Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

3 November 2026

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Scotland continues to experience a deepening housing emergency, with the number of children trapped in temporary homeless accommodation hitting a record high of 10,715 as of the end of March this year. We are writing to urge you to do everything in your power to help these children and their families find safe, secure homes.

The number of children in temporary accommodation has doubled in a decade, while the number of breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order for households with children has tripled in just four years. Temporary accommodation is a lifeline right for people facing homelessness but couples with children now spend an average of 406 days trapped there – this is far from temporary.

Your government's commitment in the latest Programme for Government to ending the use of unsafe and harmful temporary accommodation for children was welcome, but it means little if children continue to be harmed and more families continue to be trapped in temporary accommodation, and more childhoods are lost to homelessness.

The route map Shelter Scotland is publishing today sets out the steps the Scottish Government needs to take over the next year to close the implementation gap and deliver on its own commitments. The route map centres around the three objectives of Shelter Scotland and Fife Gingerbread's 'Building Hope' project:

Prevent homelessness to reduce the number of children entering temporary accommodation – by delivering the social housing Scotland needs, tackling child poverty, and adequately funding homelessness prevention.

Reduce the length of time children spend in temporary accommodation – by acquiring more family-sized homes, increasing social lets to households experiencing homelessness, and targeting funding to the areas facing the greatest temporary accommodation pressures.

Ensure that where a stay in temporary accommodation is necessary, the rights of the child are upheld – by fully funding local authorities to fulfil their statutory homelessness duties, supporting the scale-up of holistic whole-family support, and bringing homelessness legislation in scope of the UNCRC (Incorporation) Act.

Children trapped in temporary accommodation need to see urgent progress against these targets over the next year. This will be the test of whether the Scottish Government is prepared to move beyond pledges and create real change that children and their families can feel.

Best wishes,

Gordon Llewellyn-MacRae, Interim Director, Shelter Scotland

Laura Millar, CEO, Fife Gingerbread

Justina Murray, Chief Executive, Aberlour

Emma Jackson, Assistant Director (Policy and Research), Citizens Advice Scotland

John Dickie, Director, CPAG in Scotland

Margaret-Ann Brunjes, Chief Executive, Homeless Network Scotland

Nicola Killean, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

Cara Hilton, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Manager (Scotland), Trussell

Mary Glasgow, Chief Executive, Children First

Charles Maasz, Chief Executive, Glasgow City Mission

Peter Kelly, Chief Executive, Poverty Alliance

Bruce Crawford, Chief Executive, EVOC

Louise Hunter, CEO, Includem

Kate Wallace, Chief Executive, Cyrenians

Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council