

Ms Becky Smith
Scottish Government
Social Housing Division
1HS Victoria Quay
Leith
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ



24 January 2008

Dear Ms Smith

Response to Firm Foundations: Future of Housing in Scotland

A significant, but quiet evolution has been occurring within the Abbeyfield movement in Scotland during the past two and a half years. Abbeyfield has converted from a disparate movement to a new housing association, Abbeyfield Scotland Ltd. On 31 March 2008 a further 29 societies will merge with Abbeyfield Scotland making us a provider of housing and care services to older people throughout Scotland.

As a very new Housing Association we are delighted to be given the opportunity to comment on Firm Foundations but given our youth have limited our response to specific areas.

Question 1 An increase in housing supply is to be welcomed. However clarity is required about the number of publicly funded homes the figures illustrated will include. What is not clear is whether the level of funding currently available to RSL's for new build will have to accommodate Local Authority building, resulting in a significant reduction for the Housing Association sector. Increasing funding to the Local Authority sector, but not at the expense of the RSL sectors would be the preferred outcome.

Question 18 The impact of introducing large scale competitions for housing subsidy together with the introduction of fewer developing Housing Associations could potentially result in the loss of small local Housing Associations such as Abbeyfield Scotland. In an effort to avoid such a negative impact a greater focus upon partnership working across the housing section would require encouragement.

Smaller organisations are in touch with the communities in which they operate and are able to take a proactive approach to changing needs. Large scale competition as the only means of obtaining subsidy is likely to slow down the process and could lead to uniformity of solution.

Where specialist organisations like Abbeyfield fit into the new picture requires urgent clarification not only to ensure that they will continue to feature, but also how their growth aspirations either through new build or acquisition can be met. Quality of the built environment cannot be forgotten at the expense of reducing subsidy as we know to our cost.

Question 33 There is no doubt that there are too many regulatory bodies. One organisation with distinctive and separate regulatory departments would be the preferred way forward. This approach would be more light touch cutting back on the mountains of bureaucracy and would be welcomed by residents and landlords alike. The strengthening of the principles of risk assessment should result in stakeholders, providers and regulators in the housing business, focussing upon creating success.

We welcome the green paper and look forward to embracing the challenges ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eleanor Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eleanor Stewart
Director

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