

# OUR HOMES, OUR ECONOMY

A practical guide to changing the conversation about homes and the economy

WELLBEING ECONOMY ALLIANCE SCOTLAND



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# 1. Why we need a new story about homes

Homes shape almost every aspect of our lives.

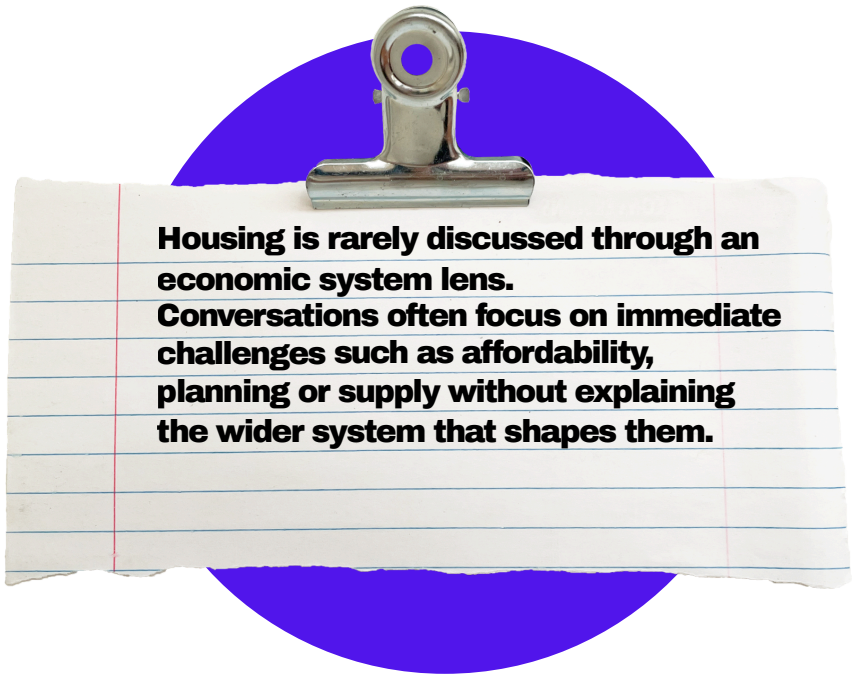
They are where we rest, raise our families, recover when we're unwell and build relationships with the people around us. A secure home provides the stability people need to stay healthy, participate in their communities and build fulfilling lives.

Yet too often, that's not how we talk about homes.

Public conversations tend to focus on house prices, planning rules, housing targets and the property market. While these discussions matter, they rarely ask a more fundamental question: what is housing for?

At WEAll Scotland, we believe housing is about much more than bricks and mortar. The homes we live in shape our health, our opportunities, our communities and our economy. Housing is not simply one policy issue among many, it is one of the clearest ways our economy affects people's everyday lives.

Despite this, housing is rarely discussed through an economic system lens. Conversations often focus on immediate challenges such as affordability, planning or supply without explaining the wider system that shapes them. As a result, housing problems can appear isolated or inevitable, rather than the product of political and economic choices.



A Wellbeing Economy offers a different perspective.

It starts from a simple idea: homes should provide people with security, dignity and opportunity before generating financial returns.

It asks us to judge success not by rising property values, but by whether everyone has access to a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.

Changing housing therefore requires more than new policies. It also requires changing the story we tell.

This guide has been developed to help organisations communicate about homes through the lens of a Wellbeing Economy. Drawing on learning from the Our Homes, Our Economy project, it provides practical framing principles, messaging tools and communications examples that organisations can adapt to their own work.

Whether you work on housing, poverty, health, climate, local government or economic reform, the aim of this guide is simple: to help build a shared narrative that places homes where they belong, at the heart of a fairer, healthier and more sustainable economy.



# 2. The story we want to tell

Every organisation has its own priorities, audiences and campaigns. This guide is not about using exactly the same words or promoting the same policies.

Instead, it offers a shared story about why homes matter and how they connect to the wider economy. By reinforcing the same ideas across different issues and campaigns, we can help build a broader understanding of why change is needed and what a better future could look like.

You can use the narrative below in full, adapt it to your own work, or draw on its key themes when developing reports, speeches and campaigns.



## The story

Homes are one of the foundations of a good life.

They are where we rest, raise our families, recover when we're unwell and build relationships with the people around us. When everyone has access to a safe, secure and affordable home, people are healthier, communities are stronger and local economies are more resilient.

Yet for too many people across Scotland, that foundation is becoming increasingly fragile.

Rising housing costs, insecure tenancies and poor-quality homes are often treated as separate challenges. In reality, they are connected. They reflect an economy that has increasingly encouraged homes to be treated as financial assets rather than places to live.

Over time, political and economic decisions have made it easier for some people to grow their wealth through land and property, while making secure and affordable homes harder for many people to access. The consequences reach far beyond housing itself, affecting health, poverty, education, inequality, community life and our environment.

A Wellbeing Economy offers a different way of thinking.

It starts from the principle that homes should provide people with security, dignity and opportunity before generating financial returns. Success is measured not by rising property values, but by whether everyone has access to a warm, secure and affordable place to call home. People and communities are given real power to influence the economic policies affecting our homes.

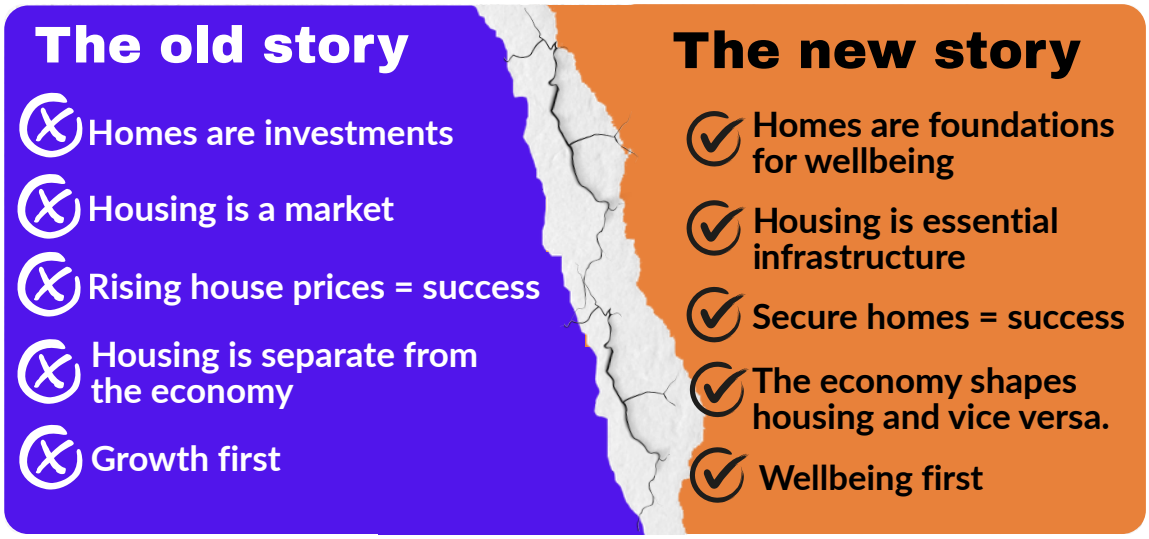
This changes how we think about solutions. Investing in homes is also an investment in healthier people, stronger communities, climate action and a fairer economy. It is best placed in public and community hands in order to reap these social benefits.

Most importantly, it reminds us that today's housing system is not inevitable.

# 3. Five ideas at the heart of our story

Whenever you communicate about homes, try to reinforce these five ideas,

1. Homes are the foundation of healthy lives and thriving communities.
2. Housing is an economic design issue.
3. Today's housing system reflects economic choices, not inevitability.
4. Homes should meet people's needs before generating financial returns for those already wealthy.
5. A Wellbeing Economy offers a different future, one where everyone has a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.



# 3.1 Five framing principles

Every organisation will tell the story of our homes differently. Some will focus on homelessness, others on health, poverty, climate or land reform. While the issues may differ, the way we frame them can make a significant difference to how people understand the problem and the solutions.

These five framing principles are designed to help organisations communicate more effectively about homes through the lens of a Wellbeing Economy. They are not rules to follow word for word, but practical prompts that can help build a more consistent and compelling public conversation.

## Why this matters

Too often, conversations about housing begin with statistics, planning rules or housing targets. While these issues matter, they can make housing feel abstract and technical.

Instead, begin with what people already understand: everyone needs a safe, secure place to call home.

A home is where people build their lives. It shapes health, relationships, opportunities and community. Starting here reminds people why housing matters before asking them to think about policy.

## What to do

Much of this will already feel familiar to organisations working in housing. The purpose of this guide is not to suggest a new way of talking about homes, but to identify the shared framing that can strengthen all of our communications when used consistently.

- **Lead with the purpose of a home, not the mechanics of the housing system**
- **Talk about what homes make possible**
- **Help audiences understand that secure homes benefit everyone, not just those experiencing housing insecurity**
- **Where appropriate, connect these everyday experiences to the wider economy**

## Try saying...

"Everyone deserves a **safe, secure place** to call home. Homes provide the **stability** people need to stay healthy, raise families and participate in their communities."

"Homes are the foundation of healthy lives and thriving communities."



## Avoid saying...

"Scotland needs to increase housing supply."

"The housing market is under pressure."



## Remember

Start with **people**, not property.

# 3.2 Show that housing is an economic issue

## Why this matters

Housing is often discussed as though it exists separately from the rest of the economy.

In reality, housing shapes almost every aspect of our economy.

The homes we live in influence our health, our education, our employment, our local economies and our environment.

Helping people make these connections broadens understanding and shows why better housing benefits everyone.

## What to do

Show how housing connects to the wider issues people already care about.

- ☑ **Talk about health**
- ☑ **Talk about communities**
- ☑ **Talk about inequality**
- ☑ **Talk about climate**
- ☑ **Talk about opportunity**



## Try saying...

"Housing isn't just about where we live. It affects our health, our opportunities, our communities and our economy."

"Secure homes are essential infrastructure that helps people and communities thrive."



## Avoid saying...

"Housing is one of Scotland's biggest policy challenges."

"Housing is a sector issue."




## Remember

Housing isn't separate from the economy, it's one of the ways people experience it every day.

# 3.3 Explain how we got here

## Why this matters

Without explanation, housing problems can appear inevitable.

People may assume that high house prices, expensive rents or housing shortages are simply the natural result of markets.

Explaining that today's housing system reflects decades of political and economic choices helps people understand that different choices are possible.

These choices have made homes more expensive and insecure, while widening inequality between those who benefit from rising property values and those who struggle to find an affordable home.



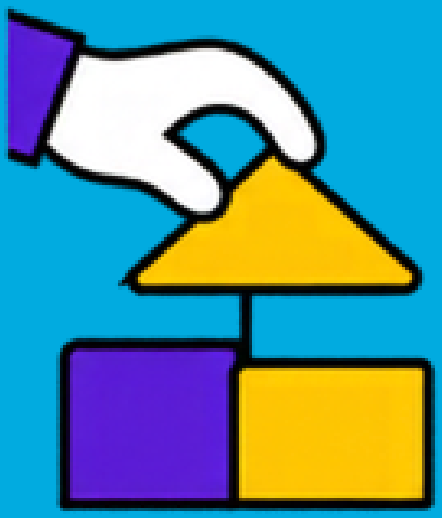
## What to do

- **Keep the explanation simple**
- **Focus on the bigger picture rather than detailed history**
- **Explain that over time, homes became financial assets as well as places to live**
- **Show how this contributed to rising prices and rents, greater insecurity and widening inequality**
- **Show that systems are designed, and can therefore be redesigned**
- **Focus on political, policy and economic choices**

## Try saying...

"Over many years, political and economic decisions encouraged homes to viewed as financial assets rather than places to live."

"Today's housing system reflects political and economic decisions. Different choices can create a different future."



## Avoid saying...

"The market has failed."

"Housing is broken."



## Remember

Explain the system, not just the symptoms.

# 3.4 Talk about the future we want to build

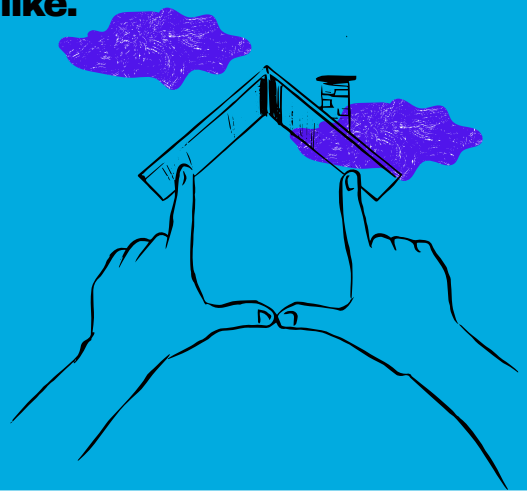
## Why this matters

Communications often spend much more time describing problems than solutions.

While people need to understand the challenges, they also need a reason to believe change is worthwhile.

## What to do

**Describe what a better housing system would feel like.**



**Talk about children growing up in secure homes, with healthy neighbourhoods, lower energy bills, and communities where people can stay connected throughout their lives and where people have a meaningful say over their homes, neighbourhoods and housing costs.**



**Focus on the outcomes people value.**



## Try saying...

"Imagine a Scotland where everyone has a secure, affordable home that allows them to thrive."

"Better homes create healthier people, stronger communities and a fairer economy."



## Avoid saying...

"Scotland's housing crisis is getting worse."

"We face an impossible challenge."



## Remember

Paint the destination, not just the journey.

# 3.5 End with hope and action

## Why this matters

If communications end with a crisis, audiences often leave feeling powerless.

People are far more likely to support change when they believe solutions exist and progress is possible.

Always leave audiences with a sense of agency.

## What to do

- **Finish by reminding people that today's housing system reflects political and economic choices.**
- **Highlight practical actions.**
- **Reinforce that Scotland can build a housing system centred on wellbeing.**
- **Leave audiences feeling optimistic rather than overwhelmed.**



## Try saying...

"The housing system we have today is the result of **political and economic choices**. Different choices can create a future where everyone has a safe, secure place to call home."

"**A Wellbeing Economy** gives us the opportunity to build a housing system that works better for everyone."



## Avoid saying...

"Nothing will change."

"The housing crisis continues."



# 4. Putting the narrative into practice

The framing principles in this guide can be applied to many different housing issues. Whether you're writing a report, preparing a speech, responding to a consultation or speaking to the media, the aim is always the same: connect individual housing issues back to the bigger story about homes and the economy.

The examples below show how you can apply these principles to some of Scotland's most common housing issues.

# Social housing

## Social housing is essential infrastructure that helps people and communities thrive

Social housing is often presented as a safety net for people who cannot access the private market.

A Wellbeing Economy tells a different story.

Investment in social housing should therefore be understood as an investment in healthier communities, stronger local economies and a more resilient Scotland.

### ✓ Lead with

1. Everyone deserves a **secure home**
2. Homes are **essential infrastructure**
3. Investing in social housing is **preventative spending**
4. Good homes **strengthen communities**

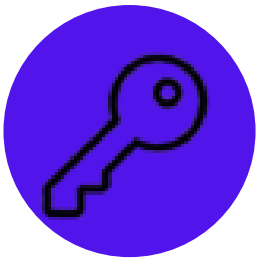
### X Avoid

- Describing social housing as a **tenure of last resort**
- Focusing only on **waiting lists**
- Framing housing solely as a **cost to government**

**EXAMPLE WORDING**

> *Social housing is one of the foundations of a Wellbeing Economy. Like schools and hospitals, it provides the stability people need to thrive while creating healthier communities and reducing pressure on public services.*

# Private renting



## Everyone deserves housing security, whatever type of home they live in

Private renting should provide secure homes, not long-term insecurity.

Rather than framing the debate around landlords versus tenants, focus on what everyone needs from a housing system: security, affordability and fairness.

Stable homes help people put down roots, support children's education and strengthen local communities.

### ✓ Lead with

1. **Everyone** deserves housing **security**
2. **Stability** creates **opportunity**
3. **Homes** should provide **security before profit**

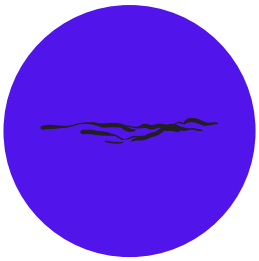
### X Avoid

- Framing the issue as renters versus landlords
- Leading with rent control legislation
- Assuming home ownership is the only successful outcome

**EXAMPLE WORDING**

> *A good housing system provides security regardless of whether people rent or own their home. Everyone benefits when renters have stable, affordable places to live.*

# Land



## The value from land should benefit the communities that create it

Land shapes almost every aspect of our housing system, yet it is often invisible in public conversations.

The value of land is largely created through public investment, thriving communities and shared infrastructure. A Wellbeing Economy asks how more of that value can be shared for public benefit.

### ✓ Lead with

1. Land is a **shared resource**
2. **Communities** help **create land value**
3. **Public investment** should create **public benefit**
4. **Fair land** use supports **affordable homes**

### X Avoid

- Beginning with technical tax policy
- Assuming audiences already understand land reform
- Leading with legislation rather than purpose

**EXAMPLE WORDING**

> *The value of land grows because communities make places successful. A Wellbeing Economy believes more of this value should be reinvested to create affordable homes and stronger neighbourhoods.*

# Empty homes

## The most sustainable home is often the one that's already been built

Scotland needs more homes, but it also needs to make better use of the homes it already has.

Bringing empty and underused homes back into use is one of the quickest and most sustainable ways to increase housing availability.

### ✓ Lead with

1. **Every home** has the potential to support a **family or community**
2. Making **better use of existing homes** is practical and sustainable
3. Reusing homes **strengthens communities**

### X Avoid

- Framing empty homes as individual failings
- Suggesting building more is the only solution
- Leading with punitive language

**EXAMPLE WORDING**

> *Making better use of the homes we already have can provide affordable places to live more quickly while reducing environmental impacts and strengthening existing communities.*

# Community wealth building

## Building homes should also build stronger local economies.

Housing investment should create wealth that stays within communities.

How we build homes matters just as much as how many we build.

Housing can support local businesses, create skilled jobs and strengthen community wealth.

### ✓ Lead with

1. Housing investment should **benefit local communities**
2. **Homes** can support **good local jobs**
3. **Communities** should shape **their own futures**

### X Avoid

- Treating housing purely as construction targets
- Talking only about economic growth
- Separating housing from local economic development

**EXAMPLE WORDING**

> *Building homes should also build stronger communities. Investing locally creates jobs, supports businesses and keeps wealth circulating where it is needed most.*

# Climate



## Warm homes are good for people, for communities and for the planet.

Housing and climate are deeply connected.

Warm, energy-efficient homes reduce emissions, lower energy bills and improve health.

Climate action should be framed as improving people's everyday lives, not asking them to make sacrifices.

### ✓ Lead with

1. **Warm homes are healthy homes**
2. Climate action **improves everyday life**
3. **Better homes** reduce bills and emissions
4. **Retrofitting creates local jobs**

### X Avoid

- Starting with emissions targets.
- Treating climate as a separate issue from housing.
- Framing environmental action as a burden.

**EXAMPLE WORDING**

> *Investing in warm, energy-efficient homes helps people live healthier lives, lowers household bills and supports Scotland's transition to a low-carbon future.*

# One story, many conversations

When organisations tell different parts of the same story, people begin to see the bigger picture. They understand that housing is about much more than buildings or markets, it's about creating the conditions for everyone to live well.

Whether you're talking about social housing, renting, land reform or climate action, the wider story remains the same.

Try to reinforce these ideas consistently across your communications.

- Homes are the foundation of healthy lives and thriving communities.
- Housing is an economic issue, not just a housing issue.
- Today's housing system reflects political and economic choices, not inevitability.
- Homes should meet people's needs before generating financial returns.
- A Wellbeing Economy puts homes at the heart of a fairer, healthier and more sustainable Scotland.

# 5. Putting the story into words

There is no single "right" way to talk about homes.

Every organisation has its own priorities, audiences and policy positions. But if a range of organisations can use a consistent narrative it helps build stronger public understanding of why housing matters and how it connects to the wider economy.

The examples below are designed to be adapted. Use them as inspiration rather than scripts, and tailor them to your own campaigns and audiences.

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# Five messages worth repeating

Changing the conversation takes repetition. Keep returning to these five ideas.

- Homes are the foundation of healthy lives and thriving communities.
- Housing is an economic issue, not just a housing issue.
- Homes should meet people's needs before generating financial returns.
- Today's housing system reflects economic choices, not inevitability.
- A Wellbeing Economy puts homes at the heart of a fairer, healthier and more sustainable Scotland.

# 6. The story in 60 seconds

**A summary of the key framing principles and messages to help you communicate consistently about homes and the economy.**

When communicating about homes, the way you frame an issue is just as important as the facts and evidence you use. These simple prompts can help keep your communications focused on the bigger story.

| DO... | DON'T... |
|---|---|
| Start with why homes matter. Talk about the role homes play in people's lives before discussing policy. | Start with the housing market. Avoid leading with house prices, supply figures or technical policy. |
| Talk about homes, not property. Emphasise homes as places where people build their lives. | Frame homes primarily as financial assets. Avoid reinforcing the idea that the purpose of housing is wealth creation. |
| Show that housing is an economic issue. Connect housing to health, poverty, communities, climate and the wider economy. | Treat housing as a standalone policy issue. Don't isolate it from the wider systems that shape people's lives. |
| Explain how we got here. Help people understand that today's housing system reflects political and economic choices. | Present the housing crisis as inevitable. Avoid language that suggests "that's just how the market works." |
| Paint a picture of the future. Describe the housing system we want to build, not just the problems we face. | Focus only on crisis. People are more likely to support change when they can imagine something better. |
| Use clear, everyday language. Explain ideas through people's lived experiences. | Rely on jargon or technical language. |
| Talk about benefits for everyone. Show how secure homes create healthier people, stronger communities and a fairer economy. | Frame housing as benefiting only one group. Better housing benefits everyone, not just those directly affected today. |
| End with hope and action. Reinforce that different political and economic choices can create a different future. | End with the problem. Always leave audiences with a sense that change is possible. |

# Key messages at a glance

These are the core messages that sit at the heart of the Our Homes, Our Economy narrative. You don't need to use these exact words, but reinforcing these ideas consistently across your communications will help build a stronger shared story.

## Homes are the foundation of a good life

Everyone deserves a safe, secure and affordable place to call home. Homes provide the stability people need to stay healthy, build relationships, participate in their communities and plan for the future.

## Housing is an economic issue

Housing shapes our health, our opportunities, our communities and our environment. It is not separate from the economy, it is one of the clearest ways the economy affects our everyday lives.

## The housing system reflects choices

Today's housing system didn't emerge by accident. It reflects decades of political and economic decisions about land, investment and public policy. Different choices can create different outcomes.

## Homes should meet people's needs before generating financial returns

A Wellbeing Economy starts with a simple principle: homes exist to provide people with security, dignity and belonging. Financial returns should never come at the expense of those purposes.

## Better homes create wider benefits

Secure, affordable homes improve health, reduce poverty, strengthen communities, support children's education, reduce pressure on public services and help create a more resilient economy.
Housing isn't just about where we live, it shapes the society we build.

## A different future is possible

Scotland can create a housing system where everyone has  a safe, secure and affordable home.
That means treating homes as the foundation of healthy lives and thriving communities, not simply as assets to buy and sell.

# The story in 30 seconds

If you only have a moment to communicate your message, remember these five ideas:

1. Homes are the **foundation** of healthy lives and thriving communities.
2. Housing is an **economic issue.**
3. Our housing system is shaped by choices. **We can change it.**
4. Homes should meet **people's needs** before generating profit.
5. A **Wellbeing Economy** puts homes at the heart of a fairer, healthier and more sustainable Scotland.

# 7. Conclusion

The way we talk about homes matters.

The stories we tell shape how people understand problems, who they believe is responsible for solving them, and what kinds of solutions feel possible. They influence public attitudes, political priorities and, ultimately, the decisions that shape our housing system.

For too long, the dominant story has framed homes primarily as financial assets. Public debate has often focused on markets, prices and property values, rather than on the role homes play in helping people and communities thrive.
A Wellbeing Economy invites us to tell a different story.

One that starts with the simple idea that everyone deserves a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.

One that recognises housing as a foundation of good health, strong communities and a fair economy.
And one that reminds us that the housing system we have today is the result of choices, not inevitability.

Changing the conversation will not solve Scotland's housing challenges on its own. But every meaningful change begins with a different way of seeing the world.

When organisations, campaigners, policymakers and communities tell a more connected story about homes, we help people understand not only what needs to change, but why it matters.

That shared understanding creates the conditions for better decisions, stronger public support and more ambitious action. We don't all need to use the same words.

If we consistently reinforce the same ideas, that homes are the foundation of healthy lives, that housing is an economic issue, and that a different future is possible, we can begin to reshape the conversation together.

Because homes are about much more than where we live.

They are the foundation of the economy we want to build.



# A final thought

As you use this guide, remember that changing the conversation doesn't happen through a single campaign, report or speech.

It happens gradually, through many voices reinforcing the same values, the same ideas and the same vision over time.

Every conversation that starts with people rather than property, every report that connects housing to the wider economy, and every speech that ends with hope helps build a new story, one where homes are recognised not as commodities, but as the foundation of a fairer, healthier and more sustainable Scotland.

That is the story this guide invites us all to tell.



# 8. How this guide was developed

This guide was developed through a collaborative process led by WEAll Scotland as part of the Our Homes, Our Economy project.

The project brought together organisations, practitioners and people with lived experience to explore a shared question: **how can we tell a more compelling story about homes through the lens of a Wellbeing Economy?**

The guide draws on five connected strands of work:

- **Research and evidence review** exploring the relationship between housing and the wider economy, and what a Wellbeing Economy approach could mean for our homes. A full analysis can be found in our analysis document on our website.

- **A discussion paper** developed by WEAll Scotland to open up debate, share initial findings and test emerging ideas.

- **Two collaborative workshops** bringing together organisations working across housing, poverty, health, community development and economic justice to challenge assumptions, identify common ground and develop a shared narrative.

- **Lived experience workshops** exploring people's experiences of the housing system, grounding the work in the everyday realities of finding and keeping a safe, secure and affordable home.

- **Ongoing feedback** from project partners to refine the framing principles, messages and practical guidance presented here.

Together, these contributions helped connect evidence about the housing system with people's experiences and the practical needs of organisations communicating about change.

The guide reflects this shared process, while recognising that participants bring different perspectives and priorities. It does not imply that every contributor endorses every message or policy idea, or represent the formal position of any participating organisation.

It offers a common foundation that organisations can adapt to their own audiences, expertise and campaigning: a way to strengthen understanding of the relationship between homes and the economy, connect work across different issues, and build support for a housing system that puts people's wellbeing first.

# 9. Acknowledgements

Ten organisations working in the housing sector and supporting those experiencing housing crisis participated in movement partner workshops that helped shape this guide. We are grateful for their contribution and we hope they find the guide useful in their work.

We are particularly grateful to the participants of the lived experience workshops carried out in partnership with Tea in the Pot and Impact Arts, and to those organisations for their valuable feedback throughout the project.

All of their collective insights and experiences helped shape this guide and strengthen our shared story about homes."

# 10. About WEAll Scotland

WEAll Scotland works to build an economy that delivers good lives for all within planetary boundaries.

We bring together organisations and individuals to challenge economic thinking, share practical solutions and build support for an economy designed around people and planet.

Find out more at weallscotland.org.