

Tackling Scotland's Housing Emergency

Housing Emergency Action Plan

September 2025

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1. Introduction

The Scottish Government declared a national housing emergency in May 2024. This Housing Emergency Action Plan builds on the significant progress to date as reported by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice to Parliament in May 2025. Having a safe, warm and affordable place to call home is central to a life of dignity and opportunity. I know that significant pressure remains on local authorities, partners and stakeholders to deliver Scotland's ambitious housing and homelessness services.

My top priority is to use this action plan to drive forward our mission to eradicate child poverty. According to the latest official statistics, there were over 10,000 children living in temporary accommodation on 30 September 2024. That number is too high. Temporary accommodation provides a vital safety net for homeless households, but it must be short term. Further action, building on the measures already put in place, is urgently needed if we are to return that system to its original purpose and comprehensively respond to the housing emergency.

The Scottish Government has made significant public investment over many years. This has resulted in the delivery of affordable housing in Scotland being 47% more per head of population in England and 73% more than Wales between 2007-08 and 2023-24. We have helped deliver more than 139,000 affordable homes between 2007 to March 2025 with 99,000 of these having been made available for social rent. Latest statistics demonstrate the challenge we still face, but I am focused on delivering the required change.

This plan comprises new, enhanced, and accelerated actions, reflecting our determination to go further and faster in our commitment to tackling the housing emergency during the remainder of this Parliament and beyond. It sets out a bold and coordinated response — one that tackles immediate pressures while laying the foundations for lasting, systemic change. Our actions sit under three key objectives:

- Ending children living in unsuitable accommodation – as a vital part of the Scottish Government's determination to eradicate child poverty;
- Supporting the housing needs of vulnerable communities; and
- Building our Future – maximising investment in Scotland's housing sector.

Housing to 2040 remains our overarching strategy that sets out a vision and roadmap to ensuring everyone has a safe, good quality and affordable home by 2040. It is a vision where homes are affordable for everyone, where standards are high across all tenures, where people have easy access to green space and essential services; where homelessness is prevented; and where child poverty and fuel poverty have been eradicated. That vision has not changed and the actions I set out today will work to support its realisation.

MÀIRI MCALLAN
Cabinet Secretary for Housing

2. Progress to Date

 **We have...** supported around **2700** households with children into affordable housing in the year to December 2024

Provided **£1m** funding for **tenancy sustainment** projects



Returned a record-breaking **2066** homes to use via **Scottish Empty Homes Partnership** and empty homes officers in 2024 – 25

Increased the **Affordable Housing Supply Programme** budget to **£768m** for financial year 2025 – 26



Adopted an activist and interventionist approach to working with local authorities



Removed barriers on stalled sites to deliver up to **20,000** new homes

Brought almost **1000** homes back in to use through **£40 million** investment



Progressed legislation to improve **tenants' rights** and **homelessness prevention** through the Housing (Scotland) Bill



3. Actions to Tackle the Housing Emergency

3.1 Ending children living in unsuitable accommodation

As part of this government's determination to eradicate child poverty, it is vital that we reduce the number of households with children who are experiencing long periods in temporary accommodation, particularly those in unsuitable temporary accommodation such as hotels and B&Bs. There will always be a need for local authorities to have a supply of temporary accommodation as this provides an important safety net in the short term to households experiencing homelessness, but it must be suitable, of good quality and short-term.

We will...

Increase the supply of affordable housing by doubling our investment in acquisitions, effectively increasing the second year of the targeted 'voids and acquisition' fund from £40 million to £80 million this financial year, with a focus on acquisitions, and in particular family homes – bringing total investment over two years to £120 million. We will ask Councils to 'flip' accommodation from temporary to permanent where appropriate and to proactively contact all relevant households to discuss the option of flipping. This fund will help to replenish stock that has been flipped to create permanent homes.

Raise the standard and quality of all rented accommodation by, subject to Parliament, bringing Awaab's Law into force, starting with tackling damp and mould, in Scotland, from March 2026.

Fund pilot schemes, including private sector leasing, to reduce the use of unsuitable temporary accommodation such as hostels, hotels and B&Bs.
Invest up to £2 million through the discretionary housing payments scheme to support households currently in temporary accommodation to find settled homes in the private rented sector.
Introduce a long-term system of rent control to support keeping private rents affordable, subject to Parliament agreeing the Housing (Scotland) Bill.
Amplify and scale-up best practice techniques, including working with partners on guidance to help drive positive behaviours as we tackle the housing emergency – continuing our activist and interventionist approach when working with front line partners.

3.2 Supporting the housing needs of vulnerable communities

It is essential that those who are at greatest risk of homelessness in Scotland are able to access housing and support when they need it most. We will increase support available to women experiencing domestic abuse, who are often unable to leave abusive partners due to financial barriers. We will improve housing options for people with multiple and complex needs, including those at risk of rough sleeping, who need a settled home alongside tailored support to be able to sustain that home.

We will...
Establish a £1 million national fund to leave to help survivors of domestic abuse to leave an abusive partner.
Invest in a geographically targeted Housing First expansion scheme by incentivising registered social landlords to pledge an additional number of tenancies for Housing First through a £3 million capital grant that enables registered social landlords to acquire suitable properties.
Provide a £1 million Housing First uplift to Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan funding in 2025-26 taking our investment to £9 million and extend Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan funding of £8 million into 2026-27.

Survivors of domestic abuse are often unable to leave abusive partners due to financial implications and economic coercive control, often leading to unsafe housing situations. The national fund to leave will allow women to purchase essentials and will offer breathing space while they navigate the social security system.

The Scottish Government's pilot Fund to Leave in five local authority areas helped 511 women, with 598 dependants. Building on the success of the pilot, we expect the national Fund to Leave to support up to 1,200 women and their children. The Scottish Government will make this scheme permanent and will set out further detail at the forthcoming spending review.

3.3 Building our future - maximising investment in Scotland's housing sector

Our response to the housing emergency takes a whole-system approach, recognising that maximising growth and investment is essential to alleviate the

pressures on households and to build the capacity and momentum needed to deliver our ambitions.

This is not solely about the public sector doing more. It's about ensuring that the entire housing sector, public and private, plays its part in delivering the homes we need across all tenures and all communities, urban, island and rural.

We will continue to invest extensively in affordable homes whilst working to create the optimum conditions for wider investment to be made in our housing sector with confidence and certainty.

Scotland's planning system is central to this response. In the context of a national housing emergency, planning must do all it can to overcome delivery challenges. It has a powerful enabling role that goes beyond statutory processes, helping to deliver outcomes for people and places and meeting diverse housing needs.

Over the past year, work across the planning system has accelerated in support of the housing emergency. We are committed to building on this momentum, with a clear expectation of an emergency-led approach to decision making both in the preparation of local development plans and in the determination of planning applications.

The delivery of more affordable homes remains the beating heart of our approach. Through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, we will continue to build on our strong track record of delivering for the people of Scotland. Our actions will also provide future funding certainty and reinforce Scotland's housing market as strong, diverse and open for investment. We will also ensure action is taken to make the best use of existing housing, bring empty homes back into use, and support those who wish to – and are able to – buy their own home.

We will...
Deliver up to £4.9 billion of investment over the coming four-years, with homes delivered through a mixture of public and privately leveraged investment. Further details will be outlined in the forthcoming Spending Review.
Introduce a new all-tenure delivery ambition, working with the housebuilding sector to increase delivery across all sectors by at least 10% each year over the next three years.
Housing will continue to be a key focus for the Scottish National Investment Bank. The Bank will accelerate activity already underway to boost their housing pipeline, including through strategic partnerships, build to rent opportunities and lending for SME house builders. The Bank will explore new ways to blend commercial capital and public subsidy to unlock more urban and rural homes across tenures.
Support the delivery of more homes in Scotland's rural and island communities by working with public bodies, landowners and the Scottish National Investment Bank to unlock land, build delivery capacity and develop a pipeline of investment opportunities.
Work with East Lothian Council and private sector partners to unlock investment and growth of the new town of Blindwells.

Closely monitor, through a Ministerial direction, the implementation of national planning policy on housing where a planning application is for 10 or more proposed new homes on land not allocated for housing.
Drive improved customer service in planning departments. The National Planning Improvement Champion, with support from the Planning Hub, will carry out a sprint to strengthen service quality by the end of 2025.
Issue a Ministerial letter to planning authorities relating to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME) housebuilders, highlighting their role in rural and brownfield development, and emphasising the need for proportionality in the planning system to enable delivery.
Extend the planning consultation on accelerating build out of new homes to specifically cover measures for SMEs, as well as measures to increase volume delivery.
Unlock new scale investment opportunities across all tenures by making early decisions on the use of powers sought in the Housing (Scotland) Bill to allow for the exemption of certain properties from the rent control measures in the Bill. In principle, we intend to exempt, where appropriate, Mid-Market Rent and Build to Rent properties, to protect and promote investment in those sectors.
Expand scope of Open Market Shared Equity Scheme (OMSE) to support First Time Buyers.

4. Call to Action

The Scottish Government is committed to addressing the housing emergency with urgency, ambition and collaboration.

We are calling on all partners across the housing sector, and beyond, to work alongside us as we take bold, coordinated action.

Through the [Housing to 2040 Strategic Board](#) – whose external governance continues to guide our national and local response – we will work together to identify how all partners can contribute to delivering our core mission to eradicate child poverty and ensure everyone has access to a safe and secure home.

We are asking partners to work with us to:

- accelerate the delivery of high-quality homes of all tenures, with a sharp focus on the delivery of affordable homes, particularly social rent;
- work to end children living in unsuitable accommodation;
- support the housing needs of the most vulnerable in our communities; and
- unlock land and investment to meet the needs of Scotland's diverse communities.

This is a shared mission. Let's work together to turn commitment into action – and action into early, positive and lasting change.



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