

GCC Gatekeeping – Peaceful Protest (July 2018)

Public Facing Q&A

What are Shelter Scotland protesting about today?

We are protesting the fact that for several years Glasgow City Council (GCC) has been breaking the law and not delivering on its legal duty to house homeless people in the city. The latest official statistics show that last year **Glasgow City Council failed to provide temporary accommodation over 3,000 times to households that needed housing help and to whom they had a statutory duty**. This is simply wrong and it is unlawful.

What do you hope to achieve with this protest?

Quite simply, enough is enough. The council must commit to immediately stopping breaking the law and end the practice and culture of gatekeeping within their homelessness services.

What does the claim that GCC are “turning people away” mean?

The Council has a statutory duty to provide homeless households with housing support and provide them with temporary accommodation. The latest homelessness statistics provided by Glasgow City Council and collated nationally by the Scottish Government (known as HL3 statistics) show that in 2017/18 GCC recorded **3,025 failures to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applications**. This is a shocking number and completely unacceptable.

Is this the only evidence of this failing?

No. There is a growing body of evidence about the failures of GCC’s homelessness services.

- On 29 March 2018 the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) published a report following the outcome of an extensive review into GCC’s homelessness practices and systems. This report highlighted that Glasgow City Council was *“failing to house enough people who are homeless in the city quickly enough”*. It also noted that GCC *“secured homes for only around half of those that it had a duty to house in the city”*.
- In addition, Shelter Scotland has been collating a log of evidence of people

being turned away or denied their statutory duty to a home in Glasgow and then coming to us for help and advice. [This report](#) shows that between July 2016 and November 2017 (17 months), there were more than 100 cases recorded by our advisers and legal team of people being denied their legal right to a home in Glasgow. We refer to this practice as “gatekeeping” and it is unlawful in Scotland.

What does “gatekeeping” mean exactly?

Gatekeeping of homeless services can take many forms. Shelter Scotland defines gatekeeping as:

- “The practice and systems of preventing people from accessing the homeless services which they are entitled to by law.”

This usually takes the form of homeless individuals being prevented (directly or indirectly) from exercising and realising their rights to make a homeless application and to receive temporary homeless accommodation. These are the most obvious forms of gatekeeping and concern repeated failures by a local authority to take a homeless application or to provide temporary homeless accommodation, where they have a statutory duty to do so under Section 28 and 29 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

Is Glasgow the only Local Authority where Gatekeeping is an issue?

No. There are other local authorities where we have client evidence that this is a problem, but Glasgow is the worst offender by a significant margin.

In addition, the latest HL3 homelessness statistics for Scotland show that there were 3,200 incidences where local authorities failed to provide homeless households with temporary accommodation in 2017/18. Glasgow City Council accounted for 3,025 of these.

Isn't a protest a bit extreme? Have you raised your concerns about this issue with GCC?

Yes. Repeatedly and over many years.

A sample of Shelter Scotland's most recent relevant engagement with GCC on this issue is highlighted below:

- **Nov 2013** – Shelter Scotland first publicly raised our concerns about a culture of complacency within homelessness services in Glasgow
- **Nov 2015** – Met with then Homeless Services Manager to raise our concerns
- **Jan 2016** – Met with then leader of the Council to highlight our concerns about homelessness practice in the city
- **Feb 2016** – Met with Scottish Housing Regulator to highlight our concerns about homeless practice in GCC
- **6 July 2016** - We met with the Chief Executive and the Social Care Services Chief Officer for Planning, Strategy and Commissioning to raise our concerns about homelessness issues in the city
- **Sep 2016** – Launched our national *Homelessness: Far From Fixed* campaign outside GCC offices calling for local and national leadership on tackling and preventing homelessness in Scotland
- **July 2017** – Attended GCC run Conference on Homelessness where specific concerns on “gatekeeping” of homelessness services were raised
- **12 Sep 2017** – Met with current Leader of GCC, City Convenor for Health and Social Care Integration and City Convenor for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Public Realm to raise our concerns about homelessness services and practices in the city
- **17 Jan 2018** – Wrote directly to Leader of GCC, Convenor of Neighbourhoods, Housing and Public Realm, Chief Executive and Social Care Services Chief Officer for Planning, Strategy and Commissioning highlighting our specific and detailed concerns about practice of gatekeeping of homelessness services in the city, requesting a meeting. NB – No formal response has yet been received on this.

In addition to the above points of engagement, our Shelter Scotland operational service managers working in the city have met regularly with homelessness services counterparts in the GCC homelessness services team to highlight our concerns

around gatekeeping practices and attended numerous local partnership meetings. We have also held numerous street campaign days in the city under the umbrella of our Homelessness: Far From Fixed campaign, highlighting these local homelessness challenges.

What has been the response from GCC to you raising these concerns?

We have had a lot of nodding of the head and platitudes about things that will be done. We have yet to see any meaningful action that makes a difference on the ground.

We have, as of yet, had no formal response from the Council to our letter dated 17 January that was sent to the Council Leader, the Housing Convener, the Chief Executive and the Head of Housing and Social Care Services at Glasgow City Council.

All other local authorities that we wrote to on these issues formally responded to us and arranged direct meetings to constructively engage on this issue.

Why are you protesting today?

Today marks exactly one year since the new leadership in the City Council first convened a meeting with partners and local stakeholders looking at tackling homelessness in the city and announced the creation of a local homelessness task force. We are not aware what further action has come from this task force to date and are disappointed that one year on things seem to be getting worse in the city.

What can/should the Scottish Housing Regulator do about this problem?

It is the role of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to regulate and monitor the performance of local authorities in meeting their statutory duties on homelessness. It is disappointing that after several years of active engagement from the SHR with Glasgow City Council things do not seem to be improving within GCC's homelessness services. This raises an important question about how useful and effective the current powers of the Regulator are to compel improvement and drive change within failing local authorities.

Do you think it is appropriate for a charity to be holding a protest of this nature?

Yes. Absolutely.

Shelter Scotland has a proud, 50-year history of fighting and campaigning for people's housing rights in Scotland. It is shameful that 50 years on from our founding we still have to campaign on these issues.

All our campaigning work is directly informed by the issues that people come to us for help with. Last year in Scotland more than 21,000 people came to us for help. We will never shy away from fighting on behalf of people who are homeless and badly housed in Scotland.

For further enquiries, please contact the Shelter Scotland Media Team on:
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The full report is available at

https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/evidence_of_gatekeeping_in_glasgow_city_council2