
The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Housing and integrated health and social care

March 2026



Introduction



The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) recognises that housing is not simply accommodation but a human right and a social determinant of health. A rights-based, person centred approach to housing support is essential for developing solutions that benefit the long-term health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland.

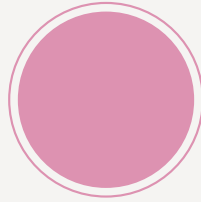
Housing must be a core component of the planning and delivery of integrated health and social care. Research consistently shows that providing good quality housing for all would significantly improve health outcomes. Support and services should be designed in a way that recognises these as interconnected aspects of people's wellbeing.

This flash report provides an overview of the role of housing within health and social care integration in Scotland, with additional insights into the relationship between housing, health and wellbeing. We hope these insights will inspire action toward a more integrated, equitable approach to housing and health.

The role of housing in health and social care integration

Statutory guidance for health and social care integration states that housing services must be considered an essential part of person centred care approaches and need to be integrated with health and social care services.¹ This document recognises the role of housing in achieving the national health and wellbeing outcomes.² When Integration Authorities create their Strategic Commissioning Plans (documents that set out how they will plan, commission and deliver services), they must include a Housing Contribution Statement that explains how housing services will be part of their integrated approach. This is intended to "provide an opportunity to bring together a joint focus on priorities and shared outcomes."³

Integration Authorities are responsible for a range of housing services. The table below shows which housing "functions" must be delegated to Integration Authorities, and which functions may be, if a local authority chooses to include them. Even for housing functions not delegated to the Integration Authority, there still needs to be good coordination between housing services and health and social care support.



Integrated housing functions

Housing functions that must be integrated

Home adaptations assistance: help for social housing providers to adapt homes for people with additional needs.

Individual adaptation assistance: help for any person needing home adaptations.

Gardening services: gardening help for elderly people and people with disabilities.

Housing support: support services that come together with personal care.

Housing functions that can, but do not have to be, transferred to an integration authority

- Furniture and laundry facilities
- Welfare services
- Homelessness services
- Housing registers
- Support to maintain housing

Housing: a social determinant of health

Housing is a social determinant of health, meaning it can impact health and wellbeing. According to the World Health Organisation, most of our health is determined by non-medical causes.⁴

Housing standards in Scotland are set out in several pieces of legislation and guidance which each apply to different types of housing tenure. Social housing must meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS).⁵ Privately rented homes must meet the standards for repair set out in the Repairing Standard Housing (Scotland) Act 2004.⁶ All housing must meet the Tolerable Standard.⁷ These documents outline the minimum requirements to make homes safe and habitable.

How does housing quality affect health? Housing can be unsafe if it is not properly built and maintained. Exposed wires, gaps in flooring, and other physical issues can be hazardous and lead to injuries.⁸ Drafty, cold, damp homes put people at greater risk of developing long term health conditions, including respiratory and cardiovascular conditions and allergic reactions.⁹ Homes that are not energy efficient can increase these risks. The high cost of heating drafty homes may discourage people from taking steps to increase ventilation, like opening windows, when it is cold outside.¹⁰ Gaps and holes may also lead to pest infestations that can carry diseases and be generally unpleasant.¹¹

Furthermore, housing can be unsafe if it does not meet the needs of the people who live in them, even if in good condition. Housing that is not built with accessibility in mind can put elderly and disabled people at increased risk of injury from slips and falls, which can in turn increase isolation and anxiety from fear of injury.¹²

Overcrowding can be a consequence of housing that is too small to accommodate families with children or multigenerational households. Overcrowding can increase the risk of spreading infectious diseases like COVID-19, as well as developing damp and mould issues.¹³

Because they spend more time in their homes, children, elderly and disabled people and people living with long term conditions are more often exposed to these health risks.¹⁴ Damp, cold, and other issues can worsen existing conditions,¹⁵ and dampness is a significant cause of asthma in children. Overcrowding puts children at greater risk of harm and developmental affects as well as poor mental health and lower educational attainment.¹⁶

Living with housing issues for prolonged periods of time can cause or contribute to existing mental health problems. Common issues include waiting a long time for repairs, affordability, temporary accommodation and insecure tenancies.

The housing emergency in Scotland

In May 2024, Scotland declared a national housing emergency. The reasons for this emergency vary between regions, but it generally stems from a shortage of affordable housing, high demand for social housing, rising private rents, and increased mortgage rates, compounded by inflation and funding cuts.¹⁷

Integration authorities can work with housing services in their areas to support and improve health outcomes. This is increasingly vital as the growing crisis in the availability of safe, quality housing across the country is exacerbating health inequalities and putting more pressure on an already stretched health and care system.

Our vision

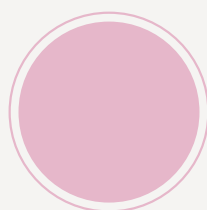
We would like to see a more integrated approach to housing provision and support in practice that recognises housing as a fundamental right, indivisible from the right to health.¹⁸

We recognise the importance of a model where housing is closely linked with health and social care structures to provide timely, appropriate, wraparound support that enables people to live as independently as possible at every age and stage of life.

Given the proven impact of housing on public health, it should be treated as an essential component of health and social care integration. Likewise, health and wellbeing should be put at the heart of all local policies, planning and decision making to ensure adequate, quality housing for all.

Greater collaboration and coordination between the social rented sector, third sector and statutory services is necessary to create a cohesive support system capable of addressing the public health challenges tied to housing provision.

By reframing housing as a preventative health measure, adopting person centred and human rights based practices, we can enhance public health outcomes across Scotland.



Community Links Worker Programme

The Community Links Worker (CLW) Programme, delivered by the ALLIANCE across Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire, supports people facing social and health challenges, including poverty, isolation, housing instability, debt, and abuse. Working closely with primary care and community services, CLWs provide direct, person-centred support that helps people overcome barriers and address the root causes of poor health and wellbeing.

CLWs play a key role in supporting people to realise their rights to health and housing. Housing concerns are one of the three most common reasons people are referred to CLWs in Glasgow, along with mental health and poverty. Programme reporting and interviews with CLWs highlight three recurring housing related challenges that affect people's health and wellbeing:

- **Shortage of affordable and social housing**
- **Unsafe and unsanitary living conditions**
- **Barriers to accessing housing support**

Some examples of support include helping people who are digitally excluded to make housing applications, addressing repairs or adjustments, accessing support for hoarding, advocacy to resolve issues with neighbours, homelessness, and asylum housing issues.

Many people seek support due to unsafe living conditions and can be referred to CLWs after presenting to GPs with ailments because of living with mould and damp. Fuel poverty and the high cost of energy compound these problems, with people describing having to choose between 'heating and eating.'

By providing tailored, person-centred support, and working with people for as long as they need, the CLW Programme has a hugely positive impact on people's lives.



This has been a really positive experience for me. It allowed my GP to focus on the medical side of my care whilst ensuring I could access support for the parts of my life that were adversely affecting my health - such as homelessness, benefit issues, etc. I was treated with kindness and compassion and seen as an individual. This made a huge difference.

- CLP Participant

Housing Options Scotland

Building a Brighter Future: Helping Adam Take His First Steps Towards Independence

Housing Options Scotland (HOS) is a nation-wide housing advice charity that supports people to navigate housing options and solutions. One of their programmes, **Making Moves**, supports young disabled people and their families plan for independent living. Making Moves ensures that the young person - their needs, preferences and will - remain at the heart of planning for their future.

They were recently contacted by a mother, Hannah to talk about **transition planning for her son Adam**. She had begun to think about the future and realised that with age she may not always be able to provide the same level of support he depends on. Wanting to ensure Adam would be prepared for the next stage of life, she reached out to HOS to explore options for independent living. After talking to an HOS housing broker, it was clear there was a range of possibilities available for Adam.

Through the Making Moves process, the first step was to bring together everyone involved in Adam's care for a Making Moves planning meeting. This meeting brought together the young person, their family, carers, and wider support network to have open, meaningful conversations about what home really means to Adam.

These discussions go far beyond bricks and mortar. They are designed to give everyone involved a seat at the table and a voice in shaping a future that truly reflects Adam's needs, goals, and aspirations.

Together, we explored important questions: Where would Adam feel happiest and most supported? What kind of environment will help him thrive? Who and what does he need nearby to feel safe, connected, and fulfilled?

The HOS housing broker is continuing to work with Adam and his mum to coordinate the meeting. With the right support in place, they are now on the path toward making informed, empowered decisions about Adam's future.

The Making Moves service is a great example of a person centred, integrated approach to housing, health and social care because it recognises that housing part of a broader system of support that helps people to live well, with dignity and independence at every stage of life.

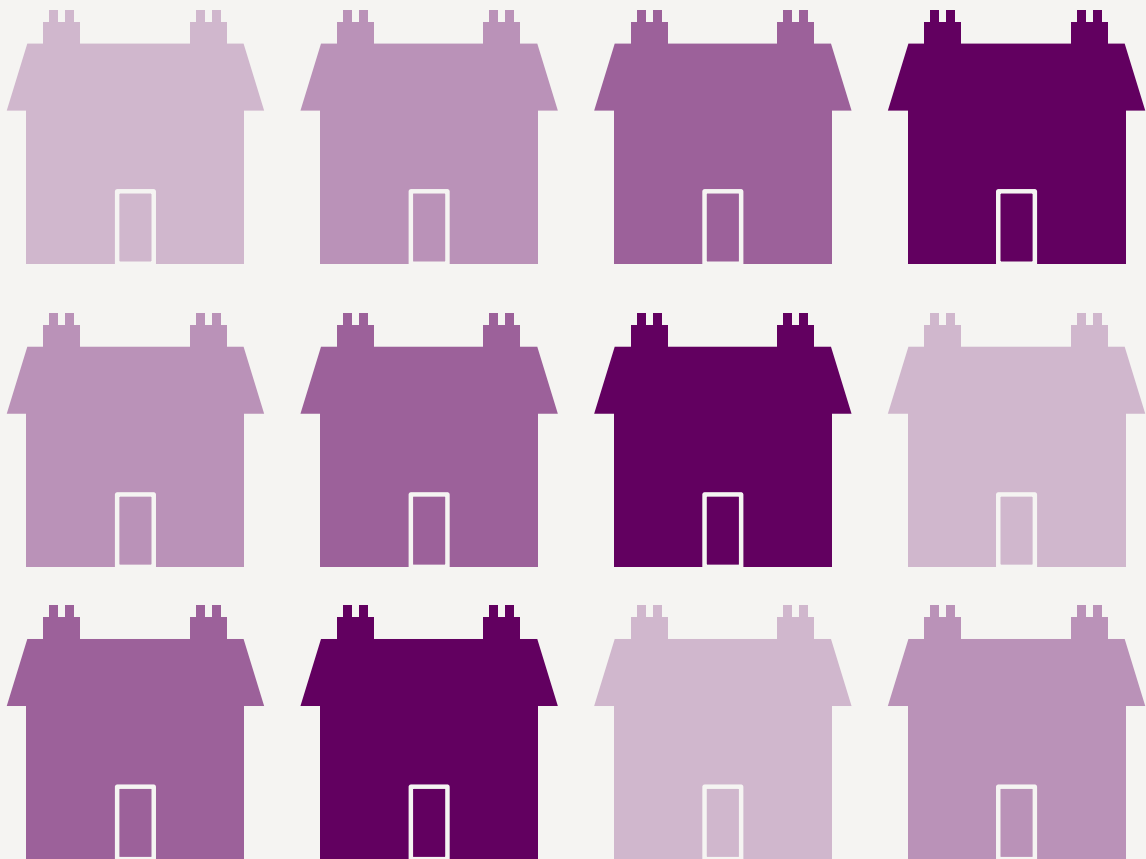
About the ALLIANCE Integration Programme

The Integration Programme supports the third sector to shape meaningful health and social care integration in Scotland by:

- Championing the third sector as an equal partner in integration.
- Ensuring lived experience and human rights shape policy and practice.
- Identifying, sharing, and promoting what works in integration across Scotland.
- Bringing people together to build relationships, change cultures, and influence lasting systems change

To learn more about the programme, visit our website:

www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/health-and-social-care-integration/



About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector membership organisation for the health and social care sector. We bring together over 3,500 people and organisations dedicated to achieving our vision of a Scotland where everyone has a strong voice and enjoys the right to live well, with dignity and respect. Our members are essential in creating a society in which we all can thrive, and we believe that by working together, our voice is stronger.

We work to improve the wellbeing of people and communities across Scotland by supporting change in health, social care and other public services so they better meet the needs of everyone in Scotland. We do this by bringing together the expertise of people with lived experience, the third sector, and organisations across health and social care to shape better services and support positive change.

The ALLIANCE has three core aims.

We seek to:

- **Empower people with lived experience:** we ensure disabled people, people with long term conditions, and unpaid carers are heard and that their needs remain at the heart of the services and communities.
- **Support positive change:** we work within communities to promote co-production, self management, human rights, and independent living.
- **Champion the third sector:** we work with, support and encourage co-operation between the third sector and health and social care organisations.



The ALLIANCE is committed to upholding human rights. We embed lived experience in our work and aim to ensure people are meaningfully involved at every level of decision-making.

Working together creates positive, long-lasting impact. We work in partnership with the Scottish Government, NHS Boards, universities, and other key organisations within health, social care, housing, and digital technology to manage funding and develop successful projects. Together, our voice is stronger, and we can create meaningful change.

¹ Scottish Government (2015) 'Housing services and integrated health and social care: housing advice note.' Available: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-advice-note/>. This document is part of a collection of guidance and advice around health and social care integration produced to support the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. (available at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/public-bodies-joint-working-scotland-act-2014-statutory-guidance-and-advice/>).The Act sets out the legislative framework for integrating adult health and social care support. Learn more about the Act here: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/health-and-social-care-integration/integration-support/about-integration/>.

² Scottish Government (2015) 'National health and wellbeing outcomes framework.' Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-health-wellbeing-outcomes-framework/>.

³ Scottish Government (2015) 'Housing services and integrated health and social care: housing advice note.' Available: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-advice-note/>.

⁴ WHO (2025) 'Fact sheet: Social determinants of health.' Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/social-determinants-of-health>.

⁵ Scottish Government (2016) 'Scottish Housing Quality Standard: guidance for social landlords.' Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/shqs-technical-guidance-for-social-landlords/>.

⁶ Scottish Government (2024) 'Repairing Standard: statutory guidance for private landlords.' Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/repairing-standard-statutory-guidance-private-landlords/>.

⁷ The Tolerable Standard is outlined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1987/26/part/IV/crossheading/the-tolerable-standard>.

⁸ WHO (2018) Housing and health guidelines.' Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550376>.

⁹ UK Government (2024) 'Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home.' Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/damp-and-mould-understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-for-rented-housing-providers/understanding-and-addressing-the-health-risks-of-damp-and-mould-in-the-home--2#key-messages>.

¹⁰ Public Health Scotland 2022, [**Population health impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland: A rapid health impact assessment**](#).

¹¹ WHO (2018) Housing and health guidelines.' Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550376>.

¹² WHO (2018) Housing and health guidelines.' Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550376>.

¹³Public Health Scotland 2022, [Population health impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland: A rapid health impact assessment.](#)

¹⁴Public Health Scotland 2022, Population health impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland: A rapid health impact assessment; WHO (2018) Housing and health guidelines.' Available at: [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550376.](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550376)

¹⁵The ALLIANCE (2022) 'Disabled People, Unpaid Carers and the Cost of Living Crisis: Impacts, Responses and Long Term Solutions.' Available at: [https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/alliance-cost-of-living-report-calls-for-further-emergency-support/.](https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/alliance-cost-of-living-report-calls-for-further-emergency-support/)

¹⁶The Health Foundation (2020) 'Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On.' Available at: [https://www.health.org.uk/reports-and-analysis/reports/health-equity-in-england-the-marmot-review-10-years-on-0.](https://www.health.org.uk/reports-and-analysis/reports/health-equity-in-england-the-marmot-review-10-years-on-0)

¹⁷SPICe (2024) 'Scotland's Housing Emergency.' Available at: [https://spice-spotlight.scot/2024/06/27/scotlands-housing-emergency/.](https://spice-spotlight.scot/2024/06/27/scotlands-housing-emergency/)

¹⁸The Poverty Alliance (2021) 'Examining the relationship between the Rights to Health and Housing: A review of international evidence.' Research commissioned by the ALLIANCE and Shelter Scotland. Available at: [https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/whats-the-relationship-between-the-human-rights-to-health-and-housing/.](https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/whats-the-relationship-between-the-human-rights-to-health-and-housing/)

