

Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan

Equality Impact Assessment – Results

October 2023

Equality Impact Assessment – Results

Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy: The Action Plan aims to meet the housing needs of, and retain and attract people to, our remote, rural and island communities.

The Action Plan supports our ambition of delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, 10% of which will be in our remote, rural and island communities.

Directorate: Directorate for Local Government and Housing

Division: More Homes Division

Team: Housing and Planning Team

Executive summary

In the recent Scottish Government Policy Prospectus¹, published in April 2023, the First Minister commits to embedding equality, inclusion and human rights into all Scottish Government policy.

The publication of the Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan aims to meet these commitments and tackle housing inequality in remote, rural and island communities.

The Action Plan aims to meet our target of delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, 10% of which will be in remote, rural and island communities.

By increasing affordable housing provision in remote, rural and island communities, this will have a positive impact on local people who would otherwise struggle to meet their housing needs, whether due to age, disability, socio-economic background or other characteristics.

The affordable homes will be delivered meeting current building standards. This means that they will be energy efficient, reducing fuel poverty which is higher in rural

¹ [Equality, opportunity, community: New leadership - A fresh start - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equality-opportunity-community-new-leadership-a-fresh-start/pages/1-10.aspx)

and island areas than urban areas. Based on local authorities' priorities in their Local Housing Strategies and Strategic Housing Investment Plans which considers local housing needs, more adaptable and future proofed homes will be delivered. This will increase the housing stock suitable for disabled and older people whose needs may otherwise not be met.

Background

Housing to 2040² includes a specific focus on rural and island housing and commits to *“take action so that rural and island communities have access to high-quality, affordable and market housing which has been planned alongside the economic and physical infrastructure and helps people to live, work and thrive – and we will help to stem rural depopulation”*.

The Action Plan will bring together relevant work strands of Housing to 2040 through a rural lens. Formal engagement through Housing to 2040 and informal engagement on the Action Plan have identified the key barriers to housing delivery in rural and island areas and includes joint action and solutions to address these. It strategically aligns to National Planning Framework 4, the National Islands Plan and Population Strategy.

Housing has a vital role to play in meeting many of our ambitions for Scotland: tackling child and fuel poverty; ending homelessness; tackling inequality; strengthening communities; helping stem rural depopulation; improving health and wellbeing; addressing the global climate emergency and promoting inclusive growth. Through the housing system, we want to support our most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and create vibrant places that are sustainable and promote wellbeing.

² [Housing to 2040 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

The Action Plan supports the delivery of affordable homes which is linked to Scottish Government national priorities, plans and targets as well as local priorities that can contribute to the delivery of the following National Outcomes:

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe;
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally;
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination;
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential;
- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment;
- We are healthy and active.

The Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan supports the ambitions set out in Housing to 2040, the development of which was underpinned by extensive consultation with communities and stakeholders across the country, including remote, rural and island areas of Scotland³.

As part of the Housing to 2040 engagement process, the Scottish Government engaged widely with groups and organisations representing people with protected characteristics. The engagement process gathered evidence on the impact of housing on protected characteristics⁴.

As part of the development of the Action Plan, we undertook further and targeted engagement with a broad range of communities and stakeholders in remote, rural and island communities. This consisted of a range of meetings with key stakeholders and organisations representing a wide range of views of housing in remote, rural and island communities. We tended to engage with organisations and groups directly involved in the development of housing. This included organisations such as local authorities, Housing Associations, Registered Social Landlords and Community

³ [Housing to 2040 - Report on stakeholder engagement in 2018 \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-to-2040-report-on-stakeholder-engagement-in-2018/pages/1-to-4.aspx)

⁴ [Housing to 2040 and the Protected Characteristics - Housing to 2040: equalities position statement - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-to-2040-and-the-protected-characteristics-housing-to-2040-equalities-position-statement/pages/1-to-4.aspx)

Development groups, amongst others. These groups represent the interests of their residents, members and tenants, many of whom will have protected characteristics.

The data used to inform the EQIA is based on evidence from various sources. Evidence from the engagement with groups representing protected characteristics as part of the Housing to 2040 process has been taken into account.

The Scope of the EQIA

In the development of the Action Plan, we engaged extensively with representatives of remote, rural and island communities to gather evidence on the housing issues and concerns faced by those communities.

The Action Plan aim to support and strengthen current policies and practices to deliver more affordable housing in remote, rural and island areas and address the barriers faced by those communities. It does not directly introduce new legislation and any legislation or regulation coming from actions will undertake a separate EQIA at the appropriate stage of policy development.

Key Findings

The EQIA undertaken for the Action Plan identified positive outcomes for equalities groups, with a greater impact on some groups than others.

Age

The EQIA identified positive impacts of the Action Plan on people based on age. By supporting the delivery of affordable housing in remote, rural and island areas, where there is significantly more market failure than in urban areas, the Action Plan will advance equality of opportunity by supporting younger people to remain in their communities, rather than force them to move to urban areas. This will help stem de-population in pressured areas.

Greater provision of affordable housing will also benefit older people by adding diversity to the housing stock. There will be more adaptable housing available to meet older people's housing needs where identified in Local Housing Strategies and Strategic Housing Investment Plans, as well as greater energy efficiency, which will reduce fuel poverty in rural and island areas.

Disability

The EQIA identified positive impacts of the Action Plan on people based on disability. The Action Plan will deliver more affordable housing in remote, rural and island areas, thus further encouraging Local Authorities to invest in adaptable housing to meet the needs of their disabled residents, where need is identified in Local Housing Strategies and Strategic Housing Investment Plans. New or improved housing stock delivery through the affordable homes target will meet current building standards, housing conditions and energy efficiency standards. These standards ensure a level of future-proofing within the affordable housing sector, ensuring that homes can be more easily adapted to meet individuals' current and future needs.

Sex

The EQIA identified that there will be minimal impact on individuals based on sex. More men tend to be homeowners than women. Women make up 92% of lone parents and tend to rely more on social security to meet housing costs than men. Men are much more likely to experience rough sleeping, however women are more likely to experience 'hidden homelessness' and have multiple occasions of moving in and out of homeless services over prolonged periods. Any impact based on sex will be positive, arising from greater provision of affordable housing and a better ability to meet housing needs locally.

Gender reassignment

The EQIA identified that there will be minimal impact on individuals based on gender reassignment. One in four transgender individuals have experienced homelessness and transgender individuals often face harassment and negative treatment when

accessing housing services, particularly when those services are gendered. Any impact of the Action Plan will be positive, arising from greater provision of affordable housing. This will allow transgender individuals in remote, rural and island communities to better meet their housing needs locally. Increased support for community-led development and principles will promote better relations between equality groups.

Sexual orientation

The EQIA identified that there will be minimal impact on individuals based on sexual orientation. Any impact will be positive, arising from greater provision of affordable housing. Increased support for community-led development and place-based living principles will promote better relations between equality groups.

Race

The EQIA identified that there will be some positive impact on individuals based on race. Any increase in provision of affordable housing is likely to have a positive effect on people who would otherwise struggle to meet their housing needs. Ethnic minorities often struggle to meet their housing needs and often face discrimination in the private sector. Ethnic minorities are more likely to experience poverty and to be in less secure, lower paid work. Certain ethnic minorities have certain housing needs, often living inter-generationally. Increased support for community-led development and place-based living principles will promote better relations between equality groups.

Religion or belief

The EQIA identified that there will be minimal impact on individuals based on religion or belief. Any impact will be positive, arising from greater provision of affordable housing and increased community-led development and place-based living principles.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The EQIA concludes that the Action Plan will have an overall positive affect on equality groups. By increasing affordable housing provision in remote, rural and island communities, this will disproportionately have a positive impact on local people noted above who would otherwise struggle to meet their housing needs, whether due to age, disability, race or socio-economic background. The increase in affordable housing provision will also indirectly positively affect the protected characteristics of sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion or belief. This is due to the increased housing options available to local people in remote, rural and island communities with any protected characteristic, as well as supporting community-led development and place-based living, both of which will promote good relations.

The Minister for Housing will chair an annual summit on the progress of the Action Plan, commencing in Autumn 2024. As part of our engagement with stakeholders on the delivery of the Action Plan, we will aim to explore the effects of the actions on inequality based on protected characteristics, where it is appropriate to do so.

Additionally, Local Housing Strategy guidance⁵ states that the Scottish Government expects local authorities' Local Housing Strategies to demonstrate how it supports equality and addresses inequality. Local authorities must undertake a full Equalities Impact Assessment as part of the LHS process. This is reiterated in the recent Strategic Housing Investment Plan guidance⁶. Local authorities must also give due consideration to the Fairer Scotland Duty assessment as part of the LHS process. Any new policy or legislation resulting from the actions in the Action Plan will undertake a separate EQIA at the appropriate stage of policy development.

⁵ [Local Housing Strategy Guidance 2019 \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

⁶ [Guidance+and+Procedures+-+MHDGN+2023-01+-+Affordable+Housing+Supply+Programme+%28AHSP%29+Process+and+Procedures.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)



© Crown copyright 2023



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83521-398-8 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, October 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1358063 (10/23)

W W W . g o v . s c o t