



What you need to know: Programme for Government 2020-2021

Background

The Programme for Government (PfG), [Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland](#), was introduced by the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon on 1 September 2020. In her speech, the First Minister highlighted the need to continue focussing resources on dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic but also stressed that we are presented with an opportunity to make changes to the way that services are delivered and to create a greener, fairer Scotland.

This briefing outlines the main commitments relating to housing.

Investing in new homes

The PfG highlights the importance of good quality housing in supporting our health and wellbeing and also in creating jobs and supporting the economic recovery from Coronavirus.

Before the pandemic, the Scottish Government had been on track to deliver the target of 50,000 affordable homes over the parliamentary term. While this is now unlikely to be met, the PfG sets out a commitment to working with the sector to deliver the remaining homes as soon as possible.

While no further specific funding commitments have been made beyond the £300 million interim funding already announced for affordable housing supply next year, the First Minister did suggest that significant additional funding will be included in the budget announcement later this year. As yet, no further supply commitments have been made beyond the 50,000 target.

The PfG also sets out commitments to:

- Publish the final vision for Housing to 2040 before the end of the year.
- Better standards for homes built with Scottish Government grant funding to be set out in guidance including:
 - Requirements for private or communal outdoor space.

- Room to work or study from home.
- Low carbon requirements including greater use of offsite construction.
- Better digital connectivity.
- Undertake a review of the adaptations system and make recommendations for streamlining the system and maximising the impact of investment.
- Commission advice from the Scottish Land Commission including a review of the housing land market.

Preventing and tackling homelessness

The PfG reiterates the Government's commitment to ending homelessness and continuing to scale up the provision of Housing First.

A new £10 million tenant hardship loan fund will be established to support those at risk of eviction but who may not be able to access other financial support. While a further £3 million will be made available for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).

Plans to extend eviction notice periods to March 2021 which had already been announced have been confirmed (subject to parliamentary approval).

However, new regulations will also be introduced to allow the notice period for anti-social or criminal behaviour to be reduced from three months to one in recognition of the impact that this behaviour can have on neighbours and the wider community.

Creating better places and supporting health and wellbeing

£275 million will be made available for community led regeneration and town centre revitalisation. This funding will also be used to support the creation of "20 minute neighbourhoods" where people can safely and easily access local amenities within a 20 minute walk of their home.

The Scottish Government has already acknowledged the negative impact that overprovision of short term lets can have on some communities and set out plans to allow for local regulation. This plans were delayed by the pandemic but the Scottish Government now intends to lay secondary legislation to give local authorities powers to licence short term lets and introduce control areas by December, coming into force by spring next year.

An independent review of the care service will be undertaken to explore how adult social care can be reformed to deliver a national approach to care and support services, including consideration of a National Care Service.

Carbon reduction and green jobs

Improving the energy efficiency of our homes is essential to meeting Scottish Government targets to eliminate fuel poverty as far as possible and reach net-zero carbon emissions. The PfG announced multi-year funding of £1.6 billion in infrastructure spending over the next parliamentary term to decarbonise heat and improve the energy efficiency of homes.

£100 million will be invested in a green jobs fund which could help to support retrofitting existing homes and

developing the skills needed to deliver new low carbon homes.

New legislation to be introduced

The PfG sets out plans to introduce several new Bills including:

The Domestic Abuse Bill which will introduce emergency barring orders to protect those at risk of domestic abuse. These will apply across tenure and temporarily remove those who may commit acts of abuse.

The UNCRC (incorporation) Bill which will establish the rights of children and young people (as set out in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)) within Scottish law. It will require public authorities to uphold the rights of children in Scotland and allow them to be challenged in court for any breaches of those rights. The UNCRC as it stands includes articles relating to adequate standards of living including housing.

The CIH view

Recognition of the role of housing in supporting better health and wellbeing, in creating jobs and supporting the economic recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic is very welcome. We are pleased to hear the Scottish Government's continuing commitment to deliver the 50,000 affordable homes that were promised over the life of this parliament but the housing sector needs greater certainty over the long term funding for affordable housing beyond 2021. [Research](#) published by CIH Scotland, Shelter Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations has highlighted the need for 53,000 affordable homes to be delivered over the next five years from 2021-2026.

The Coronavirus pandemic has shone a harsh light on the inequalities faced by those who are living in poor quality housing without access to outdoor spaces or the facilities needed to work or study from home. The commitment to better standards of new homes built with Scottish Government grant funding is therefore welcome, although we would appreciate further details on how grant funding levels will be set in future to meet these conditions. It is also disappointing that the Programme for Government lacked the same ambition for new build homes in the private sector. People should have the right to live in a good quality of home regardless of their tenure.