing.

### **Aberdeen Status/Conditions**

Acknowledging the global climate emergency and legislative requirements, Aberdeen’s Local Outcome Improvement Plan includes a stretch outcome for addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.

Figure 6.2.12 below shows the greenhouse gas emissions for 2005 to 2022 in Aberdeen. The overall trend has been a reduction in city emissions since 2005, although levels of reduction vary across sectors.

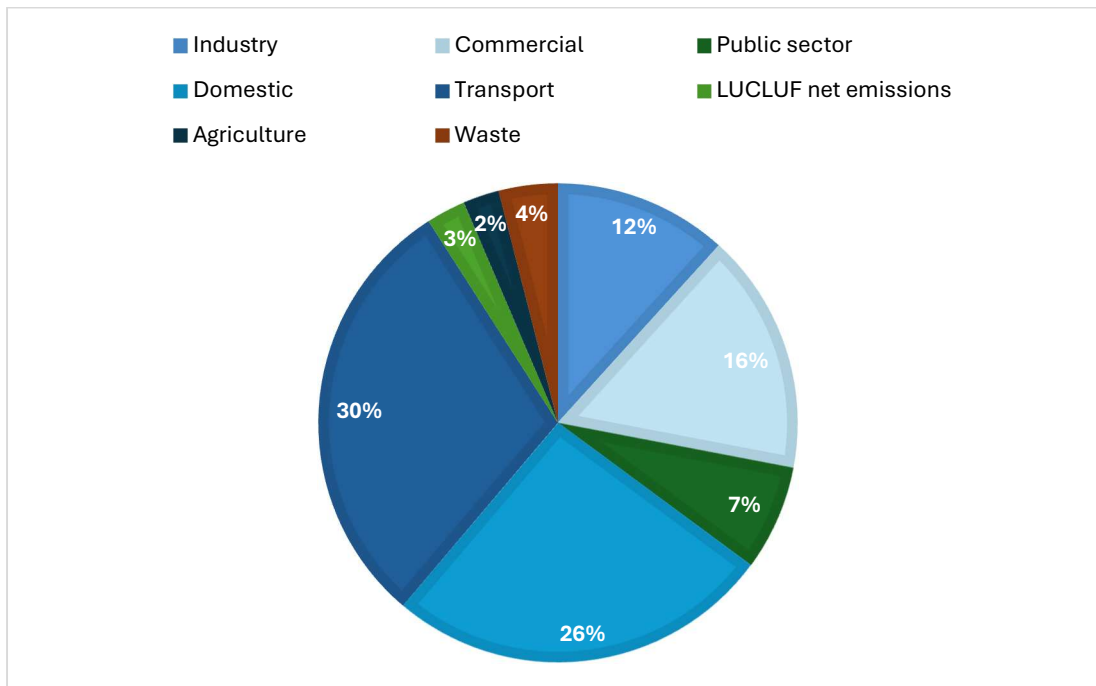
Figure 6.2.12 Aberdeen Greenhouse Gas Emissions kt CO<sub>2</sub>e, 2005 – 2022



Source: UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emission statistics, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2022).

Figure 6.2.13 below shows that domestic energy use in homes is responsible for approximately 26% of greenhouse gas emissions in Aberdeen. Most of those emissions were generated by heating, from fossil fuel systems, with emissions from domestic gas being the most significant source. An increased scale and pace of activity in reducing energy demand and decarbonising heat through a transition to clean energy systems is required to reach the net zero target of 2045 for the city. However, a fair and just approach is essential to ensure uptake, participation and avoid socio-economic impact.

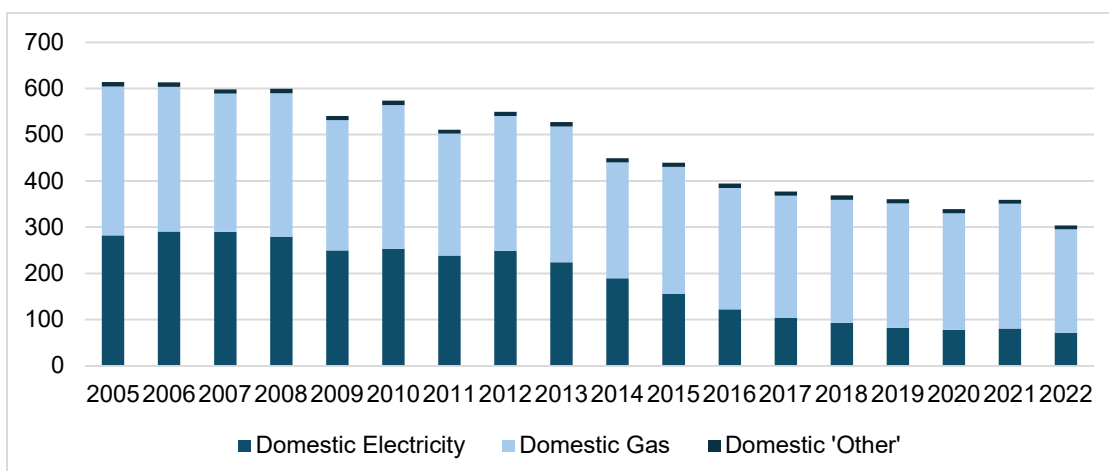
Figure 6.2.13 Aberdeen Greenhouse Gas Emissions kt CO2e, 2022



Source: UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emission statistics, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2022).

Figure 6.2.14 below shows that greenhouse gas emissions from domestic energy have reduced from around 614 kt CO2e in 2005 to 304 kt CO2e in 2022, a reduction of 50%. The most significant source of reduction is emissions from domestic electricity, with a key contributor to this the decarbonisation of the UK electricity grid. In addition, city actions including installation of energy efficiency measures; and the connection of 3,631 homes to district heating by 2023/24, have helped to contribute to reductions in city emissions from domestic energy. However, actions and reductions will need to be sustained requiring infrastructure, resources and a range of clean energy solutions.

Figure 6.2.14 Aberdeen Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Domestic Sector in ktCO2e



Source: UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2005- 2022)

## **Initiatives to Reduce Impact**

A number of heat networks are already in place in the city operated by the not-for-profit company “Aberdeen Heat and Power” as well as the NHS and Aberdeen and Robert Gordon’s Universities. These heat networks are helping to provide lower cost and lower carbon heat, particularly for hard to heat residential property types.

The new build council housing programme is building to gold standard specification. The standard requires use of energy efficiency technologies to reduce heat loss and the homes are designed with high levels of insulation and energy efficient windows and doors. The new build homes are increasing connections to low and zero carbon heat, including district heating.

[Project Doric](#) (Domestic Optimised Retrofit Innovation Concept) has enabled the ‘whole house retrofit’ of 50 council homes in the city. Each property was assessed individually to determine which measures suited the property type best. A variety of measures were installed from cavity wall insulation through to external wall insulation and air source heat pumps and solar photovoltaics (PV). Throughout the project, learning was gained on whole house retrofit and decarbonisation which will inform the development of a wider retrofit programme. As well as the manufacturers and installers offering advice to tenants when installation took place, SCARF have also been able to offer assistance to tenants on how to use these new technologies most efficiently.

## **Key Issues – Climate Change and Net Zero**

- Reducing heat demand in residential properties to make more efficient and more cost effective to install and operate clean heating systems.
- The need to phase out fossil-fuel based heating systems from residential properties while maintaining a just transition to net zero.
- Emerging changes to legislation and regulation which are strengthening net zero and energy efficiency requirements for the residential sector.
- Scale, cost and resource implication in addressing legislative requirements.
- The need to improve public engagement to understand issues and deliver better advice and signpost to information in support of net zero and climate resilience.

## **Key Actions – Climate Change and Net Zero**

- Support the delivery of actions set out in the (draft) Aberdeen Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) to decarbonise heat and expand heat networks in the city.
- Increase collaboration across city net zero and adaptation partner organisations on net zero, energy efficiency and adaptation actions and opportunities for residential properties.
- Engage partner organisations in Aberdeen with emissions and climate data on residential properties, to better support decision making.

- Expand learning and engagement with residents on the standards, timescales, methods, challenges of retrofit and retrofit actions appropriate for housing types in the city.
- Raise awareness of property level protection measures and available schemes.
- Support the delivery of Net Zero Aberdeen and Aberdeen Adapts including opportunities to upscale net zero interventions and strengthen assessment and monitoring of climate related risks to city residential properties.

## Definitions

### Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is the condition by which a household is unable to afford to heat ([or cool](#)) their home to an adequate temperature. It is caused by low income, high fuel prices, poor energy efficiency, unaffordable housing prices and poor quality private rental housing. The definition of fuel poverty is if a household spends more than 10% of its income on fuel costs *and* if the remaining household income is insufficient to maintain an adequate standard of living.

### Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency is the practice of using less energy to provide the same amount of useful output from a service (such as heating water, lighting, or cooling a fridge).

For example, light emitting diode (LEDs) and compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) have revolutionized energy efficiency in lighting and use far less energy for the same amount of illumination as traditional incandescent bulbs.

### Climate Change

Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to the climate.

### Net Zero

The term net zero applies to a situation where global greenhouse gas emissions from human activity are in balance. At net zero, carbon dioxide emissions are still generated, but an equal amount of carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere as is released into it, resulting in zero increase in net emissions.

### Aberdeen Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) are at the heart of a place based, locally led and tailored approach to the heat transition. These local strategies



will underpin an area-based approach to heat and energy efficiency planning and delivery. The existing heat networks within Aberdeen will also be developed to play a pivotal long-term role within the city. LHEES Strategies will set out the long-term plan for decarbonising heat in buildings and improving their energy efficiency across an entire local authority area.

### **Solar Photovoltaics (PV)**

Solar Photovoltaics is the **conversion of light into electricity** using semiconducting materials that exhibit the photovoltaic effect, a phenomenon studied in physics, photochemistry, and electrochemistry. The photovoltaic effect is commercially used for electricity generation and as photosensors.

### **Just Transition**

Defines a fair and equitable transition to net zero, with outcomes to ensure the benefits of climate action are shared and costs do not unfairly impact citizens least able to pay or whose livelihood may be impacted.

### **Green House Gas**

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are the gases in the atmosphere that raise the surface temperature of planets such as the Earth. What distinguishes them from other gases is that they absorb the wavelengths of radiation that a planet emits, resulting in the greenhouse effect. Gases include Carbon Dioxide and methane.

### **Mean Sea Level**

Mean sea level (MSL), often shortened to sea level is an average surface level of one or more among Earth's coastal bodies of water from which heights such as elevation may be measured.

## Priority 7: Private Rented Sector

### Introduction

This chapter provides information on the role of private rented sector housing in Aberdeen City, as well as detailing the support offered by Aberdeen City Council to help ensure the best outcomes for all stakeholders within the sector.

The private rented sector has an integral role to play in Scotland's housing system, particularly at a time where the Scottish Government has declared a housing emergency and when 28% of Scottish households have some form of housing need<sup>48</sup>. It is crucial that support is provided to both tenants and landlords during the current 'cost of living crisis' and beyond. This crisis began in 2021 and has been named as such due to the rising cost of food and electricity in the UK, with the Scottish Government stating that:

"People across Scotland are being affected by the most severe economic crisis in a generation. The effects of this are being seen now as households and businesses are having to make difficult choices, despite the support that has been announced."<sup>49</sup>

There are a myriad of factors that have contributed to the crisis such as the conflict in Ukraine, the aftermath of COVID-19 and changes in the way the UK trades with other countries following Brexit. Stakeholders in all sectors are being affected and potentially having to make difficult choices in relation to their livelihoods and living arrangements. In the private rented sector, landlords and tenants alike are experiencing hardship as a result of the crisis.

Landlords are facing challenges such as increased mortgage rates, the rising cost of repairs and maintenance, as well as legislative and regulatory measures which aim to further protect the rights of tenants. There have also been emergency measures as a result of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis which have placed restrictions on the ability of landlords to increase rent and carry out evictions. Aberdeen City Council must ensure that landlords have access to the necessary support to remain in the sector and that action is taken where homes do not meet the required standard. This will help to increase the supply of good quality homes for people trying to access the private rented sector.

Tenants have also faced difficulties over the period of the previous Local Housing Strategy as demand for rental properties has surged while stock levels have decreased, as explored further in chapter. This, alongside the difficulties that landlords are currently facing, has resulted in increased monthly rental costs for tenants and is affecting the accessibility of the sector to those who need it. Those tenants who manage to secure rental accommodation can also face issues related to disrepair and poor energy efficiency, which is explored further in the House Condition (Private) chapter. Aberdeen City Council supports tenants and landlords in resolving

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<sup>48</sup> [Homes for Scotland, Existing Housing Need in Scotland, 2024](#)

<sup>49</sup> [Scottish Government, "Cost of Living Crisis," April 2024](#)

disputes and maintaining tenancies where appropriate and help to provide them with the necessary information regarding their respective rights and responsibilities.

Ensuring that all parties operating within this sector receive the appropriate support is a key component in Aberdeen City Council meeting the vision of this Local Housing Strategy. It also demonstrates the commitment of the Council to contributing to national and local policy objectives in this area, as explored in the National and Local Context sections below.

## Strategic Priority

**We will support a well managed private rented sector.**

This Strategic Priority for the duration of this Local Housing Strategy was developed in consultation with both internal and external stakeholders for this sector. This priority encapsulates the changes that stakeholders wish to see in the sector over the next five years in order to improve outcomes for both tenants and landlords.

## National Context

### Private Rented Sector Strategy

The Scottish Government's vision and strategic aims for the private rented sector are outlined in "A Place to Stay, A Place to Call Home: A Strategy for the Private Rented Sector in Scotland" ('the Private Rented Sector strategy')<sup>50</sup>. This strategy was published in 2013 and as stated in the previous Local Housing Strategy for Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Council has aligned its strategic priority for the private rented sector with the Scottish Government's Private Rented Sector strategy.

The vision of the Private Rented Sector Strategy is:

"A private rented sector that provides good quality homes and high management standards, inspires consumer confidence and encourages growth through attracting increased investment."

This is supported by three strategic aims:

- To improve the quality of property management, condition, and service.
- To deliver for tenants and landlords, meeting the needs of the people living in the sector; consumers seeking accommodation; and landlords committed to continuous improvement.
- To enable growth, investment and help increase overall housing supply.

Details on how Aberdeen City Council is contributing to these aims will be detailed in the Key Actions section of this chapter and also in the House Condition (Private) chapter.

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<sup>50</sup> [Scottish Government, "A Place to Stay, A Place to Call Home: a Strategy for the Private Rented Sector in Scotland" \(2013\)](#)

The private rented sector in Scotland has undergone various changes since the Private Rented Sector Strategy was published in 2013. The 'Housing to 2040' strategy, which was published in 2021, stated that the Scottish Government would take action to ensure that the private rented sector offers affordable, good quality and accessible housing options to those who choose to live in it<sup>51</sup>.

One of the actions that the Scottish Government is taking is to develop a new private rented sector strategy, known as the 'New Deal for Tenants' strategy. This strategy is currently in draft form and undergoing extensive consultation with stakeholders in the sector, including tenants, landlords and investors<sup>52</sup>. According to the consultation paper, the Scottish Government aims to deliver the following:

- enhanced rights for tenants
- new requirements for data collection on rents in the private sector
- new cross-tenure housing standards
- a new Private Rented Sector Regulator
- legislation to underpin a new effective system of national rent controls

The timeline for delivering these aims was originally 2025, however the final version of the strategy has not yet been published so it remains to be seen whether this will be met. It is clear, however, that the Scottish Government is aware of a need for improvement in the private rented sector and is taking steps to ensure this happens.

The Scottish Government also carried out a consultation in late 2023 regarding a proposed Human Rights Bill for Scotland, which includes implementing a legal right to adequate housing. The consultation did not give an indication as to the practicalities of implementing such a right for local authorities, tenants, and landlords. The Bill serves as another indicator of the Scottish Government's commitment to improve standards of housing in all sectors, which will subsequently have an impact on the private rented sector. Further information on housing standards in the private sector can be found in the House Condition chapter of this document.

## **Housing (Scotland) Bill**

In March 2024, the Scottish Government introduced the Housing (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament. The Bill contains seven parts which will make changes to several important areas of existing housing law in Scotland, the most notable of which include homelessness prevention, rent controls and the rights of tenants in all sectors. The Bill has significant implications for a wide range of stakeholders in the private rented sector, as the Scottish Government attempt to enact meaningful reforms which improve outcomes for those who live in rented accommodation while also ensuring the rights of landlords to their own properties are protected.

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<sup>51</sup> [Scottish Government, "Housing to 2040", March 2021](#), pg. 36

<sup>52</sup> [Scottish Government, "A New Deal for Tenants", Draft Strategy Consultation Paper, December 2021](#)

The scope of the Bill is ambitious, and it will likely take several years for the proposed changes to take effect, however if introduced the following measures will likely have an impact on the private rented sector in Aberdeen and includes:

- Rent control areas
- Increased rights for tenants, including the right to keep pets and make alterations to the rental property
- Duties to consider eviction delays and damages for unlawful evictions
- Changes to how joint tenancies can be ended.

Aberdeen City Council has participated in the consultation for the Housing (Scotland) Bill following the Scottish Parliament's request for views on the proposed changes that the Bill will introduce.

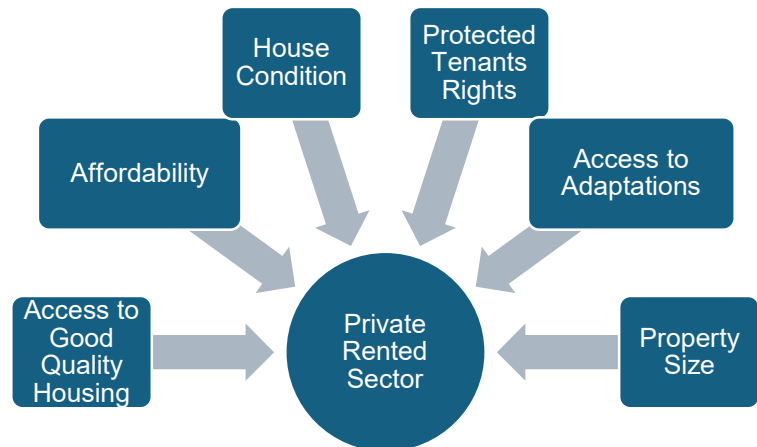
## Aberdeen Context

### Social Determinants of Health

Housing is inextricably linked to social determinants of health, which are conditions of a person's environment which can influence their health outcomes. In terms of the private rented sector, there are several factors which can influence a person's health outcomes, as detailed in the adjacent diagram. This diagram represents some of the main drivers that can influence health outcomes in the private rented sector.

Accessibility to this sector is a significant contributor to positive health outcomes. The private rented sector is a key housing option for those who are unable to purchase their own property or access social rented homes. It is important that these individuals are able to access affordable, good quality housing in this sector, with any adaptations that they may require in order to live a healthy and comfortable life in their chosen accommodation.

Regarding the quality of housing and how this can impact health, this is further explored in the House Condition chapter of this Local Housing Strategy. People may also struggle to source accommodation of the appropriate size for their household which can have a negative impact on health. In recent years, there has been increasing protection in tenant rights through legislation and this has the potential to positively impact on the health outcomes of those living in this sector.



## Local Policies

The private rented sector can contribute to the objectives outlined in several local policies and strategies, such as Aberdeen City Council's refreshed [Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026](#). The private rented sector holds relevance to Stretch Outcome 12 of the LOIP, which has the goal of reducing homelessness. Table 7.1 below details the stretch outcomes for which the private rented sector holds particular relevance, and the improvement project aims which relate to this sector. Table 7.1 is not an exhaustive list of every potential link to this sector in the LOIP, however includes the improvement project aims which have more direct links to the private rented sector.

Table 7.1: LOIP Stretch Outcomes and Improvement Project Aims Relevant to Private Rented Sector:

Stretch Outcome 12	Improvement Project Aims
Reduce homelessness by 10% and youth homelessness by 6% by 2026, ensuring it is rare, brief, and non-recurring with a longer-term ambition to end homelessness in Aberdeen City.	Reduce the number of evictions and increase the percentage of people supported to sustain their tenancy across private and social landlords.
	Increase education and skills relating to tenancy management and housing rights for young people.
	Increase accessibility to a wider range of housing options to people at risk of homelessness.

Source: Aberdeen City Council Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026, Refreshed Version (2024)

One improvement project aim is to reduce the number of evictions and people supported to sustain their tenancy in both the social and private sector. The support offered by Aberdeen City Council to stakeholders in the private sector helps to educate them in relation to tenancy management, and also potentially makes the sector more accessible by providing advice to those entering the sector.

## Extent and Location of the Private Sector

Private landlords are required to apply for registration with their local authority under the [Antisocial Behaviour etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#). Aberdeen City Council investigates reports of all unregistered landlords and will take enforcement action against landlords who are continuing to operate without registering to help ensure that rental properties on the market provide safe and secure homes to those who need them. Landlords operating without a valid registration will be issued a rent penalty notice which suspends them from collecting rental income. Action is also taken against landlords where a registration has expired and not renewed in the form of a late application fee, followed by a rent penalty notice if the property continues to be rented out without a valid registration.

Table 7.2 below shows the number of unregistered landlords or landlords whose registration has expired that have been contacted by the Private Sector Housing team and any enforcement action taken as a result of the investigation. The number of RPNs served on unregistered landlords is relatively low with much of the enforcement action taken relating to registrations which have expired.

Table 7.2: Action Taken in Relation to Unregistered Landlords and Expired Registrations

	Unregistered Landlords Contacted	RPNs served on Unregistered Landlords	Late Application Fees	RPNs served on Landlords with Expired Registrations
2020/21	288	0	462	135
2021/22	147	35	370	201
2022/23	111	18	347	192
2023/24	228	25	372	184

Source: Private Sector Housing team, Aberdeen City Council (2024)

According to the landlord registration database, as of 31 March 2024 there were 19,712 registered landlords in Aberdeen that collectively own 25,235 properties in the City. The number of private rented sector properties in 2019 was 30,952 and the number of registered landlords was 20,491. This represents a significant reduction in the number of properties compared to 2019, although the number of registrations has remained at a consistent level over the six-year period. It is important to note that the steep drop between 2019 and 2020 is likely a result of factors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Following 2020, the number of properties in the private rented sector has risen slightly, however this is still substantially lower than the pre-pandemic numbers.

The data in the Table 7.3 below indicates that while the number of active landlord registrations has remained relatively consistent, landlords seem to be reducing the size of their property portfolios. This is likely due to a variety of factors, including rising mortgage rates, increased labour and materials costs due to COVID-19 and Brexit, as well as the strengthening of tenant rights and rent controls.

Table 7.3: Private Rented Sector: Properties and Active Registrations in Aberdeen 2019-24, as of 31 March Annually

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change 2019-24
Properties	30,952	24,169	24,883	24,874	24,984	25,235	-5,717 <b>(-18.5%)</b>
Active Registrations	20,491	20,189	19,973	19,769	19,783	19,712	-779 <b>(-3.8%)</b>

Source: Registers of Scotland (2024)

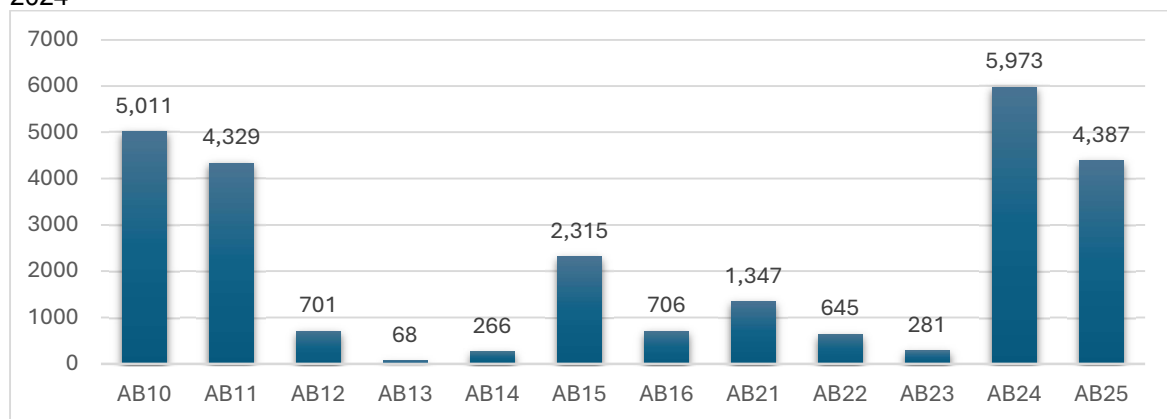
There is, however, anecdotal evidence from local letting agents and landlords, that landlords are planning to exit the sector in the near future due to the difficulties mentioned above. During the consultation period of the Local Housing Strategy, stakeholders indicated that difficulties in carrying out essential works, particularly roofing repairs, has led to landlords opting to reduce their property portfolios. These difficulties include sourcing local tradespeople to carry out the works, as well as the rising costs of these repairs when they are carried out.

It has also been suggested that political and legislative uncertainty in the sector has contributed to landlords leaving the sector or reducing their portfolios, such as the

Housing (Scotland) Bill presenting the possibility of further rent controls and several local authorities declaring housing emergencies.

Figure 7.1 below shows the number of registered private rented sector properties in the City by postcode. The majority of properties are centrally located or in close proximity to higher education establishments, with AB10, AB11, AB24 and AB25 all being relatively central or have one of the city’s universities located within their boundaries. Further information on the areas surrounding the universities can be found within the HMO section below. There are also a significant number of private rented sector properties in the AB15 region of the city.

Figure 7.1: Total Number of Private Rented Sector Properties in each Aberdeen Postcode Boundary, 2024



Source: Aberdeen City Council, Private Sector Housing Team (August 2024)

Figure 7.2 below shows a map of the postcode boundaries in Aberdeen for reference. The postcode data is based on information provided by Aberdeen City Council’s Private Sector Housing team which was a snapshot of rental properties in the City as of 12 August 2024. The total number of private rental properties on this date, 26,029, is therefore slightly higher than the total number of private rental properties provided by the Registers of Scotland detailed above.

Figure 7.2: Postcode Areas Aberdeen



Source: Aberdeen City Council (2024)



## Houses in Multiple Occupation

A house in multiple occupation (HMO) refers to any living accommodation occupied by three or more unrelated persons as their only or main residence, where the kitchen and/or bathroom facilities are shared. For landlords to rent out a property for this purpose, they must acquire an HMO licence from the relevant local authority, as required under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006<sup>53</sup>. Aberdeen City Council investigates any complaints made regarding unlicensed HMO properties. HMO licenses are granted for up to a three-year period and must be renewed before expiry if the landlord wishes for the property to remain an HMO.

In the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#), informal consultation was conducted with property agents in Aberdeen which indicated that, despite a recent increase in student numbers, there was a lower demand for HMO properties from students due to the increase in purpose-built student accommodation in the City. This is reflected in the Table 7.4 below, as the number of HMO licenses being granted per year has decreased significantly between 2017 and 2023, from 412 licenses to 278. This decrease is even more drastic when compared to the peak number of licenses being granted in 2018, with a reduction of 39.6% in the four years since then.

Table 7.4: Number of HMOs Licensed in Aberdeen, 2017-2024

Year	Licenses Granted	Total
2017	412	1,374
2018	460	1,355
2019	448	1,320
2020	300	1,208
2021	388	1,136
2022	342	1,030
2023	278	1,008

Source: Private Sector Housing team, Aberdeen City Council (2024)

The three-year rolling total of HMOs has been on a steady decline since 2017, decreasing from 1,374 licenses to 1,008 in 2023. It is clear to see that the number of HMOs in the city is declining concurrently with the number of properties in the private sector and the number of active registrations, as seen in Table 5.4 above.

Table 7.5 below indicates the decrease in each of these areas from 2019 to the latest data available. The number of properties in the in the private rented sector along with the total number of HMOs and licenses being granted, are all decreasing at a significant rate.

<sup>53</sup> Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, Part 5, s.124

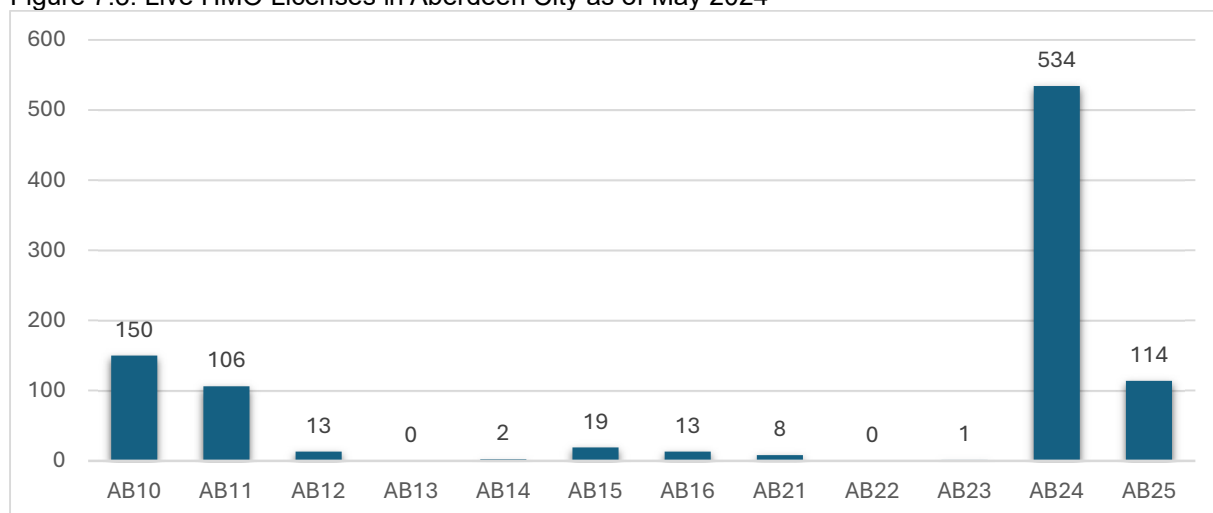
Table 7.5: Percentage Change from 2019 to Latest Data Available (2023 for HMO figures, 2024 for Private Rented Sector Properties and Landlord Registrations)

	Percentage Change
Properties	-18.5%
Active Registrations	-3.8%
Annual HMO Licenses Granted	-37.9%
3 Year Rolling HMO Total	-23.6%

Source: Aberdeen City Council (2024), Registers of Scotland (2024)

Figure 7.3 below details the number of granted HMO licenses that are currently live in Aberdeen, and how they are distributed by each postcode in the city. As seen, the vast majority of HMOs granted are located in the AB24 postcode, which covers Old Aberdeen, Woodside, Tillydrone, Seaton and Bedford. Aberdeen University is based in this postcode, which likely explains the higher number of HMO licenses Granted in this area, as students will wish to reside close to their place of study. The AB10 postcode, within which Robert Gordon University is located, has the next highest number of HMO licenses granted, although this is significantly lower than the number in AB24. Generally, the postcode distribution of HMO properties follows similar trends, as seen in Figure 5.1 above for all private rented sector properties, with most being located in AB24, AB25, AB10 and AB11.

Figure 7.3: Live HMO Licenses in Aberdeen City as of May 2024



Source: Aberdeen City Council Private Sector Housing team (2024)

## Property Size

Table 7.6 below shows the composition of properties in the private sector for both Aberdeen and Scotland according to Citylets<sup>54</sup>. The data shows that Aberdeen has a higher proportion of 1 bed and 2 bed flats than Scotland as a whole, while having a lower proportion of 3 bed flats and 3 bed houses. The most notable disparity between Aberdeen’s market composition and the national picture is that the proportion of 1 bed flats is 5.2% higher in Aberdeen.

Table 7.6: Private Rented Sector Market Composition for Aberdeen City and Scotland, Q1 2024

	2 Bed Flats	1 Bed Flats	3 Bed Flats	3 Bed Houses	Other
Aberdeen	47.5%	36%	6.2%	4.3%	6.1%
Scotland	45.6%	30.8%	7.7%	5.4%	10.4%

Source: Citylets, Quarterly Report, Q1 (2024)

According to a Citylets report, the majority of the private rented sector, both locally and nationally, is comprised of 1 bed and 2 bed flatted accommodation. In the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#), this market composition was also generally supported by Scottish Household Survey data, however this data was from 2019 and is now several years out of date.

Data from the 2022 Census provides demographical information, such as the household composition and age group of Aberdeen’s population. This data, shown in Table 7.7 below, can illustrate whether the proportions of property sizes in the private rented sector, as provided by CityLets, are appropriate for the demography of Aberdeen’s population.

Table 7.7: Household Composition by Percentage in Aberdeen City and Scotland, 2022\*

	Aberdeen City	Scotland
One-person household	43.4%	37.1%
Couple, no children	17.4%	17.4%
Couple, one dependent child	6.6%	7%
Couple, two or more dependent children	8.5%	9.3%
Couple, all Children non-dependent	3.9%	6%
Lone parent, one dependent child	3.1%	3.3%
Lone parent, two or more dependent children	2%	2.5%
Lone parent, all children non-dependent	2.9%	4.1%
All full-time students	1.8%	0.7%
All other household types	10.2%	12.7%

Source: Household Composition, Scotland’s Census (2022) \*percentages rounded to one decimal place

<sup>54</sup> “Name of the Game”, Issue 69, Quarterly Report, Q1 2024, Citylets, <https://www.citylets.co.uk/research/reports/pdf/Citylets-Quarterly-Report-Q1-2024.pdf>

When comparing the household composition in Aberdeen to the national level, most household types in the city are of a similar proportion to Scotland as a whole with some categories having a slight percentage increase or decrease. One-person households and couples with no children are the two most common households for both Aberdeen and Scotland, however in Aberdeen the proportion of one-person households is notably higher than Scotland with over 6% more.

Both demographics should theoretically find the private rented sector in Aberdeen to be accessible due to the market primarily being comprised of 1 bed and 2 bed flats. There is also the potential that couples and lone parents with one child or two children may find suitable 2 bed accommodation in this sector.

One-person households, couples with no children, and couples and lone parents with one child only should be able to access the rental market in Aberdeen based on the market composition statistics provided by CityLets, and these demographics make up 70.5% of the households in the city. This percentage does not include couples or lone parents with two children or non-dependent children which may also find 2 bed accommodation to be suitable. The proportion of 3 bed flats and houses in Aberdeen, 6.2% and 4.3% respectively, seems relatively proportionate to the number of households which would require them based on the 2022 Census results.

Aberdeen City Council will continue to monitor the market composition of the private rented sector, as well as the household composition in the city; utilising available data to monitor whether the sector has the required level of each property type to meet the needs of the citizens of Aberdeen.

## **Rent Levels**

According to recent data published by Citylets, demand for private rented sector properties across Scotland continues to rise and is exceeding the available supply of housing in this sector. The [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) provided evidence that, following the downturn in the oil sector in the city, average rents in Aberdeen decreased significantly and fell below the Scottish average in 2018. Rent levels have remained below the Scottish average since, although in 2022, the number started to rise again following a period of minimal change during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021.

Table 7.8 below shows the average rent levels in the first quarter of 2024 for Aberdeen and Scotland, compared to the same period in 2023. Table 7.9 also displays the rent levels for the same period in 2019, which demonstrates how rent levels have changed over the last ten years which includes the lifespan of the previous Local Housing Strategy.

Table 7.8: Average Rent Levels for all Property Types in Aberdeen and Scotland, Q1 2024 Compared to Q1 2023, 2019 and 2014, Totals Rounded to Nearest £

	Q1 2024	Q1 2023	Q1 2019	Q1 2014	1 Year % Change	5 Year % Change	10 Year % Change
Aberdeen	£867	£792	£675	£1,029	8.6%	22.1%	-18.7%
Scotland	£1,123	£994	£656	£441	11.5%	41.6%	60.7%

Source: Citylets, Quarterly Report, Q1 (2024)

Average rent levels in Aberdeen have risen significantly since 2019, however the rate of growth during this period is around half of the growth experienced by Scotland as a whole. The rate of growth between 2023 and 2024 shows that the market in Aberdeen appears to be experiencing similar growth to the national trend.

When expanding the analysis to a ten-year period, it can clearly be seen that over the decade there have been dramatic fluctuations in the rental market in Aberdeen, with the 2014 figures being almost 20% higher than the rent levels in 2024. The rent levels then reduced in the period from 2014 to 2019 before increasing again in recent years, which is in contrast with the consistent and significant increases seen for Scotland as a whole in the same ten-year period. As reported in the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#), these fluctuations in Aberdeen’s rental market are linked to a variety of factors, particularly in relation to the performance the oil and gas sector in the city in the past decade.

The Q1 2024 rent levels provided by Citylets can be compared with the current Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to provide a rough indicator of affordability in the private rented sector. LHA rates are limited by legislation and used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting in the private sector, based on private market rents in the Broad Rental Market Area that the housing benefit claim is made. Table 7.9 below shows the Q1 2024 rent levels by property type, compared to the corresponding LHA rates from the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Table 7.9: Average Rent Levels by Property Type for Q1 2024 in Aberdeen, Compared to Local Housing Allowance Rates 2024/25

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Aberdeen Average Rent	£545.00	£788.00	£1,145.00	£1,736.00
LHA Rate	£473.72	£648.22	£857.65	£1246.56

Source: Citylets (2024)

The comparison between these two figures clearly indicates that average rent cost for all property types is greater than the LHA rates. However, while the 1 and 2 bed properties remain relatively affordable, the gap between the average rents and the LHA rates are more significant for 3 and 4 bed properties. This disparity suggests that the private rented sector is considerably less affordable for larger families and this may result in additional pressure on social housing stock of this size. The average rents for 1 and 2 bed properties are also still above the LHA rate and could

therefore still be considered unaffordable for some households who require these sizes of properties.

## **Support Available**

### **Landlords**

Aberdeen City Council provides support and advice to private landlords to improve awareness of their rights and responsibilities, while also working with them to improve property management and condition standards in the sector.

An integral part of the support offered by the council to landlords is the employment of the Private Landlord Support Officer, who works with Private Landlords across Aberdeen City and offers advice and guidance on tenancy management and property standards. In 2023, the Landlord Support Officer dealt directly with 65 landlords who required advice, with support offered most frequently in relation to legislative queries and tenancy management issues.

Examples of this support includes:

- Annual information sessions on relevant changes in the sector
- Delivering training courses in partnership with Landlord Accreditation Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council
- Encouraging landlords to ensure their properties meet the Repairing Standard
- Providing regularly updated information on the Aberdeen City Council website
- Utilising the Landlord Support Officer Role to provide advice and guidance
- Matchmake-to-Rent Scheme which helps owners of long-term empty properties market their properties to renters
- Quarterly newsletters issued to all registered landlords who want to receive information from the Council, providing landlords advice and guidance on developments within the sector
- Collaborative information sessions with Under One Roof to improve awareness and knowledge of responsibilities in relation to building maintenance.
- Online forums consisting of talks from key speakers from the Scottish Government, Landlord Accreditation Scotland and Under One Roof. These forums cover a variety of topics such as property maintenance, tenancy management and legislative updates within the sector.
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### **Tenants**

Support and advice is also provided to tenants regarding their rights and responsibilities, such as:

- Providing advice to tenants when they contact the Private Sector Housing Unit (PSHU), such as for issues relating to management standards, repairs, etc.

- Tenant complaint form facilities for situations where tenants have unsuccessfully attempted to resolve the issues with their landlord and require input from the PSHU
- Matchmake-to-Rent Scheme which provides renters with a list of long-term empty properties which are available for rent
- Providing information on the Aberdeen City Council website about support available to tenants
- Encouraging tenants to report instances where they cannot find their landlord on the Landlord Registration Database, or where their HMO property does not appear to be licensed on the Public Register.
- Facilitating Discretionary Housing Payment applications which can be used for assistance in meeting deposits for private rented sector tenancies.
- Facilitating Local Housing Allowance applications which can be used to help those on low incomes pay rent.

## **Rent Pressure Zones**

The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 introduced Rent Pressure Zones (RPZ) which would allow local authorities to request that all or part of their authority area be designated for a rent cap<sup>55</sup>. These requests are to be made to Scottish Ministers and should be supported by robust evidence gathered by the local authority that proves:

- Rents in the area are rising too much.
- The rent rises are causing problems for the tenants.
- The local council is coming under pressure to provide housing or subsidise the cost of housing as a result.

Currently, there are no rent pressure zones in Scotland and thus far there have been no applications made by any local authority to introduce an Rent Pressure Zone in their area. Aberdeen City Council have not undertaken an application for Rent Pressure Zones and there are currently no plans to introduce them in the city. The data that local authorities are required to provide to prove that an Rent Pressure Zone is necessary is considerable, and doesn't actually exist in any published datasets, which is why there is a lack of applications made by local authorities in Scotland.

## **Rent Restrictions and Rent Control Areas**

The Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022 introduced a temporary cap on rent increases for existing tenants to protect them from rising costs during the current cost of living crisis. In addition, the [Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#) has proposed further rent control measures and local authorities may be required to carry out rent assessments in their area. The Bill, if passed, will give Scottish Ministers the power to designate rent control areas which would restrict increases to rent for new and existing tenancies.

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<sup>55</sup> Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016, Chapter 3

Rent control areas will effectively replace Rent Pressure Zones as a rent control measure if the Bill is passed as the aim of their introduction is to remedy the same issues that Rent Pressure Zones were designed to address. The introduction of new rent control measures, as well as the lack of local authority applications during the legislation's lifespan, would suggest that Rent Pressure Zones have not had the desired impact on the private rented sector in Scotland.

Aberdeen City Council are monitoring the latest developments relating to the Housing (Scotland) Bill and changes to rent control measures; having actively participated in the consultation process for the Bill thus far. The council will continue to consider the potential benefits and challenges of implementing such measures if the Bill is passed and will work with the Scottish Government to ensure that these are considered during the consultation process and beyond.

### **Build to Rent**

Build to Rent Private Rented Sector offers opportunities to complement existing housing delivery models and help to increase the overall rate of delivery of housing. Build to Rent can contribute to the creation of well-designed, sustainable places, quickly and at scale. It can provide high-quality, purpose-built rented accommodation that will enhance the attractiveness of Scotland, for new and different developers and long-term investors at scale. It can also support labour market mobility by providing homes for people moving into areas for work.

Aberdeen City Council does not have a specific Build to Rent policy, but successful build to rent schemes have been delivered in Aberdeen in the recent past, and the Council will consider any future proposals for such accommodation against the relevant policies in the Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4.

### **Key Issues**

- There is a reduced number of private rented sector properties available on the market since 2019, reducing the options available to those requiring housing in the sector.
- There is anecdotal information from local landlords that they are planning to leave the sector, as well as data which indicates they are reducing the number of properties in their portfolios.
- There have been significant fluctuations in rent levels across the city, often linked to oil and gas. This makes it harder for landlords and tenants to reliably predict the costs associated with owning and renting properties respectively.
- Larger family homes tend to be unaffordable for those on low or modest incomes with rents far exceeding Local Housing Allowance rates. 1 and 2 bed homes can currently be found within the Local Housing Allowance rate.



## Key Actions

- Continuation of the Council's Landlord Support Officer role to support private tenants when poor rental conditions/tenancy management issues are reported. Landlords are contacted and provided with advice and support on tenancy management/repairs.
- Continuation of random sampling where landlords are requested to provide a copy of all safety certificates in relation to the rental property.
- Engagement with Private Landlords to encourage landlords to increase standards of rental properties in line with the Repairing Standard. This could be through training/information sessions or detail within Newsletters.
- Ensuring private rented sector properties meet Repairing Standard.
- Ensuring that all landlords are registered through Landlord Registration process
- Reporting of landlords to the First Tier Tribunal for not complying with tenancy management and repairs.