The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple – to provide housing professionals and their organisations with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation supporting the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world.

Further information is available at: www.cih.org or by contacting ashley.campbell@cih.org

DEVELOPING OUR AGENDA FOR CHANGE

Since the devolution of housing policy to the Scottish Government, a great deal of progress has been made in creating a housing system that supports people through all stages of life. Legislation in Scotland has given greater rights to homeless households, increased standards for social housing and more recently sought to improve standards in the private rented sector. The abolition of Right to Buy will ensure that social housing in Scotland remains an asset that we can be proud of and that will benefit future generations.

Politicians have responded positively to research published by CIH Scotland, Shelter Scotland and SFHA calling for 12,000 new affordable homes to be built each year for the next five years. The Scottish Government is committed to driving out inequality and creating a fairer Scotland by 2030 but we still have a long way to go. Drawing on engagement with CIH members and stakeholders across the housing sector, our Agenda for Change calls on the next Scottish Government to adopt our recommendations under these five key areas:
1. MORE NEW HOMES

The demand for all tenures of housing in Scotland far outstrips supply. Last year over 28,000 households were assessed as homeless and there are currently around 160,000 households on local authority waiting lists for social housing. Even more are registered directly with housing associations. House prices remain high and private rents have been increasing steadily.

The commitment from politicians to significantly increase the supply of new affordable homes is welcome and the Scottish Government’s recent announcement to increase subsidy levels will help to achieve this goal. To create a fully functioning housing system, we need to provide people with a range of housing options at a range of prices to meet different needs. This also includes supporting development in the intermediate and private sectors.

CIH Scotland asks the next Scottish Government to:

- Increase overall investment in affordable housing in line with the commitment to increase subsidy rates to ensure a significant increase in supply
- Maintain the current target of at least two thirds social housing to one third other affordable tenures within the overall affordable housing target
- Ensure the right type of homes are being built, including specialist housing to meet a range of needs
- Improve access to land for the development of housing across tenures including consideration of land taxation measures
- Establish an infrastructure loan fund to facilitate delivery of essential enabling infrastructure which would otherwise stall the development of housing

2. BETTER QUALITY HOMES

Cold, damp homes are not just unpleasant to live in, they also contribute to poor health including colds and flu and more serious respiratory and circulatory diseases. In 2014/15, an additional 4,060 winter deaths were recorded in Scotland.

The Scottish Government recognises the issues relating to poor energy efficiency and fuel poverty with ambitious targets to end fuel poverty as far as practicable by 2016. This commitment was strengthened by the recent announcement that energy efficiency will be designated as a National Infrastructure Priority (NIP). However, 35% of households in Scotland are still living in fuel poverty.

Social landlords have invested approximately £860 million in recent years to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and are now working towards higher Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESSH) but more still needs to be done – especially in the private sector where energy efficiency and standards of repair lag behind.

CIH Scotland asks the next Scottish Government to:

- Underpin the commitment to establishing energy efficiency as a NIP with sufficient funding to achieve real change
- Introduce a Warm Homes Bill for Scotland as recommended by the Existing Homes Alliance
- Reduce VAT for maintenance and repairs to support investment in our homes
- Explore ways to make funding for energy efficiency measures more flexible including the use of powers to be devolved through the Scotland Bill
- Explore ways to reduce the cost of energy, one of the main factors contributing to fuel poverty
3. A BETTER SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

Since 2010, extensive welfare reform measures have been introduced by the UK Government. We support the principles behind the Universal Credit system but, there have been issues with implementation and subsequent cuts to the welfare budget have eroded work incentives for some claimants and left others in financial difficulty.

Payments made directly to tenants and long waiting periods for the first payment are causing many to fall into rent arrears, increasing the risk of debt and homelessness. Financial difficulties are forcing households to make difficult decisions on how to balance budgets. It is estimated that by 2018, welfare reform measures introduced since 2010 will have reduced incomes in Scotland by £1.5 billion each year.

CIH Scotland asks the next Scottish Government to:

- Continue to provide financial assistance to those made worse off by welfare reform
- Consider all available options for using powers to be devolved through the Scotland Bill to mitigate these impacts. This should include moving away from the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to more long term solutions
- Work with the UK Government to ensure that the most vulnerable people are protected from the negative effects of welfare reform. This should include exemptions for specialist housing, including temporary accommodation, housing with support, hostels and refuges
- Continue to fund mitigation work including advice and information for social and private landlords who are negatively impacted by welfare reform measures

4. HOMES THAT SUPPORT WELLBEING

The links between housing and wellbeing are well documented and the recent report published by the Shelter Commission on Housing and Wellbeing set out the wider benefits of investing in housing and housing services. Accessing the right type of housing at different points in our lives can have a significant impact on our physical and mental health, educational attainment and access to employment.

Housing plays an important role in preventing the need for NHS treatment and in supporting people who are leaving hospital. Emerging partnerships between housing, care and health providers are also demonstrating that housing can be a community anchor, improving access to a range of services in some of our most disadvantaged communities.

We welcome the recognition of housing’s role reflected in the sectors’ inclusion in the health and social care integration agenda. Changes must be made in the way that organisations work together if we are to meet increasing demand for services within the context of challenging financial constraints.

CIH Scotland asks the next Scottish Government to:

- Recognise the key role of housing in delivering the health and social care integration agenda
- Continue to support the contribution housing makes towards meeting the National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes
- Recognise and support the role of housing in reducing hospital admissions
- Ensure that funding for equipment and adaptations keeps pace with need
- Support workforce development and knowledge transfer between health, social care and housing
5. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND VALUES

Well planned and managed housing lies at the heart of successful communities and provides the basis for a healthier, happier, fairer Scotland. A housing system that meets the needs of our diverse and changing population is underpinned by professional standards and values.

Our Frontline Futures research showed that traditional roles within the social housing sector are changing. Providing social housing is about more than building homes and collecting rent. Frontline jobs in social housing require new skills for the digital age and extensive knowledge and understanding of partner services when dealing with vulnerable groups and the impacts of welfare reform.

Scotland is a leader in driving up standards within the private sector. Recent legislation will introduce letting agent registration and the possibility of a training requirement for those working in the sector, but more can be done to ensure that services are being provided to the highest possible standard across all tenures.

CIH sets the standard for professionalism within the housing sector as the awarding body for housing qualifications, excellence in training and development, and our code of conduct and ethical values.

CIH Scotland asks the next Scottish Government to:

• Recognise the contribution that housing professionals make towards delivering on wider social agendas including improved health and wellbeing and community sustainment
• Work with CIH Scotland to support new entrants into the housing sector
• Support the efforts of bodies seeking to continuously drive up standards and skills in the private and social housing sectors through education and training
• Promote and support development of better standards of management and practice across social and private housing tenures

CIH SCOTLAND’S OFFER TO THE NEXT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

To support the next Scottish Government to deliver this Agenda for Change, CIH Scotland is committed to:

1. Working with Government, as an independent and cross tenure membership organisation, to offer both constructive challenge and support.

2. Building capacity and skills within the sector by promoting our professional standards, ensuring the housing community is kept informed, and delivering a comprehensive learning and development offer through our new CIH Housing Academy.

3. Supporting the development of new practical solutions to delivering a significant increase in the supply of affordable homes.

4. Promoting and sharing good practice in the housing industry, and facilitating partnerships by joining up programmes across the public and private sectors.

5. Assessing the impact of national housing policy to ensure that the implications for citizens, professionals and organisations are fully considered and encourage our partners to do the same.

6. Working to ensure that housing is at the centre of local and regional health, education, social, economic and environmental programmes and policies across Scotland through cross sectoral working with a range of agencies.