



Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister
firstminister@gov.scot

29 August 2022

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to you today to express my deep concern about the thousands of households who are struggling to find and keep a home and to ask you to spearhead an urgent Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan to protect households in Scotland from homelessness. The plan must aim to reduce affordable housing need by 2026.

As an indication of the level of need, last week, our services uncovered that families in the central belt who become homeless are being asked to move hundreds of miles away to the Highlands or the north of England due to a lack of available temporary accommodation where they live. This is a staggering revelation and portrays a homelessness system on the brink of failure.

Statistics published last week confirm this picture. Over 8,600 children are trapped in temporary accommodation, the highest figure on record and up 17% in a single year. The average time spent in temporary accommodation is nearly 7 months, and for couples with children it is fast approaching a year. The number of households in temporary accommodation is up, and local authorities continue to struggle to uphold individuals' basic housing rights.

The fact that these statistics come before the full economic impact of the pandemic is felt, and before the cost of living crisis really takes hold this winter, should alarm all of us. We believe this emergency requires an urgent national response, led by you and your government.

Due to the significant challenges which lie ahead to address the housing emergency we are calling for a **Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan** to be delivered by a dedicated senior Government Minister with authority to instruct all relevant departments in the Scottish Government. It should aim to prepare Scotland's housing system for the upcoming impact of the rising covid-19 related rent arrears, rising rents



and energy bills and be responsible for meeting the needs of people already trapped in our broken and biased homeless system.

We must ensure every council has the ability to fulfil their homelessness duties and provide the homes that are needed, so that they can guarantee the legal rights of everyone in Scotland to a safe home if they find themselves homeless. As part of this response, we are proposing that the Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan is based around three key themes:

- 1. BUY AND BUILD 38,500 SOCIAL HOMES BY 2026**
- 2. FULLY FUND LOCAL HOMELESSNESS SERVICES**
- 3. GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO A PERMANENT HOME FOR EVERY HOMELESS HOUSEHOLD**

Please find enclosed further details of the **Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan**. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss this plan with you.

We believe if the political will is there, the 8,635 children trapped in temporary accommodation can be supported to find a home. They cannot afford to wait any longer for action.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Watson".

Alison Watson

Director, Shelter Scotland