

Audit scope

Housing

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

AUDITOR GENERAL 

Prepared by Audit Scotland

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Background

Having a home is important to people's safety and security, and access to adequate housing is a fundamental human right. In its Housing to 2040 strategy, the Scottish Government set out its aim for "everyone to have a safe, high-quality home that is affordable and meets their needs in the place they want to be."

The housing situation in Scotland is worsening. The number of households in temporary accommodation is increasing, and people are spending longer in the homelessness system. In this context, between 2023 and 2024, 13 Scottish councils declared a housing emergency and the Scottish Parliament declared a national housing emergency in May 2024.

The Scottish Government has set a target of delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032. Delivering more homes will help address the long-term need for housing but the number of affordable homes being built every year has fallen since 2022/23

Why this audit is important

Not having a settled home impacts on all areas of a person's life including their health and wellbeing and their employment or

education. Research shows that the impact of homelessness can be severe and long-lasting. It can also increase pressures on other public services.

The Scottish Government has committed up to £4.9 billion over the next four years to tackle the declared housing emergency, £4.1 billion of which will come from public funds. Councils and registered social landlords will also spend their own funds, gathered from tenants rent and borrowing, to address the housing challenges and build new homes.

This audit will be important in assessing how effectively the Scottish Government and councils are using this investment to address the acute and long-term housing challenges.

What this audit will look at

The audit will focus on answering two main audit questions:

- How effectively are the Scottish Government and councils addressing the immediate housing needs of people facing homelessness?
- How effectively are the Scottish Government and councils addressing long-term housing needs?

The Auditor General and Accounts Commission previously reported on [Affordable Housing](#) in 2020. This audit will follow up on our recommendations in that report.

Housing is a broad topic and issues are often interrelated. Although the following issues are important context for our audit, we do not intend to audit them:

- the private housing and rental system
- details of individual housing revenue accounts and associated debt (although we will present the national picture)
- changes in building standards, retrofitting and decarbonisation
- housing adaptations to meet the future population needs
- the effectiveness of different financing models
- links between housing and the economy.

The audit will consider some issues in the context of the case study councils, rather than nationally, including the role of planning and homelessness prevention.

How we will carry out this audit

We will gather evidence using a range of methods, including:

- interviewing stakeholders, including the Scottish Government, COSLA, Scottish Housing Regulator, Shelter Scotland, council housing officers and registered social landlords

- reviewing documents including housing emergency action plans
- analysing homelessness and housing data including spend, approvals and completions
- a more in-depth consideration of four case-study councils.

We will draw on lived experience research by stakeholders, but we do not intend to carry-out primary lived experience fieldwork.

What we want to happen as a result

The audit will provide an assessment of activity to increase the supply of homes and to reduce homelessness. It will highlight areas of good practice through case studies.

The audit will provide an independent evaluation of progress towards housing targets. It aims to provide assurance to the Scottish Parliament, the public and other stakeholders on how the funding is being spent.

The audit will make recommendations to support improvement, some of which may inform the establishment of the More Homes Scotland executive agency.

Timetable

The audit will be carried out during 2026, and the report will be published in early 2027. Following publication, the Auditor General will present the findings to the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee.

Contact

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