

Perspective paper

Housing and community regeneration



A wide range of professions and organisations are working to help regenerate Scotland's most deprived communities. Individually, and working in partnership with others, their aim is to ensure that the people living in these communities are given opportunities to develop skills, confidence and resources to take advantage of the opportunities open to them – a process that the Scottish Executive calls "closing the opportunity gap."

As well as bringing their own skills, knowledge and experience to the task, each organisation has its own perspectives about what's important, and the best ways to make things happen.

[The Scottish Centre for Regeneration](#) is publishing this series of Perspectives papers so that these views can be shared, as well as highlighting the contribution that different professions make to the community regeneration process. The papers

are also part of our aim to promote joint working between professionals involved in community regeneration.

More information about community regeneration can be found in our [FAQs: community regeneration](#).

Each perspective has been produced by the [Scottish Centre for Regeneration](#) in collaboration with an appropriate key agency or professional body. That does not mean that the SCR endorses the professional views expressed here.

This Perspective looks at the contribution of housing professionals to community regeneration is published jointly with the [Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland](#).



What is 'Housing'?

Housing is provided by local authorities, registered social landlords and private developers to meet people's needs not just for shelter but also to take account of their socio-economic position and support a range of individual and group needs e.g. disability. Housing services contribute to community regeneration through improving existing housing, creating new housing for ownership and/or for rent and by providing responsive services to tenants, owners and other service users. Usually housing is the largest financial investment in community regeneration and, therefore, has a significant role in creating sustainable and balanced communities.

The way in which housing is planned and developed has a major impact on the quality of the physical environment and the social relationships within an area and can have a direct influence on community and individual well being.

History

The history of housing provision in Scotland is tied with the country's changing economic profile. The 18th and 19th century industrialisation of Scotland's central belt was accompanied by substantial private sector-led development which subsequently led to major, inner city slum areas. The post-war municipalisation of housing, greatly improved the living conditions of many thousands of households through the substantial development of existing settlements and the creation of new towns to accommodate overspill demand.

However many areas didn't receive other forms of investment in amenities and infrastructure and became detached from the mainstream economy. Wider financial pressures contributed to a lack of investment in the maintenance of housing. This was compounded also by the loss of traditional industries e.g. in steel and coal mining, which led to high levels of unemployment in many areas in the seventies and early eighties.

PERSPECTIVE PAPER 4 Housing and community regeneration

Many of the challenges faced today by housing professionals stem from this under investment and the failure to link housing investment with local economic development and broader investment strategies, together with other failures in design, spatial planning, building systems and management. Community regeneration aims to tackle these issues.

Housing in Scotland – a brief profile

People

Approximately 10,000? people work in housing in Scotland, around 2,000 of whom are members of the professional body, the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). Most CIH members have an academic background in social policy, geography and public administration. Others have qualified in Housing Management courses offered by [Glasgow](#), [Stirling](#) and [Paisley](#) universities. Many people working in housing also have experience of working in other parts local government or other organisations. However there is no requirement for a professional qualification as a condition of taking up a job in housing.

Roles

Housing professionals most likely to be involved in community regeneration include those with responsibility for:

- Housing development which involves planning and procuring new housing developments, negotiating development contracts with the funding bodies and construction companies, overseeing delivery of the contracts. Liaising with housing policy and planning to take forward regeneration strategies and initiatives.
- Housing policy which involves strategic housing planning through local housing needs assessments and setting policies to meet these needs. Much of this strategic function is now included in the Local Housing Strategy process.

It includes an assessment of all housing tenure needs. Working with other professions to plan regeneration strategies for area renewal.

- Tenant participation which involves ensuring that the local community are able to influence regeneration projects through setting up participation structures and ensuring their delivery.
- Housing management at the local level which involves dealing with applications for housing including from homeless households, assessing applicants housing needs, allocating housing to applicants, dealing with disputes, rent arrears, eviction actions and general tenancy management, liaising with support providers and dealing with repair and maintenance of tenanted properties and their immediate environment.
- Welfare issues such as housing benefits and welfare rights and housing support which involves ensuring people in local community are in receipt of all the income that they are entitled to. In doing so helping to tackle poverty and bring greater wealth into local economy. Providing support to people to ensure that they can maintain their tenancy.

Organisations

Housing professionals work in all areas of Scotland and can be found in a variety of organisations:

- Housing providers such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) which are independent housing organisations registered with Communities Scotland. RSLs are non-profit distributing organisations run by voluntary committees. The majority of RSLs in Scotland are Industrial and Provident Societies and over 60% of all RSLs are charitable.
- Most are housing associations, but there are also co-operatives and companies, including the

PERSPECTIVE PAPER 4 Housing and community regeneration

bodies set up to manage houses transferred from local authorities under the stock transfer process.

- Local authorities' housing strategy, policy and regeneration sections.
- As Housing Consultants and Independent Tenant Advisors to tenants representative bodies that have a right to be [consulted](#) on all aspects of housing management.
- Scottish Executive, developing and monitoring legislation and guidance on housing, homelessness and fuel poverty.
- Communities Scotland in the provision of its functions, covering housing investment, regeneration, regulation and inspection.

Regulation and Professional Development

Housing is strongly regulated.

[Communities Scotland](#) inspects social landlords (both local authority and RSLs) and regulates RSLs. Where a landlord provides personal support those services are regulated and inspected by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (the [Care Commission](#)). Their work is also overseen by local authorities and by [Audit Scotland](#), and charitable RSLs also fall within the remit of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

CIH provides ongoing professional development training to its members and, together with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities ([COSLA](#)) the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations ([SFHA](#)) provides training to the wider housing field under the banner of 'Raising Standards'; and SHARE (established by the RSL sector also offers a wide range of training to RSL staff in particular. [Employers in Voluntary Housing](#) (EVH) supports Committees in their specific role as "employer". In practice it responds to all matters concerning the employment relationship and works with managers, staff and committees.

What is the policy framework for housing and regeneration?

Legislation

The nature of housing provision in Scotland has changed substantially since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, namely through the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#). This legislation authorised:

- a new tenancy regime for social rented housing
- the regulation and inspection regime for local authority housing services and RSLs
- new local authority strategic housing functions, including local housing strategies
- the abolition of Scottish Homes and introduction of Communities Scotland
- strengthened the rights of tenants, including their right to be consulted.

The Act also clarified the role of local authorities and other landlords such as RSLs in responding to issues such as [homelessness](#), [fuel poverty](#) and [Anti-Social Behaviour Orders](#). The role of local authorities as housing providers is changing to a more strategic role.

Policy

The Scottish Executive's policy is set out in a policy statement, [Homes for Scotland's People](#) identifies five national housing priorities:

- enough housing of the right type in the right place
- quality homes for those who rent
- opportunity for those who want to own their own
- help for those who need it and assistance to avoid homelessness
- strong, safe and attractive communities.

PERSPECTIVE PAPER 4 Housing and community regeneration

Key targets include commitments to:

- offer a permanent home to everyone who is unintentionally homeless by 2012
- introduce the Scottish housing quality standard as a benchmark for good quality housing in the 21st-century
- eradicate fuel poverty as far as is reasonably practical by 2016

The policy highlights the need to 'close the gap' between the better off and the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland regenerating communities so that they are safe and attractive for all. The policy recognises the complex links between housing and other areas of public policy and says that "the successful delivery of our housing objectives will help to meet our aspirations for tackling poor health and poverty and promoting sustainable development."

Who does what?

Communities Scotland which, as an agency of the Scottish Executive, helps to deliver the policy objectives and Partnership Commitments of Scottish Ministers. Its fundamental aim is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a decent quality of life through affordable housing in strong and confident communities. It seeks to improve the supply and quality of affordable housing and create opportunities for people living in disadvantaged communities.

Local authorities are responsible for developing local housing strategies that take into account the social, economic and environmental issues in their area. These provide a framework for the future development of the local housing system taking into account national housing priorities. They are also required to involve private and public housing providers and the public in agreeing local strategic priorities. [Guidance](#) on this is published by Communities Scotland. [Research](#) undertaken for

CIH earlier this year showed that local authorities are making significant progress in meeting national policy objectives but that more needs to be done to involve communities and minority groups and that better links needs to be made with Community Planning. There is also a need for local housing strategies to link more effectively with broader development plans in delivering sustainable affordable housing in communities where this is needed.

Many Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) also have both a development function and are active in terms of their wider role to assist social and economic regeneration. They are also organisations with significant social capital i.e. in the skills and experience of their Boards and committees and can be seen as successful social enterprises in their own right.

What is the housing contribution to community regeneration?

Technical skills

Housing professionals are particularly knowledgeable on issues such as :

- new housing development including innovation in design and sustainability
- house condition surveys?
- housing need
- patterns of housing tenure
- development and management of stock transfer initiatives
- affordability
- low demand for available housing and its causes
- housing finance
- managing estates and communities
- social inclusion issues
- individual support needs.

Social Issues

Housing professionals also have expertise in how to deal with issues affecting neighbourhoods such as noise, anti-social behaviour and drugs use. They

PERSPECTIVE PAPER 4 Housing and community regeneration

are regularly in contact with residents and so often have a good understanding of the issues affecting an area. Given this they can help other services to gain a better understanding of what residents might need in relation to tenancy support and other issues such as access to benefits.

Social Inclusion

People involved in housing also work to ensure that residents are not isolated or excluded, but rather are connected into local networks and institutions. Housing professionals are aware of their responsibility to respond to the diversity within the communities they serve and of the rights and entitlements of tenants and residents under the terms of Equalities legislation. Housing professionals now play important roles in helping deliver the Executive's Supporting People policy to make sure that the diverse needs of individuals are met as part of a broader person centred agenda. Communities Scotland provides support to housing professionals in developing their social inclusion role.

Community Engagement

Housing professionals have a long history of engaging the community in aspects of community regeneration. This includes managing relationships with residents' organisations and tenant representative groups. Housing associations may also have a proportion of tenants as members of their managing boards.

Wider Role

Housing professionals have a long association with the concept of regeneration and have, over time, developed their work:

- From the 'bricks and mortar' issues of house building to the need for the wider regeneration of neighbourhoods' social, economic and environmental aspects.
- From the management of house allocation, rent

collection and tenancy agreements to dealing with the broader wellbeing of tenants and communities.

- From top down service provision to tenant-led and focused services.

This shift in focus is reflected in the development of a [Wider Action](#) role for RSLs. A 2005 survey of Scottish RSLs by [Housing Wider Action](#) showed that social landlords are using this power in a variety of ways, including:

- providing advice and information services, including welfare rights support
- promoting community development or creating community facilities
- developing energy efficiency and recycling initiatives
- job creation, digital inclusion and community arts.

This wider role is significantly changing the role of the housing professional and is increasingly being recognised in the content of training and professional development.

Perspectives

Housing professionals involved in community regeneration are concerned that:

- the housing on offer is affordable to the full range of potential tenants
- the housing consists of buildings that people want to live in
- the area has an adequate supply of shops, schools and other services

They will monitor:

- the turnover of occupants
- the times taken to re-let properties
- levels of demand, length of waiting lists and perceptions of the desirability of an area
- the changing level and nature of anti-social

PERSPECTIVE PAPER 4 Housing and community regeneration

- behaviour
- where the community sits in relation to the Scottish Executive's Deprivation Index.
- the level of rent arrears.
- the environment surrounding houses
- house conditions.

What are the Challenges for Housing Professionals?

Challenges identified by people working in housing are:

- Housing professionals are keen to ensure that others involved in community regeneration recognise their roles beyond physical construction of housing and for direct management issues. They want to be included in discussion about aspects of development that are often not thought to be in their remit such as the planning and development of local services and the development of local transport facilities, including those for walking and cycling.
- Housing professionals have experience of joint working with others involved in community regeneration. They work with Health and Social Work services in [Joint Futures Planning](#) which is designed to meet the residential and non-residential care needs of Scotland's older population. They also work closely with the Police and others on anti-social behaviour.
- The housing profession has emerged from similar roots as public health (see perspective paper 1). Both are community based services in which the professionals have a local presence and profile. This local focus can sometimes be a source of creative tension with others working in regeneration, such as planners who will view a particular community in a wider city or regional context.
- Community regeneration is a challenge for housing professionals. Only a small part of their professional training is concerned with regeneration. Despite the support, training and development initiatives that are in place, the profession recognises that more is required. In particular there is a need for housing professionals to develop their partnership skills including those required to provide effective leadership to community regeneration initiatives.
- There is an ongoing debate in the housing profession how to achieve sustainable mixed tenure regeneration in different areas – in a way which ensures benefits for both tenants and owner occupiers.
- The changes from the traditional role of local authorities as housing providers means that housing professionals are looking for greater clarity about their strategic role and the relationship between different levels of decision making.
- Housing professionals are also challenged with ensuring that representatives and representative organisations are able to fully take account and articulate the interests of their tenants and residents.

The Scottish Centre for Regeneration is part of Communities Scotland, the Scottish Executive's housing and regeneration agency.

PERSPECTIVE PAPER 4 Housing and community regeneration

Useful Contacts

Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland
5 Palmerston Place
Edinburgh EH12 5AA

tel: 0131 225 4544
fax: 0131 225 4566
email: scotland@cih.org
web: www.cih.org/scotland

Scottish Centre for Regeneration
Communities Scotland
Festival Business Centre
150 Brand Street
Glasgow G51 1DH

tel: 0141 419 1690
fax: 0141 314 0026
email: scr@communitiesScotland.gov.uk
web: www.scr.communitiesScotland.gov.uk

Communities Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh EH12 5HE

tel: +44(0)131 313 0044
fax: 0131 313 2680
email: enquiries@communitiesScotland.gsi.gov.uk
web: www.communitiesScotland.gov.uk

COSLA
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh EH12 5XZ

tel: 0131 474 9200
fax: 0131 474 9292
email: enquiries@cosla.gov.uk
web: www.cosla.gov.uk