

# *HSEU eForum*

## **August 2025, Issue 85**

**Welcome to the August eForum. Read below for more information about Housing Bill amendments, 'Ask and Act' pilot project funding and the Public Service Reform Strategy.**

### **Amendments Lodged for Housing Bill at Stage 3**

In July, Maggie Chapman lodged 29 [amendments to the Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#) at Stage 3. These amendments include provisions granting Scottish Ministers the power to designate special rent control areas, where recommended by local authorities. The specified rate in a special rent control area, if these amendments were accepted, would be lower than the default rate for a rent control area, and could be a de facto rent freeze or require rent decreases.

Other amendments would set up minimum standards required for rent increases and give tenants under Scottish secure tenancies – supplied by local authorities, registered social landlords or water or sewerage authorities - the right to keep an assistance animal without the consent of the landlord. A further amendment would require Scottish Ministers to publish a timetable for the implementation of the recommendations of the *Improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse* report, published by the Scottish Government's working group in December 2020. The working group was co-chaired by the Chartered Institute of Housing and Scottish Women's Aid and the report recommended that social landlords use a human rights approach to improve housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Under Maggie Chapman's amendment, ministers would be required to publish an annual report on the progress of the recommendations' implementation.

Amendment 18 sets out a provision for a homelessness prevention strategy for LGBT+ people, to be prepared as soon as reasonably practicable, while amendment 25 offers protections against winter evictions under limited circumstances. Maggie Chapman has also set out a transitional provision determining the rent payable when a referral to a rent officer is prompted by a rent-increase notice.

## **‘Ask and Act’ Pilot Projects Funding Boosted to £4 Million**

The Scottish Government has increased its commitment to the Homelessness Prevention Pilot Fund from £1 million to £4 million. This funding will be managed by Advice Direct Scotland and used to support organisations to pilot new ‘ask and act’ measures, which are part of the Housing (Scotland) Bill. The measures will require public bodies to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness.

The fund will open from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 and close on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026, with applications to be made by pilot consortia, involving one or more public sector bodies and third sector organisations with experience in preventing homelessness. A minimum of one pilot per relevant body or sector will be sought.

More information will be available on the [Advice Direct Scotland website](#) from the week beginning 25<sup>th</sup> August.

## **Public Service Reform Strategy (and what it means for housing support)**

The Scottish Government published its [Public Service Reform Strategy](#) in June. The strategy sets out how public services should adapt and respond to challenges arising from increasing demand and associated costs. Two closely related framework documents were also published in tandem – the [Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework](#) and the [Population Health Framework](#).

The Housing Support Enabling Unit has published a [briefing](#) about these documents to help people know and understand what they could mean for housing support in Scotland, now and in future.

Our key takeaway is that existing housing support services can serve as exemplars for the health and social care improvements that the Scottish Government seeks. Ironically, however, despite housing support’s virtues, these strengths can make it less visible and more vulnerable in financially straitened times.

The Housing Support Enabling Unit therefore calls on the Scottish Government to more explicitly recognise the unique value and contribution of housing support to delivering some of Scotland’s very best health and care services. We make the case for Scottish Government investment in ‘trying, testing and learning’ through focus on housing support services, thereby offering scope to better help the people of Scotland live well, be healthier and feel more fulfilled.

## Digital Health and Care Strategy update

The Scottish Government and COSLA recently published their [Digital Health and Care Strategy Delivery Plan Update](#). The strategy, launched in 2021, focuses on using digital technologies to enhance healthcare and social care services, empower people and improve overall wellbeing, and it is worth noting that similar digital transformation aspirations are also at the heart of the Public Service Reform Strategy and Service Renewal Framework.

The annual delivery plan update includes an outline of progress on the transition to digital telecare and the establishment of a cloud-based shared Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC). Procured in October 2023, the ARC now provides opportunity for better interoperability of social work, social care and NHS systems, and the update makes clear the shared rollout continues at pace.

The digital telecare transition arising through the emergence and growth of the shared ARC promises significant changes for housing support services and provision in Scotland. In February, Bield Housing and Care became the first housing association in Scotland to adopt the shared ARC platform, with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government welcoming the development and its role in transforming telecare across the country.

## TEC Housing Conference

The 2025 TEC Housing Conference will shine a spotlight on digital transformations taking place in Scotland. Hosted at Hampden Stadium on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October and based on the theme that 'TECH is a Team Sport', it promises to be a high-energy conference showcasing collaboration, innovation and digital leadership, and how these developments are transforming services.

The agenda places particular emphasis on the crossover and integration emerging between housing and care through digital technological development, which has the potential to impact housing support service provision and delivery. Participants can expect to learn how AI, data, and co-designed services are currently functioning, to find out what's coming next, to connect with others shaping housing, health and social care, and to become better equipped to accelerate digital changes in their own services and organisations.

Sessions will focus on a broad range of themes, including: 'leading with purpose'; 'innovation, integration and impact'; 'cybersecurity and digital resilience'; and 'seeing the person in the data'.

Visitors to the [conference website](#) can see the full agenda and speakers, as well as register to take part.

## **Màiri McAllan Appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Housing**

Màiri McAllan was [appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Housing](#) upon her return to government from maternity leave in June. She has responsibility for all aspects of housing policy, including the Housing to 2040 Strategy, fuel poverty and regulation. Responsibility for housing was previously held by the former Minister for Housing, Paul McLennan, and the Housing Support Enabling Unit welcomes the priority given to housing in this elevation to a Cabinet Secretary role. In further changes, Maree Todd became Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy and Tom Arthur was appointed as Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing.

## **Getting It Right For Everyone Toolkit Published**

The Scottish Government published a [toolkit for practitioners](#) to help adults in Scotland through the Getting It Right For Everyone (GIRFE) approach. The toolkit includes 10 tools which can be used together or separately, based on individual needs.

## **Progress Update on IRISR Recommendations Published**

A [progress update](#) on implementing recommendations from the Independent Review of Inspection, Scrutiny and Regulation of Social Care in Scotland was published by the Scottish Government in June. The update sets out work undertaken by the Personal Assistants Programme Board on recommendation 8 and confirms the current work and planned actions are sufficient to meet the intentions of the recommendation.

The Housing Support Enabling Unit is currently represented on two short life working groups examining two key recommendations:

- Recommendation 15 – that the list of care service types and set of corresponding definitions as set out in Schedule 12 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, are assessed for fitness for purpose
- Recommendation 33 – that a review of the Health and Social Care Standards takes place to ensure they are based on human rights, ethical commissioning and are outcomes focused.

The workstreams are being led by a cross-sector steering group, co-chaired by the Scottish Government, the Care Inspectorate and the SSSC. Progress to date has been somewhat held up by a long discovery and listening phase, but the HSEU considers it helpful that there may be a consultation about new definitions in the Autumn and we welcome comments, queries or suggestions that we can respond to and potentially put forward in this process – such emails should be directed to [hs.unit@ccpscotland.org](mailto:hs.unit@ccpscotland.org).

Further information on progress in implementing other recommendations is also included in the update.

## **SLIF for Adult Social Care Support and Community Health Developed**

The draft Scottish Learning and Improvement Framework for Adult Social Care Support and Community Health (SLIF) has been developed, setting out the most important areas for improvement in adult social care, social work and community health. The framework includes a set of outcomes to measure improvement.

The ALLIANCE is [seeking views](#) on the SLIF in four sessions during the week beginning Monday 9 September to help inform the development of what positive experiences would look like for each outcome. One session will be held with people who work in social care, community health organisations and the third sector. To sign up for any of the sessions, email [integration@alliance-scotland.org.uk](mailto:integration@alliance-scotland.org.uk).