

Discussion Paper: **What is housing support?**

Updated June 2023

What is housing support?

The fundamental aim of housing support is to enable people to live at home as independently as possible by maintaining and developing their life skills and social networks.

Background

As part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, twenty-one tasks were outlined as prescribed housing support services which covered support such as advising with personal budgeting, arranging adaptations, and assisting with security and maintenance of accommodation.¹ These support tasks, were those deemed eligible for funding from the local authority with the purpose of allowing people to remain living independently. Housing support today is no longer constrained to these twenty-one tasks although they may still be included as part of a service.



'My photographic poster collage entails my story from when I first entered the accommodation to during my stay and after. It includes all the positive skills and personal goals I have achieved with the support of the accommodation staff and my lovely key worker, Nicola. I have included photos and collage pieces of all the services I have used, demonstrating how I have become more confident and independent in myself. The poster is significant as I will never forget my journey at the temporary accommodation and the service is amazing if you take hold of it. My self esteem has improved so much through the photographic experiences on my poster. The temporary accommodation has literally been my home to positively develop from.'

Emma Murphy, supported by DGHP

Why do people use housing support services?

People may use housing support in different settings to help with a variety of issues, including help to access health services, social care services, and specialist services such as mental health services. Housing support is used by people to achieve their own goals and become involved in activities that lead to positive outcomes including reduced social isolation, better mental health, and improved self-esteem. While housing support can help in a crisis situation, in some cases, it will be supporting a person after a crisis or through a period of transition.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2002/444/schedule/made>
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'Throughout my life, I have always had the support of caring and loving individuals. Now living independently, I am happy cohabitating with my support staff and live each day happy.'

Claire Dempsey, supported by Blackwood Homes and Care

There is not a single model of housing support. In a recent report about the economic and social benefits of housing support, commissioned by HSEU, SFHA, SCLD, Hanover, and Blackwood Homes and Care, the variety of support activity within housing support is described as 'hyper-diverse'.² Housing support can assist people who are facing homelessness; people experiencing addictions; older people; people with mental health problems; disabled people; women facing domestic abuse and people with a learning disability. While housing support is often delivered through the socially rented sector, it is available to people living across all tenures (social renting; private renting; owner occupied). Housing associations often have a key role in providing housing support³, however housing support may also be delivered by a local authority, or a third sector or independent provider. Regardless of the provider or tenure type of those being supported, housing support services are regulated by the Care Inspectorate using the Health and Social Care Standards.⁴

"From ages 12 to 20 I lived in foster placements and a children's residential home, but none of those placements felt like a home. I had to ask if I could have something to eat, what food was for me, can someone unlock the cupboards so I could get something to eat. Now 2 years on I'm living in my flat where there's no need to ask those questions, and sometimes when I open the cupboard I get a sense I might have finally found a home."

Gemma Ferrie, supported by Falkirk Council



² <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Economic-benefits-of-housing-v6.pdf> p.9

³ https://www.housinglin.org.uk/assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Report_Housing-Scotland-Models-of-housing-with-care-and-support.pdf

⁴ <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/national-policy-and-legislation/health-and-social-care-standards/>
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Housing support as a preventative tool

A common goal of housing support is to identify solutions for people that support independence. People can use housing support to retain a sense of choice and control. Another common defining characteristic of housing support is its preventative aims. By providing support that is responsive to people’s individual needs, housing support can help avoid escalation and reduce demands on statutory services.

For example, the vignette pictured below, from the CaCHE Report, serves as an example of the type of support possible through a housing support services, and how it can enable people to live independently, preventing the need for residential care.



Funding and Commissioning of Housing Support

Different housing support services, designed to target different outcomes, are also likely to have distinct funding arrangements. The funding of housing support has been described as ‘difficult to capture and measure’.⁵ While housing support services may be designed for particular groups of

⁵ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Economic-benefits-of-housing-v6.pdf> p.17

people and types of need, a service often targets more than one outcome. People using housing support may have complex or overlapping needs and require support in accessing multiple services. This poses challenges because of the complex funding arrangements that often underpin housing support services.

Most housing support is commissioned through Health and Social Care Partnerships or Local Authorities and can involve commissioners from housing, homelessness, social work as well as mental health and addictions. Supported people may also purchase housing support services themselves using self-directed support payments. Funding has come under increasing pressure after the ringfenced Supporting People programme ended in 2008.

About the HSEU

The aim of the Unit is to offer support and assistance to providers of housing support and supported housing across the voluntary sector, the private sector and to Registered Social Landlords. You can find out more about the work of the Unit on our website.

The HSEU is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care and Support Providers Scotland (CCPS) and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) and funded by the Scottish Government.



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The Housing Support Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care & Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, funded by the Scottish Government.

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