

Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Consultation response to Glasgow City Council's Housing Strategy 2017-22

The GCPH welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Housing Strategy 2017-2022. We appreciate the amount of research, evidence gathering and partner and stakeholder engagement that has taken place in order to inform this document, and we believe that this has helped to ensure that the strategy is progressive and holistic. We are aware that the previous strategy drew upon information from the GoWell research and learning programme and that health and equality impact assessments were undertaken as part of the process. The GCPH continues to advocate the use of Health Impact Assessment and we would be happy to support, organise and facilitate a similar process for this strategy.

The GCPH has been involved in a range of research and practice relating to housing since 2004. With a broader focus on the built environment, we have become increasingly conscious of the importance of how different features within neighbourhoods interact to shape health, and we consider the design and quality of housing to be an integral part of any well-functioning place. A large proportion of this response is informed by learning from the GoWell study, and the GoWell team will be happy to discuss any issues on which housing strategy colleagues would like further information. Further GCPH understanding on housing and health has been developed through work around welfare reform, ongoing work with Govanhill Housing Association, analysis of data on demographic, environmental and social trends in the city and through our long-standing programme of work exploring the reasons for Glasgow's 'excess' mortalityⁱ.

As requested, our response covers the ten strategic priorities included in the plan. For each priority we have considered the three questions included in the call for responses:

- Do you think that [*title of strategic priority*] should be a strategic priority in this housing strategy?
- Do you think that the proposed actions we have included are the right actions?
- What other actions do you think we should include?

We have only commented on the sections where a public health response is warranted and where we are able to draw on relevant GCPH learning. Additional comments on the strategy

ⁱ 'Excess' mortality is defined as mortality *over and above* that explained by differences in socioeconomic deprivation.

that do not specifically relate to any of the ten priorities are included at the end of the response in a general comments section.

Housing and health in a changing city

The GCPH recently published a [report](#)¹ on socioeconomic, demographic, health and environmental changes in Glasgow over the past 20 years, revealing stark differences across Glasgow neighbourhoods. This is illustrated by population changes between 2001 and 2013, where some neighbourhoods have experienced significant decline and others have grown by more than 30%. This is partly a reflection of the increased presence of ethnic minority groups, which have tended to settle in neighbourhoods where other migrants are already settled (e.g. Pollokshields West and Govanhill). The report also notes changing tenure patterns in the city (in particular growth in the private-rented sector), an ageing population, and increases in lone parents and single-person households. These trends – leaving aside debate and uncertainty over the absolute magnitude of change – suggest that in the short to medium term and beyond there will be increasing challenges in planning housing, health and social care services for an ageing and potentially more isolated and vulnerable population.

GCPH [research](#)² on the role of history, politics and governance in explaining excess mortality in Scotland and Glasgow has found that the scale of urban decline and demolition in Glasgow has exceeded the rate of other cities, contributing to a legacy disempowerment and long-term poor quality environmental conditions. These decisions continue to shape the population's health today, and it is worth acknowledging the significant impact that housing decisions can have. Policy recommendations relating to the recognised impact of these changes are offered in relation to housing and the physical environment, including:

- expanding the affordable housebuilding programme
- extending the Scottish Housing Quality Standard to the private-rented sector and tied housing
- targeting cold and damp housing and people who struggle to afford fuel
- increasing funding for social housing
- improving greenspace access and quality in deprived areas
- improving neighbourhood maintenance according to need and deprivation levels.

Learning from the GoWell programme suggests that *how* regeneration is done, and how people are supported in communities undergoing change, needs as much attention as *what* is done. GoWell advocates greater communication with communities about changes that are

planned as part of regeneration initiatives and greater support to enable community residents to influence plans and implementation. The work has also emphasised that the consistency and impact of approaches over time is important and that long-term issues cannot be addressed by a series of short-term initiatives.

Priority 1: Reduce poverty in Glasgow

Do you think that reducing poverty in Glasgow should be a strategic priority in this housing strategy?

The GCPH agrees that reducing poverty in Glasgow should be a strategic priority within the strategy. In the UK, housing costs account for a sizable proportion of personal spending and are highest for people in the social and private rented sectors. Across all tenure type's people living on low incomes face intense pressures to meet housing costs, with small increases often having a negative knock-on effect for budgeting around essential household costs such as heating or food. Recent research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)³ highlights the severe extent of destitution in the UK. Destitution is a term used to describe the circumstances that people face when they cannot afford to buy the essentials to eat, stay warm and dry, and keep clean for a sustained period. Routes to destitution are reported to include high living costs and delays in benefit payments, and reducing the costs of housing has been an important route out of destitution for many. The report highlights the need to provide better support for people in periods of financial crisis, with housing associations and local authorities being possible sources of help in times of need.

Welfare policy and the introduction of Universal Credit is likely to impact on people's experience of housing and the choices they have to make to meet basic needs, particularly those living in social and private-rented housing. According to a report by the JRF, the number of people requiring housing benefit to support rent payments rose by 62% between 2008 and 2013 in Scotland⁴. In recent times there has been a substantial increase in the number of in-work tenants that have become dependent on welfare support. Furthermore, even people that are currently meeting financial commitments relating to housing may be adversely affected due to the uncertain terms of their employment. The negative effects of insecure work were highlighted in a [report](#)⁵ published by the GCPH, revealing that the negative impact of insecure work on health over a prolonged period can be more detrimental to health than actual job loss.

Single parent households are becoming increasingly common. Within Glasgow, [research](#)⁶ commissioned by the GCPH identified that 94% of single parent households are headed by women, while 40% of all households with children are headed by lone parents. This represents a substantial proportion of the population, providing particular difficulties for women on low incomes. The report also identified that less than 50% of lone parents are in paid work, and around two-thirds of those that are working are doing so on a part-time basis. Other findings were that one-in-three people were unable to keep their house in a decent decorative condition, and overcrowding was also a common problem for many single parents. This makes lone parents particularly vulnerable to the impacts of welfare reforms and increases in housing costs.

Priority 2: Contribute to Glasgow's economic growth

Do you think that contributing to economic growth in Glasgow should be a strategic priority in this housing strategy?

In line with Scotland's economic strategy, we feel that 'inclusive growth' should be Glasgow's economic priority. We believe that the inclusion of a priority which focuses on the economy should aim to support people into employment, increase opportunities for volunteering at a neighbourhood level and provide opportunities for skill development through accredited courses. Although economic growth is understandably a key priority for Glasgow City Council, we feel that making the economy work for the population, rather than having an economy that is supported by the population should be prioritised. The Council can support this aim through its procurement practice, employment policies and by targeting development towards places and groups with particular needs. The proposed actions within this priority are commendable and support our preferred priority of supporting inclusive growth. However, we would welcome a stronger commitment to certain actions. For example, "encouraging the use of community benefits in tenders for work" could be worded in such a way that this was a commitment rather than an aspiration.

A strong message from GoWell qualitative research with residents in Transformational Regeneration Areas is that the social environment is perceived to influence a greater range of health issues than the physical environments of homes and neighbourhoods. We therefore welcome the aims of increasing social infrastructure through social enterprise interventions and Co-operative Glasgow. We encourage the strategy to view health gain as an economic outcome in supporting work readiness. We also suggest the strategy learns from research lead by Glasgow Caledonian University's Yunus Centre on the health benefits

of social enterprise, particularly the Homes for Good evaluation which will produce learning around how innovative provision of private-rented homes can improve a range of outcomes and the learning and emergent recommendations incorporated into subsequent drafts of this strategy.

The broad approach accords with the Glasgow resilience Strategy which priorities fair economic growth. We suggest therefore that measures of economic regeneration take account of inequalities and access to meaningful, well-paid and sustained employment. We would suggest that indicators of success around the economic ambitions of the housing strategy takes account of improvement in the financial circumstances of a broad range of demographic groups and does not rely on broad headline measures such as Gross Value Added.

Priority 3: Build 12,500 new homes by 2022

Do you think that building 12,500 new homes by 2022 should be a strategic priority in this housing strategy?

The GCPH support the commitment to build new homes and recognise the current constraints and uncertainties around housebuilding. Building 12,500 new homes by 2022 is an ambitious target given that housebuilding rates in the city are currently at around 1,000 completions per year. Key to this priority, we believe, should be the supply of affordable housing that meets the changing needs of the population. Further to this, we feel that housing provision should be targeted in areas where it has the potential to have a positive impact on existing communities, prioritising the development of brownfield sites in areas of high deprivation over greenbelt sites or those in areas where there is less potential for community gains.

We are agreeable with the actions set out in this priority. However, the development of a low carbon pilot project in 2017 to inform the minimum standard for social housing is an action that is perhaps better placed with the priority that covers climate change.

Priority 4: Deliver regeneration

Do you think that delivering regeneration should be a strategic priority in this housing strategy?

Regeneration, in our understanding of the term, is a jointly facilitated process that involves negotiation and collaboration with a range of stakeholders at different stages. The delivery of

regeneration suggests a top-down process with limited opportunity for community input. Within this priority, or perhaps as a separate priority, we would welcome the inclusion of community-led regeneration to compliment the commitments to physical regeneration included in this section. The inclusion of a priority on community-led regeneration would be beneficial to take recent policy changes into account such as the Land Reform Act and the Community Empowerment Act. Experience highlights the need to be cautious about a housing-led approach to regeneration, and the importance of delivering regeneration strategies that consciously also attend to social infrastructure, neighbourhood quality and employment opportunities.

Priority 5: Tackle fuel poverty, energy inefficiency and climate change

The GCPH supports this priority as an important means of supporting population health and reducing inequalities in health. However, we feel that tackling fuel poverty and climate change, although interconnected issues, are worthy of being distinct priorities in their own right.

Rising energy costs, continued austerity and welfare reforms mean that fuel poverty will continue to be challenge for a large proportion of Glasgow's population for years to come. It is notable that there was a reduction in the proportion of the population experiencing fuel poverty across social-rented and owner-occupied tenure and an increase for private renters between 2011 and 2014. We welcome any proposals from Glasgow City Council to buffer the negative effects of fuel poverty, including continued and increased financial support for G-HEAT, where it is reported in Glasgow City Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy for 2015 to 2018 that just over 3,000 people have been supported since 2012. Increasing the number of people accessing this service should be a key target within this priority given that a just a small proportion of the city-wide population currently experiencing fuel poverty have been reached.

The rollout of fuel banks in Glasgow – which gives foodbank users with pre-payment meters vouchers for gas or electricity – provides an indication of the desperate choices that people are currently making between food, fuel and other essential living costs. GoWell research in this area shows that affordability difficulties – including fuel costs – as result of austerity measures are consistently associated with a decline in mental health⁷. Therefore, while more downstream measures to tackle fuel poverty are clearly needed, supporting the use of fuel banks could have a positive impact on people's everyday lives.

Households generate CO₂ which contributes significantly to climate change⁸. Indeed, the provision of housing and decisions relating to housing are relevant to climate change in a number of ways. Good policy around housing can help to mitigate the effects of climate change (examples include: recycling and waste, supporting local food production, encouraging and supporting active travel, greenspace provision and planting, energy efficiency improvements, supporting renewable energy sources) and allow the population to adapt to its inevitable impacts (examples include: ensuring that new and existing buildings are resilient to adverse climate impacts and flood prevention measures). Climate Ready Scotland, which is Scotland's adopted climate change adaptation plan, expects new housing to be able to withstand the adverse effects of climate change such as flooding and storms and to contribute positively towards reducing the nation's carbon footprint through efficiency and greening measures.

Priority 6: Prevent and address homelessness

As a matter of public health urgency, the GCPH welcomes actions which support the reduction of homelessness in Glasgow. In keeping with the '2012 Parliamentary Commitment', we believe that all people should have access to settled temporary accommodation. This commitment needs to be supported by actions to house people as quickly as possible and, if necessary, by building more homes/accommodation. We recognise that other organisations such as Shelter will be better placed to comment on this priority.

Priority 7: Manage and maintain the existing housing stock

Although there is a clear need to meet housing shortages through new-build developments, it is imperative to maintain the existing stock to meet the needs of the current population and to protect the city's cultural heritage. As stated in the plan, there are over 7,000 below tolerable standard (BTS) tenemental properties in Glasgow. Through developing a greater understanding of the underlying reasons for BTS housing in Govanhill, we feel that this needs to be addressed through a systematic, well-resourced and long-term approach, and we expect that the evaluation of the Housing Acquisition and Repair Programme will provide useful learning for the rest of the city on this ongoing challenge.

This section includes commentary on the management of stalled and vacant open spaces. We support the inclusion of this but feel that it would better placed elsewhere in the document. The GCPH has undertaken research on the [impact of Stalled Spaces](#) on individuals involved and the communities in which they have taken place. Findings show that people involved gained confidence, developed new skills and felt better able to contribute to

their area⁹. Wider community benefits were also experienced through strengthened local partnerships and more positive feelings about the community as a place to live. These impacts complement improvements to the physical environment, providing a strong basis for the community-led development of spaces to continue to be supported by Glasgow City Council.

Priority 8: Support independent living and specialist provision

We fully support this priority. Meeting the needs of disability groups and vulnerable population groups is a strong marker of a fair, progressive and inclusive city. Current trends suggest that the new strategy should take full account of the changing needs of society brought about through population ageing, changes to household composition and the increased proportion of minority groups in the population.

The continuing increase in the number of elderly people will mean that the adaptation of housing is likely to become increasingly necessary¹⁰. The need to create housing that is more compatible with care needs should also be recognised, and the accessibility of the wide range of services that people will require in older age should be accounted for. New homes should be adaptable, and the current and projected future proportion of people with life-limiting illnesses and disabilities should be considered when housing targets are devised and housing quality standards are set. A further inevitable outcome of population ageing and the trend towards single person households is the increasing number of people that will face social isolation; an issue which has recently been found to be particularly important for older men¹¹. This suggests the need for better support services within communities, which is a function that can be assisted by Housing Associations.

Another important demographic change is that Glasgow is becoming an increasingly diverse city; the ethnic minority population has doubled between 2001 and 2011. GoWell research has found that social integration for migrants has been found to be lower than for British born citizens for indicators of trust and neighbourliness¹², suggesting that further work is required to ensure that migrants are made to feel welcome when they arrive in Scotland. This potentially requires additional support for housing associations and a greater commitment from Glasgow City Council to undertake more extensive integration work.

Priority 9: Raise standards in the private rented sector

We support the priority to improve standards in the private rented sector on the basis that housing in this sector has become less affordable and standards are less tightly regulated

than other tenure types. We are also aware that some of the poorest housing conditions in the city are occupied by private renters.

Affordability is a continuing issue for people that are looking to access the housing market, with reduced incomes and the rise of low-paid and insecure jobs diminishing the ability of many to get on the property ladder or to meet rental costs. This considerable growth in the private sector rental market in Scotland in last 20 years has seen a shift in the concentration of poverty from the social-rented sector to the private-rented sector, resulting in more people having limited control over their own living conditions¹³. The reduction in owner occupancy may have implications for the long-term maintenance of some housing, potentially impacting negatively on tenants.

The proportion of private-rented housing has increased in all Glasgow neighbourhoods between 2001 and 2011, rising to over 40% in some areas and remaining very low at just 5% in others. Through evaluation work as part of the Govanhill Equally Well test site, we are aware of the challenges posed by overcrowding and unfavourable and insecure tenancy arrangements for people living in privately rented housing.

The Scottish Government's vision is to create socially mixed communities and this is reflected in its encouragement of multi-tenure housing developments. However, mixed tenure housing has been found to present challenges in tenemental properties as factoring arrangements cannot always be agreed and necessary repairs are not always carried out. Reducing the amount of private-rented housing in favour of social-rented housing can be important in areas where private landlords are unwilling to support necessary repairs or the ongoing maintenance of communal areas. Through undertaking a small-scale evaluation of the Govanhill Housing Acquisitions and Repair Programme it is clear that there is need for the practice of some private landlords and letting agents to improve. Improved standards pertain not only to rogue landlords, but also more widely to landlords who may be unaware of their responsibilities. Findings from interviews with stakeholders involved in the delivery of the programme suggest that a dual approach to educate landlords of their responsibilities is required alongside measures which allow deliberate bad practice to be brought to account in an efficient way.

Actions within this section should consider the potential impacts of tax changes on the private-rented sector, in particular acknowledging the potential for rent increases as landlords pass on increased costs to their tenants. With this in mind, it would be desirable to see how Glasgow City Council plans to protect those most vulnerable to these increases.

General comments on the strategy

The following section includes a number of suggestions for inclusion in the forthcoming draft strategy.

- A glossary of terms to ensure that the strategy is accessible to all potential readers.
- Greater emphasis on working with communities as opposed to providing for them.
- An explanation of who the plan is for, how the delivery of the plan can be influenced by local people and a point of contact.

What other priorities would we like to see?

Improving health and reducing inequalities through housing

Health features strongly within the document and is rightly recognised as being influenced by housing quality. There is a strong body of evidence pointing to the important influence that housing has on health¹⁴, and the provision of good quality housing is internationally recognised as being a crucial factor for achieving social justice and reducing inequalities in health¹⁵. Given the well-evidenced impact of housing on health we feel it is reasonable to consider that improving health and reducing inequalities in health should be a distinct priority within the strategy. Greater coordination between planning for housing and planning for health & social care services will be another important strategic development.

Community-led regeneration, empowerment and placemaking approaches

We would welcome the inclusion of a distinct priority on community-led regeneration, empowerment and placemaking which identifies how local people can get involved in activities at a neighbourhood level. This might include information on how legislative changes introduced through the Community Empowerment Act and Land Reform Act can support local people in influencing decision-making and taking forward neighbourhood initiatives independently. This inclusion of placemaking as a specific policy in Glasgow's new Local Development Plan suggests that a more people-centred and holistic approach to development will be expected by Glasgow City Council in the future. Given the importance of housing in meeting this policy we would expect to see recognition of this in the new strategy. In addition, the [Place Standard](#) for Scotland has the potential to be used by community groups as a framework for prioritising change in their area, whether this is about housing or other factors relating to the development of the neighbourhood. This might be recognised in the new strategy as a tool for encouraging and enabling community-led forms of regeneration.

Housing and the wider community

While people should have access to good quality housing, there is also evidence to suggest that people's experience of housing is influenced by the wider neighbourhood. Good quality housing without access to nearby amenities and high quality and safe surroundings can prevent people from living healthy lives¹⁶, and although we recognise the importance of market forces in shaping where facilities and amenities are located, measures can be taken to reduce the negative impacts of some built environment features (e.g. vacant and derelict land, poor quality greenspace, the amount of litter and graffiti). Although perhaps not required as a distinct priority, recognition of the role of the wider environment on housing could be recognised more fully.

Reducing the harmful presence of vacant and derelict land

Having access to a good quality neighbourhood is an issue of social and environmental justice and vacant and derelict land is more common in areas of multiple deprivation. We would welcome increased investment to make use of vacant and derelict land, either on a temporary or permanent basis. The inclusion of a priority to reduce the amount of vacant and derelict land, focusing particularly on areas of deprivation, would be a welcome inclusion in the forthcoming strategy.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Although included as a priority alongside fuel poverty, we feel that the multidimensional nature of climate change and the growing threat it poses to population health means that it is worthy of being a distinct priority.

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- ³ Fitzpatrick S, Bramley G, Sosenko F, Blenkinsopp J, Johnsen S, Littlewood M, Netto G, Watts B. *Destitution in the UK*. York: JRF; 2016.
- ⁴ Aldridge H, Kenway P. *Referendum briefing: Housing costs and low income in Scotland*. York: JRF; 2014.
- ⁵ Harkins C, Egan J. *The rise of in-work poverty*. Glasgow: GCPH; 2013.
- ⁶ Graham H, McQuade R. *Impacts of welfare reforms on lone parents moving into work*. Glasgow: GCPH; 2014.
- ⁷ Curl A, Kearns A. Financial difficulty and mental wellbeing in an age of austerity: The experience in deprived communities. *Social Policy and Society* 2015;14(02):217-240.
- ⁸ Department for Environmental and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). *UK's Carbon Footprint 1993-2010*. London: DEFRA; 2010.
- ⁹ Yates G. *Assessing the individual and community impacts of Stalled Spaces funded projects*. GCPH; Glasgow; 2015.
- ¹⁰ Scottish Government. *Age, home and community: a strategy for housing for Scotland's older people: 2012-2021*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government; 2011.
- ¹¹ Beach B, Bamford SM. *Isolation: the emerging crisis for older men*. Independent Age: London; 2014.
- ¹² Kearns A, Whitley E. *Briefing paper 23: Migrant social integration in Glasgow's deprived communities*. Glasgow: GoWell; 2015.
- ¹³ Aldridge H, Kenway P. *Referendum briefing: Housing costs and low income in Scotland*. JRF; York, 2014.
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- ¹⁵ Marmot M, Friel S, Bell R, Houweling TA, Taylor S. Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health. *The Lancet* 2008;372(9650):1661-1669.
- ¹⁶ Jones R, Yates G. *The built environment and health: an evidence review*. Glasgow: GCPH; 2013.