

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1956](#): Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to review the existing Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target guidance, and to explore options for increasing the availability of wheelchair accessible housing in Scotland, lodged by Louise McGee.

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

1. Research has identified a lack of accessible homes including those suitable for wheelchair users to live in permanently. For example, In 2018 the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's report [Housing and Disabled People Scotland's Hidden Crisis](#) argued that the 'supply of accessible and wheelchair-accessible housing across all tenures needs to increase significantly if Scotland's housing market is to be future proofed and disabled people are to enjoy independent lives.'
2. There is no universally agreed definition of wheelchair accessible homes and no national source on the number of existing wheelchair accessible homes.
3. In March 2019, the Scottish Government published, "[Guidance for setting of Local Housing Strategy targets to support the Delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing](#)." The guidance required councils to set a target for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures. This could be single target, setting out the requirement for housing across all tenures or could distinguish requirements by tenure and / or sub area where this can be evidenced. Councils are required to report annually on progress against the target(s). This guidance followed a commitment made in the Scottish Government's 2016 [Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan](#)
4. The guidance notes the lack of a universally agreed housing standard to define housing for wheelchair users to live in. It sets out the expectation that wheelchair accessible homes should meet certain

criteria of the Housing for Varying Needs (HfVN) design guide (for homes funded through the Scottish Government's affordable housing supply programme). Where councils use a higher standard than HfVN, further information should be provided and value for money should be ensured.

5. The guidance also outlines the purpose of the target:

“The purpose of setting a target is to provide a greater focus and commitment to the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures, which can be evidenced through annual reporting. Progress on delivery should be monitored in both the affordable and market housing sectors with the intended outcome of providing increased choice and flexibility for wheelchair users.

6. Councils are expected to prepare local housing strategies (LHS) at least every five years. The [Scottish Government published updated local housing strategy guidance in 2019](#). Councils prepare LHS at different points. Some councils are currently preparing new five-year LHS. As part of the process for setting targets some councils have undertaken further research and analysis into the demand for, and existing provision of, wheelchair accessible homes in their area.
7. The Scottish Government guidance on wheelchair accessible homes targets asked councils to provide a position statement in their Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) submission (2019-2024) and set out the intention that future SHIPs would be used to report progress towards each council's target across all tenures. SHIPs are submitted annually to the Scottish Government and set out how councils and their local partners will spend the resources available through the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP).
8. The Scottish Housing Network has collated information from councils' SHIPs covering the period 2022-2027, and other relevant documents, on the targets councils have set. As at 25 August 2022, 29 of 32 local authorities have set targets for affordable housing wheelchair accessible housing provision. The remaining three councils are working on the development of targets. [Midlothian Council recently \(on 23 August 2022\) agreed a target of 20 wheelchair accessible homes to be built in the council area each year](#) and are looking at further ways to increase that figure. [This followed a consultation on the issue.](#)
9. Councils have taken varied approaches to setting targets. For example:
- Where targets have been set, these are most commonly a % target. For example, [East Ayrshire Council's SHIP](#) states that "where possible and practicable, aspire to ensure that 10% of housing stock in new developments that feature in the SHIP is fully wheelchair accessible."

- Some other councils have set a numerical target. For example, [Dundee City Council's target is 8 wheelchair accessible homes a year](#).
 - Some councils have a different target set for their own stock and for RSL stock. For example, [North Lanarkshire council has a 5% target for all new build social rented housing, with a 10% target set for the council's own new build programme](#).
 - Few councils have set an all-tenure target or a specific target for the private sector. There are some challenges to developing a target for private sector providers. These include, for example, the lack of data on existing private sector provision, and the difficulty councils have holding private developers to a target without specific planning mechanisms in place.
10. The Scottish Government guidance provides that councils are required to report on progress towards delivery of its target,(s) annually through the SHIP process. SPICe has examined SHIPs from selected councils who have set targets to find out what information is being provided about monitoring and progress. Not all SHIPs provide monitoring information (this partly may reflect that some targets may have only been set recently). Where monitoring information is provided there seems to be variable progress towards those targets.
11. Even though some councils have not developed a target, or have not reported on progress, this does not mean that wheelchair accessible homes are not being developed in their areas.
12. The Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme out-turn reports provides statistics on the number of homes that are purpose built for older people or disabled people. [For example, in 2020-21 through the programme](#), 716 home were purpose built for older or disabled people including 198 identified as specifically designed for wheelchair users. The 198 homes specifically designed for wheelchair users accounts for 3% of the total 6,477 homes completed through the programme in 2020-21.
13. [Scottish Government SHIP guidance](#) published in June 2022 (for the preparation of SHIPs covering 2023-2028) emphasises the existing guidance on wheelchair accessible housing targets and reminds councils to include information in their SHIPs.

“Wheelchair Accessible Housing

The published guidance for setting of LHS targets to support the delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing. We are aware from information provided by local authorities that work to develop all-tenure targets is underway in areas to help inform new Local Housing Strategies that are being prepared. A session has been held with Scotland's Housing Network to help support local authorities with the

development of their targets. Where a local authority is currently or has yet to develop all-tenure targets, we encourage engagement with local authorities who have set all tenure targets to discuss the approach that they have taken.

The SHIP should include information on:

- a. what the wheelchair accessible housing target is across all tenures;
- b. a summary of what has been delivered to date against the target; and
- c. the planned investment for wheelchair accessible housing over the period of the SHIP.

Local authorities will be aware that draft National Planning Framework 4 includes proposals that new homes that improve affordability and choice should be supported including self-provided homes; accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes amongst others. Where proposals are included in Local Development Plans to include provision of wheelchair accessible housing, local authorities should be aware that these should be backed by evidence of need.”

14. The Scottish Government is reviewing the HfVN standard and, in its [Housing to 2040 policy document](#), also commits to introducing new building regulations to underpin a Scottish Accessible Homes Standard which all new homes must achieve. As Housing to 2040 states:

“We will carry out research and engagement with stakeholders to confirm the shortfalls of the current framework. Then, as we consult on the new Housing Standard in 2021 (see Part 4A), we will also explore views on the new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard. We will build on the review of the Housing for Varying Needs Design Guide and the implementation of all tenure wheelchair accessible housing targets, intending to introduce these new requirements into building standards from 2025/26 alongside the new Housing Standard.”

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[25/08/22]

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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