

Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) submission of 11 May 2023

PE1956/D: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

ALACHO, agrees that the Scottish Government should review the existing wheelchair accessible housing target guidance.

Housing to 2040, is the Scottish Government's long term housing strategy, which sets out how homes need to be adaptable to meet the needs of the households, such as those living with long-term conditions and disabilities and everyone, who can and wants to, is enabled to live independently in a home of their own.

Local authorities each have an individual Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs), which seeks to deliver the Scottish Government commitment of building 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which 70% will be for social rent, with funding made available to local authorities through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP). It is the statutory responsibility of local authorities through their LHS to determine the appropriate housing required in their area, informed by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA). This includes identifying what specialist provision housing is needed locally, current supply and required delivery and including the delivery of specialist housing in their SHIP's and AHSP.

1. Background

In March 2019, the Scottish Government published [guidance for local authorities on the setting of Local Housing Strategy \(LHS\) targets to support the delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing](#) across all tenures. The guidance was developed collaboratively with stakeholders including the Accessible Housing group, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Association for Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) as well as disability organisations including Inclusion Scotland, Housing Options Scotland, and MND Scotland.

2. Scottish Housing Network report on local authority wheelchair accessible housing targets.

In October 2022, the Scottish Housing Network (SHN) contacted local authorities, asking them to provide a copy of their most recent SHIP, covering the period 2023-2028. SHN published their [Review of Local Authority Strategic Housing Investment plans 2023-2028 report](#), which provided an update on the national position at, February 2023 using as many available SHIPs as possible.

The key findings from the report, were positive, with most local authorities having a numeric or percentage target for wheelchair accessible homes in social rented sector.

Local authority wheelchair accessible homes targets, examples from SHN report showed:

- **East Dunbartonshire Council:** Last year's SHIP made reference to an all-tenure target of 10% for wheelchair and accessible housing.
- **City of Edinburgh Council:** 7% all tenure target set for wheelchair accessible homes, where previously no private sector target had been stated. 10% affordable housing target retained subject to review.
- **Falkirk Council:** 5% to 10% of new build properties to be wheelchair accessible where viable. Previously stated 'on sites subject to Affordable Housing Policy'.
- **Midlothian Council:** Numeric targets now set – 10 wheelchair accessible homes per annum in the social rented sector, 10 wheelchair accessible homes per annum in the private sector.

Some LA's increasing their social housing targets or changed them to include RSL partner developments.

It was also noted in the report that most SHIPs referred to an all-tenure target, an 'all tenure minimum', or a specific target for private sector development being in place and crucially, a number of local authorities had indicated that targets were being considered as part of Local Housing Strategy development.

3. Challenges for delivering increased numbers of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures

<p>Planning</p>	<p>There is no statutory planning obligation on house builders and private developers to include a proportion of wheelchair accessible homes.</p> <p>The SHN reports states, <i>“Supplementary Guidance introduced by one authority requiring private developers to build wheelchair accessible stock removed by the Reporter in LDP 2020.”</i></p>
<p>Financial Viability for new build social rent developments</p>	<p>Local authorities are finding it increasingly more difficult to financially afford to build new homes and this is evidenced in the slowing of the affordable homes supply programme.</p> <p>Another issue is around sizes of home and site capacity, resulting in mainly flatted development, with homes no larger than a 3 bed, with wheelchair accessible homes in the ground floor.</p> <p>Although it would be possible to build blocks with lifts, there are ongoing issues around increased build costs, maintenance and servicing costs and health and safety.</p>
<p>Definition of wheelchair accessible home</p>	<p>There is currently no definition of a wheelchair accessible home. In order to deliver the same standard of home across local authority areas and tenures, in Scotland a single definition is needed.</p>

In conclusion, there are multiple strands that need to come together to allow for a significant increase in the number of wheelchair accessible homes being built or adapted across the different tenures to meet the current and changing housing needs of Scotland's population.

The review of the [guidance for local authorities on the setting of Local Housing Strategy \(LHS\) targets to support the delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing](#), would allow for some of those strands to be created, such as the single definition of a wheelchair accessible home, evidence gathering to take place in the private sector and frameworks to be created for LA's to enforce a minimum requirement of wheelchair accessible homes to be delivered across tenures, monitor progress.