

Scottish Federation of Housing Associations submission of 14 April 2023

PE1956/C: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

Wheelchair Accessible homes

Response to question on the progress being made to deliver more wheelchair accessible homes across Scotland.

About SFHA

SFHA is the membership body for, and collective voice of, housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland. Housing associations and co-operatives provide homes for over half a million people in Scotland. Not-for-profit organisations, they don't just build, maintain and rent out homes: they also help their tenants by providing care and support services as well as advice and help on energy efficiency, finances, employment and much more.

Role of RSLs

The Scottish Government's affordable housing supply programme is set up to support the delivery of flexible adaptable homes through the provision of grants to registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to develop new homes. RSLs work in partnership with local authorities to develop the new homes identified in the Local Authority Housing Strategy, which should demonstrate that consideration is given to specialist housing requirements, including people with disabilities. This includes targets for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes.

RSLs have an important role to play in the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes and we know that there is a shortage of accessible housing, which is vital for the health, wellbeing and independence of people living with disabilities. RSLs are able to access funding for aids and adaptations to modify existing homes but funding for adaptations across the housing sector is fragmented and inadequate to support demand.

New Accessible Housing

For new housing, the latest figures we were able to obtain from [government statistics](#) show that for 2020-2021, the total number of wheelchair accessible homes developed for RSL social rent was 101 out of a total of 2,983 house completions: that is, 0.3%. We look forward to updated figures for 2021-22.

One of the principles set out in the Scottish Government's plans for Housing to 2040 is that Housing and the Housing Market should be highly flexible to enable people to meet their changing needs, including. "enough *accessible or adaptable homes across Scotland suitable for older people, disabled people, or anyone else in need of specialist accommodation...*". Plans include a **review of adaptations, new building standards and plans for a new accessible homes standard.**

Progress on this has been slow, while recent figures show a reduction in the number of approvals for housing associations to develop new homes. There is currently a review of housing with varying needs and a consultation expected in spring along with a consultation on the accessible homes standard. However, the review of aids and adaptations has not yet begun. There is also limited opportunity for RSLs to invest in existing housing stock which forms the majority of social housing. A [report commissioned by HACT](#) on the impact of social housing recommended a need for such investment in the existing stock for a range of interlocking reasons.

With an ageing population and a lack of affordable housing to meet the needs of disabled people, it may well be helpful for Scottish Government to review Target Guidance and explore options to increase the supply of affordable wheelchair accessible housing. This should include the review of funding for aids and adaptations for existing homes and sufficient funding to develop new homes.