



National Outcomes review 2023: Scottish Government consultation

Joint Response from Housing and Homelessness Organisations, June 2023

Overview

The review of the National Outcomes Framework provides an opportunity to reflect on the kind of society Scotland wants to be. This is a joint response from 12 organisations working in housing and homelessness in Scotland, representing the third sector, housing associations, local authorities housing professionals and academics. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation and have included a summary at the end.

Having somewhere safe to stay is one of the most basic physiological human needs (Maslow 1943). A home is more than a physical structure, and lays the foundation for many other human needs to be met. The right housing, with support, promotes better health and wellbeing, reduces poverty, enables people to access education and employment, live independently for longer and creates sustainable communities where people can thrive.

We propose a new National Outcome centred on home: the right to adequate housing and the support people need to sustain their homes, which is grounded in the Scottish policy context in Housing to 2040 and the commitment to end homelessness.

The sharp end of insufficient housing and support is homelessness. Every year, tens of thousands of people in Scotland need assistance because they do not have anywhere to live. Many thousands more are pushed into housing insecurity for a wide range of reasons including lack of affordable homes in places where people want to live, cost, unsuitable or poor quality of housing, and unmet needs for help to maintain their living situation. [Tipping the Scales](#) (IPPR, JRF and Save the Children, 2023) highlights how investing in social housing is a key lever to tackling poverty. The report also highlights “over £500 million of ‘failure spend’ related to housing – through responding to low income and a broken UK welfare system and tackling homelessness.” Scotland has had a lower poverty rate than much of the UK [largely as a result of lower housing costs](#), but the gap is closing, highlighting the need for a national focus on investment in affordable housing.

Homelessness was last considered within the Scottish National Outcomes Framework in the lead up to the abolition of the priority need category of homelessness in 2012, which led to an internationally ground-breaking widening of rights to homelessness assistance.

Since then, the provision of adequate housing to meet people’s needs and to address homelessness has not been specified as a desired national goal within the National Outcomes Framework. This is despite a secure and affordable home being foundational to the achievement of many of the current goals of the National Outcome Framework, particularly those related to community and poverty. Moreover, we expect that the right to an adequate home will be built into a forthcoming Human Rights Bill.

A national outcome focusing on home – and the support people need to live as independently as possible at home – will strengthen housing rights for people with a range of support needs including older people, homeless households, people with learning disabilities, mental health needs and others. A growing older population highlights the need for good quality accessible housing that enables people to live independently in their communities and is recognised by the Scottish Government in its [Housing to 2040](#) strategy. The Scottish Government’s [Coming Home and Implementation Reports](#), 2019, 2022, highlights the housing care and support needs of people with learning disabilities and complex needs living in inappropriate placements far from home and contains measures to reduce delayed discharge and out of areas placement. The Scottish Government’s new [ten year dementia strategy](#) clearly highlights the role of housing in supporting people to live well with dementia, providing another example of cross cutting benefits of good housing. The housing sector working in partnership with the health and social care sector is essential to meet the wider ambitions of the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes Framework.

National outcomes and indicators

We recommend that a new outcome is included in the revised National Performance Framework that covers the following:

<p><u>We all have good homes we can sustain: Everyone has a home to live in that is good quality, affordable, and suitable to their needs, and can access the support they need to live in it.</u></p>

This outcome would consider people in a wide range of circumstances, including those in poor or overcrowded housing, living in poverty, who have care needs because of age, disability, health or

other needs. The concept of 'home' incorporates, but takes us beyond, a focus on infrastructure and availability of affordable houses, and towards a person-centred approach. It acknowledges people who are homeless or living in inadequate housing, who can sometimes be forgotten in discussions about housing and community, because they lack a house or a place-based community. Crucially, it also includes housing support to enable people to live successfully in their homes. It supports the preventative agenda in line with the principles of the Christie Commission, and also supports the forthcoming Housing Bill, which will contain new prevention duties on public bodies focused on preventing people losing their housing.

This new outcome should have a set of key indicators that sit underneath it. One indicator that should be measured is the reduction of affordable housing need. In 2020, [independent research commissioned by SFHA, CIH and Shelter Scotland](#) developed a model to define and calculate affordable housing need by taking into account the backlog of housing need, new housing need, and the supply of affordable lets. **We recommend that one indicator used to measure the new National Outcome on home is the reduction of affordable housing need, as defined by this model.**

The Scottish Government has set up a Task and Finish Group, led by Homeless Network Scotland, which is developing a measurement framework for its *Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan*. A new national outcome on 'home' should align with this work, which will report to the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group later this year. The work of this Group will be valuable in informing a new set of indicators, especially in relation to measuring our progress towards ending homelessness. The Chartered Institute for Housing and Fife Council also recently produced a [monitoring framework for Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans](#) in consultation with local authorities, which would also usefully feed into the "golden thread" and development of relevant indicators. Outcomes identified in Housing to 2040 can also feed into the development of other indicators.

Policy context

There have been a number of calls for homelessness to be explicitly addressed in the National Outcomes Framework, including from two expert groups commissioned by the Scottish Government.

- [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group report](#) on tackling homelessness following the pandemic: *"Build the expectation of ending homelessness into the National Performance Framework for Scotland, with specific indicators to measure progress and explicit links related to government agendas such as social renewal, to help ensure cross sector working on homelessness. Recognise the impact and importance of continuing national Government leadership on homelessness, that supports local infrastructure but is sensitive to local need."*
- Homelessness Prevention Review Group: *"The next iteration of the National Performance Framework has an emphasis on housing which enables people to live in it successfully to minimise homelessness. Including a focus on ensuring people are supported to live in homes that meet their needs would support an agenda of ending homelessness in Scotland, and help to ensure that a wide range of services work towards the best housing situations for people in Scotland, whether they are at risk of homelessness, experiencing financial and material deprivation or have health or social care needs relating to disability or age."*
- [Homeless Network Scotland's Staying In report](#) also recommends the inclusion of homelessness prevention in the National Performance Framework.

As a result, an action has been included within the 2020 version of Scottish Government and COSLA's *Ending Homelessness Together High Level Action Plan* to consider how this may be done.

- Scottish Government and COSLA [Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan 2020](#):
New action 81. Ensure next National Performance Framework review includes explicit consideration of homelessness

The [2020 Audit Scotland report](#) into the Affordable Housing Supply Programme also highlighted the lack of evaluation of the supply programme recommending that the Scottish Government should “make much clearer the ways in which new affordable housing is contributing to wider Scottish Government policy commitments.” Introducing a new National Outcome on homes and housing would help to address this.

The proposed outcome is also in line with the Scottish Government's commitment to housing as set out in *Housing to 2040*, and through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the work to increase the rights of tenants, new legislation to prevent people becoming homeless, and the development of a right to adequate housing as part of a human rights framework. It is also supported by calls from both [Oxfam](#) and [Cyrenians](#) for a stronger focus on housing and homelessness in the 2017 refresh of the National Performance Framework.

A [recent report by the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence \(2023\)](#) also highlighted the importance – and under-recognition in policy terms – of housing support in helping the most vulnerable people in Scotland to successfully sustain a home. Acknowledging the role of housing support in supporting access to homes is vital, but often missing, in ensuring the purpose and vision of the Outcomes Framework are realised for all in relation to housing. It also supports other statutory services particularly health and care, and so supports joined up policy making across the Outcomes Framework.

Process and implementation of the National Performance Framework

People who have experienced homelessness talk to us¹ about the need for leadership to be taken at the political level, to organise a system of services and resources that will support the kind of culture change that can enable agencies to take a more preventative approach:

“It is good to have responsibility on different bodies, like landlords and everything, but first we need responsibility at a higher level, for the government to take responsibility. For the government to create things that will allow people, like the council, like the GPs, like the landlords... But it has to come from higher; the decision to make and organise this kind of system. But if there's tools that everyone can use... and you can recognise easily, it would be better.”

“When you're looking at joined-up working and co-production and all that stuff, that's going to be really valuable. I hate all those words! Because they just sound really wishy washy but see when you're speaking about an issue like this, with different agencies all getting involved

¹ These quotes are taken from Sims, R., Reid, B., Cowan, N. and Allard, M. (2023) [Home is the Foundation: Perspectives on prevention from people with experience of homelessness](#). London: Crisis.

and they're all communicating with one another and have all the same goals and aims that they're all shooting towards, there's definitely scope for improving that communication between the agencies because [at the moment] it's pretty much non-existent."

We also welcome the findings of the parliamentary [Finance and Public Administration Committee from December 2022 on the National Performance Framework](#). It highlighted some key points which we believe need to be taken forward for the NPF to be a driver of change in Scotland. These include:

- A "golden thread" through policy making and implementation, from the National Outcomes down to specific local policy and practice.
- Clarity on how the NPF is to be used in policy making and delivery at national and local level, including clearer accountability and link with budget setting.
- Consideration of the needs of future generations. In the context of housing, this should include affordable housing supply.

This "golden thread" should be woven through all national and local outcomes frameworks, to ensure policy coherence. One opportunity to ensure this, is the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group's (HPSG) Measurement Task and Finish Group, which will produce a framework for measuring our progress towards ending homelessness.

Summary

- Home is one of the most fundamental human needs, and is foundational to achieve many of the current national outcomes. Yet tens of thousands of people need homelessness assistance every year and thousands more live in insecure housing.
- An outcome focused on housing, housing support, and homelessness has been called for by various organisations and expert groups, and Scottish Government has committed to ensuring how homelessness should be incorporated into the National Performance Framework.
- Therefore, a new outcome should be added to the National Outcomes Framework to ensure **everyone has a good home they can sustain**, so that people can live well in their communities and risk of homelessness is minimised.
- There needs to be greater clarity about how the National Outcomes Framework feeds down into local strategic planning, policy and performance.
- Indicators to support the outcome should align with work by the **homelessness Outcomes Measurement Task and Finish Group** commissioned by Scottish Government and other relevant work, including Housing to 2040, but **as a minimum should include an indicator which allows us to measure the reduction of affordable housing need.**

Supported by:

Crisis: We help people out of homelessness and campaign for the changes needed to solve it altogether. Together we will end homelessness.

ALACHO: ALACHO is the representative organisation for senior housing and homelessness professionals working in Scotland's Councils and Health and Social Care Partnerships.

Scottish Federation of Housing Associations: SFHA is the membership body for, and collective voice of, housing associations and cooperatives in Scotland.

Chartered Institute of Housing: We exist to support housing professionals to create a future in which everyone has a place to call home.

Homeless Network Scotland: We are All In. We create opportunities to connect, learn and act on homelessness.

Cyrenians: Tackling the causes and consequences of homelessness.

Rock Trust: Working to prevent youth homelessness and to support young people to have better futures.

Rowan Alba: Rowan Alba provides supported accommodation to those who are homeless, and those who are facing homelessness. In particular we provide 24/7 supported accommodation to those who have been rough sleeping and cannot sustain a tenancy independently.

Churches Action for the Homeless: CATH has been preventing and alleviating homelessness in Perth and Kinross for over 30 years.

I-SPHERE: The Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University is a research centre with a mission – to use world-class research to help drive change for people affected by extreme disadvantage.

Salvation Army: Our vision is to provide safe, supportive, enabling, and nurturing environments for people to develop resilience so that they are assisted to fulfil their potential and effect positive change within their lifestyle.

Legal Services Agency: Legal Services Agency is a charity and law centre committed to providing advice and representation to those who may otherwise find it difficult to access legal support with a particular focus on housing law and preventing homelessness, mental health, equalities and discrimination, criminal injuries and employment law.

Turning Point Scotland: Turning Point Scotland is a leading social care developer and provider pioneering through partnership to transform lives and aspirations.