



# What's next for adaptations?

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# WHAT'S NEXT FOR ADAPTATIONS?

The principle of the right to adaptations is often overshadowed by the '*fight*' to make them happen - for both service users and at different stages of delivery (McCall et al 2023).

This presentation we will cover:

- The current state of adaptations in Scotland
- Projected future demand
- The barriers preventing equitable and timely delivery
- The system reforms urgently needed to meet both current and future need



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

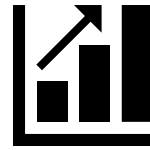


# OUR REPORT



## REVIEW

28 reports published between 2000 and 2025, covering Scottish Government strategies, parliamentary reviews, third sector publications, and professional guidance from housing, health, and occupational therapy bodies.



## ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL DATASETS

Scottish Household Survey (SHS); Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Annual Return on the Charter (ARC); Scheme of Assistance (SoA); National Records of Scotland (NRS) and Office for National Statistics (ONS): Population estimates, projections, and healthy life expectancy trends, used to model future demand for adaptations.



## KEY STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

36 participants contributed to the qualitative element of the study; six focus groups (24 participants) and 11 interviews involving 12 individuals



# WHY THIS MATTERS

At its core, this report is about people's basic rights to live with dignity, safety, and independence in their own homes. Adaptations are not a luxury or an add-on. They are often the difference between someone being able to bathe, sleep in their own bed, or safely leave their home.

“I was living in a house where I couldn't go to bed because the bedrooms were upstairs... So, I was ending up having to sleep on the couch and just washing in the kitchen sink and use a bathroom downstairs because I couldn't really access upstairs anymore.”

*ISPA Community-Peer Researcher, Female,  
Urban area in Scotland*

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# ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ADAPTATIONS IN SCOTTISH HOUSEHOLDS

Estimated number of adaptations in Scottish Households

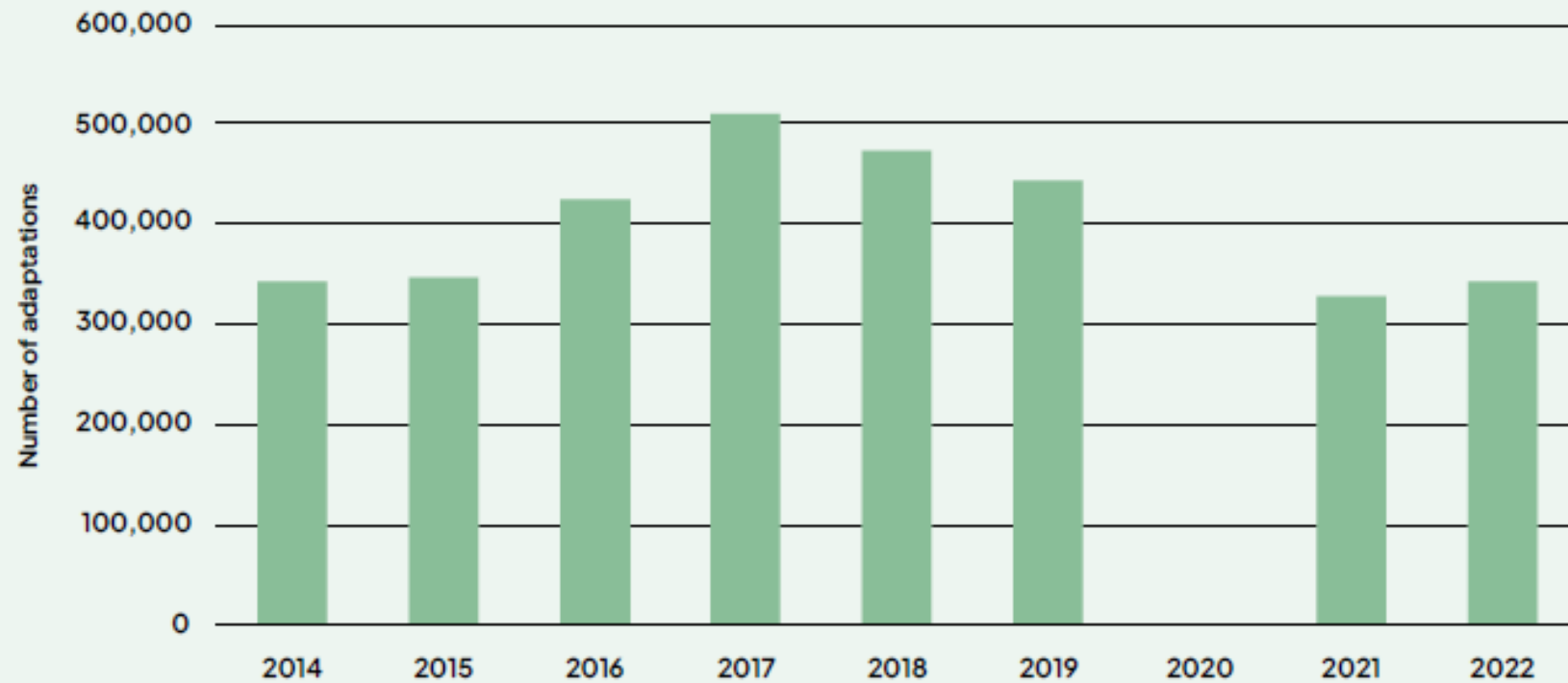
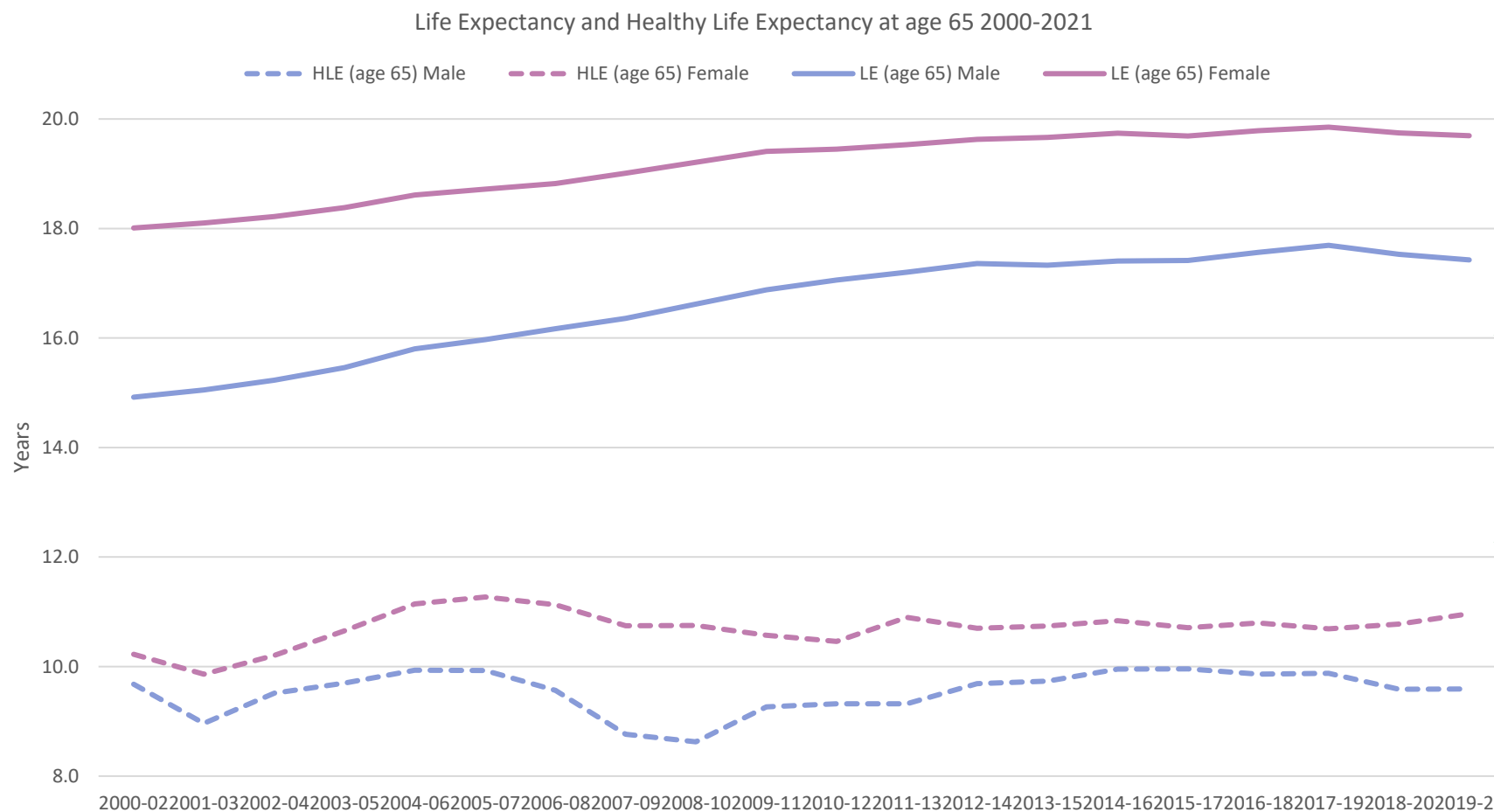


Figure 7: Bar chart showing estimated number of pre-existing adaptations across Scottish households from SHS data  
Note: 2020 data was omitted due to small sample sizes and disproportionate amount of households with adaptations installed

# LIFE EXPECTANCY AND HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY FROM 2000 TO 2021 AT AGE 65 IN SCOTLAND







# REPEATED RECOMMENDATIONS AND PERSISTENT CHALLENGES IN ADAPTATIONS POLICY

Number of times recommendations have been repeated across reports since 2000 (n=28)

21

Focus on Outcomes for Service Users

21

Accessible Information &  
Signposting

21

Preventative & Early Intervention  
Approach inc. Self-Assessment

14

Equity & Consistency Across Tenure

16

Reduce Delays in Provision

18

Strategic Partnership Approach  
to Planning - Housing, Health &  
Social Care

19

Partnership Approach to Governance,  
Delivery & Accountability Across  
Housing, Health & Social Care

13

Performance Needs to Be  
Monitored - Jointly

10

Streamlined Funding

Figure 3: Graphic showing the frequency of key themes throughout the 28 reviewed reports

# THE CURRENT SITUATION: UNEQUAL DELIVERY

Number of adaptations installed by social landlords (LA and mainstream RSLs) and homeowners each year

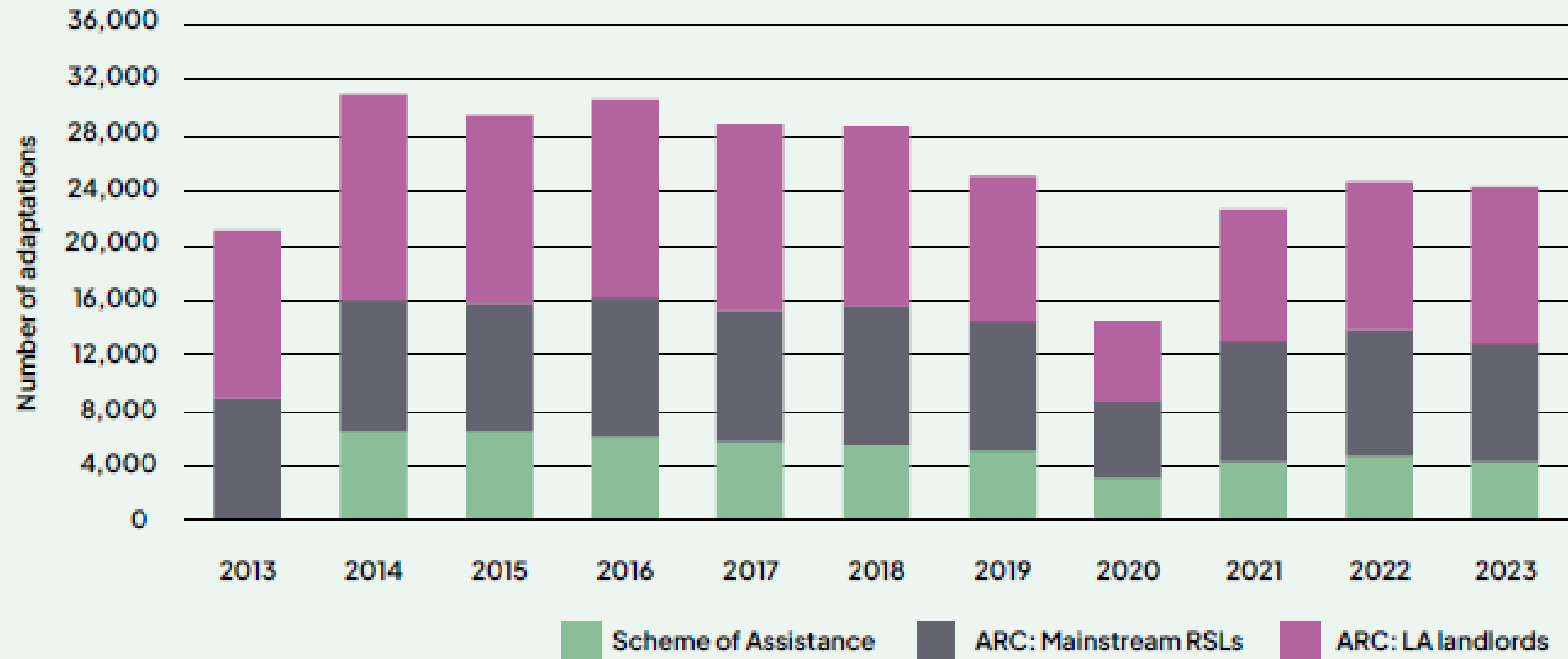


Figure 5: Stacked bar chart showing number of adaptations installed from SoA and ARC data

Note: SoA data available from 2014/15 to 2023/24, all years are graphed as the start year i.e. 2022/23=2022





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**“It’s that chicken and egg thing — waiting on OTs to have the capacity, then it’s another six months before anything happens. The demand is absolutely there.”**

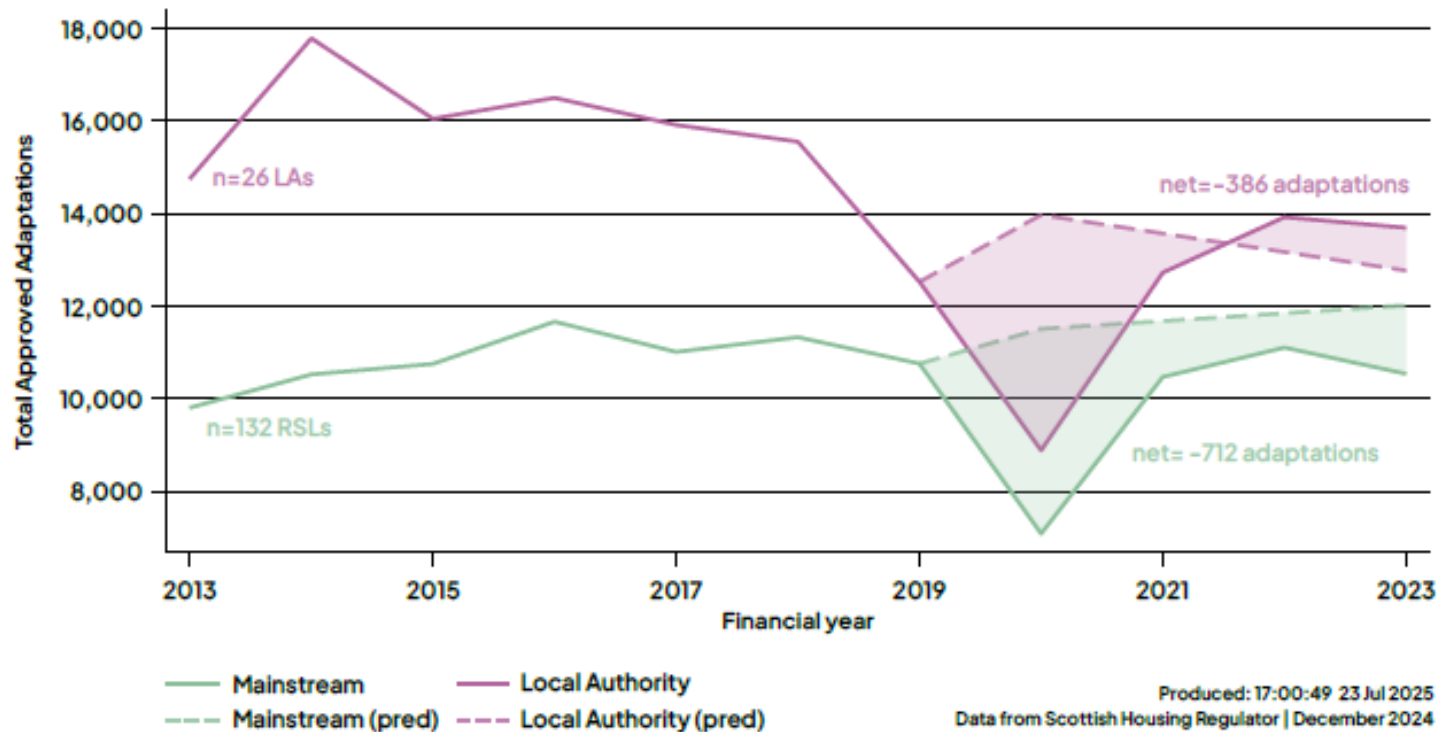
*Senior Housing Sector Leader, Female,  
Urban area in Scotland*

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# THE COVID DEFICIT



“We’ve got referrals stacking up – some haven’t even been looked at after three months. We’re doing what we can, but the demand just keeps growing.”

*Occupational Therapist, Female,  
Rural area in Scotland.*

Figure 6: Stata line chart showing approved adaptations, with post-COVID-19 actual vs predicted values from ARC data



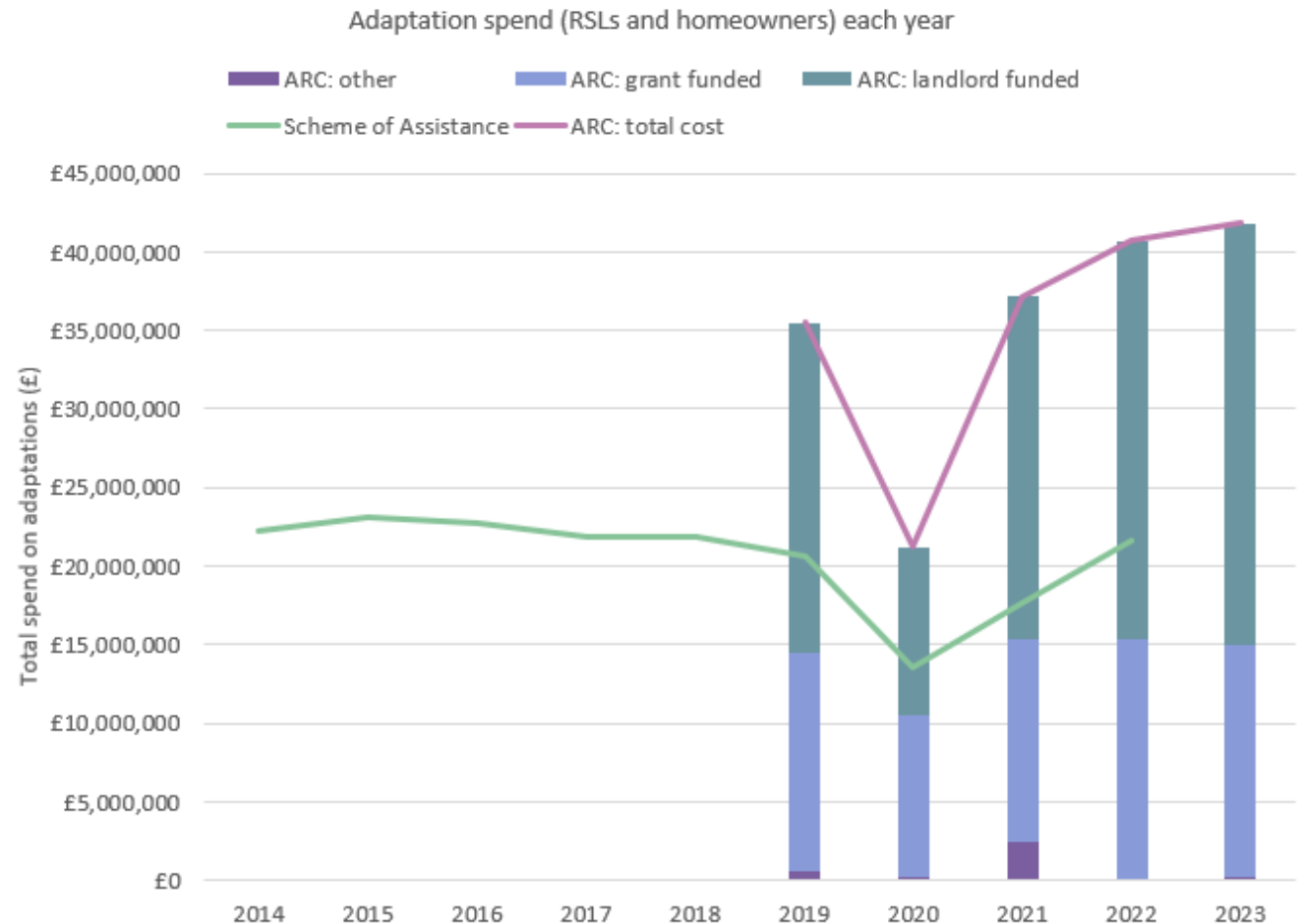
# ADAPTATION SPEND

Total spend by landlords exceeded £26.8 million in 2023.

Meanwhile, grant-funded adaptations fell by almost £378,000 between 2022 and 2023 - a concerning trend given growing demand.

**For Social landlords (ARC), the average cost rose from £1,798 in 2019 to £2,204 in 2023**

- For LA landlords average cost rose from £1,763 in 2019 to £1,943 in 2023
- For mainstream RSLs average cost rose from £1,804 in 2019 to £2,255 in 2023
- > For homeowners (SoA), it increased from £3,432 in 2014 to £5,286 in 2023



## Looking ahead, the pressure will only intensify

Using 2022 population projections and 2014–2022 Scottish Household Survey data, we estimate that:



The number of homes with adaptations will rise from **342,448** in 2022 to **372,627** by 2040



Adaptations delivered by Social Landlords (LA and mainstream RSLs) will increase from **20,675** in 2025 to **22,601** by 2040



Homeowner-installed adaptations will rise from **4,744** in 2025 to **5,186** in 2040

By 2025, Scotland could be spending over £68 million a year on housing adaptations across sectors, and this could rise to over £76 million by 2040 (in today's prices). Most of that spend will fall to local authorities and housing associations unless more support is provided for homeowners.



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“By the time someone gets an adaptation, they’ve often already had a fall or ended up in hospital – it’s backwards. We’re constantly reacting instead of preventing.”

*Occupational Therapist, Male,  
Mixed urban-rural area in Scotland.*

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**‘WE NEED TO  
SPEND TO  
SAVE’**

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“...you’ve got a backlog of people waiting for things and you’re constantly working in deficit.”

*Policy Lead, Female, has a Scotland-wide  
role covering both urban and rural areas*

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# WORKING TOWARDS PREVENTION

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**“You either spend it all at once, or you wait and let people fall through the cracks.”**

*Policy Maker, Male,  
Mixed urban-rural area in Scotland*

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**“We’re only seeing the tip of the iceberg, people don’t know what’s possible.”**

*Senior Housing Leader, Housing Association,  
Female, Mixed urban-rural area in Scotland*

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**“It’s about empowering people to act earlier, not just when it’s critical.”**

**Occupational Therapist, Female, Rural area in Scotland**



# PREDICTING FUTURE NEED

Estimated adaptation spend for homeowners and social landlords  
(LA and mainstream RSLs) 2025–2040 with 95% confidence intervals

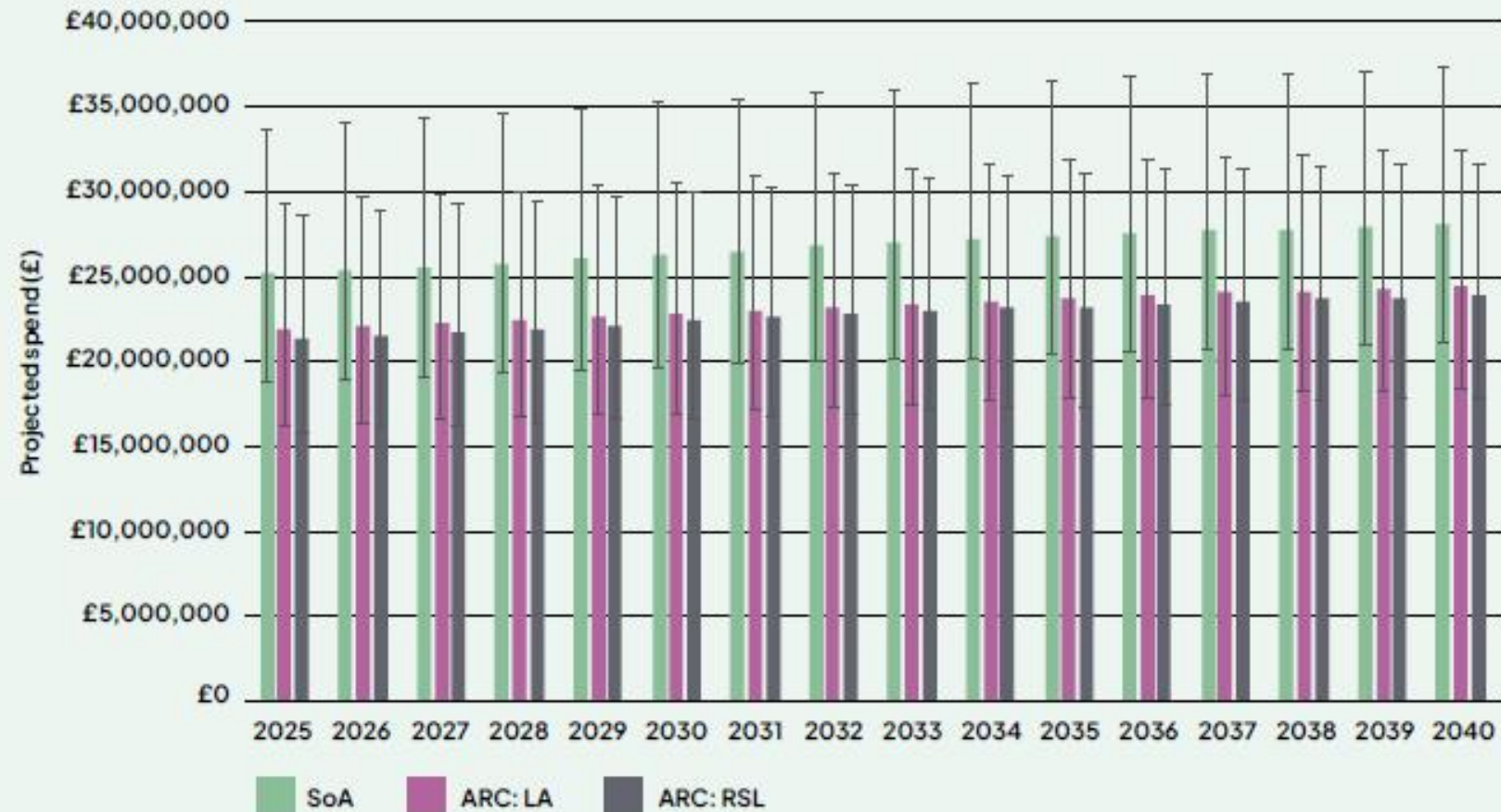


Figure 14: Bar chart showing the projected spend on adaptations each year from 2025 to 2040 with 95% confidence intervals







# Key findings: The future

## Demand is rising — and the system must be ready

By 2040, we estimate 396,267 homes will contain adaptations, up from 342,448 in 2022. The number of homes with adaptations will grow steadily over the next 15 years, with increasing pressure on both social landlords and homeowners.

## The status quo isn't sustainable

Without bold change, the system will continue to fall short of its preventative promise. People will be left waiting, and costs will continue to rise.

## We know what works - but it's not happening at scale

There is a clear roadmap: stronger legislation, better integration across services, funding reform, smarter use of data, and wider application of self-directed approaches. SDS is a key lever for enabling choice and control, but it remains underused in the context of housing. These are not new ideas - key stakeholders understand what's needed and can point to practical solutions. The challenge now is turning knowledge into action.

## The opportunity is now

Scotland's ageing population, worsening health trends, and housing crisis demand a national response.



# WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

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“For me, I would say it’s like three words, legislation, legislation and legislation... So unless it’s actually forced upon local authorities, I think you will see variances in practice and you’ll see a continuation of what we see happening locally and nationally. Guidance has no teeth.

*Occupational Therapist,  
Male, Mixed urban-rural area in Scotland*

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“Every £1 spent on equipment adaptations is a £6 saving across health and social care so it just has always seemed absolute lunacy to me that instead of actually investing in something that’s going to save you £6 across health and social care for every £1 you spend, we continue to actually cut budgets [and] kick the can down the road. It’s not the solution to the budget pressures. It’s one of the causes of the budget pressures.”

*Occupational Therapist, Male,  
Mixed urban-rural area in Scotland.*

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1

**Establish a national legal and policy framework for adaptations**, underpinned by strengthened statutory guidance and clear consumer standards. This should define minimum delivery expectations, ensure tenure-neutral access, and support consistent, rights-based provision across Scotland. The Scottish Government must follow through on its commitment to review adaptations policy, ensuring it leads to updated statutory guidance and national standards that eliminate postcode inequality.

2

**Secure sufficient, sustained funding to cover both the cost of adaptation works and the staffing, assessment, and coordination** required to deliver them well. Funding should be multi-year, transparent, and enable earlier intervention and not crisis-led responses.

3

**Create a single, coordinated pathway for adaptations**, with shared referral routes, clearer roles, and joined-up working between housing, health and social care. Opportunities include embedding housing in hospital discharge planning and developing cross-sector liaison roles, such as “trauma connectors” or housing navigators in GP practices.

4

**Strengthen data systems and feedback loops to connect policy, practice, and lived experience**. This includes tracking what works, where demand is growing, and whether adaptations are meeting their intended outcomes and supporting continuous learning and responsive commissioning.

5

**Embed early intervention, inclusive design, and smarter use of technology to future-proof Scotland’s housing stock**. A national framework should move beyond minimum compliance (e.g. “wheelchair accessible”) toward adaptable, inclusive design from the outset.

6

**Clarify and expand the role of SDS**, particularly Option 1: Direct Payments, as a funding mechanism for adaptations. This will require improved guidance for both practitioners and the public, wider promotion of SDS options, and access to trusted contractors with quality assurance safeguards.

7

**Scale up effective local models and improve public awareness**, ensuring earlier access to adaptations, more informed choices, and stronger support across all housing tenures. This must be matched by greater political leadership and visibility, with adaptations recognised and resourced as essential infrastructure across housing, health and social care, not treated as an optional add-on.

**A national framework should:**

**Enable data  
collection, cost  
tracking and  
reporting**

**Define minimum  
design and delivery  
standards**

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**Move away from  
minimal compliance  
toward inclusive,  
future-proof design  
(e.g., “wheelchair accessible”)**





# Intersectional Stigma of Place-Based Ageing (ISPA) Project

The ISPA project is an ambitious five-year participatory mixed method study that will explore and understand how the stigma attached to where people live can intersect with experiences of disability and ageing. This will provide nuanced insights into the structures and systems that drive exclusion and allow us to tackle the inequalities experienced by older disabled adults.

Do visit [youtube.com/@ispaproject](https://youtube.com/@ispaproject) for an audio and visual overview

We aim to develop interventions related to home and environmental modifications that encourage interventions for inclusive approaches within housing, health and social care delivery. This in turn supports people to age well within homes and communities across England, Scotland, and Wales. The project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (Ref: ES/W012677/1) and runs from September 2022 to September 2027.

The ISPA Project is a collaboration between the University of Stirling and the University of St Andrews, Newcastle University and University of Bristol. We are also partnered with the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (Housing LIN) and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA).



## Contact Details

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tenant participation advisory service



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