



From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy 2018-2023



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1 Introduction

Executive Summary

The Local Housing Strategy sets out Aberdeenshire's key housing plans over the next five years. It is informed by an assessment of housing need and demand for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. This shows that there is high levels of need and demand for housing of all types and tenures in Aberdeenshire. In particular, there is pressure on one-bedroom homes and on housing for older people. This is likely to rise in the future.

The table below sets out the priorities and key actions to take forward:

Priority	Action
Affordable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the supply of social rent • Increase the supply of intermediate housing • Encourage and support owners of empty homes to bring them back into use • Assist in the regeneration of our town centres • Enable the provision of affordable housing in our rural communities
Energy Efficiency, Fuel Poverty and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the energy efficiency of housing across all tenures • Assist households to maximise their income • Reduce fuel costs for households across all tenures • Change behaviours
Homelessness and Housing Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve outcomes for homeless people • Use a housing options approach • Provide and review temporary accommodation • Provide a holistic approach to housing support services
Independent Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure new build and existing stock is configured for those with particular needs • Provide equipment and adaptations to reduce unmet need • Make best use of existing stock through the allocations process
Minority Ethnic Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support minority ethnic groups to access accommodation and support • Improve relations between Gypsy/Traveller and settled communities
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support homeowners and private sector tenants to repair, maintain, adapt and improve their homes (scheme of assistance) • Improve management standards and engage with more landlords in the private rented sector

2 Strategic Context

Where does the local housing strategy fit?

The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) places a duty on local authorities to prepare a local housing strategy. The strategy should set out the policy of the local authority to carry out its housing functions. It should coordinate the activities of other social housing providers in the local area. Social housing providers should align their strategies and corporate plans to support the delivery of the local housing strategy. It should be informed by an assessment of housing need and demand. In 2014, the Scottish Government published [guidance](#) on the development of local housing strategies. This sets out a number of requirements that each strategy should cover.

At a national level, the Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy contributes to all of the Scottish Government’s 16 national outcomes as well as the four national housing outcomes.

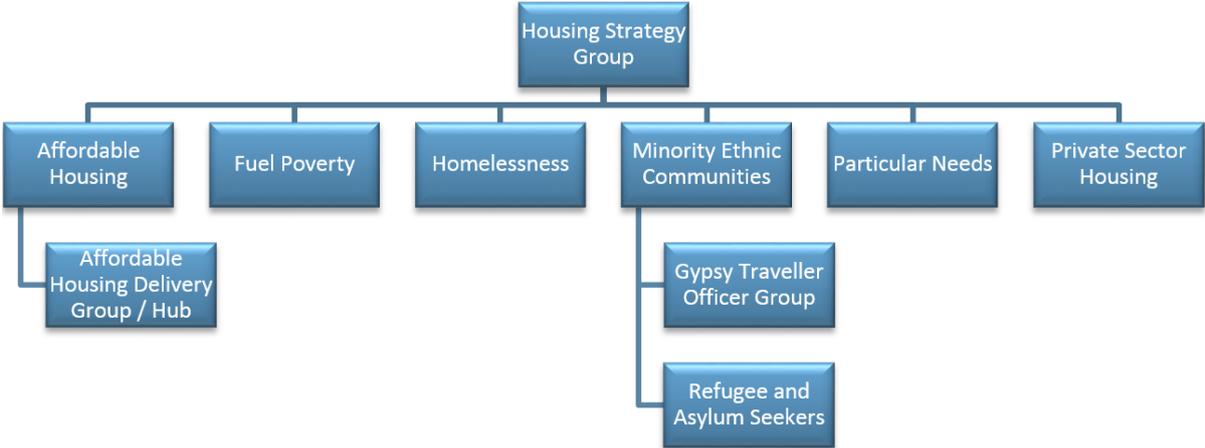
Table 1: The Local Housing Strategy in the National Strategic Context						
National Performance Framework	16 national outcomes					
National Housing Outcomes	A well-functioning housing system	High quality sustainable homes	Sustainable communities		Homes that meet people’s needs	
Local Housing Strategy Priorities	Affordable housing	Private sector housing	Energy efficiency, fuel poverty and sustainability	Minority ethnic communities	Independent living	Homelessness and housing options

The [Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan](#) provides the overall vision for the development of the north east of Scotland. Building on the existing plan that was published in 2014, the development of the local housing strategy has been aligned with the draft main issues report for the next plan which is likely to be published in early 2018. In addition, the strategy has been informed by the [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017](#) which sets out exactly where development is expected to take place up to 2026.

The [Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2017-2022](#) identifies the right mix of housing across Aberdeenshire as a priority. This strategy helps to fulfil that ambition. The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership has agreed the priorities for its Local Outcomes Improvement Plan to reduce child poverty; change Aberdeenshire’s relationship with alcohol; and connected and cohesive communities. It is clear that the local housing strategy can impact on all of these priorities.

How will the local housing strategy be delivered

The delivery of the local housing strategy will be overseen by the Housing Strategy Group. This will comprise members of active affordable housing providers, the private sector and other relevant public bodies. A group will drive forward each priority within the strategy and be responsible for agreeing, monitoring and delivering an action plan. Overall performance for the local housing strategy will be reported to the Communities Committee of Aberdeenshire Council on a regular basis.



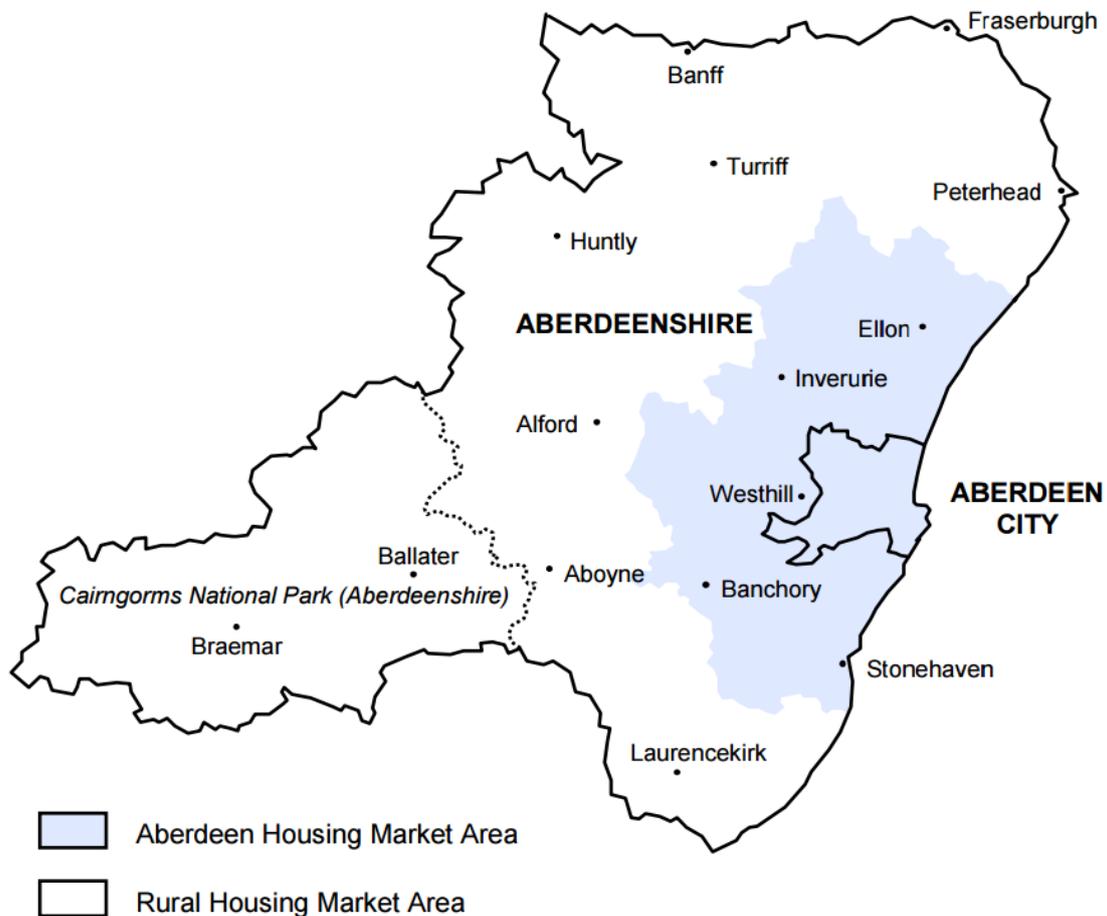
3 Evidence

Aberdeenshire

In 2016 Aberdeenshire has a population of 262,190. This has increased significantly by 16% since 2001 and is projected to increase again by 19% to 311,887 in 2039. In 2016, there are 116,421 dwellings in Aberdeenshire which has increased by 20% over the last 15 years. As expected in a rural area, the majority of dwellings are either detached (47%) or semi-detached (29%) and there are fewer terraced dwellings (12%) or flats (12%). Most properties are privately owner occupied (71%), with an additional 10% of all dwellings in the private rented sector. The social rented sector accounts for 15% of the overall housing stock.

While Aberdeenshire remains a relatively wealthy area, there are nevertheless pockets of deprivation and rural isolation. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies different elements of poverty in small areas across Scotland, with five datazones (small areas) in the most deprived 15% in Scotland.

The Housing Need and Demand Assessment identifies two housing market areas within Aberdeenshire: the Aberdeen Housing Market Area and the Rural Housing Market Area:



Housing Need and Demand Assessment Key Findings

The Aberdeen City and Shire Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2017 is the main body of evidence to inform the development of the local housing strategy. It identified a number of key findings that partners have to plan for and some of these are captured below:

Demographic	Affordability	Economic	Housing Condition and Profile
Fall in oil price and impact on the local economy may significantly reduce in-migration to the area affecting future growth in population and households	Despite economic climate, private sector rents and house prices are unaffordable in most parts of the area for those on low or average incomes	Fall in oil price has had significant negative impacts on the local economy both within and beyond the oil and gas sector	High levels of disrepair in the private sector, although this has improved significantly for the social housing stock in meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard
High rate of growth in smaller and particularly single person households	Fall in oil price is slowing house price inflation but affordability may not improve much since incomes and employment rates also likely to fall	Difficulty of predicting future oil prices means uncertainty for local economy and for the housing market. However, relatively stable price since April 2016 gives some confidence	High levels of fuel poverty, particularly in rural areas
Significant increases in older age groups, particularly over 75s in Aberdeenshire	Private sector rents levels have fallen which may improve affordability	Future housing supply across all tenures subject to market conditions and build-out rate of developers	Under occupation is high and is estimated at 41%. This is even more pronounced in properties with 3 or more bedrooms, rising to 70%
High proportion of families under 24 live in concealed households ¹ in Aberdeenshire		Potential for arrears to increase following introduction of Universal Credit	

¹ Household with more than one family

In addition to the Housing Need and Demand Assessment, evidence was gathered from consultation and engagement with different groups:

- Aberdeenshire Citizens' Panel survey
- Aberdeenshire Council tenant satisfaction survey
- New Scots Refugee Integration strategy workshop
- Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Research
- Planning for the Future tenant group
- Private sector landlord information sessions
- Aberdeenshire Council members online survey and workshop
- Local housing strategy partnership groups

To look ahead over the next five years and beyond, a horizon-scanning exercise was carried out for political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal and organisational factors. All of this information was pulled together to inform the priorities in the local housing strategy.

4 Priorities

Affordable Housing

Outcome	People will have access to an increased supply of affordable homes.
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Overview

Following on from the progress of the last five years, increasing the supply of quality affordable housing continues to be a key priority for Aberdeenshire Council. This will help to meet housing need and demand facilitating demographic and economic growth supporting [Aberdeen City Region Deal](#), with the house building industry playing a vital role in supporting our local economy through the creation and sustainment of both employment and training opportunities. It will assist in creating and maintaining mixed and sustainable communities where people want to live, work and visit.

A partnership approach is vital to the effective delivery of quality affordable housing and our multi-agency Affordable Housing Forum and the Affordable Housing Delivery Team aim to:

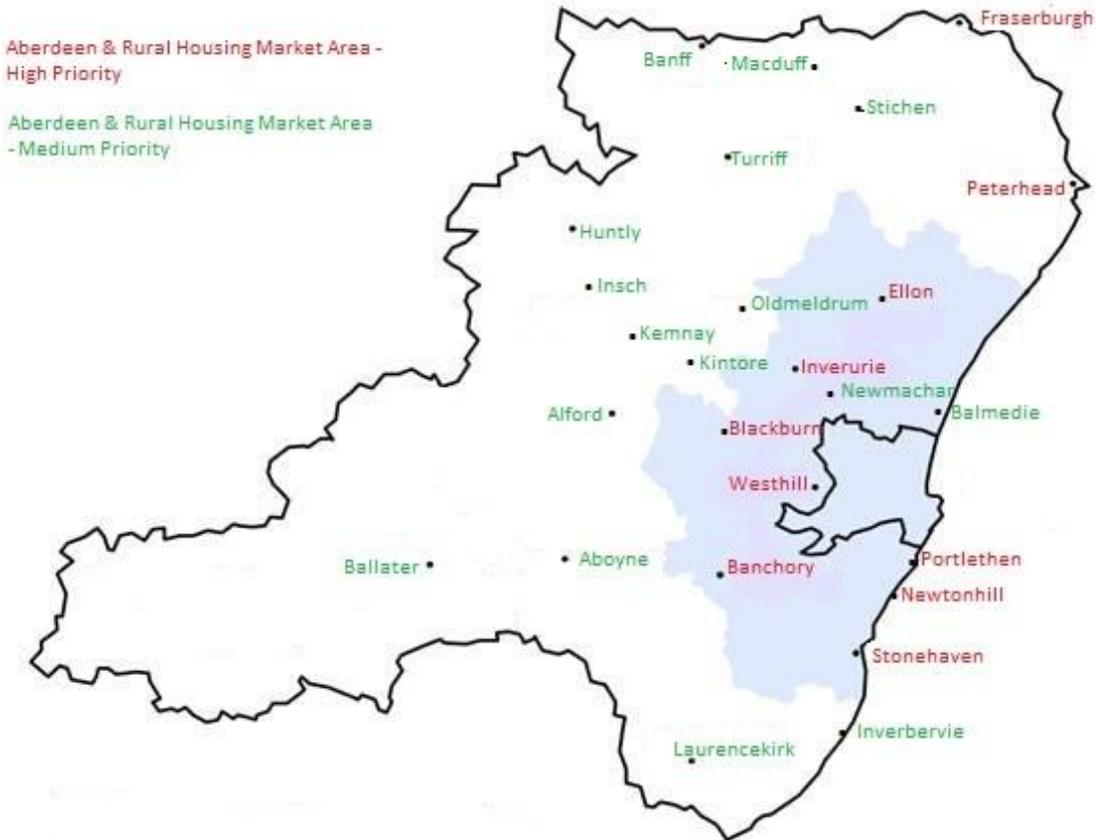
- Ensure the delivery of affordable housing to meet identified housing need by building the right houses in the right locations;
- Prepare the Strategic Housing Investment Plan;
- Maximise all funding streams as well as investigate and implement new funding models;
- Identify barriers to the delivery of affordable housing and work collaboratively to identify and implement solutions;
- Deliver best value for money by ensuring effective procurement and constructions mechanisms; and
- Share best practice and expertise.

Evidence

The Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2017 informs the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan, the Local Development Plan as well as the Local Housing Strategy. The assessment projects need and demand over three different scenarios up to 2039. In setting a housing supply target, local authorities must take account of economic and market factors. Influences include the build out rate of developers and the availability of resources. The central of the three scenarios estimates that an additional 2,125 houses across all tenures are required over a five-year period for Aberdeen City and Shire. Based on the assessment and the factors above, the housing supply target for affordable housing in Aberdeenshire is proposed to be 425 per year. This is set out in the [Housing Methodology paper](#).

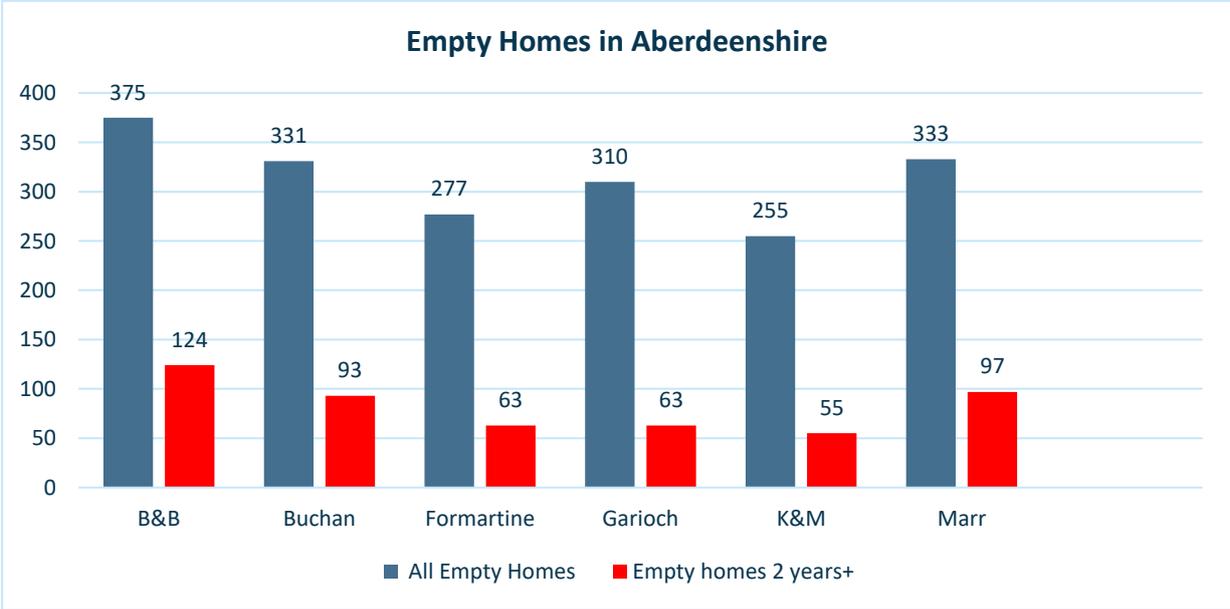
Although the housing waiting list has reduced and the supply of affordable housing has increased, housing need continues to outstrip the supply of affordable housing. An aging population as well as an increasing proportion of single person households, alongside welfare reform will likely continue to place increasing pressure on 1 bed

properties. The map below shows the settlements which have the highest housing need based on a 2016/17 assessment of waiting list, turnover and stock data. It is recognised that there is housing need across Aberdeenshire and that other sources of data such as local needs surveys can be used to inform investment plans.



ABERDEENSHIRE

Across Aberdeenshire as at July 2017 there were 1881 Empty Homes, of which 495 have been empty for longer than two years.



We recognise that empty properties are a wasted resource which could be brought back into use as part of the housing supply to meet housing need across all tenures. And this can benefit local communities by bringing new residents into the locale, supporting the local economy, services and facilities, improving the local environment and increasing the feeling of community safety.

Actions

1	Increase the supply of social rented housing by 340 units per year
2	Increase the supply of intermediate housing, including mid-market rental and affordable home ownership options by 85 units per year
3	Assist in the regeneration of our town centres
4	Enable the provision of affordable housing in our rural communities

We will continue to work with our partners to increase the supply of affordable housing. Working together we will:-

- Maximise all funding streams including Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme, Council Tax 2nd Homes, Developer Obligations Commuted Payments, Scottish Government [Rural Housing Fund](#) and seek to identify new funding streams such as Aberdeenshire Council's Affordable Housing Reserve Fund;
 - Deliver a range of affordable housing tenures, house sizes and house types to meet identified housing need both now and in the future;
 - Continue to secure affordable housing through our [Local Development Plan's Affordable Housing policy](#), actively supporting a 'Place Making' approach to the delivery of vibrant and sustainable communities;
 - Prioritise investment through the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#) to support
 - A Town Centre First Approach to the regeneration of our Town Centres to help improve the quality of housing and local environment, with particular focus on our four northern towns of Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead
 - Our rural communities by promoting appropriate affordable housing development so that they can thrive and meet local housing need
 - Further develop our multi-agency approach by nominating an "Affordable Housing Champion" to lead and streamline affordable housing delivery through an enhanced collaborative vehicle to
 - Ensure a sufficient land supply available for affordable housing;
 - Undertake any actions required to make sites deliverable;
-

- Maximise infrastructure investment, including digital infrastructure;
- Examine and adopt good practice.

5 Encourage and support home-owners to bring empty homes back into use

As part of our commitment to bringing Empty Homes back into use we will continue to participate in the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to explore and adopt best practice. We will implement a number of initiatives to support Empty Home owners:

- Develop and implement a "Matchmaker" scheme to help prospective sellers and buyers of empty properties find each other.
 - Advice and Support leaflets re:
 - Maintaining your empty property
 - Renovations and home improvement discounts
 - Renting your empty property
 - Selling your empty property
 - Investigate and where appropriate apply for funding to assist bringing empty homes back into use.
-

Resources

The resources to deliver affordable housing over the next five years are detailed in the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#). The funding includes national sources such as the Scottish Government affordable housing grant, the rural housing fund and the housing infrastructure fund, as well as the housing revenue accounts of social housing providers, Council Tax second homes funding and developer obligations commuted payments.

Performance

- Number of Social Rented properties completed per year
- Number of Mid-Market Rent properties completed per year
- Number of Low Cost Shared Equity Properties completed per year
- Number of Empty Homes brought back into use per year

Fuel Poverty, Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

Outcome **Fuel poverty to be reduced for all households as far as is reasonably practicable.**

Overview

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 set out a statutory duty to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016. However, this was not achieved. The formation of a new statutory duty to eradicate fuel poverty, a new strategy, a new fuel poverty definition and new regulations in the private rented sector, are still under development and will be finalised in 2018.

Since the last local housing strategy was produced in 2012, significant efforts have been made to reduce fuel poverty. Private sector households have been encouraged to install energy efficiency measures by participating in Scottish Government schemes, with all funding awards fully utilised.

Households of all tenures across Aberdeenshire have access to energy efficiency information, support and advice through Aberdeenshire Council's contract with SCARF. The service provided by this contract enables householders to identify measures to make their home more energy efficient; identifies possible funding streams to undertake these improvements; identifies fuel cost savings through switching tariff / supplier and also making behaviour changes. SCARF also have a recognised income maximisation referral process in place.

At the same time, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a duty on public bodies to help reduce Scotland's carbon emissions. Approximately 25% of greenhouse gas emissions derive from houses. It aims to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 42% by 2020, as a step towards an 80% reduction by 2050.

Evidence

A household spending more than 10% of its disposable income (including housing benefit or income support for mortgage interest) on household fuel to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, is said to be in fuel poverty. Extreme fuel poverty is when a household has to spend more than 20% of its disposable household income on household fuel.

Aberdeenshire has a fuel poverty percentage of 38% compared to Scotland as a whole, which has 34% of households living in fuel poverty. The findings show that Aberdeenshire as a whole has an extreme fuel poverty percentage of 14% compared to Scotland as a whole, which has 9% of households living in extreme fuel poverty. Fuel poverty levels in Aberdeenshire are higher than 19 of the other local authorities in Scotland. Contributing factors include the rural and remote locations of many of the settlements across Aberdeenshire which are off-gas areas, where fuel choice is limited.

Actions

There are three main factors that contribute to fuel poverty. They are:

- Poor Energy Efficiency of Housing, through low levels of insulation or old or inefficient heating systems
- Low Income, which is often linked to absolute poverty
- High Fuel Costs, including use of expensive fuel sources or inappropriate tariffs

In addition to these three main factors, the **behaviours** of householders can greatly influence the energy consumption within their home.

1 Improve the energy efficiency of housing both in the private sector and by meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing

We will invest significantly to improve the energy efficiency of our social housing stock to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing. The aim of the standard is to build on the achievements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and to tackle climate change and fuel poverty and to ensure that social rented housing meets a proposed minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating by 2020.

The Home Energy Efficiency Programmes Scotland: Area Based Scheme was launched in 2013/14 to upgrade Scotland's housing stock, to tackle fuel poverty, to reduce carbon emissions, to lever Energy Company Obligation and to support the local economy and sustainable local economic development. Since the scheme commenced, Aberdeenshire Council has successfully bid for and been awarded, a total of £15,322,000 in funding. This has enabled 2,542 measures to be installed in private sector housing, with a further 322 planned. The installations of these measures will help reduce carbon emissions by a total of 94,565.12 tonnes* and help lower household fuel bills by a total of £22,905,680* over the lifetime of the measures. In addition to these savings, householders will be warmer and more comfortable in their homes and households living in fuel poverty may be taken out of fuel poverty or have increased affordable warmth.

Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP) Pilot Scheme was launched in 2016 to improve the energy efficiency of both domestic and non-domestic properties throughout Scotland. Aberdeenshire Council received funding for the pilot scheme which enable various energy efficiency measures to be installed in a total of 100 homes in the private sector and to 3 non domestic properties. An application for SEEP Phase 2 funding was submitted by Aberdeenshire Council in March 2017. The bid included funding for a feasibility study to identify costs and risk factors associated with developing a biomass based district heating system; various energy efficiency measures in a Sports & Community Trust Facility and also energy efficiency measures in domestic housing. Certain elements of the funding bid were successful.

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to make ambitious applications to the Scottish Government for funding for energy efficiency schemes to improve the energy efficiency of both private sector housing and non-domestic buildings.

Aberdeenshire Council will promote and manage these schemes accordingly, to ensure maximum uptake, to fully utilise any funds awarded.

Aberdeenshire Council, will ensure that all households have access to the services of their delivery partner, SCARF and their Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) to identify possible energy efficiency improvements within their homes and provide assistance to source any grants or schemes available to help with these measures.

2 Assist households to maximise their income

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to ensure that householders across Aberdeenshire in all tenures will have access to the information and advice services on how to maximise their income by joint working with internal and external agencies. Households in most need will be targeted by SCARF, Citizens Advice Bureau, Aberdeenshire Council's Care and Repair service, Aberdeenshire Council's Welfare Officers and Gordon Rural Action who have well established income maximisation referral processes in place.

3 Reduce fuel costs, by providing in-depth energy efficiency information, support and advice to households in all tenures

There are two main ways of reducing fuel costs for residents are to:

- Reduce the amount paid for fuel
- Reduce energy consumption

Aberdeenshire Council has a contract in place with SCARF to provide Energy Efficiency Information, Support and Advice. Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) is their in-home, in-depth advice service available to householders (of all tenures) throughout Aberdeenshire. As well as advice on energy efficiency, the advisors can provide advocacy and assistance on dealing with tariffs, fuel debt and metering issues. HEAT advisors can help with any fuel bill concerns and provide advice on switching fuel tariffs or even fuel supplier.

HEAT advisors can provide a heating demonstration to ensure the householder gets the most out of their heating system through effective use of controls, timers and programmers. As well as providing practical energy saving advice, whilst in the property, an advisor can also identify potential for energy efficiency improvements to make the home warmer and cheaper to heat and depending on the household's circumstances, will be able to advise on any financial assistance available from the Scottish Government to help with installing these measures.

Through partnership working, Aberdeenshire Council launched a project pilot scheme in 2014 to form a Community Oil Buying Club in the Marr area. By bulk buying, members enjoy typical savings of 2p-4p per litre of on domestic heating oil. Membership is free and members are not obliged to purchase their oil through the club every time, or indeed at all. The North East of Scotland

Credit Union is a partner in the project and offered householders financial advice and assistance with the purchase of their domestic fuel.

Following the success of the pilot scheme, several more Community Oil Buying Clubs have been formed in the Marr area. A report of the research carried out in Marr, on the effectiveness of bulk buying fuel clubs, was circulated to all Aberdeenshire Area Project Officers, to encourage the formation of such clubs across the whole of Aberdeenshire.

4 Provide households with practical advice to change behaviours to reduce energy usage

Various factors can result in households in Aberdeenshire falling in to fuel poverty. Rising energy prices can be attributed to many cases but changes in behaviour of household members can also result in them becoming fuel poor.

Making lifestyle changes is a simple way a household can attempt to avoid falling in to fuel poverty. Avoiding leaving appliances on standby, switching off lights when leaving a room and ensuring a heating system if being utilised efficiently are no-cost easy behavioural changes households can make but drastically reduce energy bills over a period of time. Small, low cost investments by householders, such a draught-proofing and installing energy efficient lightbulbs can also lower bills.

The contract that Aberdeenshire Council has in place with SCARF, ensures that households across Aberdeenshire, of all tenures, have access to the service of HEAT. This will provide householders with practicable information on how certain behavioural changes within their homes could reduce their energy costs.

Resources

The resources to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency include the social housing providers' housing revenue accounts, national funding through the [Home Energy Efficiency Programmes Scotland: Area Based Schemes](#) and Scotland's [Energy Efficiency Programme](#).

Performance

- Energy efficiency measures installed in private sector housing
- Energy efficiency measures installed in social sector housing
- Households receiving in-house, in-depth energy efficiency advice
- Households provided with social tariff referrals
- Households assisted to maximise their income

Homelessness and Housing Options

Outcomes	<p>Homeless people are empowered to transform their lives</p> <p>Homeless people are provided with suitable temporary accommodation where necessary until a permanent housing solution can be found</p> <p>Service users satisfy their accommodation needs by assessing suitable options through a housing options approach</p> <p>Those who require additional support to find or remain in their homes receive housing support</p>
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Overview

The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) places a statutory duty on each local authority to carry out an assessment of homelessness in its area and to prepare and submit to Ministers, a strategy (as part of the local housing strategy) for the prevention and alleviation of homelessness. The Scottish Government has issued [guidance](#) on the prevention of homelessness.

Any approach taken to address homelessness should be underpinned by robust, accurate and up to date evidence on the extent and nature of homelessness. This should consist of an overall homelessness figure, broken down by age, gender and household composition, the reason for homelessness and the person's location. Homelessness can be disproportionately affected by gender and age, including those affected by domestic abuse, leaving prison or another type of supported accommodation.

Local authorities should work closely with partners, such as registered social landlords and private sector landlords, to ensure that collaboration results in a positive and effective contribution being made to the homelessness agenda at a local level. The main focus should be on the prevention of homelessness before it occurs through joint working and the use of the [housing options approach](#).

A joined up approach to planning for known milestones is important and particularly relevant for Looked after Children and those leaving prison. Here, a change in circumstances can be anticipated, but a lack of planning and available provision can lead to homelessness. Individuals at risk should be identified early and through partnership working, effective housing provision put in place together with all relevant housing related services, to provide the support required.

Local authorities should be aware of [the Scottish Housing Regulator's Housing Options and Homelessness Thematic Inquiry](#) and the need to consider the recommendations and identify where action may be needed. Guidance (developed by the Scottish Government, CoSLA, Association of Local Authority Chief Housing

Officers, and local authorities) will assist local authorities in their approaches to housing options and the prevention of homelessness.

Temporary and Supported Accommodation - Impact of Welfare Reform

Welfare Reform has the potential to impact significantly on homelessness. All changes that are made by the Department for Work and Pensions should be taken into account when making decisions at local authority level in relation to temporary and supported accommodation arrangements.

Over a period of time, the use of bed and breakfasts and hostels has diminished in favour of other forms of temporary accommodation. However, in certain circumstances there is a role for hostel accommodation and an assessment of need for this type of accommodation may be required, particularly in light of the potential impacts from welfare reform.

Consideration should also be given to the revision of the shared room rate and the implications this may have for people under the age of 35.

Evidence

The Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2017 shows a steady decline in homeless presentations, continuously falling from 1,610 in 2011/12 to 1,039 in 2016/17. This follows the overall trend in Scotland which showed a further 2% decrease for 2016/17 mainly due to the impact of housing options and homelessness prevention strategies. Aberdeenshire Council have continued to see a steady number of individuals approaching for housing advice, the main reasons for people approaching the service is due to being asked to leave their accommodation and non-violent dispute, which mirrors the trend throughout Scotland. The reasons for these approaches can often be traced back to a lack of affordable housing manifesting itself in issues of affordability of private sector rents or overcrowding. In addition, welfare reform changes arising from the UK Welfare Reform Act 2012 are likely to have a significant impact on homeless temporary accommodation.

In order to meet the demands of potentially homeless and homeless households in the area, Aberdeenshire Council's Options and Homelessness service is currently working on implementing a Housing Options approach in line with the Housing Options Guidance released by the Scottish Government in 2016. This approach will lead to a more generic approach when dealing with homelessness, prevention and housing options advice to ensure a person centred approach is provided to service users. A full training plan has been devised for staff and implementation of this approach will take place in late 2017.

The Housing Support Services (Homelessness) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 came into force in 2013 and placed a duty on Local Authorities to assess anyone who is unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness who may be in need of Housing Support, and to ensure provision of support to that person. Scotland wide, the number of homeless applicants assessed and identified as having at least one support need has increased from 34% in 2012/13 to 44% in 2016/17. 46% of applicants indicated they required support for basic housing management, 46% identified support

needs because of a mental health problem, and 25% cited a drug or alcohol dependency. Aberdeenshire have a team of Housing Officers (Support) who assess and provide low level Housing Support to assist in better tenancy sustainment and prevention of homelessness. We also commission Housing Support through a support framework which provides longer term support and can range from a minimum of 1 hour per week up to 10 hours per week. In addition we fund various projects to deliver low level tenancy sustainment or housing support services as well as more intense support such as Pitstop which houses 10 individuals with varying multiple complex needs, Shield which provides outreach support to individuals with multiple complex needs as well as operating a drop in service, and The Foyer which is commissioned specialist supported accommodation for young People. In the year 2016/17 a total of 1270 referrals were made to Housing Support, however non-engagement remains an issue, and given that there is an increase in the number of people approaching the Homelessness Service who have multiple complex needs, it is critical that services continue to work together to achieve better outcomes and meet the needs of these individuals. There are already strong links through the Homelessness Strategic Outcome Group, and we are in the early stages of piloting a Housing First Project to better meet the needs of these individuals.

The Welfare Reform agenda will require Aberdeenshire Council to assess the provision of temporary accommodation charging to ensure affordability across all tenures. Aberdeenshire Council is committed to assess ways of providing suitable accommodation for those under the age of 35 and where there is a required for supported accommodation. A charging strategy will be assessed to ensure that welfare reform changes are managed and mitigated as far as possible.

Currently Aberdeenshire operates a supported accommodation facility for 6 young people with support needs as well as commissioning 35 places of supported accommodation specifically for young people, and 10 places for vulnerable clients with multiple complex needs. All are regulated by the care inspectorate, and support officers work together with the providers to ensure regular reviews are carried out, and that efforts are made to ensure an individual is ready to move on. Outreach support would continue to be offered to every individual if required upon leaving supported accommodation to assist with the transition into independent tenancies. However, we recognise that these facilities are expensive, and following a recent review of the service where we spoke to the young people to assess their views, we took the decision to reduce one of our current facilities to 24 places, which allows us to offer more support to more people in an outreach basis. We will be looking at reshaping all our commissioned housing support over the next few years to better reflect the needs of our clients and the reduced budgets we need to work with. We currently support prisoners with Housing Officers attending regularly when required to assist with housing related issues, and are kept informed of any discharges from prison in order that we are prepared and have suitable temporary accommodation, and that support is offered and in place.

Aberdeenshire Council is an active member of the [North and Islands Housing Options Hub](#) where information, performance and good practise is shared amongst local authorities. This forum allows members to come together to carry out priority tasks and look at where consistencies in recording statistical information can be made. Input from

the Scottish Government gives the Hub good communication links on where resources should be focussed to complete tasks set out by the government for completion.

Actions

1 Improve outcomes for homeless people

We will ensure options guidance is central to the delivery of homelessness services. Adopting this approach we will work to improve homelessness outcomes by exploring the needs of applicants and households considering all tenure options and solutions available based on individual needs. We will continue to build partnership working with other services in order to prevent a housing crisis for individuals, and to assist with tenancy sustainment wherever possible.

2 Use a housing options approach

We will review and monitor the house allocation policy to give reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need. We will provide applicants with the information they need to make informed choices. We will make the best use of available stock and be responsive to local need to help sustain communities.

3 Provide and review temporary accommodation

Review/monitor temporary accommodation provision to ensure suitable accommodation is available, in appropriate locations, to those who require emergency accommodation including the use of shared accommodation. Assess rent levels of temporary accommodation to guarantee affordability to those using the service while ensuring sustainability for the Council.

4 Provide housing support and promote independent living

We will ensure everyone is provided with housing support if required to sustain tenancies, whilst ensuring housing support services promote independent living. We aim to carry out an options appraisal of our commissioned housing support services looking at future requirements for housing support and the limited funding available.

Performance

- Percentage of new tenancies by source
- Average time in temporary/emergency accommodation
- Refusals of temporary accommodation
- Percentage of households satisfied in temporary accommodation

- Average time to relet properties
 - Reduce/Eliminate use of bed and breakfast
 - Increase levels of tenancy sustainment
 - Increase numbers accepting and engaging with the support service
 - Reduce repeat homelessness
-

Independent Living

Outcome **Enabling people with an identified particular need to have access to appropriate affordable housing and support to allow them to sustain and improve their health to live as independently as possible**

Overview

Scottish Government policy supports independent living for all ages and for people with a disability. Independent living does not necessarily mean living by yourself or fending for yourself. It means having the same rights as others in freedom, choice, dignity and control at home, at work and in the community. It means having rights to the practical assistance and support required to participate in society and to live an ordinary life. It is about ensuring people of all ages are able to maintain their independence, and are able to access appropriate support when they need it.

Particular needs housing includes housing for older people; people with physical disabilities; learning disabilities; mental health conditions; long-term conditions and therefore requires to meet the needs of a diverse population and in many instances mainstream housing with access to support and care, services and infrastructure can meet individual needs appropriately and adequately and is the best housing solution. However, supported accommodation can also provide the necessary safety and security for some and may be the right choice to support independent living.

The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 was agreed by The Scottish Government and provides the legislative background for Health and Social Care Integration. The [Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2016 - 2019](#) defines how the Partnership, including NHS Grampian, Aberdeenshire Council, third sector organisations, private providers of health and social care and the residents of Aberdeenshire will work together to collectively improve health and wellbeing. It includes a housing contribution statement that sets out how housing contributes to all nine of the national health and wellbeing outcomes and particularly:

People, including those with disabilities, long term conditions or who are frail are able to live independently and at home or in a homely setting in their community’.

Evidence

The provision of suitable housing is one of the key challenges presented by an ageing population. Older people are more likely to either live alone, or in a household where all persons are aged 65 or older. Unsuitable housing impacts directly on health and providing appropriate housing of suitable quality and standard offers the potential to reduce costs to health and social care and allows older people and people with disability to remain independent. The delivery of specialist provision covers a varied range of accommodation for differing needs with access to care and support as appropriate, enabling independent living and reducing health inequalities.

Older People

People are living longer and consequently there is a requirement for a range of housing with appropriate care and support to suit changing needs as people age.

Aberdeenshire's [Joint Commissioning Strategy for Older People 'Ageing Well in Aberdeenshire' 2013-2023](#) and the subsequent [Market Position Statement Accommodation, Care and Support for Older People](#) sets out Aberdeenshire's position in continuing to support reshaping care for older people and shifting investment to support people to live at home as their dependency increases with age.

As a consequence of the reshaping of care and supporting people to live at home it is anticipated that there will be a reduction in people moving in to residential care. The average age in Aberdeenshire for someone to move to a care home is 83 years and amongst those admitted between 2009 and 2013 the average length of stay was 1.8 years.

Current analysis indicates that in Aberdeenshire there are more care home places than are needed by the local population and current provision is likely to be sufficient in most areas until 2022 due to the decreasing percentage of older people who require a care home. After this point it is anticipated that the demand will begin to rise. However, despite this it is expected that in most areas the capacity will outweigh demand.

Very sheltered housing provides independent living with a higher degree of support to older people and people with a disability, with meals provision and a dedicated team of care and support on-site 24 hours a day. There are currently six very sheltered housing schemes in Aberdeenshire. It is anticipated that as the requirement for care homes decreases the demand for very sheltered housing will grow.

The Market Position Statement depicts the anticipated changing demand compared to capacity of very sheltered housing. Across Aberdeenshire expected demand for very sheltered housing is expected to grow by 500% between 2012 and 2032. Opportunities exist for independent housing and care organisations to develop specialist care housing, particularly in Buchan and Kincardine and Mearns.

Sheltered housing stock throughout Aberdeenshire provides independent living in a safe and secure environment with the choice of companionship and social activities. It is important to continue to review the need and demand for our existing sheltered housing and consider other appropriate housing models to provide choice and options for older people.

Dementia and Dementia design

The number of people living with dementia is anticipated to increase in Scotland in the next 25 years which presents a number of challenges. In 2017 [Alzheimer Scotland reported 4,325 people with dementia in Aberdeenshire with 96% in the 65+ age group](#). Increasing specialist provision in order to meet future demand is not practicable, however well-designed housing including access to adaptations and technology enabled care can extend the amount of time a person with dementia can live at home.

In future the majority of care home residents will display symptoms of dementia. The model of care and staff training will adjust to support residents to manage daily routines safely and well, and optimise their quality of life.

Aberdeenshire's [dementia strategy](#) defines the intention to develop a person-centred care pathway for people with dementia at each stage of their condition.

People with a physical disability

As well as continuing to improve processes for adaptations and working to enable access to suitable accommodation for people with a physical disability, housing will continue to work with the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership, disabled people, carers and voluntary organisations to develop an Aberdeenshire Strategy for Disabled People. The Strategy will consider the current issues for people with a physical disability and develop the priorities and actions required to ensure access to learning, employment, health and social care, leisure and sport and housing.

People with a mental health condition

Housing work on several levels to contribute to the work of the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership to support people with mental health conditions. Homelessness prevention, access to Housing Support, the provision of affordable Housing as well as access to Housing Options advice and advocacy if required, dementia design and specialist provision contribute to supporting people with a mental health condition to sustain their tenancy and to live as independently in the community as possible.

People with a learning disability

Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership supports the national strategy for people with a learning disability '[The Keys to Life.](#)' The Aberdeenshire Learning Disability Strategic Outcome Group following on from completion of the previous Action plan are in the process of developing a new strategy and action plan which aims to be specific and relevant across the spectrum of learning disability.

The Keys to Life implementation Framework identifies four strategic outcomes for people with a learning disability:

A Healthy Life: People with learning disabilities enjoy the highest attainable standard of living, health and family life;

Choice and Control: People with learning disabilities are treated with dignity and respect, and protected from neglect, exploitation and abuse;

Independence: people with learning disabilities are able to live independently in the community with equal access to all aspects of society; and

Active Citizenship: People with learning disabilities are able to participate in all aspects of community and society.

The majority of adults with learning disabilities live in mainstream accommodation with appropriate care and support if required. Many adults with a learning disability are growing older in the family home and often with ageing parents. Consequently there is a requirement to consider their changing care and support needs as they age as well as considering appropriate adaptations and physical changes to the home. For some adults with a learning disability mainstream housing is not appropriate and client's requirements are looked at individually with Health and Social Care professionals. A range of options are available including residential care and Extra Care Housing.

Extra Care and core and cluster models of housing currently exist in Aberdeenshire. Extra Care Housing provides independent flats for residents with staff in the building and allows for individual needs to be met and for the care provision to be tailored to suit individuals. Core and cluster type accommodation for people with learning disabilities form part of a larger housing development, where dwellings are grouped closely together with a common area left for recreation. Clients have independent properties specifically adapted for their individual needs. Housing continue to work with the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership to identify opportunities for suitable accommodation for people with learning disabilities and to identify need and demand.

In the table below there is a range of housing-related solutions for people with additional support needs. Services such as housing adaptations, [Care and Repair](#), Disabled Persons Housing Service ([Houseability](#)), Technology Enabled Care and access to good quality information to make planned and informed choices regarding suitable and appropriate housing at an early stage can mean that older people, people with dementia and people with long term illness or disability can remain at home and independent for longer.

Adaptations	Disabled Persons Housing Service	Technology Enabled Care
<p>The preventative nature of adaptations in supporting independent living is well established and in line with Scottish Government recommendations</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council recognise the requirement to work to continuously improve and streamline adaptations services.</p> <p>The service provides a Small Repairs Service. This service covers small internal and external repairs. The repairs must be high priority for safety, prevention of long term deterioration of a property or for making energy efficiencies, such as cleaning out or repairing guttering, roof repairs if there are internal leaks, leaking doors and windows.</p>	<p>The Disabled Persons Housing Service Houseability provides help and support to disabled people with housing needs throughout Aberdeenshire. The service provided reflects the diversity of the requirements of disabled people and is subsequently a 'One-stop shop' with a comprehensive service providing good quality information, advice, assistance and signposting including advocacy where required. The service works to reduce inequalities and promote equality for all disabled people by ensuring Houseability clients are empowered and enabled to find solutions to their housing needs and live more independently directing the course of their own lives. The service is available to clients in all tenures of housing.</p>	<p>Technology enabled care can improve quality of life and enable older people and people with particular needs to remain at home for longer and to live as independently as possible. Both adaptations and technology enabled care can help to reduce hospital admissions, assist hospital discharge and may delay or avoid admission to either residential care or a nursing home. The Aberdeenshire Lifeline service is the name for the community alarm and Telecare service in Aberdeenshire and the service is based at the Joint Equipment Centre, Inverurie and provides alarm units and alarm systems such as falls detectors, smoke alarms and property exit sensors.</p>

Actions

1 Identify housing need and investment for those who require specialist provision

We will identify housing need and demand to provide a supply of affordable mainstream and supported housing with services attached to support people to live independently. Each year we will review and agree priority areas for particular needs groups with Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership for investment to inform and assist in the preparation of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

Working across partners, we will deliver affordable and appropriate new build housing and develop a minimum of 15% of affordable new build homes suitable for particular needs each year. Meanwhile, existing stock will be reconfigured for those with a particular need. Within the duration of the previous Local Housing Strategy the target of 15% was exceeded every year but one.

We will continue to ensure new build housing is built to housing for varying needs standards which allows flexibility for homes to be adapted in the future to accommodate changing needs for individuals. In addition, we will identify need through the Council's waiting list to inform the build of wheelchair accessible housing.

2 Develop a clear, consistent and coordinated framework and protocol across all sectors to improve working practices for the delivery of all adaptations.

We will continue to provide the care and repair service to people who are over 60 or who have a disability. We will offer advice and help with repairs, maintenance and adaptations to allow people to live at home.

We will continue to improve adaptations processes across local authority, registered social landlord and private sectors to support the strategic priorities of the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership.

We will continue to improve and streamline the processes for the delivery of major and minor adaptations to ensure equity of access, equity of service and standardised approaches to eligibility and priority across all tenures of housing with a person-centred approach. So far service redesign has reduced waiting times for adaptations despite increasing demand and the necessity to address an increase in more complex conditions for clients living with long-term illness or disability due to an ageing population.

3 Develop a clear strategic direction to allow people to maintain independent living opportunities and continue to live in their own homes for longer in line with national policy direction to "Shift the Balance of Care"

We will:

- Continue to review the balance of sheltered housing and very sheltered housing
- Explore other housing models for all client groups to ensure choice and personalisation in housing and support
- Identify areas in the care and repair service to maximise service provision and achieve possible reduction in costs
- Improve the effectiveness and consistent manner in which information is collected for all major and minor adaptations carried out across all sectors
- Inform the review of the housing allocations policy to ensure it reflects the needs and choices of all particular needs client groups
- Support Aberdeenshire's Dementia Strategy by ensuring commitment to research by the Chartered Institute of Housing to improve links between housing organisations and partners in health, social care and the third sector and explore opportunities to improve housing sector practice for people with dementia.

4 Provide a holistic approach to housing support services

We will improve access to information and advice on housing options and support to manage your house and for applying for more suitable accommodation. We will speak to clients as early as possible to support their discharge from hospital. We will increase awareness of the Housing Allocation Policy and Procedures amongst the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership and promote positive links with the Local Housing Strategy.

Resources

The resources to support people to live independently in their own homes come from a range of sources. Aids and adaptations are funded for Registered Social Landlords by the Scottish Government, through the local authority capital plan for the private sector, and through the Council's housing revenue account. New build homes to meet particular needs are funded through the housing revenue accounts of social housing providers.

Performance

- Number and percentage of new build properties developed and fully accessible for clients with a particular need
- Number of disabled adaptations carried out in:
 - 1) Private Sector;
 - 2) Registered Social Landlords

3) Local Authority

- Waiting times between requests for a housing adaptation, assessment of need and delivery of any required adaptation:
 - 1) Average days between referral and assessment;
 - 2) Average days between assessment and completion
- Number of people with a disability receiving housing related advice and information
- Number of individuals given comprehensive housing options advice prior to discharge from hospital to quicken hospital discharge

Minority Ethnic Communities

Outcome **Minority ethnic communities will have access to appropriate land, housing and support, encouraging social integration.**

Overview

All individuals have the right to expect the same quality of housing regardless of their ethnicity and may have requirements which are particular to their ethnicity. The council and its partners aim to set standards of achieving equality in all areas of housing. This relates to the race protected characteristic within the [Equality Act 2010](#) and supports Scottish Government National Outcome 7: '*We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society*'

Aberdeenshire Council acknowledges that the Gypsy/Traveller community, which comprises a wide mix of different groups including: Irish Travellers; English Gypsy/Travellers; Scottish Gypsy/Travellers and Roma, has specific requirements and requires the same level of protection from discrimination and abuse, in common with all of Scotland's minority ethnic communities. It is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers, a particularly marginalised group. The Scottish Government continues to recognise Gypsy/Travellers as an ethnic group in its work and encourages others to do likewise. It also works to ensure equality for Gypsy/Travellers, by integrating their needs into health, education and social services.

Aberdeenshire Council endeavours to provide a service to meet the requirements of all ethnic communities to ensure they are better informed of housing options available to them; able to access housing services; given the help they need to obtain and sustain a home of their own; and are prevented from becoming homeless and/or supported whilst homeless.

Evidence

National Record of Scotland estimates of the migrants that moved within Scotland during 2015-16 are:

- Of the 8,841 migrants that moved away from Aberdeen City and stayed within Scotland, 41% moved to Aberdeenshire (3,596).
 - Of the 6,003 migrants that moved away from Aberdeenshire but stayed within Scotland, 39% moved to Aberdeen City (2,349). Angus and Moray together accounted for another 16% of outward moves, with Edinburgh, Glasgow and Highland being the next favourite destinations.
 - Of the 5,935 migrants who moved to Aberdeenshire from elsewhere in Scotland, 59% came from Aberdeen City (3,596).
 - Of the 6,177 migrants that went to Aberdeen City from elsewhere in Scotland, 38% came from Aberdeenshire (2,349).
-

The 2011 Census is the most comprehensive source of information on ethnicity. In 2011, 21,939 people from a non-white ethnic background lived in the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Area. This equated to 4.6% of the population, slightly above the comparable rate of 4.0% for Scotland. The largest non-white ethnic minority group in Aberdeenshire, comprised people who described their ethnic group as Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British. Analysis of the 2011 census shows that 4,212 people identified their ethnicity as 'White: Gypsy/Traveller'. This represents less than 0.1% of the population.

The UK Syrian Resettlement Programme aims to secure and protect refugees in the UK; has the wellbeing of the refugee and the welcoming communities at the centre of decision making, including, by delivering refugee independence and self-sufficiency, to enable better social cohesion; and deliver value for money for the UK tax payer, including by minimising the burden on local and national government by securing early independence and self-sufficiency.

People from ethnic minorities in Scotland are four times more likely than the general population to live in overcrowded accommodation, according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It further says, ethnic minority households are four times more likely than white households to live in overcrowded properties - 11.8% compared with 2.9%. After housing costs, 36% of people from ethnic minorities were in poverty, compared with 17% of white people.

Actions

1 Minority Ethnic groups have access to good quality affordable housing which meets their needs, culture and lifestyle.

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to identify barriers to meeting the housing needs of the minority ethnic community, including migrant workers and provide appropriate housing information and advice. It will also work toward ensuring minority ethnic people living in the private rented sector have accommodation that meets their needs.

2 New Scots, Refugees/ and Asylum Seekers have access to good quality affordable housing which meets their needs, culture and lifestyle.

Aberdeenshire Council will ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are supported to fully understand the housing options available to them by a range of agencies, and as a result are able to make the best possible choice for them. Between 2015 and 2019, Aberdeenshire Council has committed to resettling 50 families through the Syrian Resettlement Programme. Over the course of the four years, families will be resettled on a phased basis to ensure that they receive the necessary coordination and support. In housing Syrian New Scots in Aberdeenshire, we will:

- Secure private rented sector properties on rolling two-year tenancies
-

- Locate families where they can access services
- Match families to accommodation appropriate to their needs
- Work with services across the public and voluntary sectors to support new families and sustain tenancies
- Minimise or avoid the use of Council social housing stock to reduce further pressure on the Council waiting list

3 Gypsy/Travellers normally resident in Aberdeenshire and Gypsies/Travellers visiting the area have accommodation that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle

We will provide assistance to Gypsy/Travellers who would like to develop private sites. We will use the [policy on managing unauthorised encampments](#) to support Gypsy/Travellers to meet their needs and follow the code of conduct. We will provide support for Gypsy/Travellers who want to access housing services. In May 2015 Aberdeenshire Council agreed the [Gypsy/Traveller Site Provision Strategy](#). This identifies need for sites in north, central and south Aberdeenshire. We will work towards increasing Gypsy/Traveller site provision by ensuring the sites identified within the Local Development Plan are progressed.

4 General relations between Gypsies/Travellers and settled communities are improved.

All agencies will work together to counter prejudiced media coverage, provide joint responses to press inquiries about Gypsies/Travellers encampments and coordinate legal action where necessary. All members of the community will be encouraged to report prejudice incidents.

Performance

- Number of Unauthorised Encampments
 - Adherence to the Code of Conduct for Gypsy/Travellers
 - Number of downloads of the Living and Working in the North East of Scotland guide
 - Prejudice and Discrimination Reporting
-

Private Sector

Outcomes

The quality of private sector housing is maintained and improved to promote health and wellbeing by addressing disrepair and enhancing energy efficiency.

The private rented sector provides high management standards that inspires consumer confidence and encourages growth through attracting increased investment.

Overview

The responsibility for maintaining and improving the quality of housing in the private sector lies with the owner of the property but the council and its partners will offer advice and assistance to homeowners and private sector tenants to prioritise improvements and allow informed choices to be made.

Aberdeenshire Council has a statutory requirement under [Section 10](#) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to develop and implement:

- A 'Scheme of Assistance' policy to help homeowners and private sector tenants to carry out repairs, maintenance, improvements or adaptations to their homes.
- A 'Below Tolerable Standard' policy to address those houses that fall below the Tolerable Standard.
- A 'Housing Renewal Area' policy which details how Housing Renewal Areas will be identified and designated.

These three policies provide a mix of encouragement and assistance for owners of properties that can be backed up by enforcement where necessary through the issuing of works notices and maintenance orders in instances where owners fail to engage.

The Scottish Government's [strategy for a successful private rented sector](#) published in May 2013 sets out the vision for "a private rented sector that provides good quality homes and high management standards, inspires consumer confidence, and encourages growth through attracting increased investment".

Various pieces of legislation have been introduced previously, including the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) and the [Private Rented Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) to help achieve the vision, to raise standards and to ensure landlords and agents are operating the best management practises. The regulatory framework will be strengthened further by further three policies due to come into force in 2018 - the [new private residential tenancy regime](#); the transfer of certain functions to the [Housing and Property Chamber - First tier Tribunal for Scotland](#) and the [regulation of letting agents](#).

The new private residential tenancy regime is being introduced through the [Private Housing \(Tenancies\) \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#), which introduces a new type of tenancy known as a 'private residential tenancy'. This is aimed at improving security for tenants and providing safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors.

The Housing and Property Chamber, First Tier Tribunal for Scotland, was formed in December 2016, replacing the Private Rented Housing Panel and the Homeowner

Housing Panel and deals with determinations of rent or repair issues in private sector housing as well as assistance in exercising a landlord's right of entry. The Chamber also helps resolve issues that arise between homeowners and property factors and from December 2017 will hear more private rented sector cases under the new private tenancies regime with powers also being transferred to the tribunal from the sheriff courts.

Applications to the First Tier Tribunal are generally tenant driven but from April 2016 under the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), Local Authorities were also given the power to make a 'Third Party' application to enforce the 'Repairing Standard', the standard to which landlords must maintain and repair their property. This helps to tackle the problem of poor property condition in the private rented sector and in taking action against landlords who refuse to comply with the repairing standard. Changes to the 'Repairing Standard' are expected in 2018 through the [Review of Energy Efficiency in the Private Sector](#) consultation which proposes bringing the standard closer to the standard required in social rented housing.

Landlord registration was introduced in 2006 by the [Antisocial Behaviour etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#). One of the requirements for landlords to become registered is a 'fit and proper person' test. Aberdeenshire Council works in partnership with Police Scotland in identifying landlords who are not suitable to be registered as part of the 'fit and proper person' test and in identifying those landlords who are involved in serious organised crime, extending to those involved in lower level crime. Operating as an unregistered landlord can carry a penalty of up to £50,000. .

Landlords may also use a 'Letting Agent' to manage their property with anyone involved in 'Letting Agency' work having to be assessed by Aberdeenshire Council under the 'fit and proper person' test. Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 a new regulatory framework is being introduced in 2018 which will include agents also having to be formally registered, qualified through formal training and having to work to a code of practice.

Evidence

The responsibility of improving the quality of housing in the private sector lies with the owner of the property but the council and its partners will offer advice and assistance to homeowners and private sector tenants to prioritise improvements and allow informed choices to be made. In Aberdeenshire 81% of properties are located within the private sector, 71% owner occupied and 10% in the private rented sector.

Condition: owner occupied properties	Aberdeenshire	Scotland
Disrepair	60%	71%
Disrepair to critical elements	37%	52%
Urgent disrepair	30%	32%
Extensive disrepair	3%	6%

Damp	3%	3%
Condensation	7%	8%
Below tolerable standard	3%	2%

Landlords who fail to keep their properties up to the 'Repairing Standard' can be reported to the Housing and Property Chamber – First Tier Tribunal and face penalties for failing to comply, with Aberdeenshire Council providing support to tenants through this process.

Actions

- 1 Provide information, advice and practical support and in some circumstances, financial assistance to homeowners and private sector tenants to help them repair, maintain, improve or adapt their homes through our 'Scheme of Assistance' policy and 'Below Tolerable Standard' policy.**

The Scheme of Assistance policy aims to promote greater responsibility amongst homeowners and emphasises the fact that homeowners are primarily responsible for the repairs and maintenance to their homes. It is a major part of the council's policy to maintain and improve the quality of our private sector housing in order to prevent a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Scheme of Assistance policy aims to:

- Prevent houses from falling below the Tolerable Standard
- Identify and improve houses that are currently below the Tolerable Standard
- Adapt houses to make them suitable to meet the needs of a disabled person
- Promote the links between healthy homes and healthy residents
- Maintain and prevent the decline of residents' health and wellbeing

The council will promote the Scheme of Assistance policy through partnership working with organisations including the Health and Social Care Partnership and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The Scheme of Assistance policy is supported by the Below Tolerable Standard policy. We will continue to work with the Council's Environmental Services and homeowners in order to identify and improve houses that are already below the tolerable standard and to help owners prevent their properties from falling below the tolerable standard.

Aberdeenshire Council will take a proactive preventative approach encouraging homeowners to take responsibility for the repairs and maintenance by offering information, advice and practical assistance through the Scheme of Assistance to help facilitate the repairs. If this fails, then

enforcement action through the use of work notices or maintenance orders may be used in accordance with the Below Tolerable Standard policy. Enforcement powers will only be used when all other avenues have been explored.

The Council has produced a 'Housing Renewal Area' policy covering powers to deal with poor quality housing issues on an area basis. Aberdeenshire Council will consider using the Housing Renewal Area powers if there is a significant number of sub-standard housing; and / or the appearance or condition of the housing is adversely affecting the area; and it is believed to be the most appropriate action to take to address these issues.

2 Improve the management standards, engage with more landlords and provide support to tenants within the private rented sector.

- Improve the quality of housing and enforcement of the 'Repairing Standard'
- Find ways of engaging with more landlords
- Find ways of supporting tenants to challenge landlords who are not operating to the minimum required standards

We will continue to work with Landlord Accreditation Scotland to provide training courses and information sessions each year, in conjunction with Aberdeen City Council, to private sector landlords and agents. This includes provision of information on a variety of topics relating to the management of private rented sector properties. Increasing landlord's awareness of their rights and responsibilities should result in improved management, quality of buildings and energy efficiency in the private rented sector.

We will be proactive in engagement and develop different ways of reaching a greater number of landlords in particular those who do not attend the organised training sessions. We will make use of the landlord registration database to promote this work to ensure landlords and tenants are made aware of legislative changes including their rights and responsibilities.

3 Develop a mechanism for providing financial assistance to those homeowners who cannot afford to carry out repairs and maintenance to their homes through the use of equity release type loans.

A Scheme of Assistance is available whereby homeowners are helped to carry out repairs and maintenance to their homes. Financial assistance through repair grants however, is not available. It is well recognised that not all homeowners require financial assistance; many have the funds in place but need help in determining how to go about the work. The Scheme of Assistance will provide help in these circumstances.

There are however, some homeowners who do not have access to any funding. The Scottish government is piloting schemes with a number of council's providing owners on low incomes, loans for structural repairs and

energy efficiency works to improve their property. The pilot schemes are aimed at providing equity loans up front with no interest payments payable with the loan being recovered on sale of the property or death of the applicant. It is expected that if the pilot scheme is successful that the scheme could be rolled out nationally.

Resources

The resources to meet the identified outcomes for the private sector include Aberdeenshire Council general and capital fund budgets for private sector housing and environmental services.

Performance

- To provide information and advice to 1,250 households to help them to repair/maintain their homes through the Scheme of Assistance.
- To provide practical assistance to 500 households to help them to repair/maintain their homes through the Scheme of Assistance.
- Number of households assisted in order to address BTS elements or prevent properties falling BTS.
- To improve the standards in the private rented sector by offering 10 Landlord Accreditation Scotland training courses and 3 information sessions each year to private sector landlords and agents.

5 Community and Tenant Engagement

Community Engagement

The local housing strategy has been shaped by engagement with tenants, the general public, public, private and voluntary organisations and groups. To deliver all of the priorities identified in the strategy, we will continue to work with communities to ensure they can influence the design and delivery of the services they receive.

Tenant Participation

We will ensure that our tenants and other customers are enabled and empowered to become involved, if and when they want, and at a level they feel comfortable with, in decisions about the housing service provided. These opportunities should extend to those who are hard to reach or seldom heard. A tenant-led review of tenant participation will take place to ensure that we can engage with tenants, seeking and supporting their involvement in housing issues.

This is achieved through various methods and options:

- The Tenant Participation Promotion Team (an elected group of seven tenant representatives, from across Aberdeenshire)
- Tenant Led Continuous Improvement, Scrutiny Group
- Tenant/Officer Working Groups (Asset Management, Housing Options, Planning for the Future, Tenancy Services)
- Local Tenant Groups
- Local Tenant Voices
- Sheltered Housing Tenant Forum
- Interested Tenants
- Tenants Newsletter

Aberdeenshire Council is a member of 'North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together' (NETRALT), a partnership working group of tenants, residents and staff representatives from local authorities and registered social landlords which encourages tenant and resident engagement across the North East of Scotland. There is opportunity to share ideas and resources to help to develop tenant participation for tenants and landlords. NETRALT also provides the opportunity to share best practice and encourage effective partnership working with tenants and staff.

Aberdeenshire Council tenants take part in tenant scrutiny, through which they can contribute to the assessment of their landlord's performance, asking questions based on clear information and data, leading to the opportunity to make recommendations which may result in change and improvement.

6 Appendices

Impact Assessments

The impact of the local housing strategy has been assessed through an [Equality Impact Assessment](#) and a [Town Centre First Assessment](#). In addition a pre-screening was carried out for a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Performance Management Framework

Action plans to deliver the strategy will be measured by the performance indicators included under each priority in the strategy. These will be reported to Communities Committee and to Area Committees annually.