Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans:

Making the case for the next five years

Report and recommendations by
CIH Scotland in partnership with Fife Council

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Foreword

The pandemic highlighted the importance of a secure home and everything that means to individuals and families. It also confirmed that significant action to address homelessness can happen when given the right focus and will from government, local authorities and partners. This report builds on the work published in July 2021 by CIH Scotland, highlighting the importance of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) as part of the Ending Homelessness Together commitment.

This report confirms that housing professionals remain committed to addressing homelessness and improving customer experiences, but further work is required to ensure a holistic approach to homelessness prevention. There is a strong understanding that progress has been made, although it is clear the range of social, economic and environmental factors driving homelessness continue to place unprecedented pressures on services, particularly temporary accommodation. However, this understanding needs to be measurable, and this report is accompanied by proposals for an RRTP Monitoring Framework to measure and evaluate progress and track the journey towards ending homelessness as part of the National Action Plan.

RRTPs provide the focus for service transformation and improving lives. This is part of a wider approach to a social justice and a human rights approach to housing, which needs longer term leadership and commitment from Scottish Government. The vision needs to be supported by appropriate resource and investment to ensure the momentum and good practice which has been created is not lost, and the most vulnerable in society do not continue to face inequality and disadvantage. There is evidence that good practice in scaling up Housing First, developing new initiatives and developing innovation in service provision has been stimulated by RRTPs. However, without longer term support and a commitment to workforce development, there are real risks that all of the momentum and progress may be lost.

Gavin Smith
Chair of CIH Scotland
Service manager, housing access, Fife Council

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1.Executive summary

CIH Scotland and Fife Council have been working in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders to explore how Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) are progressing across Scotland. As the initial five-year period is coming to an end, the project has sought to understand the role of RRTPs in delivering better homelessness outcomes, and what should happen next.

This report focusses on the resources (financial and non-financial) required to implement RRTPs, and is published alongside another report setting out the rationale for a more consistent approach to measuring progress with RRTPs. A third strand of the project looking at the role of the private rented sector (PRS) in tackling homelessness will commence this year.

This report details the progress that has been made towards implementing RRTPs to date, highlights ongoing challenges, and makes recommendations for the further support needed to achieve the aims of RRTPs and the Scottish Government's ultimate ambition – to end homelessness in Scotland. It is based on feedback from a steering group, an online survey of local authorities, and an online workshop for local authorities allowing more in-depth discussion on emerging themes.

The key conclusion of the project is: The progress that has been made with homelessness prevention, service transformation, and scaling up Housing First is at risk if Scottish Government support for RRTPs comes to an abrupt end.

Full recommendations

1. The Scottish Government and Scottish Housing Regulator should support more consistent measuring and reporting of progress with RRTPs demonstrating impact and value for money.

2. The Scottish Government must provide long term certainty over funding for RRTPs beyond the initial five-year period to support commissioning of services, recruitment and retention of staff.

3. The Scottish Government and skills agencies should support a more strategic approach to workforce development across the housing sector.

4. The Scottish Government should provide dedicated RRTP funding for a further five years to support the continuation of RRTP work and mainstreaming of service changes.

5. The Scottish Government should work with local authorities to agree a fair model of distribution for RRTP funding. Awards should be made initially for a minimum of two years with indicative assumptions provided annually so that local authorities always have two years' confidence in the funding to be received.

6. The Scottish Government should work with COSLA and local authority finance directors to ensure that funding is fully utilised to support the development of homelessness services and the intended purpose and not distributed to other areas of spend.

7. The Scottish Government should set clear expectations for the contribution of partners towards both preventing homelessness and supporting those who do become homeless.

8. The Scottish Government must make adequate resources available to implement the new prevention duty, including staff training and development.

9. The Scottish Government should work with the HPSG RRTP sub-group to revise RRTP guidance, ensuring that it is equalities proofed, fit for purpose and supports greater partnership working. While acknowledging and aligning with the prevention duty, clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries must be established.

2. Background

Developing Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group[1] (HARSAG) was established by the Scottish Government in 2017 to make independent recommendations on how to address the immediate issue of rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation in the longer-term, and ultimately end homelessness in Scotland.

Responding to the HARSAG recommendations, the Sottish Government asked all local authorities to draft an RRTP based on guidance developed by Indigo House[2]. The Scottish Government also committed to providing funding from the Ending Homelessness Together fund to support implementation.

The RRTP guidance stated that where homelessness cannot be prevented, rapid rehousing should be implemented meaning:

- A settled, mainstream housing outcome as quickly as possible
- Time spent in any form of temporary accommodation reduced to a minimum, with the fewer transitions the better
- When temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within a community.

In addition, it states that for people with multiple needs beyond housing:

- Housing First is the first response for people with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantages
- Highly specialist provision within small, shared, supported and trauma informed environments should be available if mainstream housing, including Housing First, is not possible or preferable.

Initial draft RRTPs were submitted to the Scottish Government by 31 local authorities by the end of December 2018 with the remaining one submitted in January 2019. These RRTPs set out plans over the five-year period 2019-2024 and outlined requests for funding required to deliver the plans. The Scottish Government gave feedback on these drafts, inviting updated submissions and most local authorities have since published progress reports or updated plans. Progress is monitored annually through the Scottish Government Activities and Spend Report, which feeds into the annual review of the Action Plan[3].

Implementing RRTPs and the need for further support

In 2021 CIH Scotland carried out a survey of local authorities across Scotland seeking information on their progress with implementing RRTPs, the impact of the pandemic and other challenges. We received responses from 30 local authorities providing the basis for a report and recommendations on the support needed by local authorities to achieve the ambitions set out in RRTPs[4].

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[1]https://www.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group/

[2]https://homelessnetwork.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/rapid-rehousing-guidance.pdf

[3]https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-annual-report-2022/

[4]https://www.cih.org/media/yvjeyzuu/rapid-rehousing-transition-plans-research-2021.pdf

Since the publication of the initial report, the operating context for local authorities has changed significantly including:

- Ending of emergency Covid-19 restrictions
- Refugee resettlement programmes
- Supply, labour and working practices around empty (void) properties and changing turnover trends
- Cost of living crisis affecting household incomes and ability to cover the cost of essentials
- Introduction of new emergency legislation restricting rent increases and evictions across the rented sector
- Increasing interest rates, costs of materials, staff and operations
- Continuing progress with HARSAG recommendations, including the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) and removing local connection referrals
- Commitment to introducing a statutory homelessness prevention duty
- Approaching the end of initial five-year RRTP period.

As part of a wider project seeking to implement the CIH Scotland RRTP report recommendations, supported by Fife Council, we are publishing this updated report, reflecting the changes that have taken place over the last eighteen months.

This report sets out specific recommendations on the resources (financial and non-financial) required by local authorities to deliver RRTP ambitions and makes the case for continuation of RRTPs beyond the current five-year timeframe. A second report outlining proposals for a new RRTP Monitoring Framework which will support a more consistent approach to measuring progress has also been published and is available on the CIH website.

3. Scope of this project and methodology

The project sought to gain a better understanding of emerging challenges for local authorities and the resources required to deliver RRTPs through:

- Analysis of the current funding requirements set out in RRTPs compared to funding available through Scottish Government grant funding and other sources such as local authority General Fund or partners such as Health and Social Care (H&SC)
- Mapping complex funding routes and considering how to better embed homelessness prevention across the public sector and with other partners
- Contribution from partners (financial or non-financial) in supporting the delivery of RRTPs
- Estimated future funding requirements, timescales and risks associated with inadequate funding
- Analysis of funding distribution and the impact on delivering RRTPs and recommendations for change if required.

Initial desktop research was carried out by CIH Scotland, mapping out the funding awarded to RRTPs and providing context for the wider research. The funding analysis is attached at appendix 1.

A steering group was established to support the work and provide feedback on progress. The group was chaired by Gavin Smith, service manager at Fife Council and included representation from five other local authorities of varying sizes and geographies, the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO), Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). Secretariat support was provided by CIH Scotland.

Following the initial meeting of the steering group, an online survey was developed and issued to all local authorities through ALACHO, seeking to build on the initial survey carried out by CIH Scotland in 2021. Responses were received from 15 local authorities.

The survey was supplemented by an online discussion workshop attended by seven local authorities, where emerging themes were discussed in more detail. The steering group also provided views on feedback from the survey and online discussion group.

4. Homelessness and the wider context

This section outlines some of the challenges faced by local authorities in recent years created by unprecedented external pressures such as the Covid-19 pandemic, housing supply and affordability, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the economic climate. All of these aspects have an impact on demand for housing and homelessness services and affect the delivery of RRTPs.

In February 2023, the Scottish Housing Regulator published a thematic review of homelessness services across Scotland[5]. The report outlines major strategic challenges being faced by local authorities, specifically:

- Dealing with the significant number of people currently in temporary accommodation
- Maintaining a sufficient supply of temporary accommodation
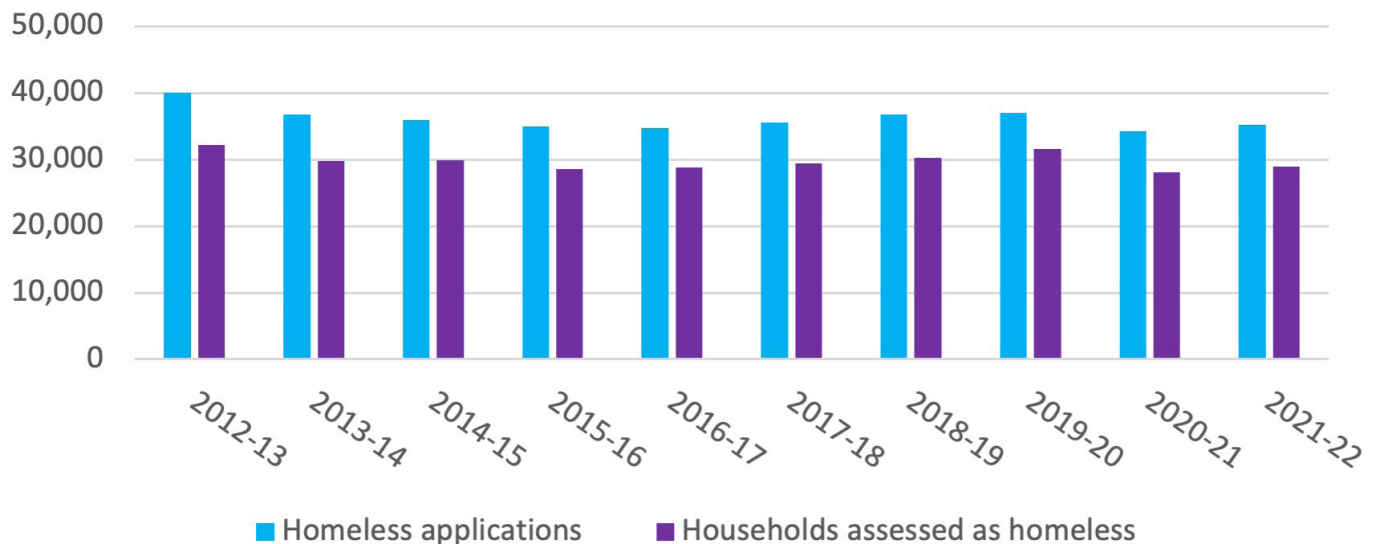- Ensuring access to the number of permanent homes that are needed.

The report highlights the risk of systemic failure in some areas without intervention, recommending that *"…the Scottish Government may need to consider what further urgent measures it can take to support councils to respond to the immediate challenges they face in delivering services for people who are homeless."*

These challenges were mirrored in the online survey and discussions we had with local authorities as part of this research.

Impact of the pandemic

Despite concerns that the pandemic would lead to significant increases in homelessness, the number of households assessed as homeless reduced from a peak of over 31,000 in 2019/20 as emergency measures were put in place to support tenants financially, and to prevent evictions from the social sector and PRS. Between 2019/20 and 2020/21 the number of households assessed as homeless fell from 31,612 to 28,042, a reduction of 11 per cent. By 2021/22 the number had increased slightly to 28,882 up by three per cent.

**Chart 1: Homeless applications and households assessed as homeless**

Source: Scottish Government statistics, Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22[6]

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[5]https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/media/1884/homelessness-services-in-scotland-a-thematic-review-february-2023.pdf

[6]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2021-22/documents/

The emergency measures, Scottish Government funding and strong support provided by local authorities, social landlords and third sector organisations prevented the anticipated spike in homelessness during the pandemic. However, the latest Scottish Government homelessness statistics show that homelessness applications are now exceeding pre-pandemic levels. While homelessness assessments remain slightly lower, open homelessness cases are now at the highest rate since records began in 2002[7].

Chart 2: Open homelessness applications, as at 30 September
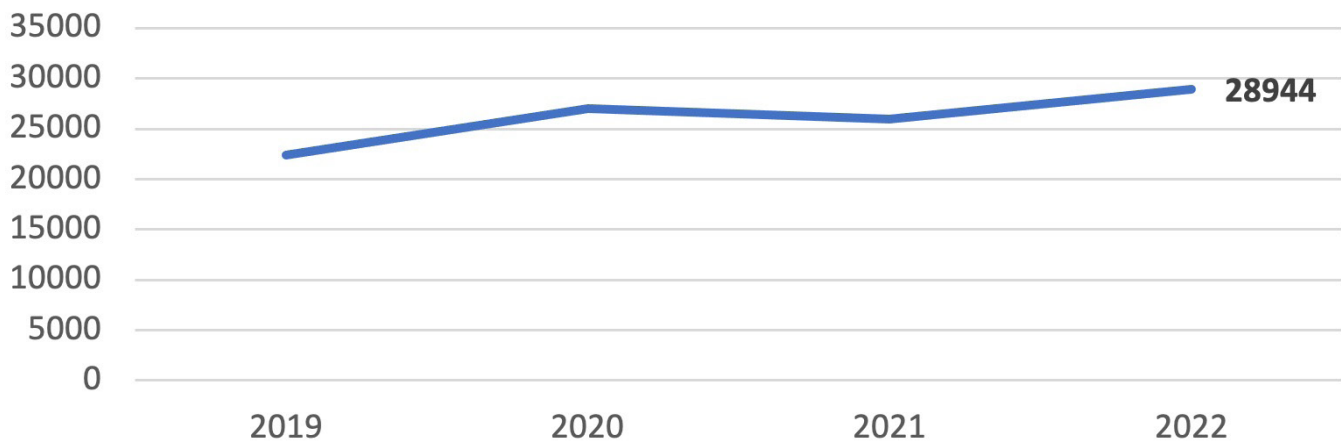
Source: Scottish Government statistics: Homelessness in Scotland update to 30 September 2022[8]

During the pandemic, limited availability of permanent accommodation in many areas resulted in record numbers of households in temporary accommodation and lengthy stays in some areas. Local authorities reported a range of issues affecting the ability to provide permanent accommodation including:

- Reduced stock turnover and/or temporary pause on general needs allocations
- Difficulty bringing voids up to lettable standard due to lack of materials and tradespeople
- Longer time taken to let due to social distancing measures affecting viewings and tenancy sign up
- Staff sickness reducing capacity, and difficulty with recruitment.

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[7]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-update-to-30-september-2022/pages/the-extent-of-homelessness-in-scotland/
[8]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-update-to-30-september-2022/pages/the-extent-of-homelessness-in-scotland/

The number of households in temporary accommodation steadily increased from 10,989 in 2019 to 13,945 in 2022. The number of households with pregnant women or children in temporary accommodation also increased during this time.

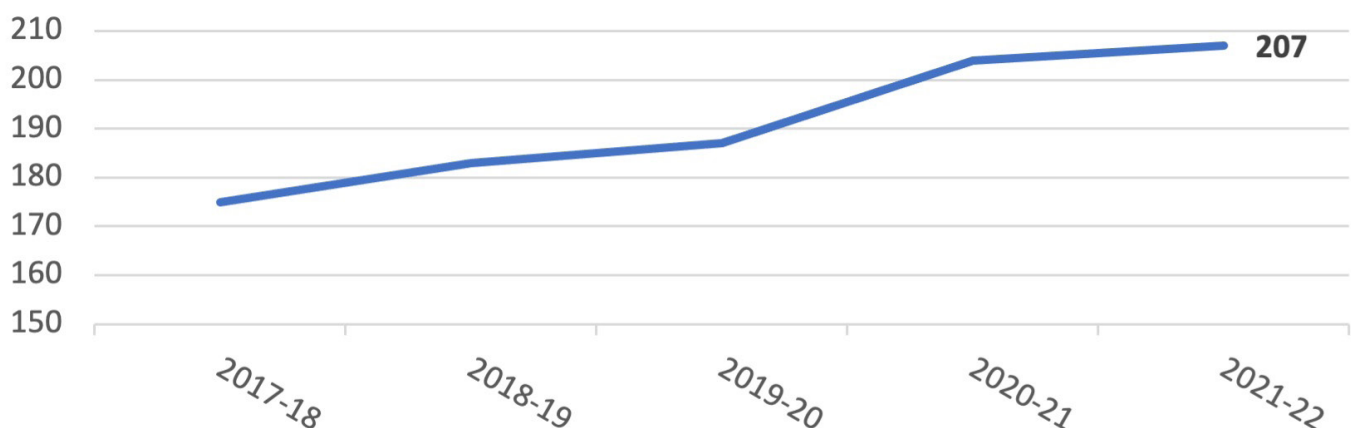**Chart 3: Households in temporary accommodation, as at 31 March**
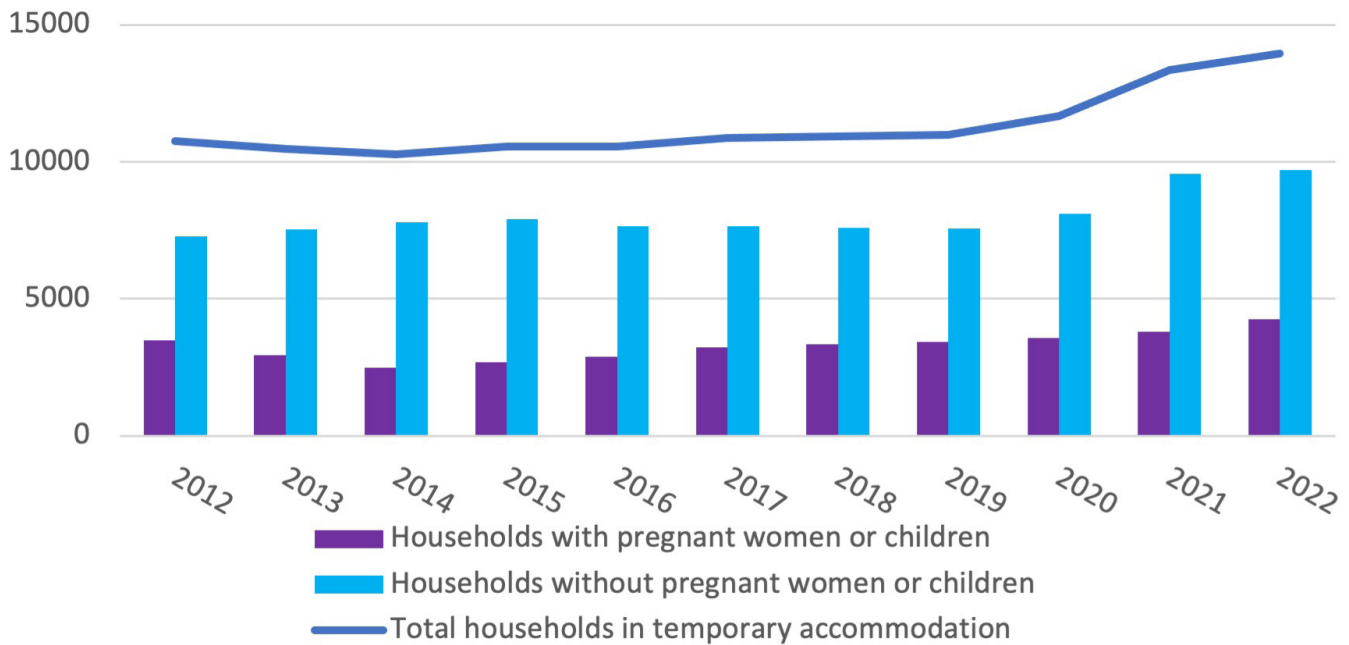
Source: Scottish Government statistics, Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22[9]

The number of households in temporary accommodation has continued to increase, reaching 14,458 as of 30 September 2022, 9,130 of which were households with children. This is the highest number of households with children living in temporary accommodation since the time series began in 2002[10].

The average time spent in temporary accommodation increased significantly during the pandemic from an average of 187 days in 2019/20 to 207 days in 2021/22. Households with children are likely to be housed more quickly but Scottish Government data for 2021/22 showed that a significant proportion of households with children were still waiting over a year for permanent accommodation.

Chart 4: Average time spent in temporary accommodation (days)
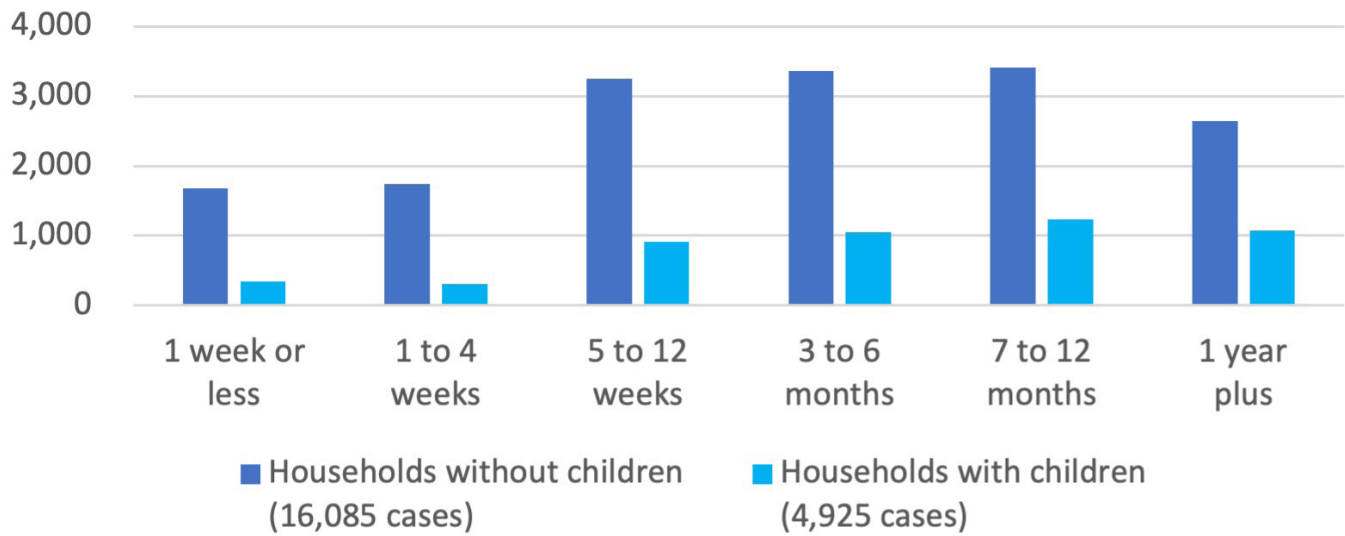

Source: Scottish Government statistics, Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22[11]

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[9]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2021-22/documents/

[10]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-update-to-30-september-2022/pages/the-extent-of-homelessness-in-scotland/

[11]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2021-22/documents/

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Chart 5: Average time spent in temporary accommodation by household type

Source: Scottish Government statistics, Homelessness in Scotland 2021-22[12]

The increased demand for temporary accommodation and pressure on supply also led to a significant increase in breaches of the UAO which was extended in 2020 to include all homeless households. The number of breaches recorded across Scotland increased from 560 in 2020/21 to 2,040 in 2021/22. The number of breaches decreased in the first two quarters of 2022/23 but remains high.

Chart 6: Breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order
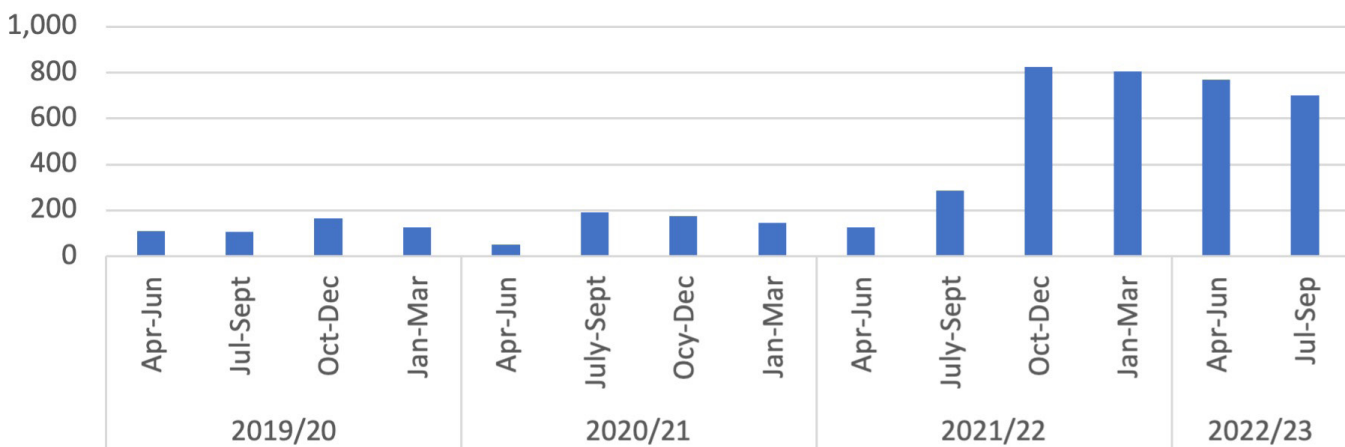
Source: Scottish Government statistics: Homelessness in Scotland update to 30 September 2022[13]

The Scottish Housing Regulator also published detailed analysis of social landlord performance throughout the Covid-19 pandemic highlighting significant increases in void rates and time to let, staff sickness, and rent arrears[14].

Asylum seekers and resettlement programme work

Asylum and immigration matters are reserved to the UK Government, but the Scottish Government has taken a proactive approach to welcoming people who have been displaced by conflict, trauma or human rights violations. While the majority of asylum seekers are placed in Home Office accommodation in Glasgow, the asylum dispersal programme is rolling out with more local authorities expected to play an active role.

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[12]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2021-22/documents/

[13]https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-update-to-30-september-2022/pages/the-extent-of-homelessness-in-scotland/

[14]https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/covid-19-dashboards

Asylum seekers and refugees arrive in the UK from a wide range of countries but the Syrian conflict, withdrawal of UK troops from Afghanistan, and more recently the conflict in Ukraine have seen significant increases in the number of people needing rapid access to accommodation.

As of December 2022, the UNHCR reported that over 7.8 million Ukrainian refugees had been registered across Europe including 147,800 in the UK. The UK Government encouraged members of the public to host refugees through the Ukrainian Sponsorship Scheme[15] to provide quick access to housing within communities. The Scottish Government declared itself a 'super sponsor' allowing Ukrainian refugees the option to name the Scottish Government as their sponsor and travel immediately without the need to find a private sponsor.

However, the popularity of the 'super sponsor' scheme caused the Scottish Government to pause applications in July 2022. A report[16] published in November states that the scheme had received 35,501 applications, had granted 30,629 visas and welcomed 17,463 arrivals to date, the highest rate per head of population across the UK.

While the Scottish Government's swift action to support Ukrainian refugees has been applauded, the arrival of so many households in a short space of time has inevitably created challenges for local authorities with already stretched services. While accommodation has been secured in the short-term, many are living in unsuitable accommodation, including chartered cruise ships, and local authorities are working towards longer-term housing solutions.

Social landlords have been invited to apply for capital grant funding to deliver longer-term accommodation through a £50 million Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund with a view to bringing void properties back into use or repurpose other buildings as residential accommodation to temporarily house displaced Ukrainian people for up to three years. The guidance makes clear that if the homes are no longer available at the end of the three-year period (for example, because of planned demolitions), local authorities and RSLs will be expected to source suitable alternative accommodation for anyone wishing to stay in the area[17].

Housing supply and affordability

Demand for social and affordable housing still far outstrips supply with around 180,000 households on local authority waiting lists across Scotland[18]. This is a significant increase on previous years, likely as a result of ongoing pressures following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Scottish Government commitment to deliver 110,000 social and affordable homes by 2032 will be extremely challenging due to financial pressures. The Scottish Government budget 2023/24 saw a 24 per cent reduction in the More Homes budget in cash terms[19]. Inflation is also having a significant impact on costs which is explored in more detail below.

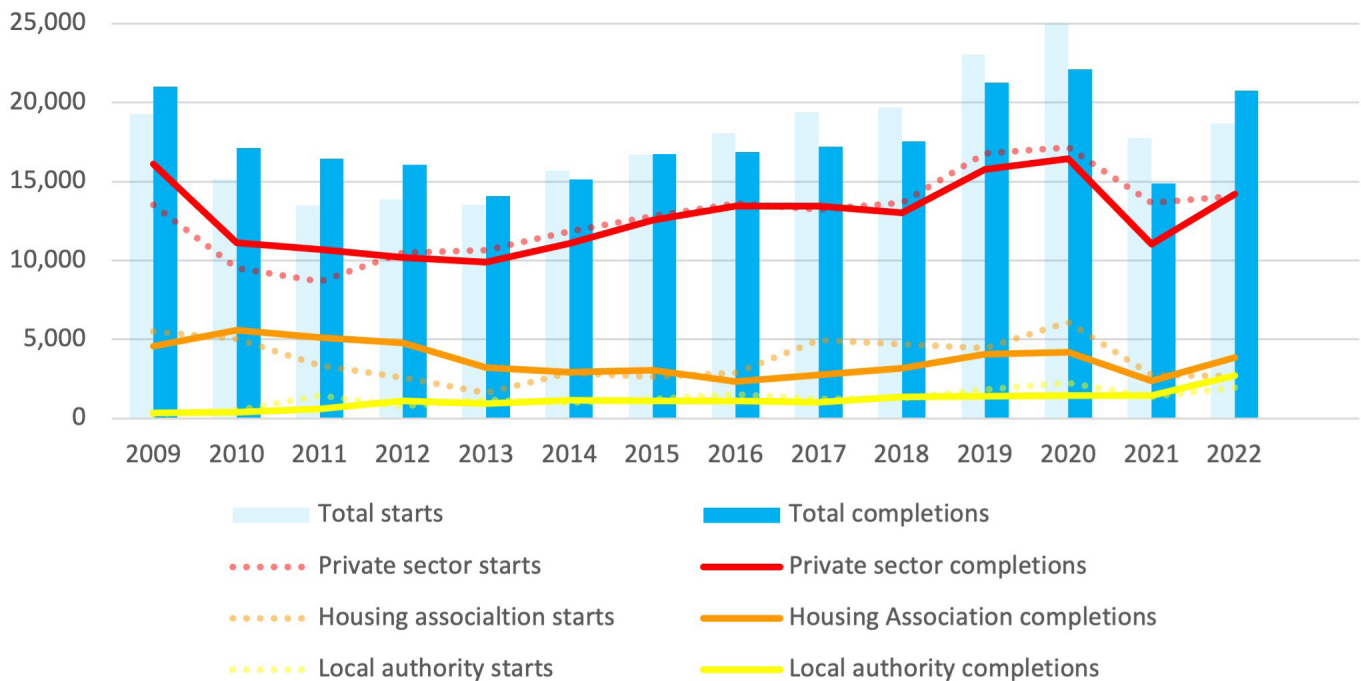[15]https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme

[16]https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-support-displaced-people-ukraine-review-super-sponsor-review/pages/1/

[17]https://www.gov.scot/publications/ukraine-longer-term-resettlement-fund/pages/overview/

[18]https://www.gov.scot/news/annual-housing-statistics-2020-21/

[19]https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-budget-2023-24/

Chart 7: Housing starts and completions each year to end of March

Source: Scottish Government, Housing statistics for Scotland quarterly update: New housebuilding and affordable housing supply[20]

Access to suitable housing in the PRS remains a challenge with areas in high demand facing significant affordability issues. The PRS market is varied and while the latest data shows that between 2010 and 2022, the average two-bedroom rent in Scotland increased below inflation, rent has increased significantly above inflation in Greater Glasgow and the Lothians[21].

There are also concerns that private landlords are leaving the sector due to increasing regulations and uncertainty. The wave two findings from the Rent Better project[22] suggest a significant reduction in the PRS in recent years. While there are limitations in the data available, landlord registration data suggests a loss of around 8,000 homes between 2019 and 2021 and local authority data suggests that the issue is particularly acute in rural areas. In addition, around half of landlords surveyed for the research stated that they intend to exit the market in the next two to five years. This will cause further supply issues if alternative accommodation is not available in the local area.

Additional uncertainty has been caused by the Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022[23] which was introduced with the aim of protecting tenants from eviction. The emergency legislation introduced an in-tenancy rent cap of zero per cent for social and private rent and purpose built student accommodation (PBSA). It also placed a moratorium on evictions and increased penalties for unlawful evictions.

Evidence submitted to the Scottish Government on the impact of the legislation on the PRS suggested that it could be having unintended consequences including:

• Landlords increasing rent between tenancies when they may not otherwise have done so
• Landlords deciding to leave the market
• Discouraging investment in repairs and improvements.

[20]https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-statistics-scotland-quarterly-update-new-housebuilding-affordable-housing-supply-published-04-october-2022/documents/

[21]https://www.gov.scot/publications/private-sector-rent-statistics-scotland-2010-2022/pages/1/

[22]https://rentbetter.indigohousegroup.com/findings/rentbetter-wave-2-full-reports/

[23]https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2022/10/contents/enacted

However, regulations laid before Parliament in January 2023[24] extended the rent cap for the PRS for a further six months from April 2023 at a maximum of three per cent while dropping the cap for the social sector and PBSA. The PRS cap may be extended for a final period of six months if Ministers deem it to continue to be necessary, and the Scottish Government has committed to a longer-term permanent rent cap in the PRS. This raises questions about whether private landlords will decide to leave the market in significant numbers and, if so, how supply will be maintained.

Inflation and the cost of living crisis

Inflation increased sharply from 0.5 per cent in February 2021 to just over 11 per cent in October 2022[25] but essential items such as food increased significantly more. ONS analysis suggests that everyday low-cost grocery items had increased in price by around 17 per cent over the 12 months to September 2022. During this time the price of vegetable oil increased by 65 per cent, pasta increased by 60 per cent and tea by 46 per cent[26].

The cost of domestic energy doubled over the last year and despite UK Government support for households, the Scottish Government estimated that from October 2022 around 86,000 households in Scotland (35 per cent) would be living in fuel poverty. 600,000 of these households would be living in extreme fuel poverty[27].

These pressures on household budgets significantly increase the risk of rent arrears and homelessness as people may prioritise other essentials over housing costs.

Social landlord rents and inflation

The impact of inflation on housing providers has also been significant. Social landlords are facing steep increases in costs for materials for new developments, repairs and improvements, operational and staff costs, energy, and increased borrowing costs for new and existing loans.

In the last six years, social housing rents have increased by an average of just 2.5 per cent per year. During Covid-19 (2021/22) 25 RSLs (18 per cent) and five local authorities (20 per cent) froze rents. Four of the five local authorities continued the freeze in 2022/23 and one more introduced a freeze. In 2022/23 average local authority rent increases was 1.6 per cent and RSL increase was 3.3 per cent. However, with rising costs, this low level of increase is unlikely to be sustainable as inflation is predicted to remain high until 2024[28].

Table 1: Estimated CPI inflation

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023	10.1%	9.5%	7.9%	5.2%
2024	4.0%	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%
2025	1.2%	0.8%	0.6%	0.0%

Source: Impact of rent controls: a report prepared by Savills for the Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland

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[24] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2023/8/contents/made

[25] https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/november2022

[26] https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/trackingthelowestcostgroceryitemsukexperimentalanalysis/april2021toseptember2022#price-changes-for-lowest-cost-items

[27] https://www.gov.scot/publications/cost-living-crisis-scotland-analytical-report/pages/4/

[28] https://www.cih.org/media/wqshgmcj/impact-of-rent-controls.pdf

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Removing the social sector rent cap will allow social landlords to increase rents in April 2023, but at rates still significantly below inflation. COSLA has stated that local authorities will not increase rents above an average of £5 per week and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) has reported an average planned increase for its members of 6.1 per cent[29]. This means that service delivery will remain challenging and investment in existing housing stock and new build is likely to be affected.

Analysis commissioned by CIH Scotland[30] outlines a number of social landlord costs that are being pushed up by inflation including:

- **Staff costs** Around two thirds of housing management costs are driven by employee costs and social landlords must ensure that wages reflect the cost of living to remain competitive, attract and retain staff. Analysis suggests moderate increases for local authority staff of up to 2.5 per cent and RSL increases more closely in line with rent increases which could be up to six per cent.
- **Repairs and maintenance** Around a quarter of costs relate to materials which have been increasing due to inflation and increased import costs. Estimates suggest a minimum of 10 per cent for planning assumptions, but some landlords are reporting increases of 25 per cent. Staff costs will also be a significant factor.
- **Contractors and suppliers** Skilled and unskilled trades have been affected by labour shortages and costs for existing and new contacts vary. However, increases seem to be at or around the level of CPI.
- **Utilities** Average increases are estimated at 30 per cent for 2022/23 and 100 per cent for 2023/24.

5. Progress on RRTPs to date

Each of Scotland's 32 local authorities is working within a unique housing market context, with their own challenges and priorities. While these differences are reflected in the different approaches to housing and homelessness services, all local authorities share the same legal obligations and the same goal – to prevent homelessness as far as possible or to ensure that any instance of homelessness is as brief as possible.

Of the local authorities responding to the 2022 survey, 73 per cent reported having to scale back or delay the delivery of their RRTP due to the pandemic. As illustrated above, the pandemic did not cause an increase in the volume of homeless applications, but it did create significant additional pressure on temporary accommodation and many local authorities had to focus resources on identifying additional supply and dealing with a backlog of households in temporary accommodation.

"We had to scale back delivery of our RRTP due to the pandemic. This had an impact on all areas of our service delivery, with allocations suspended for a period, and offers of housing only being able to be made to delayed discharges from institutions."

This local authority also described having to dedicate significant resources to managing the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic resulting in delays to planned RRTP work.

"In general, we had to dedicate a significant amount of time to adapting and changing to Covid-19 guidance and restrictions, often at short notice, rather than progressing the work of the RRTP."

Despite these challenges, some local authorities also highlighted positive aspects arising from the pandemic, including more flexibility in acquiring accommodation to meet needs, agile working, and developing closer working relationships with partners. Some also reported that while the pandemic did not delay their RRTP plans, they needed to adjust to new ways of working with more emphasis on telephone and digital rather than fact-to-face contact.

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[29] https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-13389
[30] https://www.cih.org/media/wqshgmcj/impact-of-rent-controls.pdf

"There were also areas of real progress in reducing long term homelessness, scaling up Housing First learning and developing along the way and in strengthening the authority's partnership approach."

All of those who reported delays in RRTP delivery stated that they are now progressing, albeit within the context of new challenges such as the Ukrainian resettlement scheme and cost of living crisis.

This section summarises progress made with RRTPs to date, drawing on the feedback we have received from local authorities through our survey, online workshop and steering group, and publicly available publications.

Preventing homelessness

While the RRTP guidance did not focus specifically on prevention, feedback from local authorities suggests that as RRTPs have evolved, prevention activity has taken much more of a key role and that prevention should be a priority in all homelessness work. The importance of preventing homelessness is also clearly emphasised in the revised Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan published in 2020[31].

The vast majority of local authorities that responded to the survey (93 per cent) said that RRTPs have stimulated new prevention activity in their area. Prevention activities reported through the survey included:

- Greater focus on early intervention including mediation services, debt advice, homelessness prevention funds, new prevention pathways for 'at risk' groups, and multidisciplinary working groups to prevent eviction
- Working proactively with partners such as RSLs, DWP and Citizens Advice
- Involving people with lived experience of homelessness in developing services
- Improving digital inclusion with the provision of devices such as mobile phones and tablets
- PRS access schemes such as tenancy deposit and furnishing schemes, and providing information about shared tenancies, particularly for younger people
- Changing culture within the organisation
- Establishing or scaling up Housing First provision
- Creating a virtual Housing Options Hub to broaden access to advice and information
- Recruitment of dedicated staff such as RRTP lead officers and staff focusing on homelessness prevention work.

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[31] https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-homelessness-together-updated-action-plan-october-2020/

Prevention in practice – HOMESTART

South Lanarkshire Council

HOMESTART is a confidential advice service offering support to new tenants to sustain their tenancy and help them to settle into the community. It started as a pilot project in June 2019 and has continued with RRTP funding after showing a positive impact on tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention. HOMESTART housing officers work with new tenants to identify concerns, usually before they sign their tenancy, and offer tailored, person-centred support for those who need it. HOMESTART provides a wide range of support options, but the main areas of assistance are:

- Help with furnishing
- Setting up utilities, fuel advice and assistance to clear historical debts
- Community links and information
- Help with budgeting, debt, and money advice.

The HOMESTART team will also work closely with partners if the tenant requires more in-depth support and to avoid duplication. This could include a referral to the housing support team for someone needing additional or longer-term support.

Feedback from tenants who have used the service has been positive and a survey of new tenants in the first year of HOMESTART showed that 81 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received from HOMESTART.

"The officer helped with SWF and other small things for my home which have made a huge difference to me as I am on benefits. Gave me info about registering with a doctor as I'm new to the area and about Healthy Valleys for other support."

During the first full year of HOMESTART operating (2020/21), there was a 15 per cent reduction in tenancies ending within 12 months.

HOMESTART performance

	2020/21	2021/22
HOMESTART referrals progressed	1,305	1,536
Number of cases provided with information and advice	389	471
Number of cases provided with practical assistance	813	1,041
Number of cases closed at end of year	1,202	1,512
Number of cases still open at end of year	103	*127

*Includes total carried forward from 2020/21

Measuring the impact of prevention work

While homelessness prevention work is monitored through Scottish Government PREVENT 1 statistics, feedback from the sector suggests that inconsistency in the way that details are recorded by different local authorities limits the effectiveness of the data and does not allow for direct comparison or for trends to be effectively monitored over time.

The Scottish Government RRTP annual report 2020/21[32] outlines homelessness prevention delivered through RRTP projects across Scotland. It includes numerous examples of prevention activity but does not quantify the success of prevention activity.

Several local authorities responding to our survey noted that it is extremely difficult to measure the success of services while external factors have such a significant impact on need and demand. For example, the increase in use of temporary accommodation during the pandemic was contradictory to the aim of RRTPs to reduce the use of temporary accommodation – however, there was no question that the emerging need had to be addressed and this should not be seen as a failure of RRTPs.

Several survey responses noted that full evaluations were not ready at this stage of their RRTP, but some did state that they were tracking activities with a view to being able to provide more in-depth analysis at a later date.

While no comprehensive financial analysis was provided, some local authorities did provide examples of the types of activities and outcomes that were likely to result in longer-term savings to the homelessness service or other partners.

One local authority stated that they had seen an increase in Housing First tenancy sustainment beyond one year. Another reported that RRTP activity had helped them to half their backlog of homeless households, improving access to a range of options through flipping tenancies and promoting the use of the PRS, all resulting in quicker access to permanent housing and better tenancy sustainment.

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[32]https://www.gov.scot/publications/rapid-rehousing-transition-plans-annual-report-2020-21/

Prevention in practice – supporting victims of domestic abuse

Fife Council

The Prevention of Homelessness (PoH) Fund can be used to support people moving to a new home if it is no longer safe for them to stay in their current home by storing personal belongings or supplying essentials such as flooring and furniture.

While there is a cost associated with storing items, there are significant advantages including: helping people to feel more at home with their own belongings; stopping perpetrators of domestic abuse from damaging items or using them to keep control; quicker turnaround when a new tenancy is identified; putting less stress on households to buy new furniture or take on debt; not having to pay rent on two homes; and freeing up an empty home for use by another household in need.

The two examples below show how victims of domestic abuse in very different circumstances have been supported to move to a safe home and avoid unnecessary hardship.

Example 1: Ms T was living in a Fife Council tenancy with her three children. The property was specially adapted to meet the needs of her son. Following abuse from her partner who had found out where she lived and was stalking and harassing her and her children, Ms T fled to a refuge leaving the tenancy empty. Ms T was claiming benefits for two homes at this point meaning government was paying for a property that no-one was living in.

With agreement from Ms T, her council tenancy was terminated, freeing up a home for another household in need, and her belongings were put into storage while she remained in the refuge until suitable accommodation was available.

The cost of storing Ms T's belongings for seven months, plus removals and flooring, came to £2,838.28. If this service had not been available and Ms T had needed help to furnish her new home from scratch it is estimated that this would have cost £5,219.98 which equates to a **saving of £2,381.70**.

"I know I won't need to start from scratch again, which I would have worried about so much and it would have caused me hardship."

Example 2: Mr W was an older gentleman living in a very unsafe home and needed to be moved due to domestic violence. A perfect bungalow became available and a decision was made to move Mr W as quickly as possible for his safety, meaning there was not enough time to wait for a Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) application. Mr W had nothing but his clothes, but the project was able to help get emergency things put into the new bungalow so he could move in quickly. We carpeted throughout the bungalow, put vinyl in the kitchen and bathroom, and also provided a bed, cooker, fridge freezer, and curtains. The property was ready for Mr W to move in within two days of making contact.

The cost of furnishings was **£951.80** which is a small amount to prevent this gentleman from having to live in a dangerous, unsafe and abusive home.

"With the support I now have I am living a safe and happy life."

Housing First

The Scottish Government has committed to the expansion of Housing First and the RRTP guidance encourages local authorities to provide a Housing First service where need has been identified.
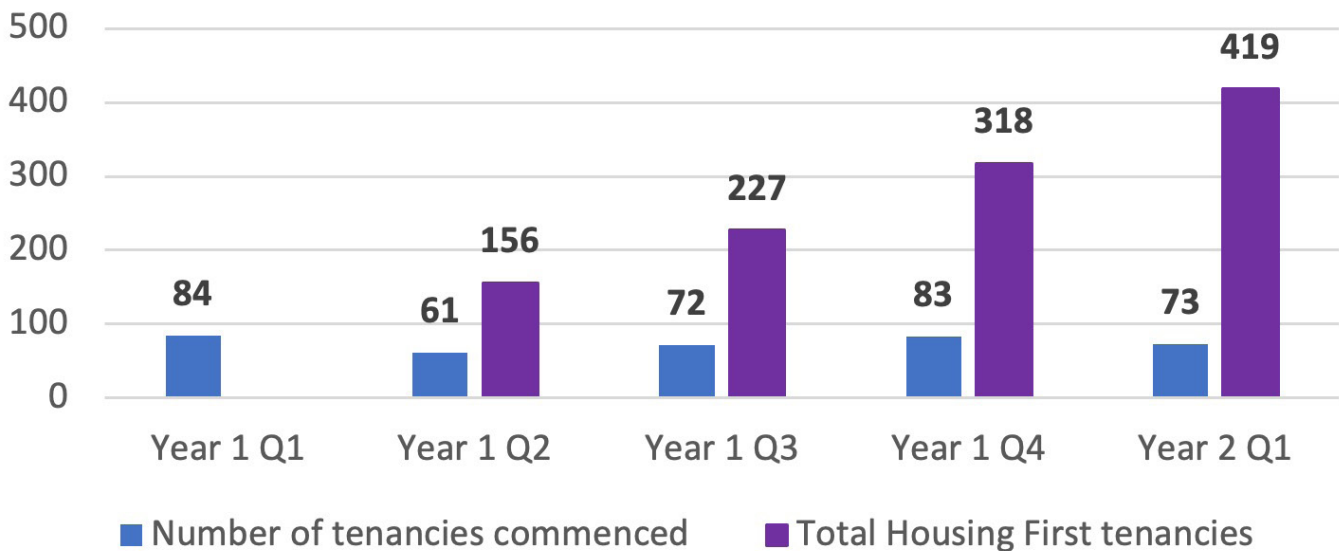
Extensive research and pilot projects have shown that Housing First, if administered effectively, benefits individuals through supporting independence and improved mental and physical health and wellbeing. An evaluation commissioned by Social Bite published in 2017[33] outlined findings from Europe, the USA, Canada, and England which claim considerable cost savings from the provision of Housing First, suggesting that a similar approach in Scotland could have comparable benefits. While Housing First does require up-front investment, longer-term savings can be made by preventing repeat homelessness, addressing health and addiction issues which reduces the need for NHS treatment, and reducing the need for intervention from the criminal justice system.

The scaling up of Housing First services across Scotland was initially supported by the Housing First Pathfinder Project which operated from 2018 – 2023 in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling, and is now being further expanded through RRTP work across Scotland.

The Pathfinder project has now come to an end with the final evaluation showing successful prevention of repeat homelessness[34]. Of the 579 people supported by the project, tenancy sustainment rates were high at 88 per cent over 12 months and 80 per cent over 24 months. Participants also gave positive feedback on the support they received with their health and addiction issues.

The Scottish Government began monitoring and reporting on all new Housing First tenancies across Scotland from 1 April 2021[35]. The latest report shows that Housing First services are now being offered in 24 local authorities across Scotland, with a further three local authorities planning to introduce services in 2023/24.

Chart 8: Housing First tenancies across Scotland April 2021 – June 2022

Source: Scottish Government Housing First quarterly reports[36]

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[33]http://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/EradicatingCoreHomelessness.pdf

[34]https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/scotlands-housing-first-pathfinder-evaluation-final-report

[35]https://www.gov.scot/collections/housing-first-publications/

[36]https://www.gov.scot/collections/housing-first-publications/

The number of Housing First tenancies has steadily increased since monitoring began and while there is clear progress being made with the scaling up of Housing First across Scotland, local authorities responding to our online survey reported challenges with delays caused by the pandemic, uncertainty in relation to long-term funding, and issues with recruitment and retention of staff.

These challenges are reflected in the Scottish Government's quarterly reports which indicate an increase in the average time taken from a Housing First referral to the household moving into a permanent tenancy. This has increased from an average of 142 days to 201 days.

Local authorities taking part in this project report that RRTPs have been a positive driver in establishing and scaling up Housing First, but that provision is resource intensive and highly reliant upon partnership working, either through commissioning services, or funding and support from H&SC which is not always guaranteed or consistent. H&SC partnerships understandably have their own priorities and pressures to deal with and, as one participant reflected, when something like the pandemic, or winter flu season comes along, RRTP work will not be high on the agenda for H&SC partners.

Feedback suggests that existing Housing First projects could be at risk, and it will be extremely difficult to scale up provision without dedicated, long-term funding through RRTPs or another route.

Transforming temporary accommodation

A key aim of RRTPs is to reduce the amount of time spent in temporary accommodation, and to use mainstream, furnished accommodation whenever possible. As outlined above, the Covid-19 pandemic reversed a lot of the progress that had been made in reducing the use of temporary accommodation. In the summer of 2022, local authorities taking part in this project reported that they were making progress with tackling backlogs. However, more recent discussion suggests that emerging challenges such as the cost of living crisis, increasing homelessness presentations, and lack of suitable supply, are again worsening temporary accommodation backlogs.

Some local authorities have stated that they have had to make use of unsuitable accommodation such as B&Bs in order to meet immediate need. Any increase in homeless presentations will not yet be reflected in the latest Scottish Government homelessness statistics for 2021/22 which were published in August 2022.

Some local authorities report "flipping" tenancies to provide households with permanent homes but also stress the need to balance this with ensuring enough supply of temporary accommodation when it is needed.

"The council's ambition is to increase the numbers of flipped properties further however, the need to ensure enough temporary accommodation remains to meet current and future demand and costs involved needs to be considered which is ultimately slowing progress in achieving a key objective of the RRTP."

Recent changes to legislation have also had an impact on how temporary accommodation can be used and how it may have to be further adapted in future. The issue of legal changes is explored in more details under Section 6 below.

Progress on RRTPs - conclusions/recommendations

There is clear evidence of good practice in relation to homelessness prevention, Housing First, and progress on changing the use of temporary accommodation despite some setbacks. However, RRTPs lack a consistent framework for monitoring progress which can make it more difficult to secure support from partners. As part of the wider RRTP work, CIH Scotland and Fife Council have been working to develop an RRTP Monitoring Framework to encourage more consistent monitoring and reporting of progress.

> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government and Scottish Housing Regulator should support more consistent measuring and reporting of progress with RRTPs demonstrating impact and value for money.**

The Housing First Pathfinder evaluation stressed the need for cross-sector input from H&SC and the criminal justice sectors in the funding of Housing First going forward. It was clear that delivery should not fall solely to housing and homelessness services. This issues of funding and partnership working are explored further in the sections seven and eight below.

6. Ongoing challenges

As outlined in section four above, a range of external factors are creating significant challenges for local authority housing and homelessness services including:

- Impact of the pandemic
- Ukrainian resettlement scheme
- Housing supply and affordability
- Inflation and the cost of living crisis
- The operation of the PRS
- Increasing pressures from relationship breakdowns, including violent/abusive relationship breakdown
- Ongoing pressures on wider public services – hospitals, prisons and other institutional settings.

We asked local authorities how these and other challenges were affecting their ability to deliver RRTP ambitions. This section summarises the challenges that were most frequently mentioned in response to the online survey, in the online workshop, and discussions with the steering group.

Staff recruitment

80 per cent of local authorities responding to the online survey have experienced issues with staff recruitment and retention and this was also discussed at the online workshop and with steering group members. Common issues include:

- Lack of skilled applicants
- Internal recruitment freezes or only able to offer short-term contracts
- More attractive pay elsewhere e.g. hospitality, retail, and delivery
- Staff shortages exacerbating voids
- Lack of support staff to deliver Housing First and other supported accommodation/accommodation with support options.

"We are seeing fewer applications for posts advertised in our sector than we were before the pandemic. Of the applications we are receiving, we often don't see the same skillset from applicants to meet the requirements of the role."

"There have been remarkably low numbers of applicants meeting essential criteria of advertised roles. This makes recruitment process longer than expected."

For some, retaining existing staff is becoming more challenging as people consider other employment options where conditions or pay may be preferable.

"The pandemic has led to several people making different choices about their career, whether that is to work elsewhere or retire, which is leading to people leaving the sector. The high pressure of roles in our service mean that some people can experience stress or burnout. The intensity of dealing with people in crisis every day, often with challenging behaviours, can impact on people's ability to stay in the role."

"Within housing/housing support/care roles the council and some partners are experiencing increasing challenges retaining and recruiting appropriately qualified and experienced staff, partly again due to the temporary nature of contracts and uncompetitive terms and conditions."

The short-term nature of RRTP funding also creates challenges in recruiting skilled staff who may not want, or be able, to take a temporary contract.

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Changing legal context

There have been a significant number of changes to housing and homelessness policy and legislation in recent years in quick succession. Some local authorities have mentioned that keeping up with changes can be challenging, and that new legislation does not always align with the aims of RRTPs or may redirect resources away from planned activities.

"The revised Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) also placed more demands on our service in terms of the type of accommodation to be provided, with no extra resource to do this and a more constricted stock supply to meet these needs. We have serious concerns about the abolition of local connection referrals at the end of this month, and the potential impact on the number of presentations to our service as a result. We only use B&B accommodation on a very infrequent basis, but this may need to increase to meet demand at this time, therefore resulting in breaches of the UAO."

The extension of the UAO in May 2020 means that no homeless household should be housed in unsuitable temporary accommodation for more than seven days. Previously, the UAO had only applied to households with children or pregnant women. The definitions and some exemptions are set out in guidance[37]. While additional exemptions were introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, the UAO is still creating challenges for some local authorities and breaches remain high.

In addition to the challenges of meeting the extended UAO, in 2022 the Court of Session ruled that local authorities have an absolute duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation taking the needs of the household into account[38]. Glasgow City Council had argued that finite resources prevented the provision of a larger property for the case in question. The ruling has implications for local authorities across Scotland and highlights the need for resources to ensure that temporary accommodation is adequate, and that households can be moved into permanent accommodation as quickly as possible.

A judgement at Kirkcaldy Sheriff Court in 2022 effectively changed the status of over 600 temporary accommodation occupants to secure tenants, requiring Fife Council to convert tenancies and reprovision all temporary accommodation. While this has led to a significant loss of available temporary accommodation and further increased pressure on homelessness services, it has allowed the Council to accelerate the RRTP priority of providing permanent accommodation.

The way in which temporary accommodation is used going forward, and the standard of properties being provided is being considered by two groups:

- **HPSG temporary accommodation task and finish group** – In 2022, the HPSG set up four task and finish groups to consider different aspects of the Ending Homelessness Together plan. A temporary accommodation task and finish group has been asked to make recommendations on how to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation, and how accommodation should be managed, funded and shaped in the future. The group will report to the Cabinet Secretary for social justice, housing and local government in 2023.
- **Scottish Government temporary accommodation working group** – An independently chaired working group was established in 2022 to consider the existing advisory standards for temporary accommodation included in the Homelessness Code of Guidance[39] and whether these could be made mandatory. The group submitted a revised set of standards which have been accepted by the Cabinet Secretary. These will be circulated to local authorities as amended advisory standards with a view to being made mandatory in future.

The findings and recommendations of both of these groups could have a significant impact on the way that temporary accommodation is provided in the future and local authorities are likely to need time and support to implement any changes.

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[37]https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-homeless-persons-unsuitable-accommodation-scotland-order/

[38]https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/cos-general-docs/pdf-docs-for-opinions/2022csoh35.pdf?sfvrsn=c48e3b1e_2

[39]https://www.gov.scot/publications/code-guidance-homelessness-2/pages/14/

Wider housing market and PRS

While affordable housing supply is insufficient to meet demand in many areas, local authorities recognise the need to make better use of a range of housing options, including private rented properties. However, there are concerns about affordability and security of tenure in the PRS making it unsuitable as a permanent home for some households.

"Challenges remain in meeting the needs of homeless households within a social rented sector that is already over capacity. As part of the RRTP, the council and its partners have been working to improve and increase access to the private rented sector for homeless households. It is recognised however that affordability and security within this sector are often barriers for homeless households."

Several local authorities also raised concerns about private landlords in their area selling up or moving back into their rented home, further reducing supply.

"We have also not been able to progress work on the private rented sector as far as we would like, as the pandemic has reduced the number of properties available in the sector, with many landlords selling up while property prices remain high."

Following the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, many local authorities are finding that they are now providing services to a different group of people who may never have accessed homelessness services before and have a different set of needs and expectations.

"The pandemic left a legacy of households, that under normal circumstances, would have been housed permanently but instead still required temporary accommodation."

"We also need to meet the expectations and requirements of people who use our service, who are often used to services being delivered much quicker by private companies, and how to manage these when we are unable to provide permanent accommodation as quickly as they would like."

"We have seen a change in the expectations of people using the [homelessness] service because of the pandemic, with a change in aspirations of property type that they want to move into, meaning some property types are now proving less popular when advertised."

Several local authorities mentioned the reliance of RRTPs on the supply of suitable, affordable, permanent accommodation. RRTP ambitions cannot be delivered in isolation.

Inflation and the impact on service delivery

As set out in section four above, local authorities are facing considerable financial pressures due to increasing costs and restricted ability to increase rents through both the COSLA agreement to limit increases to an average of £5 per week, and policy decisions to keep rent increases low to support tenants.

"There are wider-Council challenges on the service, with savings on budgets required across the whole Council, while spending on wages must increase, and demands on services across the Council also increase."

Social security

Some aspects of social security are devolved to the Scottish Government while others are reserved to the UK Government, making a complex landscape of support available. Concerns raised by local authorities who took part in this project included:

- **Temporary accommodation subsidy** RRTPs aim to make savings through reducing the use of temporary accommodation. However, rising costs such as staffing mean that charges may have to increase in future. The HPSG task and finish group on temporary accommodation should consider the long-term viability of temporary accommodation charges and subsidy through the social security system.

- **Local housing allowance (LHA)** UK Government changes to LHA rates mean that in many areas access to an affordable home in the PRS is severely restricted or simply not available at all. This issue will be considered as part of the next phase of our RRTP project due to commence in 2023.

- **Access to grant funding** Criteria for grant funding such as the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) and Crisis Grant can be quite restrictive and finite resources can prevent people from accessing funding when they need it. Some local authorities have used RRTP funding to establish their own hardship funds or to provide support with essential items such as furniture. The provision of such funds depends on continued focus on RRTPs.

Ongoing challenges - conclusions/recommendations

The delivery of RRTPs is significantly impacted by external factors and this needs to be kept in mind when considering the extent to which actions have been delivered. Local authorities need to retain flexibility to set their own priorities and change direction if needed to deal with changing circumstances, while working towards the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

Most local authorities are still on the journey towards long-term changes in service delivery and working towards embedding these in mainstream delivery. In many cases this work has been delayed because of external factors and emerging challenges that could not have been predicted while RRTPs were first being developed.

There is a clear need to address issues with staff recruitment and retention if RRTP ambitions are to be achieved, including the roll out of Housing First and ultimately ending homelessness.

> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government must provide long term certainty over funding for RRTPs beyond the initial five-year period to support commissioning of services, recruitment and retention of staff.**

> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government and skills agencies should support a more strategic approach to workforce development across the housing sector.**

7. Financial resources

When developing RRTPs, local authorities were asked to indicate the cost of implementing their plans over the five-year period. An evaluation of initial RRTPs carried out by Crisis calculated the total estimated cost of implementation across all RRTPs published at the time (26) would be £102.9 million[40].

Some of these RRTPs included capital costs which the Scottish Government later clarified would not be provided through RRTP funding. Subsequent RRTP publications have included revised cost estimates, but some local authorities still report that lack of funding and the nature of distribution is impacting their ability to deliver RRTP ambitions.

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request published by the Scottish Government in July 2022[41] gives a full breakdown of RRTP funding allocated to 31 March 2023. A letter from the Cabinet Secretary to local authorities in December 2022 outlined distribution of the final £8 million funding for 2023/24. Including RRTP development, RRTP implementation, additional winter support funding, and the Housing First Pathfinder programme, the Scottish Government has allocated £52.5 million across Scotland.

The Scottish Government also created a new £30.5 million Homelessness Prevention Fund for 2023/24 by merging the previous Hostels Grant and Homelessness Support budget.

A table showing the latest RRTPs available online, requested and allocated funding for each local authority, and the distribution of the Homelessness Prevention Fund is included at appendix 2.

This section explores how available funding from the Scottish Government and other sources, and how this is distributed, impacts local authorities' ability to deliver RRTPs.

Funding shortfalls

Under a third of local authorities responding to the survey (27 per cent) indicated that funding from the Scottish Government and other sources has been sufficient to deliver RRTP ambitions. 60 per cent said that funding had supported delivery of some RRTP ambitions and 13 per cent reported a significant shortfall in the funding required.

Chart 9: How does the total funding received (from Scottish Government and other sources) compare with the costs set out in your RRTP?

26.67% ■ Funding has been sufficient to deliver all RRTP ambitions.

60.00% ■ Funding has been sufficient to deliver some RRTP ambitions.

13.33% ■ There has been a significant shortfall in funding available to deliver RRTP ambitions.
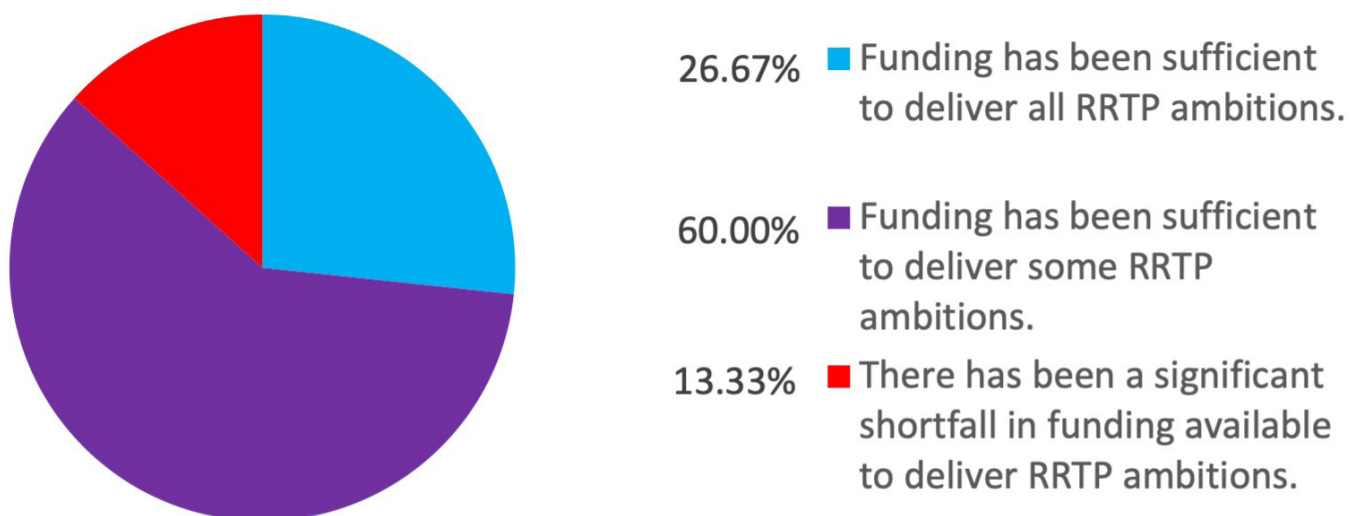
Source: CIH Scotland online survey of local authorities 2022

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[40]https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/246630/2020_rapid-rehousing-transition-plans-a-scottish-overview.pdf
[41]https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202200276865/

Several local authorities stated that delays due to the pandemic and agreement with finance departments to carry over underspend meant that they were not short of funding but shared some concerns with long-term viability of RRTP projects.

"As a result of the pandemic and staffing challenges we had a large balance of unspent RRTP funding. However, this is fully committed to planned activities. To ensure effective implementation of the RRTP, there are requirements for sufficient resources and longer-term funding for the services and responses required to prevent and address homelessness."

"We are also equally concerned about mainstreaming activities beyond the life of RRTP."

Some local authorities indicated that funding had been sufficient because they had been working to the budget and had not committed to activities beyond this.

"As we have a set budget of RRTP funding, we haven't planned work that would have been more than this funding, as otherwise it would have impacted spending from our General Fund. Our RRTP funding is ringfenced for this purpose."

"We have only been able to deliver some of our RRTP ambitions and the funding has been sufficient. If we had been able to proceed with all of our action plan items, the funding certainly would not have covered all of those."

This suggests that more could be delivered if funding was available. Other local authorities have prioritised certain aspects of their RRTP, delivering what they can with the resources available.

Distribution of Scottish Government funding

Initially, RRTP funding was distributed to local authorities annually via a formula based on homelessness rates in the area. A minimum funding level was introduced to ensure that authorities with fewer homelessness presentations received a better share of the funding, and subsequently local authorities were provided with funding assumptions for the final two years of the RRTP period.

While the recent two-year funding award was welcome, and 60 per cent of local authorities stated that this had improved their ability to deliver their RRTP, many still called for longer-term, guaranteed funding.

"Funding constraints come through the short-term nature limiting recruitment to temporary staff, lack of confidence in longer term service commissioning arrangements (and lead in times) as well as difficulties establishing a focus on prevention and early intervention while achieving statutory duties. Strategic planning in the current environment is challenging, particularly given the nature, scope and extent of the change required."

"The increase to two-year funding assumptions has not significantly helped us to deliver our RRTP. Strategic planning for complex areas such as homelessness usually requires long-term planning, usually of at least three years, to allow us to effectively develop, implement, embed, and monitor changes to our practice. While the change to two-year funding does allow us to plan longer than one year, it is still insufficient for some of our more ambitious aims."

"Without confirmation of the actual allocation to each authority it remains difficult to extend contracts with partners over a two-year period. The council suggests that continuity of officers is important in bringing experience and knowledge to the roles allowing better planning, monitoring, and reporting on outcomes."

A minority of local authorities have experienced issues with the fact that RRTP funding is not ringfenced.

"An out-of-hours harm reduction project… has not been progressed beyond a one-year pilot due to the inability to carry forward funding. This project provided a vital resource for individuals with complex needs during weekends ensuring anyone at risk of harm was supported from a Thursday evening to a Monday morning."

However, wider discussion at the online workshop and with the steering group has determined that ringfencing would not be beneficial for the majority of local authorities where current arrangements are working well, and that alternative solutions should be considered.

There is some appetite to revisit the funding distribution method – taking wider factors into account than just homelessness numbers e.g. poverty and deprivation, the cost of providing Housing First, and access to suitable housing options.

"The RRTP funding has been significantly lower than required. The funding based on homelessness numbers rather than plan requirements has posed difficulties for the Council… Homelessness numbers in the area, in comparison to other areas, are lower however, due to low stock and low turnover, the time taken to rehouse households is significantly higher."

Any new funding formula should retain the lower threshold to ensure that smaller local authorities do not lose out on funding.

Funding from other sources

Just under two thirds of local authorities (60 per cent) reported receiving funding or support from other sources including:

- Other Scottish Government funding streams
- Local authority funding – Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- NHS and H&SC Partnerships
- Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs)
- Criminal Justice Service
- Third sector.

However, while contributions were highly valued by the local authorities that received them, these funding streams were not always consistent or reliable. In some cases, funding was provided directly to support RRTP work, in other cases partners would fund or partially fund staff to support RRTP work.

Financial resources - conclusions/recommendations

There is a clear need for dedicated funding to support RRTPs going forward and for the Scottish Government to work with local authorities to review the funding distribution model. While there is little appetite for ringfencing and most local authorities have positive arrangements internally, those who are unable to make full use of RRTP funding for its intended purpose are at a significant disadvantage.

A decision on future funding also needs to be made urgently so that current projects can continue, or there is a risk of progress to date being lost entirely.

> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government should provide dedicated RRTP funding for a further five years to support the continuation of RRTP work and mainstreaming of service changes.**
>
> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government should work with local authorities to agree a fair model of distribution for RRTP funding. Awards should be made initially for a minimum of two years with indicative assumptions provided annually so that local authorities always have two years' confidence in the funding to be received.**
>
> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government should work with COSLA and local authority finance directors to ensure that funding is fully utilised to support the development of homelessness services and the intended purpose and not distributed to other areas of spend.**

There is a clear need to encourage more long-term financial contributions from partners that benefit from homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing. Establishing a better evidence base to demonstrate value for money would help with this as will the development of a wider duty to prevent homelessness. The contribution of partners is explored in more detail in section eight below.

8. Non-financial resources and partnership working

While additional funding would be welcome and is needed to support the delivery of RRTPs, it is clear that the ambition to end homelessness cannot be delivered by housing and homelessness services in isolation. Buy-in from a range of partners is required. This section explores the extent to which key partners are already supporting the delivery of RRTPs and what more could be done.

Local relationships

40 per cent of local authorities said that the Integration Joint Board (IJB) gives enough priority to the RRTP in their area. Based on the feedback from the survey, online workshops and steering group, it is clear that relationships with H&SC partners can be complex and fragile, and in some cases are lacking formal structures and leadership.

Some local authorities do report good partnership working, but for some this is set by strategic agreements such as the RRTP, Local Housing Strategy (LHS), or Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) while others rely on close working relationships at an operational level.

Homelessness Prevention Duty

We asked whether local authorities have planned or are starting to make changes to services as a result of the forthcoming prevention duty. While some local authorities commented that it is too early to know what the impact of the new duty might be, there was broad support for the principles, and the potential to highlight the importance of other bodies in preventing and tackling homelessness.

Several local authorities have started to consider how positive changes could be realised and existing partnerships strengthened. Comments included plans to develop a homelessness prevention strategy, make training available to staff in other organisations and joint working to develop referral pathways.

While views on the new duty are widely positive, there is some concern about how the duty will work in practice and what resources will be made available to support implementation.

"It is hoped that implementation of the prevention duty will help towards achieving RRTP ambitions."

"Further guidance [should be given] to other service areas outside of housing confirming the expectations of their service areas in delivering outcomes related to the RRTP."

Wider partnership working

Local authorities described a range of positive practice in relation to working with partners. Stock transfer authorities and those working in areas with high demand for affordable housing particularly valued working closely with RSLs and, as outlined above, are keen to see improvements in the PRS to make private renting a more attractive option.

In one area where links with the PRS are strong, the local authority has been able to support households to move into permanent accommodation more quicky in the private sector, with many requiring family-sized accommodation that wasn't available in the social rented sector, which was viewed as a positive outcome.

One local authority described a co-production approach between the housing/homelessness service and H&SC to developing strategic documents with shared outcomes, clear actions and ownership and making use of Partner Contribution Statements (PCS) to set and monitor expectations.

"A key feature of the RRTP is the continued use of Partner Contribution Statements (PCS). These live documents detail the progress of each partner's support to the RRTP by setting out details of specific contributions they will make, individually or in conjunction with other partners, towards ensuring delivery of the five priority objectives. The actions detailed within PCS's are wide and varied reflecting the different roles of partners and the services they deliver."

Even where good partnership working was acknowledged, a range of suggestions for improvement were made including:

- Raising the profile of RRTP work and the cross-sector benefits
- Co-location of services
- Job shadowing to build understanding and knowledge
- Involving people with lived experience of homelessness in service design
- Removing barriers to joint commissioning
- Stronger leadership and messaging from Scottish Government
- Better communication and joined up working with the third sector to avoid duplication and make the most of available funding.

Non-financial resources and partnership working - conclusions/recommendations

The Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for partnership working, accelerating more flexible approaches to service delivery and there is great potential to build upon this now. While there are already strong partnerships in many local authority areas, these would benefit from stronger messaging and leadership locally and nationally. The prevention duty provides a clear opportunity to capitalise on this.

> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government should set clear expectations for the contribution of partners towards both preventing homelessness and supporting those who do become homeless.**

> **Recommendation: The Scottish Government must make adequate resources available to implement the new prevention duty, including staff training and development.**

9. The future of RRTPs

The Scottish Government has set a vision to end homelessness in Scotland with RRTPs playing a key role. RRTPs were intended to bridge current service provision with a move towards mainstreaming rapid rehousing and Housing First. In theory, the financial savings made through preventing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation will eventually fund new service models.

"Through the development of alternative temporary accommodation options [the Council] has been able to end the use of all temporary accommodation provided by third party contractors. Some of the savings realised from this have been reinvested in RRTP activities including increasing the resource available to help people access the private rented sector through the provision of rent deposits [and] introducing a homeless prevention fund."

In reality, while a great deal of progress has been made, unprecedented challenges have caused setbacks in reducing temporary accommodation and delays in other planned activities for the majority of local authorities. As the current five-year RRTP period is set to come to an end, this section explores what should happen next.

The value of RRTPs

As set out above, RRTP projects make a significant contribution towards preventing homelessness and are essential to the Scottish Government's wider aim to end homelessness.

There is a wealth of research that demonstrates the financial benefits of tackling homelessness.

Research published by the Scottish Government in 2018, Health and Homelessness in Scotland[42], demonstrated clear links between homelessness and increased A&E attendances, acute hospital admissions, outpatient appointments, prescriptions, admission to mental health specialties and drug treatment services.

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[42]https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-homelessness-scotland/

Recognising that around 30 per cent of people being liberated from prison did not know where they would spend their first night, and two thirds who are homeless after release from prison go on to reoffend[43], the Scottish Prison Service committed to working with the housing sector on a set of standards to prevent homelessness – Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE)[44]. With the average annual cost of a prison place at £35,600, there are obvious savings to be made from prevention[45].

Tackling homelessness also supports the Scottish Government's National Objectives, the statutory duty to reduce child poverty and commitment to create a Fairer Scotland.

Risks of not continuing RRTP

The majority of local authorities taking part in this project shared concerns that ending RRTPs, or the associated funding, would lead to loss of services that have been established in the last four years and are still bedding in. Housing First in particular was mentioned as an area where provision may have to be scaled back or where it would be difficult to expand services even if additional need was identified.
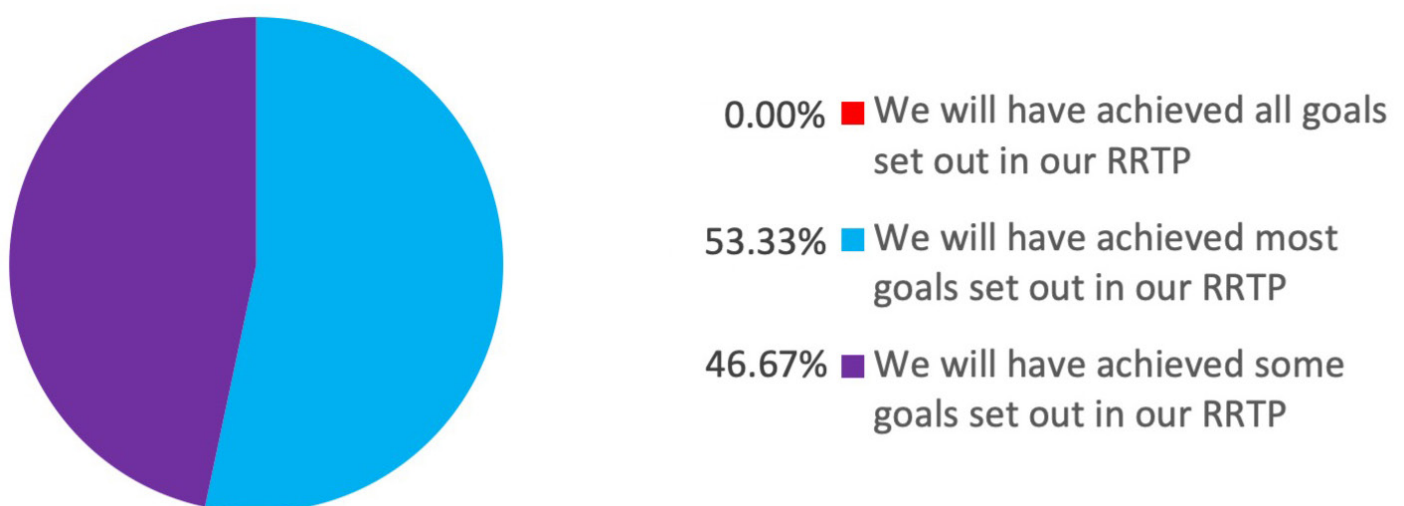
Scaling back or withdrawal of services creates uncertainty and a lack of continuity for service users. This can be particularly detrimental to households experiencing homelessness who rely on services. The Housing First Pathfinder evaluation highlights the importance of building relationships between staff and Housing First tenants, recommending that the length of contracts is maximised to avoid changing providers as far as possible. It also notes that most service users require long term specialist support.

The progress that has been made with homelessness prevention, service transformation, and scaling up Housing First is at risk if Scottish Government support for RRTPs comes to an abrupt end.

What next?

There is significant appetite to continue RRTPs beyond the initial five-year period, building on achievements to date. None of the local authorities who responded to the survey said that they will have achieved all of the goals set out in their RRTP by the end of the five-year period. However, respondents were positive about achievements to date with 53 per cent stating that they will have achieved most of their goals and 47 per cent saying that they will have achieved some of their goals.

Chart 10: What position will you be in at the end of your five-year RRTP?

0.00% We will have achieved all goals set out in our RRTP

53.33% We will have achieved most goals set out in our RRTP

46.67% We will have achieved some goals set out in our RRTP

Source: CIH Scotland online survey of local authorities 2022

[43]https://assets.ctfassets.net/6sqqfrl11sfj/3qHWDX2rKIyPwEcA2X5jk6/3b5c84740334af434ce13e1106b90583/Preventing_Homelessness_and_Reducing_Reoffending_092015_FINAL.pdf

[44]https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Publications/Publication-5363.aspx

[45]https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/s22_190912_sps.pdf

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Local authorities have stated that even if they had initially been on track to deliver RRTP ambitions within five years, external factors have slowed progress and this should be taken into account.

RRTPs were always intended to be interim plans – leading to mainstreaming of services. But in most local authority areas this will take longer than the initial five-year period, not least due to pressures created by the pandemic and other external factors such as the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis and cost of living crisis.

"Reducing the need for temporary accommodation was an intended outcome of the RRTP and at the end of year one there were early positive indications of this. This progress was reversed by the onset of Covid-19, which resulted in an increased demand for temporary accommodation, a reduction in turnover levels and consequently an increase in the council's supply to meet need and, in the time homeless households spent in temporary accommodation. It is however important to note that the increase in the supply of temporary accommodation has since decreased."

"We need a commitment from SG that RRTP vision is not just a five-year project but a long-term sustainable vision for the future."

The future of RRTPs - conclusions/recommendations

The operating context has changed significantly since local authorities were asked to develop RRTPs but there is a strong sense that they are still relevant and helping to drive positive changes in homelessness services. RRTP work must be supported beyond the current five-year period, allowing local authorities to continue working towards long-term changes in their service provision, aligning with the new prevention duty.

Recommendation: The Scottish Government should work with the HPSG RRTP sub-group to revise RRTP guidance, ensuring that it is equalities proofed, fit for purpose and supports greater partnership working. While acknowledging and aligning with the prevention duty, clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries must be established.

10. Conclusion and summary of recommendations

This research has highlighted significant challenges faced by local authorities across Scotland. Despite facing a "perfect storm" of external factors including a global pandemic, refugee resettlement, and cost of living crisis, local authorities have made a great deal of progress in implementing RRTPs through extremely difficult circumstances.

RRTP work is key to the Scottish Government's ambition to end homelessness in Scotland and needs continued focus and more consistent input from partners to achieve this.

The progress that has been made with homelessness prevention, service transformation, and scaling up Housing First is at risk if Scottish Government support for RRTPs comes to an abrupt end.

Full recommendations

1. The Scottish Government and Scottish Housing Regulator should support more consistent measuring and reporting of progress with RRTPs demonstrating impact and value for money.

2. The Scottish Government must provide long term certainty over funding for RRTPs beyond the initial five-year period to support commissioning of services, recruitment and retention of staff.

3. The Scottish Government and skills agencies should support a more strategic approach to workforce development across the housing sector.

4. The Scottish Government should provide dedicated RRTP funding for a further five years to support the continuation of RRTP work and mainstreaming of service changes.

5. The Scottish Government should work with local authorities to agree a fair model of distribution for RRTP funding. Awards should be made initially for a minimum of two years with indicative assumptions provided annually so that local authorities always have two years' confidence in the funding to be received.

6. The Scottish Government should work with COSLA and local authority finance directors to ensure that funding is fully utilised to support the development of homelessness services and the intended purpose and not distributed to other areas of spend.

7. The Scottish Government should set clear expectations for the contribution of partners towards both preventing homelessness and supporting those who do become homeless.

8. The Scottish Government must make adequate resources available to implement the new prevention duty, including staff training and development.

9. The Scottish Government should work with the HPSG RRTP sub-group to revise RRTP guidance, ensuring that it is equalities proofed, fit for purpose and supports greater partnership working. While acknowledging and aligning with the prevention duty, clear roles, responsibilities and boundaries must be established.

Appendix 1: Contributing to the report

We would like to thank everyone who gave their time and expertise to support the development of this report through the steering group, online survey and online workshop. During the course of the research, CIH was devastated to lose the contribution of the late Marion Gibbs. Marion helped frame the research and provided invaluable throughout. Her untimely passing will be felt in the sector for a long time.

Responses to the online survey were anonymous, membership of the steering group and participation in the online workshop were as follows.

Steering group membership

- Fife Council (chair)
- CIH Scotland (secretariat)
- Aberdeen City Council
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Falkirk Council
- Highland Council (representing the Highlands and islands)
- North Ayrshire Council
- Scottish Government
- South Lanarkshire council

Online workshop

- Fife Council (chair)
- CIH Scotland (secretariat)
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Midlothian Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Western Isles Council

All local authorities were required to publish RRTPs by the end of December 2018. RRTPs should be continually monitored although this varies between local authorities. Scottish Government asked all to submit updated RRTPs by 30 June 2020, but this was later extended due to Covid-19. The table includes latest iterations that could be located by early 2023.

Initial RRTPs set out estimated costs to deliver the plans and many of these included capital costs e.g. housing supply. A report published by Crisis in 2020 detailed 26 funding requests from all RRTPs available at that time which totalled £102.9 million.

The Scottish Government later clarified that RRTP funding would not cover capital costs which should be covered by other budgets, and some local authorities have since revised their original cost estimates. The Scottish Government has distributed £52.5 million in relation to RRTP and Housing First.

The table below gives a detailed breakdown of RRTP funding received based on Scottish Government response to Freedom of Information (FOI) request – this contains funding levels for RRTPs for all local authorities to March 2023. A letter from the Cabinet Secretary to local authorities in December 2022 outlined the distribution of £8 million RRTP funding for 2023/24.

A letter from the Cabinet Secretary to local authorities in December 2022 outlined the creation of a £30.5 million Homelessness Prevention Fund by merging the previous Hostels Grant and Homelessness Support budget. Allocations for 2023/24 are also detailed in the table.

	Published RRTP	Latest report/ update	RRTP development	RRTP implementation						Housing First (HF)	Winter Support (WS)	Total (RRTP, HF and WS)	Homelessness Prevention
			2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2019-2022	2021/22	2018/19-2023/24	2023/24
Aberdeen City	RRTP (draft) uploaded November 2019	RRTP report 2022/23	£77,072	£301,000	£358,000	£346,000	£341,000	£326,251	*	£223,000	£1,972,323	£900,000
Aberdeenshire	RRTP (Feb 2019); Action Plan; Resource Plan; RRTP EIA	Update June 2021	£62,272	£261,000	£249,000	£252,000	£243,000	£227,149	*	£155,000	£1,449,421	£960,000
Angus	RTP 2019/20-2023/24	2021 update	£42,279	£172,000	£161,000	£144,000	£122,000	£111,285		£100,000	£852,564	£481,000

	Published RRTP	Latest report/ update	RRTP development	RRTP implementation						Housing First (HF)	Winter Support (WS)	Total (RRTP, HF and WS)	Homelessness Prevention
			2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2019-2022	2021/22	2018/19-2023/24	2023/24
Argyle & Bute	Submitted to Scot Gov Dec 2018	Updated RRTP 2021	£30,000	£95,000	£105,000	£93,000	£92,000	£91,684		£65,000	**£571,684**	£546,000
Clackmannanshire	Draft RRTP		£30,000	£103,000	£116,000	£111,000	£106,000	£107,438		£72,000	**£645,438**	£332,000
Dumfries and Galloway	RRTP April 2019	3rd version	£33,797	£143,000	£179,000	£181,000	£188,000	£197,656		£112,000	**£1,034,453**	£754,000
Dundee	Draft RRTP 2019-2024	Update Nov 2022	£68,049	£300,000	£282,000	£277,000	£287,000	£286,226	£815,139	£175,000	**£2,490,414**	£1,045,000
East Ayrshire	RRTP May 2019; RRTP EIA	Progress report Nov 2022	£30,000	£119,000	£143,000	£158,000	£178,000	£182,910		£89,000	**£899,910**	£664,000
East Dunbartonshire	RRTP April 2019	Update June 2019	£30,000	£120,000	£95,000	£88,000	£78,000	£71,076		£61,000	**£543,076**	£437,000
East Lothian	RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP Draft 3rd version	£40,224	£160,000	£169,000	£161,000	£158,000	£149,387		£105,000	**£942,611**	£608,000
East Renfrewshire	RRTP 2019-2024		£30,000	£76,000	£72,000	£72,000	£77,000	£82,158		£45,000	**£454,158**	£371,000
Edinburgh	RRTP 2019-2024	Second RRTP Sep 2020	£229,225	£1,005,000	£892,000	£871,000	£772,000	£713,228	£2,000,744	£563,000	**£7,046,197**	£3,143,000
Eilean Siar	Draft RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP update June 2020	£30,000	£34,000	£29,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000		£18,000	**£261,000**	£221,000
Falkirk	RRTP Exec Summary 2019-2024		£56,992	£211,000	£211,000	£215,000	£222,000	£244,460		£132,000	**£1,292,452**	£756,000
Fife	RRTP 2019-2024		£124,111	£524,000	£534,000	£528,000	£548,000	£555,232		£335,000	**£3,148,343**	£1,895,000

	Published RRTP	Latest report/ update	RRTP development	RRTP implementation						Housing First (HF)	Winter Support (WS)	Total (RRTP, HF and WS)	Homelessness Prevention
			2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24		2019-2022	2021/22	2018/19-2023/24	2023/24
Glasgow City	RRTP 2019/20-2023/24	Update to IJB Jan 2020	£300,736	£1,332,000	£1,237,000	£1,266,000	£1,372,000	£1,471,795	£1,652,437	£772,000	£9,403,968	£5,094,000
Highland	RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP update May 2021	£60,671	£280,000	£297,000	£291,000	£291,000	£300,148		£187,000	**£1,706,819**	£1,431,000
Inverclyde	RRTP Jan 2019	Update Oct 2019	£30,000	£53,000	£44,000	£50,000	£50,000	£61,275		£28,000	**£316,275**	£553,000
Midlothian	RRTP 2019/20 – 2023/24	RRTP 2020/21-2032/24	£32,218	£141,000	£137,000	£127,000	£121,000	£113,941		£85,000	**£757,159**	£535,000
Moray	RRTP 2019-2024		£30,000	£97,000	£93,000	£90,000	£90,000	£94,532		£58,000	**£552,523**	£395,000
North Ayrshire	RRTP 2019-2024	Update Oct 2020	£44,356	£187,000	£209,000	£224,000	£223,000	£238,781		£130,000	**£1,256,137**	£859,000
North Lanarkshire	Draft RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP year three May 2021	£96,242	£389,000	£465,000	£464,000	£443,000	£391,099		£290,000	**£2,538,341**	£1,845,000
Orkney Islands	Draft RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP update June 2021	£30,000	£22,000	£27,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000		£17,000	**£246,000**	£144,000
Perth and Kinross	RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP Update Jan 2021	£46,347	£203,000	£214,000	£196,000	£175,000	£153,417		£133,000	**£1,120,764**	£629,000
Renfrewshire	Summary report to committee	Update August 2021	£43,080	£186,000	£187,000	£189,000	£190,000	£190,329		£116,000	**£1,101,409**	£964,000
Scottish Borders	RRTP 2019-2024	Update June 2021	£34,684	£153,000	£167,000	£166,000	£165,000	£160,378		£105,000	**£951,062**	£561,000
Shetland Islands	RRTP May 2019	Updated RRTP July 2021	£30,000	£31,000	£27,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000		£17,000	**£255,000**	£153,000

	Published RRTP	Latest report/ update	RRTP development	RRTP implementation						Housing First (HF)	Winter Support (WS)	Total (RRTP, HF and WS)	Homelessness Prevention
			2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2019-2022	2021/22	2018/19-2023/24	2023/24
South Ayrshire	Draft RRTP 2019-2024		£39,856	£173,000	£175,000	£176,000	£182,000	£184,741		£110,000	£1,040,597	£602,000
South Lanarkshire	RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP review 2019/20	£104,465	£461,000	£453,000	£445,000	£451,000	£460,892		£282,000	£2,657,357	£1,575,000
Stirling	RRTP 2019/20-2023/24		£30,000	£101,000	£111,000	£123,000	£132,000	£134,091	£120,783	£69,000	£820,874	£498,000
West Dunbartonshire	RRTP 2019/20-2023/24		£62,770	£265,000	£251,000	£234,000	£238,000	£251,142		£156,000	£1,457,912	£649,000
West Lothian	Draft RRTP 2019-2024	RRTP update 2021/22	£70,970	£302,000	£311,000	£312,000	£315,000	£297,308		£195,000	£1,803,278	£921,000
*Aberdeen City & Shire Housing First									£958,263			
Scotland			£2,000,416	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£5,547,366	£5,000,000	£52,547,782	£30,500,000