



From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire Council

Local Housing Strategy

2024 - 2029



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1. Introduction to Aberdeenshire Council's Local Housing Strategy

1.1 Purpose

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out Aberdeenshire Council's key priorities for the housing service over the next five years. It details the strategic direction, policies and plans over the lifetime of the LHS and prepare for longer term objectives of the Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 policy. This will enable Aberdeenshire Council and its partners to deliver high quality housing and housing services to meet the needs of local people across all housing tenures. The LHS also provides important links and contributions to improving the health and wellbeing of residents, creating sustainable places, working towards Net Zero and reducing fuel poverty while supporting economic growth.

This version of the LHS builds on the progress against the actions of the 2018 – 2023 document and will look to build on these in line with new targets and aspirations.

The LHS has been developed with the backdrop of the Covid19 pandemic, the UK exit from the European Union, war in Ukraine, as well as construction costs, rising inflation, and cost of living crisis. These factors have and will continue to have significant impacts on the economy and local communities of Aberdeenshire. The Local Housing Strategy therefore comes at a crucial time and aims to support to improve housing outcomes by tackling inequalities and child poverty and increasing the energy efficiency of our housing stock where possible, new and old.

Evidence from the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire [Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2023 -2028](#) has been used to inform the strategy alongside working with local partners to enable the supply of housing across all tenures and types of housing provision. The strategy aligns with national housing priorities and policies to look at maximising investment opportunities in the Aberdeenshire area.

The purpose of the strategy is to provide a clear strategic direction for the priorities and actions detailed below. It will also ensure that actions and targets are monitored regularly to establish that these are being achieved in line with the vision of the LHS.

Priority	Actions
Increase supply of housing in Aberdeenshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the supply of housing.• Assist in the regeneration of our towns.• Enable the provision of affordable housing in our rural communities.• Encourage and support owners to bring empty properties back into use.
Provide a range of housing options for those who wish to live in Aberdeenshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private Sector contribute towards homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing transition plans.• Ensure that the quality of private sector housing is maintained and improved to the required standards.• Promote and support the delivery of Mid-Market Rent and Low-Cost Home Ownership through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the awareness of Self Build through the Local Development Plan policy and Self Build Register.
Where possible, homelessness is prevented but where it can't be, a Rapid Rehousing approach is used to resolve cases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve outcomes for homeless people. • Use a housing options approach. • Provide and review temporary accommodation. • Provide housing support and promote independent living.
Increase supply of appropriate housing and support to ensure health and wellbeing across all of Aberdeenshire's Communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the supply and ensure best use of older people and particular needs accommodation in Aberdeenshire. • Identify housing need and investments for those who require specialist provision. • Develop a clear, consistent and coordinated framework and protocol across all sectors to improve working practices for the delivery of all adaptations. • Develop a clear strategic direction to allow people to maintain independent living opportunities and to continue to live in their own homes for longer in line with national policy direction and shift the balance of care. • Provide a holistic approach to housing support services. • Minority ethnic communities have access to good quality affordable housing that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle. • New Scots, Refugees and Asylum Seekers have access to good quality affordable housing that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle. • Gypsy/Travellers have better incomes in and out of work. • Gypsy/Travellers have improved access to public services. • Tackle racism and discrimination. Improve Gypsy/Traveller representation.
Work towards Net Zero and a reduction in fuel poverty in Aberdeenshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define a 'just transition' towards the Social Housing Net Zero Standard. • Provide housing that is fit for purpose and healthy, safe and secure. • Improve energy efficiency of housing in the private sector. • Assist households to maximise their income. • Provide households with practical advice to change/reduce energy usage and costs.

In meeting the requirements of the [Local Housing Strategy: Guidance 2019](#), the strategy must be:

Evidence based

Developed in collaboration with stakeholders, including residents and tenants

A corporate document, agreed and supported by all Local Authority departments

Demonstrate how it supports equality and addresses inequality

Developed using extensive and inclusive engagement and consultation

Forward looking & delivery focused

Clear, concise and easy to read

Linked to previous LHS to show progress achieved against outcomes and to carry forward any outstanding actions, as appropriate

Reviewed annually with progress updated through an Outcome Action Plan.

1.2 Outcomes and Achievements from 2018 – 2023 Local Housing Strategy

This Strategy builds on a strong foundation of positive housing outcomes delivered by the 2018-2023 Local Housing Strategy. A total of six priorities were identified for the housing service during this five-year period. Key outcomes achieved during this time include:



Housing Delivery

In the period from 2018 – 2023:

- 4058 private properties were completed in Aberdeenshire.
- 966 social rented properties were delivered in Aberdeenshire.
- 81 Mid-Market and Low-Cost Shared Equity properties were completed.
- 132 properties purchased through Scottish Government's Help to Buy Fund
- 116 empty properties were brought back into use.



Fuel Poverty, Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

- ❑ Aberdeenshire were successful in bids for HEEPs and Energy Efficiency Scotland Area Based Funding.
- ❑ 2,000 energy efficiency measures were installed in private sector housing over the 5-year period. Estimated carbon savings as a result of this work is 36,650 tonne over the lifetime of the measures (25 years)
- ❑ 7,587 energy efficiency measures were installed in the social sector housing. This included a mixture of cavity wall insulation, internal wall insulation, PV, and heating upgrades to a more energy efficient boiler/heating system.
- ❑ 1,688 households have received in-house, in-depth energy efficiency advice, through SCARF, contracted by Aberdeenshire Council. This enables home visits to be made by their Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) to carry out a full Home Energy Checks (HEC). The householder is provided with beneficial advice on how simple behaviour changes can reduce their energy costs.
- ❑ 1,789 households were assisted to maximise their income.



Homelessness and Housing Options

- ❑ 45% mainstream new tenancies have been let to homeless households, annually.
- ❑ 112 Housing First tenancies have been created during the period of the LHS.
- ❑ 348 properties have been flipped from temporary accommodation to a permanent tenancy from 2019 – 2023.
- ❑ The introduction of shared tenancies for use as temporary accommodation has seen 60 bedspaces being created assisting in the withdrawal of B&B use for homeless people.
- ❑ Covid-19 resulted in a reduction in the number of homeless applications made to Aberdeenshire Council during 2020/21, which may have been due to the restrictions on ending tenancies in the private rented sector.
- ❑ In LHS period, 3450 households were provided advice to prevent homelessness.
- ❑ Aberdeenshire Council also significantly reduced the number of open homeless cases.
- ❑ The average days spent in Temporary Accommodation improved significantly over the life of the LHS, reflects ongoing work on RRTP.



Independent Living

- ❑ The number (1047) and percentage (26%) of new build properties developed and fully accessible for clients with a particular need was above the target of 15%.
- ❑ Of the 1047 properties, 70 were fully wheelchair accessible. The target of 10% was agreed in 2020. Since this date, the number of fully accessible homes completed increased each year reaching 13% in 2022/23.
- ❑ Houseability assists clients in hospital to prepare for their changing needs in their home following discharge to enable them to continue to live independently.
- ❑ 581 people with a disability received housing options advice and information from Disabled Persons Housing Service, Houseability.

- 80 individuals were given comprehensive advice from Houseability, prior to discharge from hospital to quicken hospital discharge which is well above target.
- 777 disabled adaptations were completed in the private sector while 414 disabled adaptations were carried out in Local Authority properties. Adaptations in Local Authority properties were given priority over other repair work to prevent hospital admission and allow hospital discharge.
- Covid 19 influenced targets from 2020 - 2021 but in the main they were exceeded.
- Reduction in waiting times in the average days between assessment of need and delivery/completion of the required adaptation for council properties has been achieved due to streamlining the adaptations processes. Performance has been similar for the private sector.



Minority Ethnic Communities

- 75 families/households have been resettled under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.
- In 2021, a new Gypsy/Traveller Site Provision Strategy 2021-2026 was implemented which prioritises new provision in central Aberdeenshire and enhancements to the facilities to one of the existing Travellers' sites.
- Efforts continue to try to identify land for Gypsy/Traveller sites in addition to those identified in the Local Development Plan and this will be a focus in the LHS 2024 – 2029.
- Adherence to the Code of Conduct has been consistently high, exceeding targets, with Travellers reporting that they feel safe in Aberdeenshire.
- Two additional planning applications were granted for private sites in South and North Aberdeenshire in 2021/2022. Other planning applications are in process, with applicants being assisted by the dedicated Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer.



Private Sector

- 5,500 households were provided information and advice through Scheme of Assistance.
- 1,254 homeowners and private tenants were offered practical assistance in relation to repairs, maintenance, and improvements to their homes. Practical assistance is provided through home visits to help identify works and source contractors and help identify sources of funding.
- 45 Landlord Accreditation training sessions for landlords and agents were delivered in Partnership with Aberdeen City Council. These were previously face to face but were delivered online in response to Covid-19 restrictions and since then online attendance numbers have risen. Core Sessions include topics such as property condition / management, tenancy agreements and notices and tenancy management.
- 100% fit and proper tests for all persons applying to become a registered landlord were carried out. Working closely with Police Scotland and other council services to scrutinise all applications for Landlord Registration.

- Exceeded targets for completing 10% routine checks to ensure that landlords are complying with registration requirements (i.e. adequate fire, gas and electrical safety, energy performance certificates and deposit checks).

1.3 Local Housing Strategy Consultation and Engagement

Consultation undertaken with

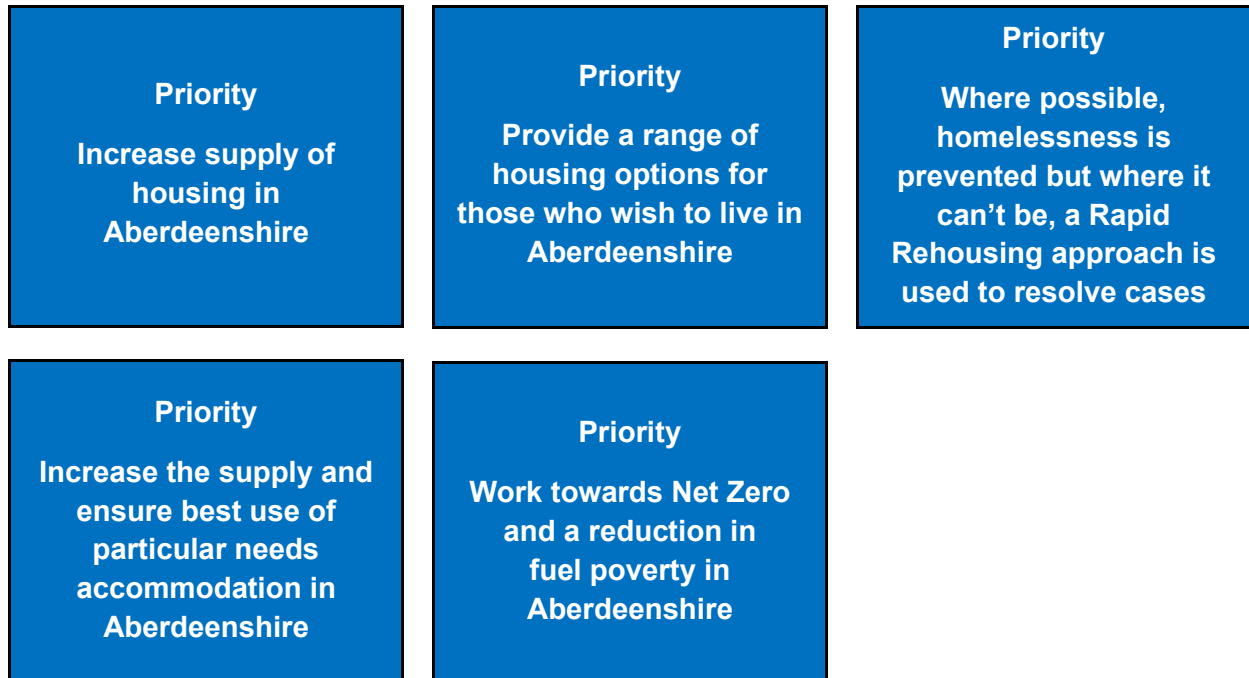
- Elected members
- Independent Living Strategic Outcome Group
- RSLs
- Public consultation
- Consultation with other Council Services
- Tenant Groups
- Gypsy/Traveller groups
- Affordable Housing Forum
- Community Planning Partnerships
- Area Committees
- Stakeholder Groups

A full consultation report is available at appendix 4.

1.4 Local Housing Strategy Vision and Priorities



‘Everyone in Aberdeenshire has access to a high quality, affordable home in a community that allows them to thrive.’



2. Local Housing Strategy Context

2.1 Strategic Context for Housing in Scotland

Housing to 2040

[Housing to 2040](#) is Scotland's first ever long-term national housing strategy. The strategy provides a vision for what housing should look like and how it will be provided to the people of Scotland, no matter where they live and what point in their life they are in. There are four key themes which the strategy is developed around:

More homes at the heart of great places

Affordability and choice

Affordable warmth and zero emissions

Improving the quality of all homes

Housing to 2040 Strategy aims to increase the supply of affordable housing; attract investment across the housing sector; reduce carbon emissions with a view to achieving zero emissions; with well-connected resilient communities within an effective housing system.

Over the period to 2031/32, the Housing to 2040 strategy makes a commitment to increasing housing supply by setting an ambitious target to deliver 100,000 affordable homes, with at least 70% of these homes for social rent. The strategy sets out a specific vision for achieving:

A well functioning housing system

High quality, sustainable homes

Sustainable communities

Homes that meet people's need

National Performance Framework

The Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF) sets out a structure for all of Scotland. The purpose of the framework is *'To focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth.'*

Eleven indicators have been identified in the framework and performance is measured against these. The indicators share the same aims as [The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) These are 'global goals' and targets that are part of an internationally agreed performance framework designed to "achieve a better and more sustainable future for all".

All countries are aiming to achieve these goals by 2030. The NPF and the SDGs share the same aims. The NPF is Scotland's way to localise and implement the SDGs. The NPF has a focus on tackling inequalities so that no one in Scotland is left behind as we work together to achieve these goals. LHS outcomes in Aberdeenshire align well to the NPF vision and make strong contributions to the targets set under the growth, participation, population, cohesion, and sustainability elements of the framework.

Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4)

In January 2023, the Scottish Government approved a new spatial plan for Scotland. [The fourth National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#) sets out a vision for what Scotland, as a place, could and should look like in 2050. This includes national planning policies and provides a plan for future development. Driven by the overarching goal of addressing climate change, this long-term strategy will focus on achieving four key outcomes:

1. Net zero emissions
2. A wellbeing economy
3. Resilient communities
4. Better, greener places

Aberdeenshire Council's Local Housing Strategy has been informed by the themes and aims set out in NPF4. The outcomes of creating local living / 20- minute communities include improved housing, an improved local economy, improved quality of life for residents, decreased health inequalities and action to tackle climate change.

Aberdeenshire Council set a 'minimum all tenure housing land requirement' (MATLHR) following Scottish Government consultation with local authorities on the spatial strategy for NPF4 in 2021. MATLHR targets set a minimum threshold for housing land allocations within the Local Development Plan and took into consideration population and migration trends, housing completions and affordable housing need/delivery.

Consultation was undertaken with elected members, private and third sector groups and community councils to agree the proposed target.

The proposed Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement set for Aberdeenshire for the next 10 years is c.7,550 units. Setting the MATLHR does not impact on the requirement for setting Housing Supply Targets within the Local Housing Strategy based on the housing estimates produced within the HNDA.

In preparing this Local Housing Strategy there has been close partnership working between housing and planning colleagues to ensure that housing delivery and land use planning principles are informed and well aligned.

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans

Rapid rehousing is identified within [Scotland's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan](#) as the key approach to ending homelessness. The rapid rehousing approach means prioritising prevention but if homelessness occurs then households are provided with appropriate settled housing as quickly as possible, moving away from the use of temporary accommodation as an automatic first response to homelessness. Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans are part of Scotland's strategy to end homelessness, developed and delivered in response to local authority circumstances.

Local authorities have been working on the development and implementation of their rapid rehousing transition plan (RRTP) since 2019.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter introduced in April 2012 and reviewed in 2016 and 2021. A revised charter came into effect from 1 November 2022. The Charter sets out the

standards and outcomes that all social landlords should be aiming to achieve for their customers. It also sets out what tenants and other customers can expect in terms of the: customer/landlord relationship, housing quality and maintenance, their neighbourhood and community, access to housing and support and getting good value from rents and service charges.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)

[The Scottish Housing Quality Standard \(SHQS\)](#) was introduced in February 2004 and is the main way the housing quality of housing in measured in Scotland. SHQS ensures that social landlords make their tenants’ homes are energy efficient, safe and secure, not seriously damaged, and have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition.

Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing (ESSH)

[The Energy Efficiency Standard in Social Housing \(ESSH\)](#) was introduced in March 2014 and since that time has set multiple milestones for social landlords to meet for their social homes meeting EPC ratings. The Scottish Government is undertaking work to create a Social Housing Net Zero Standard and this is expected to be published in 2024/25.

2.2 Strategic Context for Housing in Aberdeenshire

It is important that Aberdeenshire Council’s LHS should be closely aligned with relevant plans and strategies which set out the ambitions for the local people of Aberdeenshire. Key Strategic plans and documents aligned to the LHS priorities are detailed below.

Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2024 – 2029

[Aberdeenshire Council Plan](#) sets out the priorities for the period 2024 – 2029. The plan reflects updated priorities designed to respond to challenges facing Aberdeenshire Council. These include significant demographic changes which are likely to be seen up to 2030 and the continued financial pressures being felt due to increased demand and cost of services.

There are 3 key priority areas set out in the Council Plan where focus can be places to make the greatest impact locally within the financial challenges we face.

Pillar	Priority
Sustainable Economy	We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.
Connected Communities	We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.
Living well locally	We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.

Aberdeenshire Council Strategic Assessment 2023/24

[Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment](#) is a document which provides an evidence-based picture of the current situation in Aberdeenshire and how it may change in the future. The document is developed collaboratively with all services of the Council and community planning partners.

The strategic document looks at each of the priority areas set out in the Council Plan (see above) while considering medium term financial strategy and budget setting for the period the plan covers. It is key that the LHS feeds into this document and that this document feeds into the LHS as appropriate.

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership – Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

Aberdeenshire's Community Planning Partnership produce the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). It is the vision of the group to support the "best quality of life for everyone in Aberdeenshire". Housing is one of the many key partners which work at a strategic and local level to deliver the priorities of the LOIP detailed below. As such, this Local Housing Strategy will set out housing's role in improving health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities and those who live in them.

Aberdeenshire's [Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017 - 27](#) has three strategic priorities:

- Reducing Poverty in Aberdeenshire
- Connected and Cohesive Communities
- Health & Wellbeing

This LHS contributes to these key strategic priorities through the delivery of housing and housing related services which:

- support the growth of a strong and resilient local economy.
- reduce poverty by tackling housing related pressures such as affordability and energy efficiency.
- enable people to live independently at home where safe to do so, in the community they choose.
- support community safety and resilience.
- deliver housing for those with particular needs.
- identify and address barriers to inequalities across all groups

Child Poverty Action Report

Linked to Aberdeenshire's LOIP, the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities (TP&I) Strategic Group leads on Child Poverty. The multi-agency partnership work to six core principles:

- Recognise, place and empower young people and families to not only influence and inform decisions but coproduce services which meets their needs.
- Ensure a holistic approach is developed through the partnership working at a local and/or strategic level.
- Improving Health Inequalities.

- ▣ Addressing the causes of child poverty, not its symptoms.
- ▣ Making early interventions for families, young people, and disadvantaged communities.
- ▣ Improving employability as a key means of tackling child poverty.

Annually an [Action Report](#) is produced outlining the work and achievements of the partnership and the links to key strategic documents, including the LHS. The LHS has a strong role to play in reducing housing-induced poverty which is a key driver of child poverty. Key actions such as enhancing supply and access to affordable housing, reducing homelessness, tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency of housing stock are key actions which are influential in making a contribution to tackling child poverty in the area.

Health and Social Care Strategic Plan

The Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) Strategic Plan sets out how housing services can contribute to meeting the health and social care outcomes. The current strategic plan runs between 2020 -2025 and includes key actions and priorities in supporting the integration of housing, health and social care services.

The plan has 5 strategic priorities including:

- ▣ **Prevention and Early Intervention
Independent Living**

‘focus on the development of homes that meet people's needs and support independent living’.

‘Availability of home adaptations for those with a particular need to which they will have the right to the practical assistance and support required to participate in society and to live and ordinary life’.

- ▣ **Reshaping Care
Homely Setting**

‘Aberdeenshire offers a number of accommodation options for people who have particular housing needs because of a long-term condition or frailty. Work is in progress to evaluate our current model of support with the aim of achieving the most efficient model, with the appropriate mix of options, for our population. This work will be carried out in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council’s Housing Service and the Third Sector’.

- ▣ **Engagement**

- ▣ **Effective use of Resources**

- ▣ **Tackling Inequalities and Public Protection.
Support for people at risk of becoming homeless**

Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan

The [Local Development Plan 2023](#) (LDP) sets out how the Council aims to work towards its vision in Aberdeenshire. The purpose of the LDP is to manage development and the use of land for the public interest.

There are 6 key themes in the LDP, specific to Aberdeenshire including:

- To promote sustainable mixed communities with the highest standards of design.
- To take on the challenges of sustainable development and climate change.
- To protect and improve assets and resources.
- To increase and diversify the economy.
- To protect, enhance and promote green-blue networks within and between settlements.
- To make efficient use of the transport network, reduce the need to travel and promote walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport.

There are several policies set out within the LDP that directly contribute to the development and implementation of actions within this LHS as follows:

Policy H1 – Housing Land

This policy sets out allocated sites to support housing development as displayed in settlement statements. It also protects this land from being used for purposes other than housing unless it is linked to such.

Policy H2 - Affordable Housing

This policy states the requirement for 25% of new housing developments, where 4 or more properties are being developed, should be available for affordable housing provision. This includes use as social rent, low-cost home ownership (share ownership/equity) or low-cost home ownership (entry level). Lower than market rents in the private sector are also permissible in this category. The principle behind this policy is to create 'sustainable mixed communities.'

Policy H3 – Special Needs Housing

This policy provides guidance on possible sites for the development of specialist housing i.e. care homes or specialist disabled accommodation.

Policy H4 – Residential Caravans

This policy provides information on when residential caravan use is/isn't permitted. This is also linked to other relevant policies such as B3 – Tourist Facilities.

Policy H5 – Gypsy/Travellers

Policy H5 recognises the need for sites to be identified to meet the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller community. The policy also provides more information on conditions that may be linked to approvals of sites.

The LHS is also instrumental in delivering several key LDP priorities aligned to the new National Planning Framework, including tackling climate change, promoting placemaking and supporting the delivery of a wellbeing economy.

Cairngorm National Park Local Development Plan

The [Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021](#) (CNPA LDP) sets out how the National park aims to work towards its vision in the area. The purpose of the LDP is to manage development and the use of land for the public interest.

There are 4 key themes in the LDP, specific to Scottish National Parks. These are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
- to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area.
- to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public.
- to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

Ballater is identified as a settlement with a strategic role in the Upper Deeside area of the Cairngorm National Park Authority. Key objectives for the area include:

- Conserve and enhance Ballater's distinctive built heritage and the integrity of its Conservation Area.
- Increase the attraction of Ballater as a business, tourist and recreation destination.
- Deliver housing that meets local need and affordable housing, including low-cost ownership and affordable housing for rent.
- Increase and enhance flood management and resilience.

Braemar is identified as an intermediate settlement within the CPNA LDP. Key objectives for this area include:

- Enhance the role of Braemar as a local service centre.
- Support opportunities to enhance and diversify the local economy, enhance the role of tourism and improve car parking provision.
- Conserve and enhance Braemar's distinctive built heritage and the integrity of its Conservation Area.
- Deliver housing to meet local needs particularly affordable housing.
- Support proposals for small-scale business development.

Dinnet and Strathdon are considered as rural settlements within the plan. Key objectives include:

- Support the role of Dinnet as a key gateway into the National Park.
- Support the delivery of housing that meets local needs, particularly affordable housing.
- Support proposals for small-scale business development.
- Facilitate economic growth that supports the local community.
- Support small-scale organic growth through the Local Development Plan's housing policy.

There are several policies set out within the LDP that directly contribute to the development and implementation of actions within this LHS as follows:

Policy 1: New Housing Development

- New Housing Development includes proposals to develop in existing rural groups.
- Other housing in the countryside support development that are necessary for or improve operational and economic viability to businesses linked to the countryside.
- Affordable housing where affordable housing contributions are higher in the Ballater and Braemar areas.

Policy 7: Renewable Energy

This policy considers the use of renewable energy sources where consideration has been given to conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the Park, minimise cumulative effects and detrimental impacts on local air quality.

Local Transport Strategy

The [Local Transport Strategy \(LTS\) 2012](#) aims to deliver transport solutions for users of the transport network. The LTS seeks to identify key transport issues in Aberdeenshire and sets out a shared approach with citizens, businesses and partners.

The LTS has been developed to support the delivery of a range of wider strategic transport objectives and priorities as set out in the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), its associated Action Plans and the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy (NTS). The Strategy also supports the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum's (ACSEF) Economic Action Plan, the Aberdeenshire Economic Development Strategy and the Council's wider aims as set out in the Single Outcome Agreement.

The aims of the LTS are to:

- Reduce Non-Sustainable Journeys
- Increase Active Travel
- Make Travel More Effective
- Improve Health
- Reduce Carbon Emissions from Transport

The objectives of the LTS are to:

- Promote Sustainable Economic Growth – maximise the effectiveness of the transport network, services and facilities.
- Promote Social Inclusion and Accessibility – improve connections within and between communities, increasing accessibility of the transport network.
- Protect the Environment – remove barriers to active and sustainable travel helping to improve health and reduce emissions.
- Improve Safety – enhance the safety of all users of the transport network.
- Improve Integration – develop and improve integration between all forms of transport and improve connectivity within and beyond Aberdeenshire.

The LTS will aim to encourage individuals and businesses to consider ways to travel less, travel more actively and, where vehicular travel is necessary, how journeys could be made more effectively.

[Travel Less](#)

The LTS will aim to support and develop opportunities leading to a reduced need to travel. The business community will be encouraged to develop opportunities for remote and flexible working and adopt technologies which support this.

[Travel Actively](#)

When it is necessary to travel, the Strategy will ensure that active options are widely known, barriers preventing a change are removed and when change does occur, that this new behaviour is supported. The LTS will communicate the need to make small changes first such as substituting an occasional journey for a more active alternative.

[Travel Effectively](#)

The LTS will aim to make passenger trips more effective by encouraging shared or linked purpose journeys, a principle which can equally be applied to freight movements. Efficiencies of fuel for both private and commercial vehicles will be promoted using techniques such as eco-driving, promotion of 'greener' fleets, carsharing and support of new fuel technologies. Public transport is one of the most efficient methods of travel and efforts will be made to improve access to bus and rail services.

The LTS is due to be reviewed and updated during 2024. The review is likely to incorporate similar themes but with a People and Place approach.

Aberdeenshire Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy

The [Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy](#) (LHEES) is the key element to the Scottish Government's place-based, locally led, tailored approach to heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency across the country. The Scottish Parliament passed The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2024 which requires all local authorities to produce an LHEES strategy and delivery plan by December 2023 with these to be reviewed at five-yearly intervals.

The key element of the approach to heat decarbonisation is the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES). The aim of an LHEES is to set out a long-term plan for how each local authority will decarbonise the heat supply in buildings and improve their energy efficiency across the entire local authority area.

The [Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) presents the Scottish Government's vision for the future of heat in buildings. It sets out actions the Government is undertaking in the building sector to deliver their climate change commitments, while at the same time maximising economic opportunities and ensuring a just transition, including helping to address fuel poverty.

Heating is the UK's biggest source of carbon emissions producing 37% of the UK total. Of that 37%, around 14% is attributable to heating (and cooling) domestic properties. This is why it has become a target to reduce emissions from heating for governments in the UK. Another driver which must be recognised is the current cost of living/energy crisis. Energy costs have soared for all from late 2021 and show little signs of coming down. With Aberdeenshire having high levels of properties without mains gas, this is exacerbated since oil or LPG heating is a more expensive way to heat buildings than mains gas.

This LHEES has four primary priorities to drive the delivery plan and be the initial areas of focus. There is a real sense of urgency to make changes that will reduce carbon emissions

within the next 5 years and timescale of the LHEES. The priorities are all interlinked, progress is required on them all.

Priority 1: improve building energy efficiency. This applies to all building types, in the UK and the North East in particular, we have a high percentage of inefficient, leaky buildings. We need to identify the actions that work for specific building type without unintended consequences.

Priority 2: increase uptake of low and zero-carbon heating technologies across the area. This priority relies on the properties in question being able to take on the identified solutions. Part of this is identifying areas that present good opportunities for potential heat networks.

Priority 3: drive reduction in fuel poverty across Aberdeenshire. This is a key priority which has some statutory targets and will be linked to the other priorities. Often poor energy efficiency of buildings can be a driver for fuel poverty, particularly in off gas grid locations.

Priority 4: increase awareness of available information relating to decarbonisation and energy efficiency. This one is key to engaging communities that we hope to support through the energy transition. There are some funding opportunities as well as building archetype guides to inform people as to the appropriate insulation methods for specific property types. Looking at the figures on uptake of financial support would suggest this information is not widely known.

Place Strategy and Place Plans

A key action under the Infrastructure and public assets priority of the [Aberdeenshire Council Plan](#) is to develop and implement a Place Strategy that considers the current and future needs of communities.

[Local Place Plans](#) (LPPs) allow communities to highlight issues in their area, gather ideas, develop proposals for use and development of land and express future aspirations for the area in which they live.

LPPs can cover an array of proposals including climate change adaptation, active travel, housing sites and community facilities, town centre improvements and conservation of areas.

Place planning is a key tool when considering the priorities of the Local Housing Strategy. Using the principle ensures a more collaborative approach and understanding of place to achieve better outcomes for communities.

The [Place Standard tool](#) provides a framework to carry out assessments in partnership with communities and stakeholders. This tool will be utilised in the development of key priorities detailed in this document.

2.3 Local Housing Strategy Resource Projections

Lead partners have responsibility for meeting LHS resource requirements to deliver the LHS Outcome Actions, this includes the Scottish Government, Aberdeenshire Council, local RSLs, NHS as well as the independent and private housing sectors and other public bodies. Whilst it is difficult to predict the level of Scottish Government Funding to be allocated to local authorities over the next five years, the 2022/23 baseline position provides an indication of potential funding availability. Housing-related General Fund expenditure is expected to total £35.5M over the next five years, including £23M for homelessness and temporary accommodation, £6.2M to support repairs and adaptations in the private sector,

£2.2M to support Community Safety, and £1.5M to support the delivery of affordable housing.

Based on current revenue budgets, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is expected to spend £373M over the next 5 years, with £224M going towards day to day running costs (e.g. staffing, repairs and servicing), £58M on Loan Repayments, and £79M transferred to our capital budget to fund new build housing, property upgrades and energy efficiency works. In the longer term, we estimate that total HRA revenue expenditure over the next 30 years will total £3.2B, of which the majority will go towards day to day running costs, with around £670M potentially available for transfer to the capital budget for investment.

Total Capital expenditure over the 5-year period is anticipated to be £266M, with £78M planned for new build housing and open market acquisitions, and £188M for maintaining and upgrading our existing homes. This work will be funded by the £79M of funding transferred from the HRA, £36M in external grants, and £151M of borrowing. Over the next 30 years, we estimate that total capital investment in our stock will be around £1.2B, which will be funded through a mix of borrowing and money transferred from the HRA account.

Combining these resources suggests that over the 5-year period of the LHS, Aberdeenshire Council is projected to spend over £675M on the delivery of housing and housing services. Over and above this, the main social landlords operating in Aberdeenshire will invest in both the delivery of new homes and housing services, as well as repair, maintenance and improvement of the social housing stock across Aberdeenshire. This scale of investment in housing and related services within Aberdeenshire has a significant impact on the local economy, including employment in the public, private and independent sectors as well as the impact on the construction sector and related supply chain. The resource impact of Local Housing Strategy therefore stretches far beyond meeting housing need.

Such investment is subject to ongoing review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and partners business plans. During such reviews, changes to service delivery may be required to ensure financial viability and affordability to both the tenants and landlords. This will continue to be monitored in line with the priorities set out in this document.

3. Equalities Impact and other Assessments

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

The Council has a statutory obligation to ensure that all its functions and activities are exercised in full compliance with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and the Fairer Scotland Duty (2018). Equality is at the heart of Aberdeenshire's Local Housing Strategy. There is a commitment from the housing service to understand the diversity of those we are supporting through the priorities and outcomes of this LHS.

The Council aims to ensure that our priorities and services delivered produce positive outcomes for everyone in Aberdeenshire by prioritising preventive approaches and tackling inequalities where they exist.

An Integrated Impact Assessment was carried out throughout the production of the Local Housing Strategy. The combined assessment considers the impacts of five impact assessments:

- Children's Rights and Wellbeing
- Climate Changes and Sustainability
- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty
- Health Inequalities
- Town Centre's First.

The full version of the IIA can be found at Appendix 3.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, all qualifying public plans, programmes, and strategies are assessed for its likely environmental effects. A pre-screening assessment was carried out for the Local Housing Strategy (LHS). It was concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) would not be required as the LHS does not identify land for new housing development, the effects of which would be identified through the SEA of Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan. It was also agreed that there would be minimal impacts on environmental issues arising from the LHS.

4. Housing in Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire covers an area of 6,339 square kilometres and is a predominantly rural area in Northeast Scotland that includes the Cairngorm mountains, agricultural lowlands, and coastal landscapes. There are six administrative/committee areas: Banff and Buchan, Buchan, Garioch, Formartine, Kincardine and Mearns, and Marr, and the largest settlements in Aberdeenshire are split relatively evenly between these areas.

[Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2023 -2028](#) (HNDA) provides the evidence and data to support the development of the Local Housing Strategy. Within the HNDA, two housing market areas are identified within the Aberdeenshire area. These are the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA) and the Rural Housing Market Area (RHMA). The map below shows the boundaries of each of the market areas.



4.1 Population and Households

Population

The National Records of Scotland's (NRS) latest population estimates are for mid 2021. At this date, the population of Aberdeenshire was 262,690. This is an increase of 9,040 (or 3.6%) since 2011. This was above the Scottish average population increase of 3.4%.

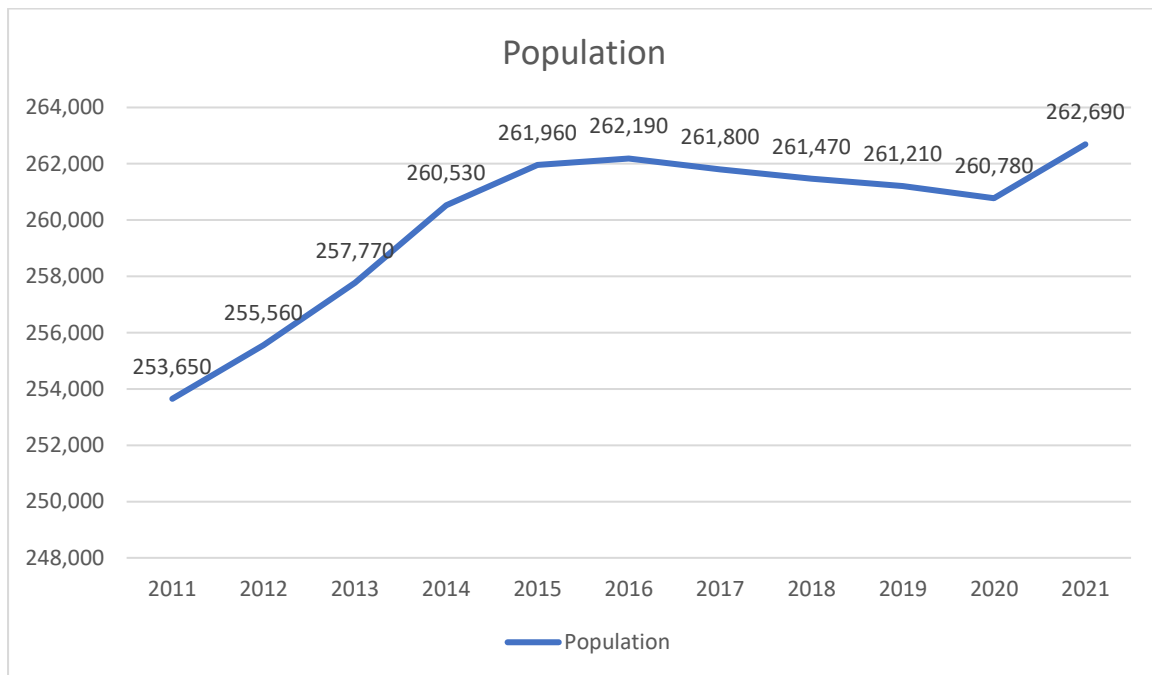
Between 2017 – 2020, there were slight decreases in population in Aberdeenshire. However, the population in the area remained above the Scottish average throughout this period. The increase in the population in 2021 may have been due to the impacts of the pandemic. Populations in urban areas fell during this period, whereas some rural areas saw a rise in numbers.



In 2021, Aberdeenshire's population was 262,690.

The projections used in the HNDA for population were based on 2018 information. As such, numbers are calculated based on past trends and a range of assumptions. Due to the timing of this information, events such as the pandemic and Brexit were not taken into account but could however have a significant on future population predictions.

Between 2018 – 2038, population is predicted to rise by 2.5% in Aberdeenshire approximately in line with the Scottish average.



Graph 1: Source: [Aberdeenshire Council Area Profile \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](http://nrscotland.gov.uk)

Table: Population in Aberdeenshire

Year	Population
2011	253,650
2012	255,560
2013	257,770
2014	260,530
2015	261,960
2016	262,190
2017	261,800
2018	261,470
2019	261,210
2020	260,780
2021	262,690

Households

In 2021, the number of households in Aberdeenshire was 113,861. This is an increase of 8,696 (or 8.4%) since 2011 and was above the Scottish average of 6.4%. The number of households have increased at a faster rate than the increase of population (3.6%).

As well as taking into consideration the trends in Aberdeenshire Council's population, the LHS considers the potential housing impacts of changes in the number and types of households living in the area and future household projections.

In September 2020, the NRS published household projections for every local authority in Scotland, based on a starting point of 2018 population estimates. The projections include a principal scenario and variants based on alternative assumptions about migration trends (both high and low). In Aberdeenshire, the principal migration projections show an increase of 11% from 111,156 to 122,900 from the period 2018 – 2043. High migration projections show a broadly similar increase of 12% from 111,156 to 124,943 households.

In the shorter term, over the next decade (2022-2032) the number of households in Aberdeenshire is projected to increase by 8% from 111,156 to 120,291 households under the principal scenario. During the life of the next LHS, 2024-2029, the number of households in Aberdeenshire is projected to increase by 6% from 111,156 to 118,325.

4.2 Economy

The Aberdeenshire economy is characterised by high employment (80.8% in 2019 compared to 74.8% in Scotland), and low unemployment rates (2% compared to 3.2% in Scotland).

The largest employment sector in the North-East (Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire) by full time equivalent jobs was the health sector with 14.6% of employment in 2020 with professional, scientific, and technical industry employing 12.6% of the population. This sector includes employment relating to legal, accounting, management consultancy, engineering and scientific research activities. This sector reflects the regional focus on research and development, primarily centred round the oil and gas industry, however the number of jobs has slightly decreased over time (previously in 2015 this was 13.5% and the largest employment sector).

The mining, quarrying and utilities industry is also regionally significant with 10.7% of the employees in the Northeast working in this sector, 8.0% of which in Aberdeenshire. This is considerably higher than in Scotland as a whole (2.7%). This sector includes activities relating to petroleum and gas extraction and the associated support services.

Regionally there was a very low reliance on the public sector in 2020, with only 19% of those in employment in the Northeast working in the public sector. This is lower than the Scottish national average of 24.1%. However, this represents a 2.4% rise in the number of public sector employees from 2015 to 2020.

Looking forward, Aberdeenshire and surrounding areas will see development of new green construction i.e. substations and connecting infrastructure to support the move to renewable energy. As a result, Aberdeenshire will host large numbers of workers coming from out with the area to support and build the required foundations. These workers are likely to remain in the area for several years contributing to the local economy. Housing will be required for workers and this will be addressed through a variety of means but will include a legacy for use once workers have left the area.

4.3 Housing Market

House Prices

As noted above, there are two housing market areas in Aberdeenshire. The Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA), which consists of all the Aberdeen City area and approx. a 20-mile radius around the City in Aberdeenshire to the north, south and West. Areas in the AHMA include Portlethen, Stonehaven, Westhill, Inverurie, Banchory and Ellon. The rest of Aberdeenshire is within the Rural Housing Market Area (RHMA). It is important to consider the housing need and demands of each area as both have very different characteristics. AHMA have much higher house prices, higher demand and higher household incomes than the RHMA.

Following the impact of the decrease in oil price in 2014, there was a notable impact on the local economy from 2016. This saw house prices fall steeply in the North East where there was an increase in other areas in Scotland. This was contrary to the position prior to this time where prices in Aberdeenshire were well above the Scottish average, particularly in 2015 where the average house price was £233,566 compared to £168,723 in Scotland.

Residential sales have followed a similar pattern to house prices with a sharp drop in 2020 as a result of Covid-19. Following this period, sales increased to levels not far off the peak of sales in 2014. This may have been as a response to pent up demand following the pandemic and not a change to the overall trend. Data will continue to be monitored to determine any new trends.

Lower quartile house prices are used to determine the entry level for first time buyers. Table 1 shows median and lower quartile house prices as at 2019/20 for each Housing Market Area in Aberdeenshire.

Area	Median	Lower Quartile
Aberdeenshire	£195,000	£135,000
Aberdeenshire part of Aberdeen HMA	£216,222	£165,000
Rural HMA	£165,000	£110,000
Scotland	£155,000	£100,000

Table 1: Registers of Scotland/CHMA

Lower quartile prices remain above those in Scotland. Highest prices are found in the Aberdeenshire area of the Aberdeen HMA.

When comparing income with house price an indication can be drawn to how affordable housing is to the population. The HNDA tool assumes affordability for buying a property if the price is no more than four times annual income. Table 2 below shows the ratios between house prices and income. Using the definition above, those shaded red would be deemed unaffordable with green being an affordable option.

Area	Lower Quartile price/Lower Quartile income	Lower Quartile price/Median income	Median price/Median income
Aberdeenshire	6.3	3.7	5.3
Aberdeenshire part of Aberdeen HMA	8.5	4.8	6.3
Rural HMA	5.9	3.4	5.1
Aberdeenshire part of Cairngorms NP	7.5	4.6	5.7

Scotland	5.8	3.5	5.5
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Table 2: Registers of Scotland, LHIE, CACI

Using this measure of affordability, households with lower quartile incomes cannot afford to purchase property in any part of the area. Housing in the lower quartile is more affordable for those on median incomes except for those in the Aberdeenshire part of the Aberdeen HMA and Cairngorms NP area. There are, however, considerable variations in house prices within housing market areas meaning that households that considering a different area, may find more affordable housing.

Private Sector Renting

There are significant differences in costs for renting in the private rented sector across Aberdeenshire. Rents are typically higher in the Aberdeen HMA compared to the Rural HMA across all property sizes. For example, a typical 3 bed rent in the Aberdeen HMA is 40% more than that in the Rural HMA.

Following the downturn of the oil industry, private sector rental levels have fluctuated in the area since the peak in 2014. Since 2017, 3 bed properties in Aberdeenshire have increased by 13% while 1 and 2 bed properties have increased by 5% and 2% respectively. There was insufficient data to analyse 4 bed increases due to a lack of advertised stock, however data does suggest an increasing trend in rental prices.



Income

Table 3 below shows lower quartile and median incomes for different parts of Aberdeenshire.

Area	Median	Lower Quartile
Aberdeenshire	£36,400	£21,320
Aberdeenshire part of Aberdeen HMA	£43,253	£25,112
Rural HMA	£32,240	£18,720
Scotland	£28,600	£17,160

Table 3: Local Level Household Income Estimates 2018

Incomes remain higher than Scotland, particularly in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area but there has been a recent levelling of income growth.

Median Income rose by 7% in Aberdeenshire while in Scotland, it increased by 11%

Short Term Lets

From 1st October 2022, the Scottish Government introduced legislation covering the letting of accommodation and new requirements for accommodation to be licensed by the local authority. For those who wish to offer accommodation on a short-term let basis, this legislation means they cannot trade without a licence. Once approved, a licence is valid for 3 years.

Licences are required for:

- those who wish to let a property where they don't usually reside (i.e. a second home),
- let their all or part of their home while they are absent (i.e. on holiday)
- use part of their home on a short term let (i.e. home sharing)

Since inception, Aberdeenshire Council have received 1057 live applications for short term let licences with the majority for South Aberdeenshire. A [live register](#) is available on the website detailing applications.

The availability of short term lets are positive accommodation options in areas of high tourism allowing areas to see economic benefits of visitors. However, for people residing in the area, this can remove potential permanent housing options, creating further pressure on housing need. In addition to this, there is potential that short term lets can add further pressure on the housing market in tourist areas as locals are unable to buy properties due to increased house prices.

4.4 Housing Stock

In 2021, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) reported that Aberdeenshire had a total of 120,682 dwellings across all tenures. This was an increase of 15.78% from 2006 and well above the Scottish average of 10.72%.



In 2021, Aberdeenshire had 120,682 dwellings.

As expected in a rural area, the majority of these dwellings are either detached (47%) or semi detached (29%). 12% of dwellings are flats and 12% are terraced properties. The highest type of tenure in Aberdeenshire is owner occupation with 71% of dwellings owned. This is above the Scottish average of 61%. 18% of stock was provided through social housing and 11% private sector both of which are lower than the Scottish average at 26% and 13% respectively.

66% of stock in Aberdeenshire have 3 or more bedrooms which is above the Scottish average of 53%. This data is limited as the statistics for the private sector was unavailable so figures are based only on owner and social rented tenures.

Of all housing stock, 3% have been assessed as Below Tolerable Standard in Aberdeenshire. This is slightly above the Scottish average of 2%. All of these properties are in the owner-occupied sector suggesting that upgrades may be unaffordable to those who own their property.

3% of dwellings are Below Tolerable Standard just above Scottish average 2%

28% of properties are in urgent disrepair in Aberdeenshire. 24% in Owner-Occupied sector which is below the Scottish average of 26%. 32% in Social Housing sector and 44% in Private Rented sector higher than Scottish average of 30% and 37% respectively.

28% of dwellings are urgent disrepair which is below than Scottish average of 29%

In 2022, Aberdeenshire had 2,543 Empty Homes, approx. 6% of empty homes in Scotland. This number has reduced over the five-year period. Economic factors such as the downturn of oil had a substantial effect in the area resulting in significant job losses and business closures. The housing market was affected seeing a reduction in house prices and selling a property took longer. This impacted the ability of empty homeowners to sell or bring their properties back to standard for use. Aberdeenshire Council employs an Empty Homes Officer to work with owners to provide them support and assistance to bring their properties back into use. In addition to these empty homes, 1,214 properties are used as second homes in Aberdeenshire. Two areas see higher percentages of second homes, Banff and Buchan and Marr. The Banff and Buchan area consists of small coastal villages with second homes linked to tourism. Marr includes the Royal Deeside area and is therefore another popular tourist destination. While in the Banff and Buchan area, the turnover in stock allows for a healthy supply of housing, the same cannot be said in Marr. This has added to housing pressures in this area for those looking to live here permanently. Rentals in the area also tend to be expensive making it challenging for those who work in the area to access affordable accommodation.

5. Priority 1 – Increase supply of housing in Aberdeenshire

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is an all-tenure strategy which considers current and future housing need, setting a strategic vision for housing across both public and private sectors. Providing the right size, type and tenure of housing, in resilient, well-connected places is a fundamental aspect of Local Housing Strategy delivery and crucial to the delivery of Aberdeenshire Council's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Aberdeen City Region Deal.

Aligned to providing more homes whilst creating resilient communities and places, the LHS is required to provide evidence and policy direction in relation to:

- the extent and nature of housing need and demand across Aberdeenshire
- delivering a generous supply of housing land aligned to the Local Development Plan and Housing Supply Targets
- the strategic direction for housing investment in Aberdeenshire, including the Strategic Housing Investment Plan
- efficient and innovative ways of building and financing the development of new homes.

Informed by analysis of the main issues, housing system drivers and [Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2023 -2028](#), LHS Priority 1 focuses on 'Increasing the supply of housing in Aberdeenshire'.

Chapter 5 sets out the evidence base and outlines what Aberdeenshire Council and partners will do to address the main challenges of enhancing housing supply with a view to providing more affordable homes to create resilient communities with place making at the heart of the planning and delivery process. It concludes with LHS priority actions for partnership, investment and delivery activity.

LHS analysis suggests that the key issues which drive the need for action, investment, and collaboration to increase housing supply whilst promoting placemaking to create resilient communities in Aberdeenshire are as follows:



Housing Need

To provide the evidence required to calculate local housing and land requirements over the next 20 years, the Council has produced a [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2023 - 2028](#) (HNDA) in partnership with Aberdeen City council, using the Scottish Government's HNDA calculation tool. This was signed off as robust and credible by the Centre for Housing Market Analysis in January 2024.

The HNDA calculation works by projecting forward the number of new households who will require housing in Aberdeenshire. This is based on household projections produced by the National Records of Scotland (NRS). The number of existing households who need to move to more suitable housing is also included.

The baseline projections for Aberdeenshire assume the number of households will grow under a high migration scenario. Based on this assumption, future housing estimates for Aberdeenshire suggest a requirement for around 10,330 new homes over the period 2023-2042. During the life of the LHS 2024-2029, a need for approximately 2,844 new homes is estimated across Aberdeenshire; around 569 per annum.

Of this estimated 2,844 new homes, around 53% of this requirement is for market housing options, both owner occupied and private rent, with the remaining 47% focused on affordable housing tenures. Around 44% of new homes are estimated to be needed in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area and 56% in the Rural Housing Market area. Of the affordable housing tenures, 58% of housing estimates are focused on the delivery of social rent and 42% on intermediate tenures such as shared ownership/equity and mid-market rent.



Affordable Housing Pressure

There are 16,208 general needs social houses across Aberdeenshire with 11,578 (71%) provided by Aberdeenshire Council and 4,630 (29%) provided by RSLs. Around 9% of general needs social houses become available for letting in Aberdeenshire each year. Demand for social housing in Aberdeenshire outstrips supply: the current Aberdeenshire Council waiting list has 4,306 applicants for general needs properties and with an average of 1,060 annual relets this equates to 4 applicants for every Council tenancy that becomes available. 25% of applicants have a Band A or B award which is the highest housing need, 65% have Band C or D a lower housing need and 10% of applicants have no banding award which is no assessed housing need.

- ❖ Comparing Aberdeenshire Council's stock profile with the current waiting list shows significant pressure on one-bedroom properties: 48% of waiting list applicants with a housing need require a one-bedroom property but only 29% of general needs housing stock is one-bedroom. While housing need outstrips supply for one-bedroom properties, there is stock in most settlements and at least a proportion of housing need can therefore be met.
- ❖ This is different for larger properties, where there is pressure specifically from applicants with the highest housing need. There are 25 settlements in Aberdeenshire where there is a housing need for three-bedroom properties but no turnover of stock in the last 5 years. 40% of the applicants for three-bedroom properties have a Band A or B award, and without any turnover of stock there is no scope to meet their housing need.
- ❖ There are also 77 settlements across Aberdeenshire that have a housing need for four- and five-bedroom properties and where there is no current stock of these types of properties. The majority of applicants with a housing need for these sizes of houses have a Band A or B award and as there is no stock of that size there is no scope to meet that housing need.

A Housing Demand Score has been calculated for all settlements in Aberdeenshire, which allows them to be ranked based on their housing need. Figures for waiting list first choice were taken for each settlement as at 31st March 2023 for the last 5 years (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023). Applications with bands A to D were included, and the average waiting list figures over the last 5 years were calculated. Turnover per settlement (average lets over the last 5 years divided by stock as at 31st March 2023) were also calculated to show the proportion of stock becoming available per year. The Housing Need Score for each settlement was calculated by taking average waiting list demand over the last 5 years and dividing this by turnover. Details of the 25 most pressured settlements can be found in Table 4 below:

Top 25 Most Pressured Settlements in Aberdeenshire

Settlement	Area	Housing Market Area	Demand Score
Inverurie	Garioch	AHMA	9430
Westhill	Garioch	AHMA	5448
Stonehaven	Kincardine & Mearns	AHMA	5283
Peterhead	Buchan	RHMA	4385
Fraserburgh	Banff & Buchan	RHMA	4100
Portlethen	Kincardine & Mearns	AHMA	3728
Ellon	Formartine	AHMA	3058
Banchory	Marr	AHMA	2416
Balmedie	Formartine	AHMA	2006
Turriff	Formartine	RHMA	1686
Huntly	Marr	RHMA	1657
Kemnay	Garioch	AHMA	1427
Mintlaw	Buchan	RHMA	1205
Banff	Banff & Buchan	RHMA	1141
Ballater	Marr	RHMA	900
Alford	Marr	RHMA	871
Kintore	Garioch	AHMA	736
Laurencekirk	Kincardine & Mearns	RHMA	700
Aboyne	Marr	RHMA	685
Oldmeldrum	Formartine	AHMA	645
Newmachar	Garioch	AHMA	614
Blackburn	Garioch	AHMA	592
Portsoy	Banff & Buchan	RHMA	587
Braemar	Marr	RHMA	566
Macduff	Banff & Buchan	RHMA	560

Table 4: Most pressured settlements, Aberdeenshire

It is important to note however, that inclusion in Table 4 above is not a prerequisite for the delivery of affordable housing, with opportunities out with these towns actively pursued to meet identified local housing need as appropriate. As well as meeting housing need, it is acknowledged that housing development will also contribute to a range of strategic priorities in Aberdeenshire such as town centre regeneration, rural sustainment, and strategic growth.

With regards to other affordable tenures, just under half of the applicants on Aberdeenshire Council's waiting list have expressed an interest in mid-market rent and affordable home ownership as a possible rehousing solution. However, there is insufficient data to evidence whether these households would have the financial means to potentially access these tenures.



Key Workers

Key workers are often considered as essential to providing services to the public and can include professions such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and police officers but can also extend to private sector businesses, and seasonal staff for example. It is also acknowledged that difficulties in the recruitment and retention of key workers can be detrimental to local economic growth and to service provision that is important to the wellbeing of local communities. In Aberdeenshire whilst there is the provision of mid-market rented accommodation through arms-length organisations of our housing association partners and Aberdeenshire Council – Create Homes, these properties are not specifically targeted at key workers but have been a useful resource for local key workers to access affordable accommodation close to their employment. Recent projects have been undertaken to work with partners to identify opportunities to provide accommodation for key workers. These have included working with the Health and Social Care Partnership to identify accommodation options for carers coming to work in Aberdeenshire. In addition, initial work has been undertaken with energy suppliers looking to commence energy efficiency and renewables work in the area. A strategy is being developed in order to provide accommodation to transient workers while leaving a legacy for longer term housing at the end of the works. Officers will continue to actively monitor this in partnership with stakeholders to ensure that appropriate action is taken to deliver the right size and type of accommodation to meet this clients groups need while maximising available funding streams including [Rural Affordable Homes for Key Workers Fund](#).



New Supply

The [Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024 - 2029](#) (SHIP) is the delivery plan to direct affordable housing investment and meet affordable housing supply targets across Aberdeenshire. Over the next 5 years, the Strategic Housing Investment Programme could deliver 1,972 new affordable homes subject to securing appropriate approvals and funding. Around £172M of funding from the Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme will be required to enable this programme. The priority is the supply of homes for social rent, with around 78% of delivery anticipated as social rent and the remaining 22% across a diverse range of affordable tenures. In terms of the projected new build completions over the life of the SHIP, 62% are anticipated to be delivered in the Aberdeen Housing Market and 38% in the Rural Housing Market area. With regards to addressing the pressure points of 1 bed properties and larger family size properties of 3+ bedrooms, around 35% of social rent properties are anticipated to be 1 bed properties and around 39% 3+ bedroom properties.

The delivery of the SHIP over the life of the new LHS will take place against an ambitious national policy agenda, Housing to 2040. Meantime a Housing Innovation Programme led by the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre and the Scottish Futures Trust aims to transform housing design standards towards manufacture and assembly and a greater use of collaborative procurement frameworks. In alignment with this approach Aberdeenshire Council is a member of the Scotland Excel New Build Residential framework which expires July 2024.

The Housing Supply Target for Aberdeenshire set in the previous Local Housing Strategy (2018-2023) was 5,250 units over five years, equivalent to 1,050 per year. Within this an affordable housing target of 1,838 units (368 per year) was set, and a market housing target of 3,413 (683 per year). The affordable target was 35% of the overall total. Analysis of housing completions shows that the target for market housing was exceeded with 3,684 units delivered compared with a target of 3,413. However, only 1,047 affordable units were delivered over this time period, below the target of 1,838 and equating to 22% of total completions. As a result, the overall supply target of 5,250 units was not met over this five year period with only 4,731 units delivered.

There are a number of reasons for this. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in 2020 has been significant, as has the increased rates of inflation and interest rates which have resulted in reduced delivery across all sectors. Essentially, the housing market has been less buoyant than anticipated at the time the housing supply target was set and this decreased demand has led to a slowing of delivery for new build market housing across many parts of the area. This had a knock-on effect on the affordable housing supply because the delivery of affordable units is to a large extent dependent on S75 agreements tied to market housing developments.

Lower than anticipated levels of delivery in recent years in combination with an already generous supply of land for housing means that there is a substantial amount of land available for housing development over the life of the new LHS. The 2023 Housing Land Audit showed there is land with capacity for more than 18,000 units across Aberdeenshire. Most of this land is in private ownership however, and therefore increasing the rate of delivery of affordable housing remains challenging, particularly given that market build rates continue to be lower than they have been in the past. Affordable housing partners recognise the importance of maximising land supply out with the Affordable Housing Policy and as such work continues to identify and pursue other opportunities including a collaborative approach with regards to the disposal of partners' land and assets and securing land/units from the open market where appropriate and viable. Seeking to acquire units from the open market aligns with [Scottish Government's National Acquisition Programme](#) where this meets Aberdeenshire Council's wider strategic aims such as meeting local housing need, financial viability, asset and tenancy managements plans, energy efficiency standards and bringing empty properties back into use for example.

Given the predominantly rural nature of the Aberdeenshire area, Aberdeenshire Council support the Scottish Government's ambitions that Self and Custom Build housing can play in providing good quality homes whilst sustaining rural communities. To support this potential housing delivery model, Aberdeenshire Council have established an online [self-build register](#) where individuals can register their interest in different areas and locations. This data will then help shape and inform the Local Development Plan and associated policies.

Ensuring an effective land supply for affordable housing will be a crucial element of increasing the supply of affordable housing across Aberdeenshire over the life of the new LHS.



Placemaking

Since its inception in 1996, Aberdeenshire Council has adopted a place-based approach with the creation of six administrative areas to ensure we are representing and responding to the needs of local communities. This local area approach and strong local focus is embedded in the way that Aberdeenshire Council work.

The [National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#) sets out national policy on Local Living and 20 Minute Communities aiming to encourage, promote and facilitate the application of the Place Principle and create connected and compact neighbourhoods where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or using sustainable transport options.

Aberdeenshire Council's Place Strategy is founded on the [Place Principle](#) agreed by Scottish Government and COSLA and seeks to work more closely with communities in their role as custodians of local places and seek solutions through working with partners at a local level. The Place Principle is fundamental to [National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#) which promotes a shared understanding of place and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for people and communities.

Aberdeenshire Council's approach complements the [National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#), aligns with Best Value obligations and underpins the Council Plan, whilst being a key factor in driving change. The strategy and place plans are underpinned by [Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment](#), supporting a strategic vision with and for citizens, to craft economic and social outcomes that are equitable for all.

Place and wellbeing outcomes



The principles of equality, net-zero emissions and sustainability underpin all of these themes, and all themes should be embedded in policy and action.

The strategy is based on the Place & Wellbeing Outcomes as noted below:-

- [Movement](#) – active travel; public transport; traffic and parking
- [Spaces](#) – streets and spaces; natural spaces; play and recreation
- [Resources](#) – services and support; work and economy; **housing** and community
- [Civic](#) – identity and belonging; feeling safe
- [Stewardship](#) – care and maintenance; influence and control

Housing delivery is a key tenet to the creation of local living / 20-minute neighbourhoods by improving housing diversity and the range of options on offer, the ability to 'age well in place', increased affordable housing options, plus safe spaces and streets, with placemaking at the heart of shared outcomes.



Actions

Increase the supply of housing

Assist in the regeneration of our towns.

Enable the provision of affordable housing in our rural communities.

We will continue to work with partners to increase the supply of housing within resilient, well-connected places to meet local housing need. Working together we will ensure an effective housing land supply; implement the Strategic Housing Investment Plan; pilot new technologies and delivery models to maximise housing opportunities; optimise the use of brownfield and vacant land; and support our rural communities to deliver housing within a placemaking context.

A partnership approach is vital to proactively addressing the challenges of increasing the supply of housing in Aberdeenshire.

Building on the existing collaborative approach currently adopted within Aberdeenshire, stakeholders will continue to work together through the Affordable Housing Forum and Affordable Housing Delivery Team to maximise the opportunities to increase the supply of housing; this approach enables a shared understanding of the issues and challenges whilst shaping and informing the Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Plan.



Outcomes

- **Number of Social Rented properties completed per year.**
- **Number of Acquisitions completed per year.**



Empty Homes

Empty homes are recognised as a wasted resource which have the potential to be brought back into use as part of the housing supply chain. They are a blight on communities and can attract anti-social behaviour, resulting in feelings of insecurity, and may contribute to depopulation and reduced property values in that area.

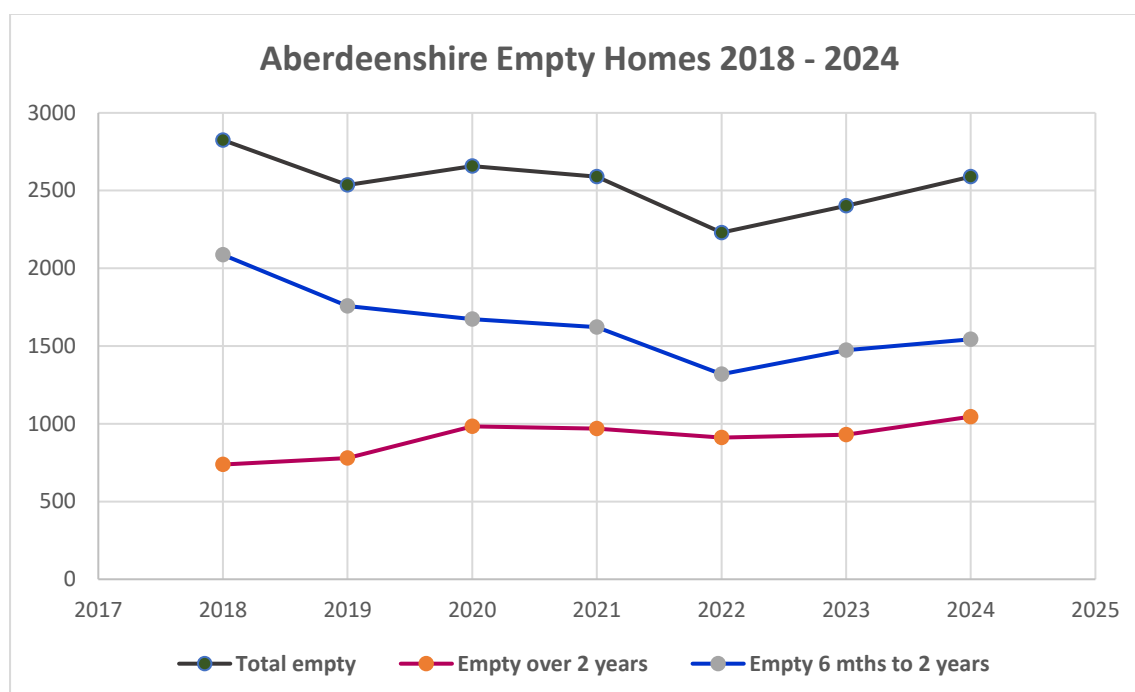
By encouraging owners to bring their empty properties back into use as housing across all tenures, will increase the stock and range of available housing options whilst improving the condition and quality of housing stock. It also contributes to safe and thriving

neighbourhoods, regenerating and/or sustaining both rural and urban communities, placemaking and supporting local economies.

To maintain a healthy housing market, it makes economic, environmental, and practical sense to tap into a resource that is already there. Furthermore, bringing empty properties back into use contributes to sustainability and reduces carbon emissions whilst improving energy performance standards which will help alleviate fuel poverty, addressing both health and child poverty inequalities.

All of which connects to and supports the [Scottish Empty Homes Partnership's aims and objectives](#), the Scottish Government's vision of [Housing to 2040](#) and contributes to the National Planning Framework Policy 9: [Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings](#) and Policy 16: [Quality Homes](#).

The graph below, from Aberdeenshire Council Tax data, shows the empty homes figures by time empty during the period 2018 to 2024. A long-term empty property is a dwelling that has been empty for 6 months or more and is liable for Council Tax.



Graph 2: Source: Aberdeenshire Empty Homes data 2018 to 2024 (Aberdeenshire Council Tax data)

Year	Empty 6 months to 2 years	Empty over 2 years	Total empty
2018	2087	738	2825
2019	1757	779	2536
2020	1674	983	2657
2021	1621	968	2589
2022	1319	911	2230
2023	1474	929	2403
2024	1544	1046	2594

Over the course of the last 6 years there has been a general downward trend in the total number of empty properties, however, there has been an increase in the number of properties empty over 2 years during this time.

The [Housing Needs & Demand Assessment](#) highlights some of the context around the reasons why a home becomes a long-term empty property. An Aberdeenshire context to these aspects include:

- Downturn of global oil price led to an economic slump with job losses, business closures and impacts extending to other industries. The area saw decline in the local economy which impacted the housing market. House prices dropped and they took longer to sell. This impacted empty homeowners' ability to rent or sell their properties. Affordability of bringing the property up to standard was also impacted during this period and potentially a reluctance to sell until the market and house prices started to rise again.
- The [Private Residential Tenancy](#) which came into force in 2017 under the [Private Housing \(Tenancies\) \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#), offers tenants more security than the previous Assured and Short Assured tenancies. A further challenge to the Empty Homes policy is that due to this change, some owners have become reluctant to register as landlords and for some existing landlords, they have not relet their property once vacated by tenants on the previous tenancy agreement. This potentially adds to the number of empty homes in Aberdeenshire. Advice and support will be provided to these owners to assist them in the renting process or to sell their properties.
- Legislation on energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector may be technically challenging and expensive to meet for some owners. In rural areas, typically empty properties are older and require higher levels of repair, maintain and upgrade and associated costs and challenges in terms of procurement, securing contractors, supplies, and delivery costs. Some empty properties may be historic buildings in conservation areas or be listed. If they need repair the challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the market value of the property is often less than the cost of carrying out the refurbishment of the building.
- Covid-19 enforced social distancing and moving house with temporary business closures and job furloughs. During this period, empty homeowners were unable to procure contractors to carry out works. Supply of materials were also difficult to obtain, and costs increased significantly. These factors could also be contributed to, in addition to Covid-19, to Brexit and the war in Ukraine.

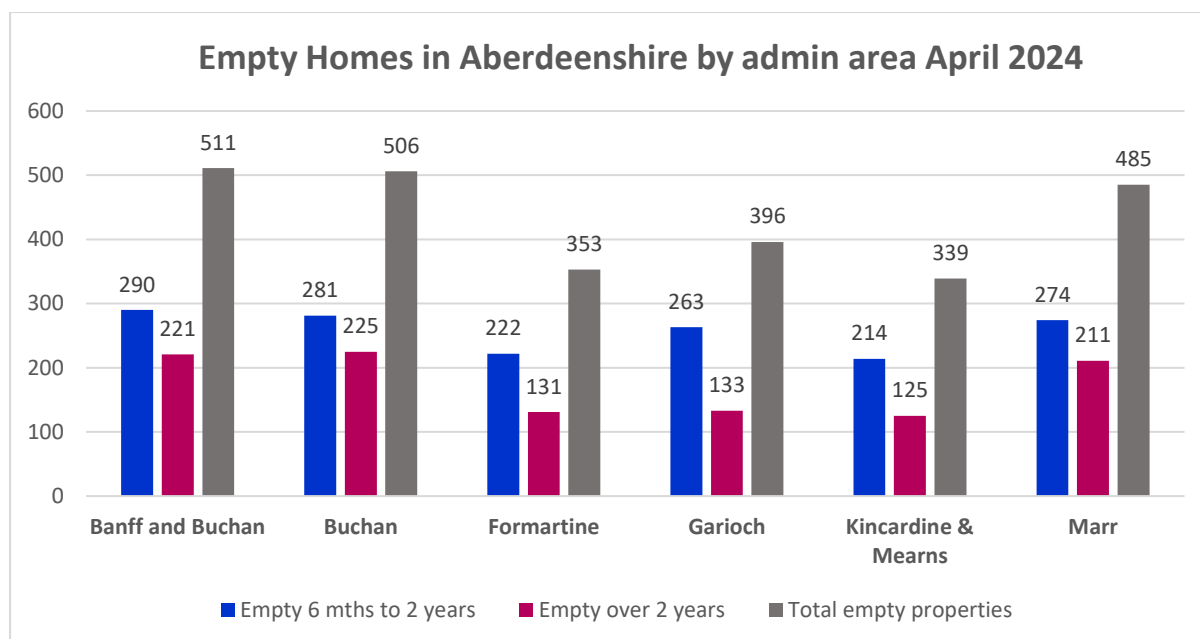
From April 2018 to March 2024, Aberdeenshire Council bought 44 empty residential properties from the open market and brought them back into use for social rented affordable housing. In addition, along with our RSL partners and a private developer, 12 empty non-residential properties were converted into 99 units of affordable housing for social rent and one unit for Low-Cost Shared Equity (LCSE) across Aberdeenshire.

Since 2018, 398 enquiries have been made to the dedicated Empty Homes mailbox with the following specific advice provided:-

- 195 enquiries received on funding and financial related queries.
- 87 enquiries received for advice on buying and selling.
- 46 general enquiries.
- 8 enquiries regarding advice on renovations and maintenance.
- 27 enquiries regarding advice on renting.
- 35 enquiries reporting an empty home.

Since Summer 2022, processes have been set in place to regularly contact empty property owners to inform them of the advice and information available through the Empty Homes Service with over 5202 empty homeowners contacted.

A robust evidence base from Aberdeenshire Council Tax data as at April 2024 recorded that the total number of empty properties in Aberdeenshire was 2590. The graph below shows how this is distributed across each administrative area in Aberdeenshire, along with how many properties have been empty for 6 months to 2 years and those empty over 2 years.



Graph 3: Source Empty properties in Aberdeenshire by administrative area, and time empty at April 2024 (Aberdeenshire Council Tax data).

Table: Empty Homes in Aberdeenshire by Admin Area April 2024

Admin Area	Empty 6 months to 2 years	Empty over 2 years	Total empty properties
Banff and Buchan	290	221	511
Buchan	281	225	506
Formartine	222	131	396
Garioch	263	133	396
Kincardine & Mearns	214	125	339
Marr	274	211	485

Table 5 below sets out how levels of long-term empty properties in Aberdeenshire compares with our neighbouring councils and with Scotland as a whole.

Council	Number of long-term empty properties	% of dwellings that are long term empty	Number of 2 nd homes	% of dwellings that are 2 nd homes
Aberdeenshire	2704	2.2%	1166	1.0%
Aberdeen City	5594	4.5%	686	0.6%
Moray	928	2.0%	791	1.7%
Highland	3390	2.7%	3753	3.0%
Angus	1236	2.1%	389	0.7%
Perth & Kinross	1275	1.7%	1202	1.6%
Scotland	46,217	1.7%	24,061	0.9%

Table 5: Long term empty properties in Aberdeenshire and Scotland (NRS Households and Dwellings in Scotland published June 2024

[NRS Household Estimates 2023 Data - Microsoft Excel Open XML Spreadsheet \(live.com\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/nrs-household-estimates-2023-data)

Table 5 also shows the number of second homes. A second home is one which is not the main residence of the owner, but it is occupied for a minimum of 25 days per year. In some areas, there are high numbers of these 2nd homes which can be a barrier to local people accessing a home in an area they want to live, work or remain in.

Recent new legislation has been approved that will allow councils to charge up to double Council Tax on second homes, in line with empty properties, with the aim being to increase the availability of housing to be lived in. These charges will be applied from 1st April 2024. The Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2023. Impacts of this change will be monitored regularly with second homeowners being provided with advice and assistance on how to rent or sell the property. It is anticipated that there may be an increase in Short Term Lets as second homeowners may choose to use accommodation for holiday or short term lets rather than considering a Private Residential Tenancy.

Bringing empty properties back into use is challenging in many ways. Working in partnership with other services, agencies and community groups is a more pragmatic approach to help raise the profile of empty homes to tackle them more effectively with shared resources, knowledge, and ideas. Work is ongoing to link with a North East Scotland wide group comprising internal and external partners to help address empty homes and any problems caused by them.

It is recognised that funding can be a main issue for many empty homeowners. The Empty Homes Service will continue to assist and provide advice to owners on schemes regarding financial discounts and incentives that may be available to them. These include VAT reductions, claiming VAT back from HMRC and merchants' discounts.

Engaging with empty homeowners can also be challenging. Targeted emails are sent to empty homeowners biannually, in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), to make them aware of the Empty Homes Service and the advice and support that can be provided to assist owners to bring their empty property back into use. However, the response rate is low, with some requesting that the team do not contact them again. In addition to this, the housing service work closely with Council Tax to ensure details of the empty homes service is included in correspondence. This allows homeowners with no email addresses to be made aware of the advice and assistance available.

There are some legislative tools, such as Compulsory Purchase Orders, that can be used in the approach to tackling empty homes. However, these are not always effective or enforceable, with many being time consuming, complicated and with pressures on human resource capacity and budgets. These need to be considered carefully and managed appropriately if and when they are implemented.

Due to the rural nature of Aberdeenshire, there are difficulties in some areas with access to public transport, transport links, digital inclusion, and employment opportunities. Empty homes can be a problem in many different areas for different reasons and can sometimes contribute to the decline of town centres. With the lack of job opportunities and accommodation, typically younger people are tending to move away to bigger more thriving towns and cities. This can lead to other properties being low demand to rent or buy and the possibility of these becoming further empty properties.

- Empty homes have a role to play in contributing to increasing the supply of housing and meet housing need across all the community. The [Empty Homes Framework](#) developed by the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) is embedded in our commitment to

bring empty homes back into use. We will continue to encourage and support empty homeowners to do so using the resources and initiatives available via the dedicated Empty Homes Service to provide individualised advice: Advice and information leaflets on our webpage.

- Access to merchant's discounts and reduced rated VAT.
- An online Matchmaker Scheme, which is a free service to help match prospective sellers and buyers of empty properties.
- Mapping empty homes using data to inform strategic planning and targeting for empty homes work.
- Working with the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, being an active member of the Scottish Empty Homes Officer Network, and being supported with training, workshops, advice, knowledge sharing, best practise, and expertise.
- Investigate and where appropriate apply for funding to assist bringing empty homes back into use.
- Collaborative working across Aberdeenshire Council services and external agencies to maximise resources whilst encouraging empty property owners bring their properties back into use.



Actions

Encourage and support owners to bring empty properties back into use.

We will continue to monitor, review and analyse the number of empty homes across the Aberdeenshire area annually, including the use of Council Tax data, to inform our strategic planning and future actions to help address empty homes. Our advice and information service will continue to support owners to assist with returning empty homes back into use either in the private or social sector. Actions will include to continue to use the Matchmaker service, implementation of best practice and raising awareness of empty homes. Local place planning activities will be undertaken to tackle empty homes in settlements where this has been identified as a priority.



Outcomes

- **Number of Empty Homes brought back into use per year.**

6. Priority 2 - Provide a range of housing options for those who wish to live in Aberdeenshire

It is important that there are a range of housing options for those who will be unable to or do not desire to access the social housing sector. This chapter considers other housing options available in Aberdeenshire to assist with people to meet their housing need in a tenure, area and property type that suits their lifestyle.



Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector plays a crucial role in contributing to the overall housing supply in Aberdeenshire helping to alleviate the pressure on the housing market. With approximately 11% of the total housing stock in Aberdeenshire in the private rented sector it provides an essential and accessible housing option for many people including, students, professionals, families, and individuals who may not otherwise have access to social housing or be able to afford buying a home. It also offers flexibility and choice in terms of the length of tenure and housing options – e.g. size and type of property required to meet preferences and needs, whether short or long term. The growth and improvement of the PRS could be an important consideration within the new LHS aligned to Town Centre, rural and economic growth strategies. Contrary to the rest of Scotland, rental costs have generally reduced in Aberdeenshire since 2014, however there are differences between rent in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (AHMA) and the Rural Housing Market Area (RHMA). Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire were the only areas of Scotland to see rents decrease for 1 bed flats over the last 10 years (-11% compared to +31% for Scotland). 2 bed flats increased in the area by 3% which was still considerably below the 33% increase across Scotland.

There is evidence that private sector rents are not affordable for those on lower quartiles incomes across most of the area. While rents and house prices have fallen since 2014, this has only had a marginal impact on affordability because income has seen a recent levelling of growth. In the last year, there has been some reversal in these trends with rental costs starting to increase.

The Private Rented Sector is also regulated by the Scottish Government to provide tenants with protected rights and to ensure that private rented properties meet certain quality and safety standards as outlined in the [Repairing Standard](#).

Ultimately, the responsibility for repairing, maintaining and improving the quality of homes in the private sector sits with the homeowner, however, through its [Scheme of Assistance](#), [Below Tolerable Standard](#) and [Housing Renewal Area](#) policies, Aberdeenshire Council aim to provide homeowners and private tenants with appropriate advice, information and in some instances, financial assistance to encourage and help them to repair and maintain their properties without the need for enforcement action.

Aberdeenshire Council provide advice and training to landlords to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities in terms of housing conditions. This includes best practices in property management. In addition, the Council also have enforcement powers to take action against landlords who do not take appropriate action. This provides confidence to tenants in the sector that properties they reside in will be kept to standard.

On the 26th March 2024, The Scottish Government introduced the [Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#). As part of the new legislation, several changes have been made to improve the way the rented sector in Scotland works. The Bill includes:

- Rent Control areas for the private sector.
- Capping of rent increases on referral or appeal.
- Duties to consider delay to evictions.
- Damages for unlawful eviction
- Keeping pets
- Making changes to home
- Unclaimed tenancy deposits
- Registration of letting agents etc.
- Ending joint tenancies
- Converting older tenancies

As part of the new legislation, there will be a requirement for all councils to assess the need for rent control areas in the private sector every five years. An initial analysis is to be undertaken by all local authorities and reported to the Scottish Government by 30th November 2026. This analysis will inform whether the Scottish Government is required to introduce rent control areas and place limits on rent increases. Initial information suggests that this will not be required in Aberdeenshire, however this will be reviewed on completion of the analysis.

The private rented sector can make significant contribution towards homelessness prevention. Private landlords provide a large portion of the housing stock, extending the pool of available housing for individuals or families experiencing homelessness, they offer an accessible, flexible, and diverse range of housing options suitable for different needs and preferences in towns and villages across Aberdeenshire reducing the need for social housing.

Providing access to secure housing helps individuals and families maintain stability and avoids repeat homelessness instances, we recognise that Landlords have the ability to provide stable and affordable housing, therefore we are working hard to establish and build strong working relationships with our landlords not only to increase the availability of secure suitable housing but to provide support to both landlords and tenants to promote and encourage tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector.

Aberdeenshire Council run a [Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme](#) (RDGS) to assist individuals and families to access the private sector. The scheme supports eligible households who are unable to provide an up-front deposit to allow them to rent in the sector giving them more flexibility in the area and type of property to meet their housing need. RDGS can only be accessed by registered landlords, ensuring that only good quality accommodation is being supported.



Mid-Market Rent

Mid Market rent (MMR) is an intermediate rental tenure that provides quality and affordable homes for those on low to moderate incomes. MMR rental levels tend to be higher than social housing rents but below private sector rents.

MMR is provided by a range of social landlords in the Aberdeenshire area, including Aberdeenshire Council's Limited Liability Company, Create Homes. Access to this tenure provides further housing options to those households who may be unlikely to access social housing but cannot afford to purchase a property or rent at market levels.

Tenants will be provided with a [Private residential tenancy](#) which ensures security and stability for tenants in line with the [Private Housing \(Tenancies\) \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#).

Demand for Mid Market rent properties will be kept under review. Where demand is identified, this will be considered with partners to expand of the portfolio in the area making best use of funding sources available.



Shared Equity

Shared Equity is an affordable home ownership option which allows people to address their housing needs by purchasing a property. There are several models of shared equity schemes in Aberdeenshire provided by both Aberdeenshire Council and it's Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners.

Aberdeenshire Council administer a [Low Cost Shared Equity scheme](#). This allows a nominated purchaser to buy a majority equity share in a property. Properties in this scheme are usually a result of planning agreements between the Council and developers. The purchaser holds the full title of the property, and no additional rental charges are required for the Council's share of the property. This scheme allows households to become homeowners who may not be able to access the open market.

[Affordable housing for sale](#) are advertised online and applicants are required to meet certain eligibility criteria to qualify.

Shared equity schemes are also available to those on low to moderate incomes to allow them to access housing by purchasing a home.

The New Supply Shared Equity Scheme aims to help suitable applicants to fund the majority share of a new build home which has been built for shared equity sale. The Scottish Government will hold the remaining share of the property under the share equity agreement. In Aberdeenshire, two RSL partners provide this service.

The Open Market Shared Equity Scheme aims to help suitable applicants to fund the majority share of a property purchased from the open market. The Scottish Government contributes between 10% - 40% of the purchase price of the house. In Aberdeenshire, one RSL partner provides this service. The scheme is aimed at first-time buyers, social rented tenants, disabled people with a housing need, armed forces personnel and recent veterans.

Shared Ownership is a scheme that allows applicants part-buy and part-rent a property from one of the three RSL partners that operate the scheme in Aberdeenshire.



Self-Build

Aberdeenshire Council and the Scottish Government are keen to see more self-build housing. While more challenging than buying a house from the open market, self-build can be custom built to the individual needs of a household.

There are several types of self-build including:

- Self-build housing – where a household builds their own home/appoints a builder.
- Custom-build housing – where a household tasks a builder to tailor a home to their specification before it is built.
- Collective self-build – a group of people who come together collaboratively to build their homes, share costs and building relationships.
- Community led housing – where a community build homes for affordable housing (rent or sale) for local people.
- Co-Housing – a community with shared communal space coming together to build a neighbourhood that embodies particular values.
- Self-provided housing – includes self-build, custom-build and collective build housing.

For those interested in Self-Build, a [Self build guide](#) has been created to give people information about the process. Aberdeenshire Council also hold a register of those who have an interest in this type of accommodation. Between 6th November 2023, when the register went live to 31st March 2024, 25 responses were received. The majority of interest was in the Kincardine and Mearns and Garioch Areas. The Council has a duty to consider this information when preparing the Local Development Plan and data will be used to inform policy and future land use. For those who do register an interest, it will not necessarily result in an offer of land being made.



Actions

Private Sector contributes towards homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing transition plans.

Aberdeenshire Council will encourage tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector by improving communication and building and nurturing good relationships with both landlords and tenants so they are aware of their rights and responsibilities and, will explore all opportunities for working collaboratively with landlords, encouraging their engagement and assistance with tackling homelessness.

Ensure that the quality of private sector housing is maintained and improved to the required standards.

Aberdeenshire Council will deliver information and training sessions and provide advice and support to both landlords and tenants to ensure they understand their obligations and responsibilities. We will also routinely check properties to ensure compliance with regulations and continue to work with our partners and colleagues across Services to improve standards within the private rented sector.

Promote and support the delivery of Mid-Market Rent and Low Cost Home Ownership through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan process.

Aberdeenshire Council will work with partners to identify, develop and deliver intermediate tenure housing through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). The SHIP sets out key strategic priorities for investment and identifies areas of potential delivery subject to appropriate approvals and funding.

Promote the awareness of Self Build through the Local Development Plan policy and Self Build Register.

Aberdeenshire Council will promote the awareness of self-build as a housing option where appropriate and will signpost interested parties to the Self Build register.



Outcomes

- **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 7 Landlord Accreditation Scotland training courses, 3 information sessions each year to private sector landlords and agents and a quarterly newsletter.**
- **Complete 100% fit and proper tests for people applying as registered landlords.**
- **Complete 10% routine checks to ensure that landlords are complying with registration requirements.**
- **Number of Mid-Market Rent properties completed per year.**
- **Number of Low-Cost Shared Equity properties completed per year.**
- **Monitor and Review annually Self Build register as part of Local Development plan.**

7. Priority 3 - Where possible, homelessness is prevented but where it can't be, a Rapid Rehousing approach is used to resolve cases



Homelessness

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. There have been ongoing changes to homeless legislation including intentionality, suspension of local connection and extension of unsuitable accommodation order. There is about to be further legislation to place a duty on public bodies to prevent homelessness following the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Bill in March 2024. These changes put pressure on services to adapt and makes longer term planning more challenging.

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.

In 2018 the Scottish Government and CoSLA published the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan setting out a shared direction towards ending homelessness. It envisioned transformational change and homelessness being tackled through:

- a person-centred approach.
- the prevention of homelessness.
- prioritising settled accommodation.
- responding quickly when homelessness happens.
- and joining up planning and resources.

Local Authorities were encouraged to transition to rapid rehousing by default. The experience of homelessness should be rare, brief, and non-recurrent.

In Aberdeenshire we have embraced rapid rehousing and re-modelled the service with a continued focus on housing options activity and exploring permanent housing solutions at an early stage, changing how we use our Residential Accommodation Units, and managing reduction in temporary accommodation stock by flipping and the development of shared temporary units. [Aberdeenshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan](#) sets out how the service planned to undertake this work with annual updates being reported on its progress. Housing First provides support to individuals with complex needs and promotes tenancy sustainment ending the cycle of homelessness.

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.

A joined-up approach to planning for known milestones is important and particularly relevant for Looked after Children and those leaving prison where 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.

Aberdeenshire Council has experienced consistently lower levels of tenancy sustainment with homelessness sustainment reducing significantly in 2023/24. Whilst the transition to alternative accommodation may be considered positive, an analysis of sustainment levels will be undertaken.

Tenancy Sustainment levels for the Council’s Housing stock are reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator on an annual basis (Annual Return on the Charter). This data demonstrates an overall sustainment level of 86.45% for 2023/24, reducing from 87.68% in 2022/23.

The recent [Supported Housing Task and Finish Group Report](#) published in July 2024 by Scottish Government acknowledges that for a small percentage of the population who cannot sustain a tenancy, supported accommodation will need to be in place. The delivery of such accommodation will need to be delivered in partnership with Health & Social Care Partnerships.

Evidence

The [Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2023 -2028](#) shows a decline in homeless presentations, reducing by 17.5%. This bucks the overall trend in Scotland which only showed a 0.9% decrease in the same period. Some of these reductions may have been caused by the COVID pandemic and the longer-term outlook is for homelessness to increase nationally.

We are seeing reduced homeless presentations over the last five years.

Year	Number of Presentations
2019/20	1218
2020/21	898
2021/22	908
2022/23	1004
2023/24	715 YTD (Feb 24).

Table 6: Homeless presentations

Figures initially dropped due to Covid but have remained lower due to changes made to service provision due to Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP). This is against what is happening nationally where homelessness is now generally on the increase. Reasons for approaching the service remain consistent with majority of cases due to relationship breakdown around 60%.

Other significant points to highlight in Aberdeenshire is success in managing a sufficient supply of appropriate temporary accommodation with no breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order or failure to accommodate including during the pandemic.

Aberdeenshire Council’s RRTP includes several performance indicators. The number of open homeless cases has reduced from 304 in 2019/20 to 86 in January 2024. The length of the homeless journey was 142 days in 2019/20 dropping to 79 days in January 2024 and time spent in temporary accommodation has reduced from 131 days in 2019/20 to 70 days in January 2024. Other indicators include homeless cases open for more than 9 months, lower numbers of repeat homeless presentations and numbers of households being supported through Housing First increasing.

Aberdeenshire Council leads 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. We also lead on or contribute to other national conversations including rural Housing First, national temporary accommodation group, and the temporary accommodation task and finish group.



Housing Support

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. Aberdeenshire currently provides housing support through our three commissioned services which are Aberdeen Foyer for young people aged 16-20 or up to 26 if they have been in local authority care and The Salvation Army for Adults aged 21+. In addition to this we provide support to women who have been subject to domestic abuse via a contract with Grampian Women's Aid.

In 2017 Aberdeenshire Council did a pilot of Housing First to support those who have multiple complex needs and a history of homelessness or failed tenancies. Since then, the project has upscaled several times and now supports over 100 clients by providing intensive housing support. A Housing First Outcomes briefing report published in 2023 showed tenancy sustainment was currently at 90% for clients supported via the project. This is an excellent outcome. The project also collected data from partner services which showed reduced prison admissions, reduction of risk behaviours in terms of substance misuse and can prove significant savings to partners. For the year 22/23 we received 165 referrals for young people and 580 referrals for those aged 21+.

In addition to this we have several specialist posts within the support team as follows:

Mental Health Link Workers – This post provides support to those in the community who are struggling with mental health which in turn is influencing the management of their tenancy. The worker assist clients to access GP appointments and accompany them if required and link them to services in the local communities such as wellbeing groups, art classes, men's sheds, etc which all assist with mental health. These posts work with approx. 50 clients each month.

Young Person Support worker – This was made possible because of funding from the Whole family wellbeing board. The worker carries a small caseload of clients (around 10) which allows for the provision of intensive support. Although this post has only been running since May 2023, we are already starting to see very positive outcomes for those supported by the project.

Housing Support Worker who supports the Syrian families and refugees. This is funded from the resettlement team budgets and allows for the provision of more intensive support and assisting families to settle in their new homes.

We work closely with housing colleagues and partners in Social Work and the Scottish Prison Service to ensure the effective implementation of the SHORE standards and actively participate in the Community Justice Partnership to promote positive engagement and identify areas for improvement.



Actions

Improve outcomes for homeless people.

We will focus on rapid rehousing with an emphasis on homeless prevention. Working together with those at risk of homelessness and relevant partners to identify potential homelessness and to consider all tenure options and solutions based on individual needs. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, we will identify suitable sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible and minimise any time spent in temporary accommodation.

Use a housing options approach.

We will review and monitor the housing 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. The use of Choice Based Letting provides transparency in the letting process and promotes choice.

Provide and review temporary accommodation.

We will monitor and review temporary accommodation provision to ensure that it meets the Temporary Accommodation standards and that stock levels are consistent with current and anticipated demand.

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 are person centred and will promote independent living.

Analyse the reasons for lower levels of tenancy sustainment withing the Aberdeenshire Council housing stock

We will ensure that the reasons for lower levels of Tenancy Sustainment are reviewed and analysed to ensure the best outcomes for those housed. Outcomes will include improvements in tenancy sustainment.



Outcomes

- **Percentage of new tenancies by source**

- **Average time in temporary/emergency accommodation**
- **Number of breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order**
- **Understand and minimise tenancies ended for negative reasons**
- **Increase numbers accepting and engaging with the support service**

8. Priority 4 - Increase the supply of appropriate housing and support to ensure health and wellbeing across all of Aberdeenshire's Communities.

Independent Living – *Enable people with a particular housing need to have access to appropriate housing and support to allow them to sustain and improve their health to live as independently as possible.*

Overview

Housing has a key role to play in supporting and enabling Independent Living and health and wellbeing across Aberdeenshire. A fundamental aspect of the Local Housing Strategy is supporting people with varying and diverse needs to live independently in suitable housing with access to the appropriate support when they need it.

The Local Housing Strategy supports the national health and wellbeing outcomes and targets as outlined in the [Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025](#). Housing's contribution to meeting the national health and wellbeing targets is articulated throughout the document.

Informed by analysis of the main issues, the LHS is an integral part of improving public health in Aberdeenshire from the planning and delivery of appropriate accessible homes, wheelchair homes and specialist provision such as supported accommodation for key client groups. The LHS also sets out the work required for enabling people to live independently and safely for as long as possible through continued investment in adaptations, technology and care and support services.

Evidence and Policy direction



Particular needs housing and Independent Living

Particular needs housing includes housing for older people; people with physical disabilities; learning disabilities; mental health conditions; long-term health conditions and complex care needs and therefore requires meeting the needs of a diverse population, and in many instances mainstream housing with access to care and support, 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.

Working with our partners we work to deliver affordable and appropriate new build housing and develop at least a minimum of 15% of affordable new build homes suitable for particular needs clients each year. All new build homes are built to [Housing for Varying needs \(HfVN\) standards](#) and the design and specification for the new build programme in Aberdeenshire embraces 'Passivhaus' principles.

Analysis shows that the demand for accessible and/or adapted properties continues to increase. Waiting list information indicates that Aberdeenshire have around 900 people waiting for wheelchair/ground accessible properties and Scottish Government housing statistics (2022) shows the number of Local Authority stock suitable for particular needs clients at around 2264 units. In addition to identification of need from waiting list information, evidencing the requirement for accessible and wheelchair accessible information is an

important part of our work with AHSCP to obtain an evidence base of housing requirements for particular needs clients. The [Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024 -2029](#) shows the investment and delivery of new build affordable housing for particular needs clients including wheelchair accessible properties.

There is an identified lack of accommodation for people with bariatric conditions. The required numbers, design specification and associated costs require Aberdeenshire Council to commit to carrying out research on this important issue.



Wheelchair accessible housing targets

The LHS supports the [Scottish Government's guidance in 2019](#) to Local Authorities recommending the setting of a specific target for wheelchair housing following the report by Inclusion Scotland and the associated research which highlighted the difficulties faced by disabled people in accessing housing which meets their needs and subsequently set an all-tenure target.

As part of the development of a minimum of 15% of affordable new build homes suitable for particular needs clients built each year within the affordable housing sector, 10% of this number is wheelchair accessible, and the Council encourages 10% of all new housing developments in the private sector on developments of 20 or more units should be wheelchair accessible.

Aberdeenshire Council supports the Scottish Government's approach as set out in [The fourth National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#), 'NPF4 position statement' to work with planners and private developers to increase the delivery of all-tenure wheelchair accessible targets. Whilst challenges remain around the recording and monitoring of this data, Aberdeenshire will keep aligned with other Local Authorities and national progress on this issue.



Adaptations

Housing adaptations play a crucial part in enabling independent living for older people, people with a disability and those living with long-term mobility or health issues and those with bariatric conditions. Investment in equipment and adaptations helps support the increasing demands on the care services from an ageing population and makes a significant contribution to ensuring that those with a health condition or disability can live well in their own home for as long as possible. Adaptations promote independence, inclusion, and quality of life. They play a crucial role in creating safe, supportive, and accessible housing for individuals with disabilities and are essential for ensuring that housing meets the needs of individuals regardless of their ability or limitations.

Adaptations involve modifications to the design, layout, or features of the home to accommodate specific needs and requirements of disabled people. There are two types of adaptations; minor adaptations which includes provision of aids and equipment such as modular ramps, grabrails, handrails, chairs etc. and major adaptations which includes any structural alteration to a dwelling such as level access showers, low threshold doors, door widening etc.

There is strong evidence to supporting investment in disabled adaptations because they provide longer terms savings by reducing the need for personal care, hospitalisation, assisted living, care homes, nursing homes etc.

In Aberdeenshire, adaptations are provided for Local Authority, RSL properties and in the private sector. Care & Repair is operated in-house by the Council's Private Sector Housing Team. The responsibility for private sector and council house adaptations is delegated to the Integration Joint Boards. The Scottish Government manage Stage 3 adaptations funding for Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) properties. Aberdeenshire continue to work towards a tenure-neutral approach to housing adaptations to enable equity for clients.

The adaptations service is demand led, based on an assessment of need undertaken by an Occupational Therapist, however, based on previous trends, the average annual requirement for adaptations for social rented housing is around 170 and 200 properties in the private sector. We have an aging population and demand for this service continues to rise and adequate funding levels are currently a challenge for both minor and major adaptations.

Aberdeenshire Council's [Scheme of Assistance](#) provides information on the assistance that can be provided in relation to repairs, maintenance, and adaptations to households in privately owned and private rented properties. Priority is given to essential adaptations for people with disabilities. There are two elements of the Scheme, firstly, Advice, Information, and Practical Support; and secondly, Financial Assistance.



Planning and delivery of particular needs housing

Adults with learning disabilities require a range of accommodation that can meet the varying needs of individuals. The Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership's [Market Position Statement Accommodation for Adults with Learning Disabilities 2020 – 2025](#) expresses the intention to work with partners to deliver suitable and sustainable models of accommodation and support to meet the needs of clients with learning disabilities.

Aberdeenshire's [Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024](#) asserts the requirement for good housing options and in particular supported accommodation and supported living.

Working in collaboration with our colleagues in AHSCP, Aberdeenshire Council have gathered an evidence base of housing and support requirements for clients with a learning disability, clients with mental health issues and for clients with complex care issues. The ongoing work has identified the number of individuals requiring accommodation in Aberdeenshire and identified the required model of housing such as mainstream housing with appropriate support, extra care housing and core and cluster models of housing needed. This information has subsequently been fed into the SHIP and enables the necessary strategic planning between partners and will shape and inform new build projects subject to securing the appropriate approvals and funding.

A Housing Forum has been created to allow appropriate planning for both existing housing resources by Housing Options staff, as well as potential new build projects.



Complex care

[The Scottish Government's Coming Home Implementation report](#) sets out a clear objective to reduce the number of out of area residential placements and inappropriate hospital stays for people with learning disabilities and complex care needs who have intensive support needs. The report is set in the context of the Scottish Government's A Fairer Scotland which has five ambitions. These are: -

- Independent living: support services that promote independent living, meet needs and work together to enable a life of choices, opportunities, and participation.
- Financial independence: decent incomes and fairer working lives.
- Accessibility: places that are accessible to everyone, including housing, transport, and the wider environment.
- Protected rights: the rights of disabled people are fully protected, and they receive fair treatment from justice systems at all times.
- Active participation: disabled people can participate as active citizens in all aspects of daily life.”

Aberdeenshire Council housing service is currently working with Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) to identify the required model of housing and numbers required for specialist housing for complex care clients. Accommodation design specifications have been prepared by AHSCP and housing colleagues. The design of accommodation for this group requires spacious and robust properties that include a range of features to reduce the risk of harm to individuals and their support staff. The national [Dynamic Support Register](#) which is owned and maintained locally in order to create greater visibility of people with learning disabilities in terms of strategic planning and to allow for performance monitoring of admission to hospital and inappropriate out of area placements. It aims to improve the visibility of this group of people both at a strategic level and nationally and allow local areas to monitor their own progress against reducing delayed discharges and out of area placement and contribute to ensuring there is appropriate available housing – the key to ensuring a person can remain in the community.



Older People

People are living longer and consequently there is a need for a diverse range of housing options with appropriate care and support when required. Population projections for Scotland from the National records of Scotland predict an 11% increase in over age 65 and a 39.6% increase in over age 75 between 2018 and 2028 in Aberdeenshire. The data shows additionally that often people are living longer and being supported in the community with more complex needs. The change in population and increase of older people also brings changes in aspirations and demand for diversity and choice in housing and support.

Sheltered housing is provided by Aberdeenshire Council with independent living properties provided by RSLs. As of 31 March 2024, there was 1,492 sheltered housing places in Aberdeenshire with 73 of these being higher care very sheltered housing places. Waiting

lists for sheltered housing provide an indication of current need. As of 31 March 2024, there was 515 people on waiting lists for sheltered housing with 42 of these on the waiting list for the higher care very sheltered housing.

However, the requirement for both sheltered housing and very sheltered housing is under review, with Aberdeenshire looking to create a viable and sustainable model and network of sheltered housing complexes as part of older people's housing across Aberdeenshire. It is acknowledged there are some sheltered housing schemes in locations in Aberdeenshire that are classed as low demand and, as part of the overall sheltered housing review, are being considered for alternative use. This closely links with care home provision across the area.

Aberdeenshire's Health and Social Care Partnership's Market Position Statement '*Accommodation, Care and Support for Older People*' 2017 predicted that although current care home provision was sufficient to meet demand, a 108% increase in demand for care home places was anticipated from 2017 to 2037. In line with demographic projections and the large predictions of the numbers of older people in Aberdeenshire, estimates show that there will be a shortfall in capacity for older people's care home accommodation. The intention is to ensure opportunity for the third and private sector to develop additional provision in areas of under supply and additionally to adjust the geographical nature of care services and ensure provision matches demand.

With an ageing population comes an increase in the number of people living with dementia. The Scottish Dementia Strategy published on 31st May 2023 suggests that 90,000 people in Scotland live with dementia currently. Of those over 3000 are under the age of 65 and some estimates suggest that 1 in 3 people born today will go on to develop dementia. In 2021 the population in Aberdeenshire was 262,690 and therefore potentially 87,563 people in Aberdeenshire may develop dementia in their lifetime. Dementia design, aids and adaptations, housing support and Technology enabled care can assist in enabling individuals to live as independently as possible with dementia. The [dementiaAberdeenshire](#) website provides a one-stop shop for information about dementia for people with dementia, carers, and the local community in Aberdeenshire.



Technology Enabled Care (TEC)

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) is an umbrella term that covers a range of technologies that support people to live independently. Dispersed community alarm equipment in people's own homes and integrated warden call systems in sheltered and supported housing enable service users to raise an alert in an emergency or where assistance is required. Typically, the equipment can include a button, pull cord or pendant, integrated smoke, and heat detection, PIRs⁷⁸ and other peripherals to manage safety and security. The alerts can trigger calls on site or remotely via an alarm receiving centre. Community Alarm and telecare services are operated by Aberdeenshire Lifeline in Aberdeenshire.

The number of people receiving Community Alarm was 2524 as of March 2024, with 516 receiving telecare packages. The figures for Aberdeenshire indicate a small decrease in the use of these services in recent years similar to the national picture. TEC enables users to live independently for longer and reduces the need for more expensive care services therefore will continue to be an important element of care and support for independent living at home. Opportunities for expanding the use of this are being explored in conjunction with

Health and Social Care Partners, focussing on the promotion of the benefits of using this type of equipment with both staff and clients directly.



Housing support services for Independent Living

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.

The Houseability service visits clients in hospital at as early a stage as is possible to discuss their accommodation needs and identify the support and services required to facilitate early discharge.



Actions

Identify Housing need and investment for those who require specialist provision

Aberdeenshire Council will identify housing need and demand to provide a supply of affordable mainstream and supported housing with services attached to support and enable 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.

We will identify need through the Council's waiting list to inform the build of wheelchair accessible housing. Additionally, as part of the target of 15% of all new build affordable homes to be developed as Particular Needs housing, 10% will be fully wheelchair accessible and we will encourage 10% of all new housing developments in the private sector on developments of 20 or more units to be wheelchair accessible.

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

Aberdeenshire Council 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. Service redesign and delivery will continue to address the increase in more complex conditions for clients living with long-term illness or disability due to an ageing population.

Develop a clear strategic direction in line with Scottish Government policy for Independent Living and support the strategic priorities of the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership.

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to review the balance of sheltered housing and very sheltered housing. With our partners, we will explore other housing models for all client groups to ensure choice and personalisation in housing and support. We will look to identify areas in the care and repair service to maximise service provision and achieve possible reduction in costs while improving the effectiveness and consistent way information is collected for all major and minor adaptations carried out across all sectors. We will 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.

Provide a holistic approach to housing support services

Aberdeenshire Council will improve access to information and advice on housing options and support and enable clients with a disability or long-term health condition to make informed choices when applying for more suitable accommodation to suit their needs. We will speak to clients as early as possible to support their discharge from hospital.



Outcomes

- **Number and percentage of new build affordable properties developed that are suitable for clients with a particular need.**
- **Number of confirmed OT assessments where there has been identified need for adaptation in:**

- Private Sector
- Aberdeenshire Council Stock
- Registered Social Landlord
- Number of disabled adaptations carried out in:
 - Private Sector
 - Aberdeenshire Council Stock
 - Registered Social Landlords
- Waiting times between requests for an adaptation, assessment of need and delivery of any required adaptation:
 - Average days between referral and assessment.
 - Average days between OT adaptation assessment and completion.



Minority Ethnic Communities

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

Overview

Everyone should have a right to accommodation that is of a good standard and meets their requirements 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 race as a protected characteristic within the [Equality Act 2010](#).

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.

Although there is no consensus on a generic description, Aberdeenshire Council acknowledges that the term 'Gypsy/Travellers' can refer to a range of distinct groups who consider a travelling lifestyle to be part of their cultural or ethnic identity such as Roma/Romany Gypsy, or Scottish and Irish Travellers. The Gypsy/Traveller community has specific requirements and should be afforded the same level of protection from discrimination and abuse, in common with all of Scotland's minority ethnic communities. Aberdeenshire Council 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.

Evidence

Both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire have seen a growth in refugee and asylum-seeking populations over recent years, beginning with the resettlement of Syrian refugees in 2016/17. Many from this community have now gained indefinite leave to remain and Citizenship status and are now permanent residents of Aberdeenshire. In Aberdeenshire,

regular resettlement is ongoing, with a political commitment to resettle up to 30 families per year via Home Office resettlement schemes.

Between 2016 and 2023, Aberdeenshire Council resettled over 300 refugees via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme, the Vulnerable Childrens Resettlement Scheme, the Afghan Assistance and Relocation Programme, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme. The ambition of the Aberdeenshire New Scots' Integration Strategy is to enable refugees to integrate from day of arrivals, so RSL and social housing which is less in demand for other Waiting List applicants is utilised to provide permanency. A further 750 Ukrainians were resettled into Aberdeenshire in 2022 and 2023 with the initial support of Sponsors. Our Ukraine Moving On Housing Project provides clients with the advice needed to progress from temporary arrangements with Sponsors to securing a tenancy.

The number of schemes the housing service support is increasing and includes Ukrainian support, Afghan and Syrian Refugee schemes, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children along with Asylum seekers who have been granted Refugee Status. These schemes will add to future requirements for housing supply which is detailed within the [Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2023 -2028](#) and has been taken into account when calculating the Housing Supply Target (Appendix 2).

The population size of Gypsy/Traveller groups across Scotland is relatively unknown compared with other ethnic groups. There is limited official data available in terms of the number of households and overall population numbers. The Scottish Government previously published a semi-annual count of households in Gypsy and Traveller communities living on official council sites, private caravan sites and unauthorised encampments. The last year that this count was undertaken was 2009 and only included Gypsy/Traveller households based on sites/encampments, meaning the data is unlikely to give a true reflection of the current population of this group of people in Scotland. The Scottish Government made the decision to cease these counts as there were no notable trends to be drawn from the data.

'Gypsy/Traveller' was introduced as an ethnic category in the 2011 Census, which provided baseline population data for this group for the first time.

People identifying as 'Gypsy/Traveller'

Area	Total number	Percentage
Aberdeen City	279	6.6%
Aberdeenshire	175	4.2%
Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire	454	10.8%
Scotland	4,200	100%

Table 7 Source: Census 2011

Evidence suggests that around 10.8% of Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller community resides in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The data is considered to be unreliable due to its age and the fact that members of the community may choose not to identify as part of this ethnic group. The true population figure is likely to be much higher, and organisations which work with Gypsy/Travellers have estimated this to be between 15,000 and 20,000 people. Assuming that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire are home to 10.8% of the Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland, the true population may be between 1,620 and 2,160 across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council areas. These figures will be reviewed when 2022 Census data becomes available.

There are currently two sites available to the community in Aberdeenshire. Both of sites meet minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites. Despite the need for additional sites and potential locations being identified in Aberdeenshire Council's [Local Development Plan 2023](#), there has been a lack of progress in terms of delivering further site provision.

Gypsy/Travellers indicate a preference for private sites but constructing these sites can be costly and challenging. Planning permission can be difficult to obtain, and even after receiving approval the sites may be subject to further requirements such as an Environmental Impact Assessments, licencing, porosity testing, drainage and utilities connections.

Engagement is ongoing with the Gypsy/Traveller community in Aberdeenshire, both formally and informally. An annual satisfaction survey is completed by residents on Greenbanks Travellers Site at Banff which is submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator. Both the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer and the Site Assistant at Greenbanks engage on an ongoing basis with residents on the two sites listening to concerns and suggestions. In addition the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer engages with those on private sites and in the settled community, listening to concerns and issues affecting them. The Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer investigates opportunities for the Travelling community in terms of education, health, connectivity, training, enhancing skills and opportunities in consultation with them. The Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer maintains a list of contacts who can be consulted on issues and oversee progress of initiatives relating to Gypsy/Travellers. It is topic driven and Gypsy/Travellers are contacted and consulted as appropriate.



Actions

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.

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. In Aberdeenshire, we will:

- Utilise low demand properties to provide safety and stability.
- 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.

Gypsy/Travellers will have better incomes in and out of work.

The Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer progresses claims on behalf of the Travelling community, establishing entitlements to maximise incomes and increase uptake of financial support for which they are eligible. As a member of the Financial Inclusion Partnership the Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer is kept abreast of initiatives and options for financial support.

Gypsy/Travellers will have improved access to public services

The Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer provides advice, support and signposting for Gypsy/Travellers in Aberdeenshire on Council sites, private sites, in the settled community and on unauthorised encampments, raising awareness of access to and availability of services, such as Education and Health. The Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer attends groups and events such as Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP) looking at how best to improve services and access to services for Gypsy/Travellers and works in partnership with Health and Education colleagues.

Tackle racism and discrimination against Gypsy/Traveller Communities

Racism and discrimination are combatted by such initiatives as providing information about Gypsy/Traveller culture, history and needs, whenever opportunity arises, internal training courses for staff and making awareness raising presentations on Gypsy/Traveller culture in house, to external partners and third sector organisations. Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month provides such opportunity to reach other groups as well as the general public.

Improve Gypsy/Traveller representation

Consultation takes place on a regular basis with Gypsy/Traveller communities on accommodation and services to ensure these are fit for purpose. A list of contact details of Gypsy/Travellers is maintained and refreshed on a regular basis, and they can be contacted for input into decision making. Who wishes to input at any time may be topic driven.



Outcomes

- **Number of privately run Gypsy/Traveller sites in Aberdeenshire.**
- **Number of local authority run Gypsy/Traveller sites in Aberdeenshire.**

9. Priority 5 – Work towards Net Zero and a reduction in fuel poverty in Aberdeenshire

Net Zero

The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) was amended by the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), increasing the ambition of Scotland's emissions reduction targets to net zero by 2045. Approximately 17-21% of greenhouse gas emissions derive from houses. By continuing to submit ambitious funding bids to deliver projects for energy efficiency improvements and low-carbon heating in residential buildings, we will assist in achieving Scotland's Net Zero target.

The Scottish Government has committed Scotland to becoming a 'net zero' society by 2045. To achieve this, improving the energy efficiency of buildings has been designated as a 'national infrastructure priority'. The [Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) sets out the pathway towards net zero in Scotland with key aims to:

“Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Scotland’s homes, workplaces and community buildings and to ensure that we remove poor energy performance as a driver of fuel poverty.”

For homes, demand reduction, whole house solutions and fabric first are seen as essential elements in the transition towards low carbon heating and better energy efficiency. The strategy defines a 'good level of energy efficiency' as EPC band C by 2030 with all homes meeting this standard by 2030. However, at the same time, the strategy states that prior to utilising EPCs as the standard through which the properties will be measured, reform is required.

“To achieve a just transition towards net zero requires a deep retrofit approach.”

At a UK Government level, a review of Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)/Reduced Data Standard Assessment Procedure (RdSAP) and its compatibility with net zero was published in June 2017. The report recommends the current Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) is replaced with a fabric efficiency metric based on the heat demand in kWh/m²a. The reason for this change is that the current rating is based on heating cost rather than consumption. This disincentivises adoption of low-carbon heating systems due to the current unit cost difference between gas and electricity. The new metric would place greater emphasis on fabric efficiency and reward a fabric first approach to home decarbonisation.

Work on Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) reform is ongoing with a review of the Scottish Governments Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (ESSH2), to form a Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS). Interim guidance suggest SHNZS will adopt an 'fabric efficiency rating' measured in kWh/m² as recommended by the 2021 UK Government report.

The Scottish Government published a consultation in November 2023 on the replacement for ESSH2, the Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS) which closed on the 8th March 2024. The proposed focus of the standard is heat demand, amount of energy for heat consumed by a property, and the replacement of dirty (polluting) heating with clean systems.

In summary, while the policy and direction of travel for the decarbonisation of housing in Scotland is clear, the strategy towards achieving net zero within buildings in Scotland is not fully developed. While the ultimate target will be to achieve net zero by 2045, how this translates to demand reduction targets or the method for calculating these targets is unclear.

However, it is clear from interim guidance that a focus on demand reduction through fabric first measures should be prioritised.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty has always been a significant issue affecting many individuals and households across Aberdeenshire; however, it has become a growing concern more recently due to the cost-of-living crisis and escalating fuel prices, particularly for those on low incomes or living in inefficient housing.

The Scottish Parliament passed the [Fuel Poverty \(Targets, Definition and Strategy\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) in June 2019.

The act defines fuel poverty as:

A household is in fuel poverty if the household's fuel costs (necessary to meet the requisite temperature and number of hours as well as other reasonable fuel needs) are more than 10% of the household's adjusted 'net income' and after deducting these fuel costs, benefits received for a care need or disability, childcare costs, the household's remaining income is not enough to maintain an acceptable standard of living.

The Act sets a new target for 2040 that requires:

By 2040, as far as reasonably possible, no household in Scotland is in fuel poverty and, in any event:

- no more than 5% of households in Scotland are in fuel poverty,
- no more than 1% of households in Scotland are in extreme fuel poverty.

Interim targets have been set to allow Scotland to work towards the 2040 vision. These state that by 2030:

- no more than 15% of households in Scotland are in fuel poverty.
- no more than 5% of households in Scotland are in extreme fuel poverty.

A further target aims that by 2035:

- no more than 10% of households in Scotland are in fuel poverty,
- no more than 3% of households in Scotland are in extreme fuel poverty.

The most recent fuel poverty figures for Scotland relate to 2022 and are published as part of the [Scottish House Condition Survey 2021](#) (SHCS). These figures allow for fuel poverty estimates fully compatible with all the elements of the new definition in the [Fuel Poverty \(Targets, Definition and Strategy\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#).

The data shows that Scotland, as a whole, has 31% or 791,000 households living in fuel poverty and 18.5% or 472,000 households living in extreme fuel poverty.

The SHCS 2017-19, which is the most recent set of figures released for fuel poverty at local authority level, show that Aberdeenshire has a fuel poverty percentage of 24% or 27,000 households and an extreme fuel poverty percentage of 15% or 16,000 households. Fuel poverty levels in Aberdeenshire are higher than 12 of the other local authorities in Scotland.

However, it is estimated that fuel poverty levels in Aberdeenshire will have risen significantly since this report was published and may now exceed the national average. This increase will reflect the extensive rise in fuel costs, as well as other factors contributing to fuel poverty in Aberdeenshire, including the rural and remote off-gas locations of many of the settlements where fuel choice is limited.

The next local authority level figures from the SHCS will be based on a three-year average for 2022 to 2024 and will be published in early 2026.

Since the last Local Housing Strategy was produced in 2018, 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; possible funding streams to undertake these improvements; fuel cost savings through switching tariff / supplier and making behavior changes. SCARF also have a recognised income maximisation referral process in place. This contract enables Aberdeenshire Council to identify the levels of fuel poverty within the six local political areas.

The Home Efficiency Programs Scotland: Area Based Scheme was launched in 2013/14 to upgrade Scotland's housing stock, tackle fuel poverty, reduce carbon emissions, 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 £32,734,898 in funding. So far this has enabled 4,880 measures to be installed in private sector housing, with a further 330 planned by the end of 23/24. The installation of these measures will help reduce carbon emissions by an average total of approximately 101,406.4 tonnes and help lower household fuel bills by a total of £43,698,275 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.

Reduction of 101,406.4 tonnes of carbon emissions over lifetime of measures as a result of energy efficiency works

Scottish Housing Quality Standard and Energy Efficiency

As of 31 March 2023, 78.2% of Aberdeenshire's Council Housing met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) which was higher than projected at the start of 2022/23 and represents continuing improvement from 2021/22. At present 1827 properties (13.9% of housing stock) are classed as 'exempt' or 'in abeyance' in terms of Scottish Government Guidance meaning that 7.9% did not meet the SHQS. Work is ongoing in relation to these properties and further progress in the region of 460 additional properties brought to SHQS is currently forecast by the end of 2023/24. Of the remaining 575 (6%), the Housing Improvement Programme will bring 53 up to the SHQS by December 2024, leaving 522 electrical safety checks which will be brought to standard by September 2024.

Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) non-compliance is the major reason for properties not meeting the SHQS. For the small number of properties (less than 0.5%)

that do not meet the standard independent of EESSH, there are mitigating factors such as tenants refusing to provide access to complete required works. We review properties where there are tenant refusals annually, and work is carried out at change of tenancy to ensure the property is brought up to the standard. Aberdeenshire Council currently anticipates that 15% will be from the EESSH standard (mainly on technical grounds), on completion of the current Housing Improvement Plan (HIP), approximately 85% of our stock will fully comply with EESSH, and therefore with the SHQS.

Currently the Council's housing stock has a high level of energy efficiency with the average Energy Efficiency (EE) rating across all properties is 73, equivalent to an EE band C. This is higher than the average score of 67 for Scottish local authorities and higher than the national overall housing stock, which scores an EE rating of 65, equivalent to an EE band D.

Currently, 26% of the Council's stock reaches the EE rating of 81 required for EESSH2 compliance. This is considerably higher than national levels where 7% of social properties currently comply with EESSH2. Over two-fifths of the Council's properties currently have an EE band C (42%). With a package of fabric, heating and solar measures, compliance could increase to 54%. Almost a quarter (24%) of the properties that would not meet EESSH2 after all the modelled measures are within 3 SAP points from compliance.

For 437 properties no applicable measures could be assigned (representing 5% of those that currently do not comply). Aberdeenshire Council are conducting sample surveys on these properties alongside those with low EE ratings after exhausting measures to verify and update existing data.

The average annual Carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions per household is 4.8 tonnes per year, lower than the national average of 7 tonnes per household. It is estimated that the annual CO2 emissions across the entire housing stock is 62,850 tonnes per year. This could be reduced by 12,202 tonnes of CO2 per year (20% reduction across the entire stock) with the average annual CO2 emissions per household decreasing to 3.9 tonnes per year.

The average annual running costs across the entire stock are estimated to be 31% lower than the average of for all housing stock in Scotland. If all the identified measures could be installed, the average annual running costs would be reduced to 42% lower than the Scottish Average. This does not include the rise in fuel costs from 1 April 2022 onwards.

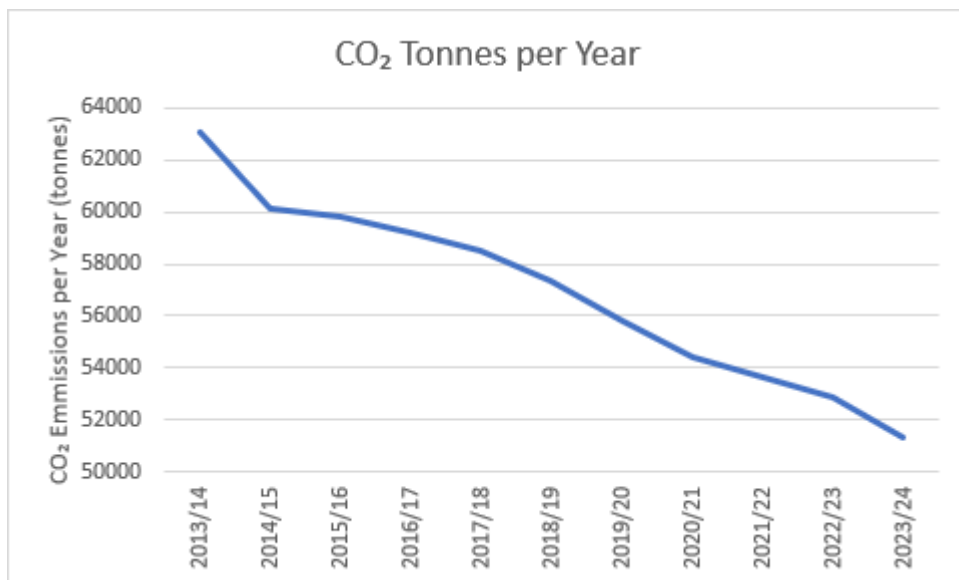
The Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS) consultation closed on the 8th March 2024 and we await the outcome. Previously the main metric for reducing carbon emissions in existing social housing was EESSH2, which required dwellings to achieve an EPC band B by 2032. However, this standard and its underlying methodology will be replaced with the SHNZS which proposed to focus on heat demand (the amount of energy for heat consumed by a property), and replacement of dirty (polluting) heating with clean heating systems. This goes beyond EESSH2 to bring about a more significant reduction in energy demand and carbon emissions.

Table 8 below shows the number and type of energy efficiency works carried out in Aberdeenshire Council stock as part of the Housing Improvement Programme. Graph 4 shows the reduction in carbon emissions because of this work.

Upgrade	No of Upgrades	Carbon Saving (tCO2e)
Air Source Heat Pump to Air Source Heat Pump	15	0
Air Source Heat Pump to Quantum	2	0

Cavity Wall Insulation	854	747
Doors	4310	345
Electric boiler to Quantum	2	0
Electric storage to Gas	772	394
Electric storage to Oil	13	0
Electric storage to Quantum	1501	495
External Wall Insulation	671	852
Gas to Gas	2144	1093
Gas to Oil	1	0
Gas to Quantum	74	44
Ground Source Heat Pump to Ground Source Heat Pump	3	0
Ground Source Heat Pump to Oil	3	0
Ground Source Heat Pump to Quantum	1	0
Internal Wall Insulation	574	672
Oil to Gas	2	2
Oil to Oil	80	54
Oil to Quantum	57	46
Powervault Battery	500	0
Photovoltaics	4875	5522
Solid Fuel to Gas	15	17
Solid Fuel to Oil	21	14
Solid Fuel to Quantum	208	166
Windows	2906	727
Grand Totals	19704	11190

Table 8: Energy efficiency works in Housing Improvement Programme



Graph 4: Carbon emission reductions.

Aberdeenshire Council has determined that single energy efficiency measures are no longer adequate to achieve SHNZS and is investigating the adoption of a whole house retrofit approach. This approach aims to identify the various interactions between fabric and services improvement measures to ensure that the finished building is not only energy efficient, but also provides a healthy internal environment for residents. To ensure the

consistency this approach will follow the principles of "[PAS 2035 retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency - specification and guidance](#)" as far as possible in our assessment to ensure quality assurance. Initial findings indicate that costs are likely to be in the region of £15,000 to £120,000 per property. Aberdeenshire Council is currently undertaking a programme of whole house upgrades to 2,000 granite properties (super insulation, draught proofing, photovoltaics, clean heating, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery) and has been successful in obtaining 50% grant funding of £4,558,957 for these works to date. The Council is also investigating the feasibility of geothermal district heating and a solar farm.



Actions

Define a 'just transition' towards the Social Housing Net Zero Standard.

Aberdeenshire Council will develop a strategy to work towards the Social Housing Net Zero Standard to ensure that council stock meet net zero and energy efficiency requirements.

Provide housing that is fit for purpose and healthy, safe and secure.

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to develop the Housing Improvement Plan 2 to ensure necessary improvements are made to council stock. In order to manage and monitor Damp, Condensation and Mould, training will be provided to all relevant officers along with comprehensive procedures on dealing with any identified issues.

Improve energy efficiency of housing in the private sector.

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to submit ambitious funding bids to the Scottish Government for the installation of energy efficiency measures in eligible private sector housing.

Assist Households maximise their income.

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to work jointly with our partners to deliver the provision of advice and assistance on income maximisation to households of all tenures, including signposting and referrals as required. We shall invest through the Area Based Schemes, working towards the 2045 goal for climate change. It is crucial to ensure this is inclusive to our most vulnerable households.

Provide Households with practical advice to change / reduce energy usage and costs

Aberdeenshire Council's contract with SCARF ensures that households of all tenures have access to information, advice and support regarding energy usage in their homes. This service includes home visits by SCARF's Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT).



Outcomes

- **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 assisted to maximise their income.**
- **Percentage of dampness referrals visited with 5 days.**

10. Delivering Local Housing Strategy Outcomes

10.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Each Local Housing Strategy (LHS) Priority has a related and detailed action plan which details resources, lead officer and where applicable, timescales. The purpose of these action plans is to ensure implementation, provide a robust monitoring and a reporting mechanism.

The LHS Action Plan provides the framework for evaluating the impact of housing led activity, partnership working and investment.

Progress on the LHS will be measured by performance indications identified in under each priority and these will be reported to Area Committees and Communities Committee on an annual basis. This will allow members to ensure that the LHS priorities are being progressed effectively and performance monitored. Each action plan will be fully updated on progress and impacts of the activity with information shared on partnership working and any investment to maximise opportunities.

10.2 Resources

This is an ambitious Local Housing Strategy with considerable investment required to deliver each LHS outcome. LHS delivery is set within a challenging economic period not only in the Aberdeenshire region but across Scotland and the UK. This challenging financial and resource context is set against a backdrop of increasing need for housing services and demand for affordable housing. There is therefore a real need to ensure that LHS resources are maximised through partnership, innovation and targeting preventative activity over the next 5 years. There are substantial resources dedicated to Local Housing Strategy activity in Aberdeenshire, as outlined for each LHS Priority below.

Priority 1 – Increase supply of housing in Aberdeenshire	Priority 2 - Provide a range of housing options for those who wish to live in Aberdeenshire	Priority 3 - Where possible, homelessness is prevented but where it can't be, a Rapid Rehousing approach is used to resolve cases	Priority 4 - Increase the supply and ensure best use of particular needs accommodation in Aberdeenshire	Priority 5 – Work towards Net Zero and a reduction in fuel poverty in Aberdeenshire
Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Homeless Services	Homeless Services	Social Work Services	Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
RSLs Business Plan	RSLs Business Plan	Partnerships	Health and Social Care Partnership Funding	RSLs Business Plan
Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP)	Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP)	Private Sector Landlords	National Health Services Funding	Local Authority/RSL Borrowing
Council Tax 2nd Homes	Council Tax 2nd Homes	Private Developers	Voluntary Organisations	Scottish and UK Government Funding Initiatives
Affordable Housing Policy	Affordable Housing Policy	Voluntary Organisations	Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Public Utilities
Local Authority/RSL Borrowing	Local Authority/RSL Borrowing	Scottish Government Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) Funding	RSLs Business Plan	National Health Service Funding
Private Developers	Partnerships		Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP)	Private Sector owners and landlords
Scottish Land Fund	Private Sector Landlords		Council Tax 2nd Homes	Private Sector lenders
			Affordable Housing Policy	

Rural & Island Housing Fund	Private Developers		Local Authority/RSL Borrowing	
Housing Infrastructure Fund	Scottish Land Fund			
National Health Service	Rural & Island Housing Fund			
	Housing Infrastructure Fund			
	Voluntary Organisations			

Table 7. Main Resource & Funding Sources.

In addition to dedicated resources delivering LHS Outcomes, LHS implementation is supported by a wider resource framework of staff, land resources and the existing housing stock.

10.3 Housing Supply Target

As noted above Aberdeenshire Council have completed a HNDA which provides a statistical estimate of how much additional housing will be required to meet all future housing need and demand in the area. The housing estimates produced by the HNDA provide the starting point for setting a Housing Supply Target (HST) (Appendix 2). The decision within the HNDA to opt for the high migration scenario which generates a greater level of need and demand is supported by recently published research commissioned by [Homes for Scotland](#). This research uses a broader definition of housing need than the HNDA and looks specifically at existing need for housing. The report for Aberdeenshire suggests the HNDA may underestimate the extent of existing need. Therefore, opting for the higher growth scenario as the basis for the HST builds in capacity for addressing higher levels of need if required as suggested by the Homes for Scotland report.

The HST sets out the estimated level of additional housing that can be delivered and informs the Housing Land Requirement within the Local Development Plan (LDP). An annual average Housing Supply Target (HST) for Aberdeenshire has been set at 1000 units per annum with a 250 target for affordable housing and a 750 target for market housing units. The HST has been derived from HNDA housing estimates and takes into consideration the full range of factors that may influence housing delivery including historic completions, available resources and policy considerations. The HST therefore provides a strong starting point for determining the Housing Land Requirements within the next Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan to ensure a generous supply of effective housing land to enable an increase in supply of housing across all sectors.

10.4 Affordable Housing Supply Programme

Aberdeenshire's affordable housing programme is supported by grant subsidy from [Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme](#). The Scottish Government has allocated grant of £20.324 million to Aberdeenshire to deliver the Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) for 2024/25. In order to deliver the SHIP 2024/29, approximately £172m grant is required. Details of grant allocations for 2025/26 – 2028/29 are still to be announced. The council and its partners aim to maximise the delivery of affordable housing whilst supporting Scottish Government's 2040 vision of which a minimum of 70% will be social rent, the remainder as intermediate tenures, subject to capacity and securing appropriate funding.

Developer Contributions

Section 75 – land and/or commuted sums and other mechanisms under the Affordable Housing Policy are used to secure developer contribution where there is a demonstrable need for affordable housing. Through the in recent years, as a result of a less confident housing market, the SHIP has had to become less reliant on the Affordable Housing Policy to ensure sufficient levels of programming for the Council and other developing partners.

Council Tax Reserve Income from Reduction of Discount for Empty and Second Homes

Aberdeenshire have funding available through income raised each financial year from the Council Tax levy associated with Empty Homes and Second Homes. This funding assists in supporting the delivery of the affordable housing programme.