

Focus on Influencing Scotland

DECEMBER 2023



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Scotland

Last month, we published new research, in partnership with CaCHE and Fife Council, which highlighted the shortfall between Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the actual cost of renting a home in the private rented sector (PRS).

LHA is the amount of financial support that a household can claim towards their rent in the PRS. Rates were initially set at the 50th percentile in 2008 before being reduced to the 30th percentile of local rents meaning that the bottom 30 per cent of homes in an area should be affordable to a household claiming benefits. However, the rate has been frozen since April 2020 at which point it was based on 2018/19 data. Rents in some areas have risen considerably in the intervening years creating significant affordability issues for private renters across Scotland.

In the Autumn Statement, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced plans to reset the rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) so that it will cover the cheapest 30 per cent of properties, giving 1.6 million households an average of £800 of support next year.

This aligns with the recommendations of our research and will help to increase housing choices for low-income households in Scotland and across the UK. However, this short-term measure is just one aspect of the support needed to address homelessness in Scotland. LHA has often been undermined by the UK Government, first being cut and then repeatedly frozen. We want to see a long-term guarantee that support for housing will reflect the real cost of renting. We also need to tackle other barriers to accessing affordable rented housing across all tenures, and that will require greater investment from the Scottish Government and the building of more social housing.

You can read our research report "Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans: assessing the affordability of the private rented sector for LHA recipients in Scotland" [here](#).



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Influencing Our Influencing work

LHA result

Following campaigning from CIH and others across the sector, the UK Government announced that the local housing allowance (LHA) freeze would be lifted from April 2024. However, this is only guaranteed for one year. Read the [latest blog](#) from CIH Scotland chair Gavin Smith outlining what still needs to be done to improve the private rented sector.

Housing and Dementia

Policy and practice manager Ashley Campbell was invited to take part in a roundtable hosted by the UK Government's Department of Health and Social Care to share learning from our work on the role of housing in supporting people to live well with dementia. The discussions will help to inform the UK Government's [Older People's Housing Taskforce](#).

Heat in Buildings

The Existing Homes Alliance organised a stakeholder event chaired by Arianne Burgess MSP in November. The event brought together experts from housing organisations, the third sector, and industry representatives to consider the implications of the upcoming Heat in Buildings Bill.

Scottish Budget

Ahead of the 2024-25 Scottish Budget, due to be announced on 19 December, CIH Scotland director Callum Chomczuk and board chair Gavin Smith met with housing minister Paul McLennan MSP to discuss CIH's priorities for the Scottish Budget. Callum also met with Conservative housing spokesperson Miles Briggs MSP to discuss the upcoming Budget and need for a policy response on new supply and homelessness.

Latest from CIH

A round up of some of our latest news, policy, blogs and publications

Scottish housing sector comes together for young people during Scottish Careers Week

With young people in Scotland experiencing unprecedented levels of housing need, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) and the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland have come together to launch a new online resource to bolster both housing and young people's careers. Launched as part of Scottish Careers Week, the 'Your Career in Housing' website has been created to provide young people with the skills and opportunities needed to get into a meaningful career and, in doing so, help tackle the housing crisis.

Read more [here](#). Visit the [website](#).

CIH Scotland and ALACHO write to the Housing Minister

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) have sent a joint letter to Paul McLennan MSP Minister for Housing, outlining significant concerns with the pressures being faced by housing and homelessness services.

Read more [here](#).

CIH Scotland raises concerns about the Housing Bill

In our response to the Scottish Government consultation on proposals for rented sector reform ahead of the new Housing Bill being introduced, we have raised a number of concerns about how some of the proposals will work in practice.

Read more [here](#). Read our response [here](#).

Consultation briefing: a new Net Zero Standard for Social Housing

We have published a new member briefing summarising the Scottish Government's latest consultation on a new Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS).

Download it [here](#).



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