



SHELTER SCOTLAND BRIEFING: MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE TACKLING CHILD POVERTY DELIVERY PLAN 2022-26 PROGRESS REPORT

Shelter Scotland exists to defend the right to a safe home and fight the devastating impact the housing emergency has on people and society. We work in communities to understand the problem and change the system. We run national campaigns to fight for home.

It is vital that we understand and act on the link between Scotland's poverty crisis and the lack of social housing. Stubbornly high rates of child poverty in Scotland are a symptom of the wider housing emergency we are facing, with far too many people across Scotland being pushed into poverty because of high housing costs, or being forced into the homelessness system.

The Poverty and Inequality Statistics published in March¹ showed the stark challenge facing the Scottish Government if it is to meet its statutory child poverty targets. Child poverty remains stubbornly high at 24% after housing costs.

These figures are unacceptable and prove that more must be done to lift children out of poverty. Increasing the Scottish Child Payment and lowering the cost of housing in Scotland are two of the key levers that the Scottish Government currently has control of for tackling child poverty.

Housing and Poverty

- **Record numbers of children (9,130) trapped in temporary accommodation – a 120% increase since 2014**
- **Rising homelessness with a 40% increase in households (14,458) having to live in temporary accommodation compared to 2014²**
- **Child poverty levels after housing costs are lower in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK due to the higher number of families in social housing.³**
- **Increasing the supply of social housing decreases levels of poverty by reducing housing costs in the long-term**
- **The Scottish Housing Regulator⁴, the Accounts Commission⁵, the Scottish Government's expert Task and Finish Group on Temporary Accommodation⁶, the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty delivery plan⁷ and Shelter Scotland's Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan⁸ all agree – we need more social homes to tackle homelessness and reduce child poverty for the long-term.**

¹ Scottish Government, [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2019-2022](#).

² [Homelessness in Scotland: Update to 30 September 2022](#)

³ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [Poverty in Scotland 2021](#).

⁴ Scottish Housing Regulator (2023), [Homelessness Services in Scotland: A Thematic Review](#)

⁵ Accounts Commission (2023), [Local Government in Scotland](#)

⁶ Scottish Government (2023), [Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group: final report and recommendations](#)

⁷ Scottish Government, [Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty delivery plan 2022-2026](#).

⁸ Shelter Scotland (2022), [Scottish Housing Emergency Action Plan](#)

Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026

The latest delivery plan to tackle child poverty in Scotland, published last year, makes several welcome commitments around how housing will play a vital role in reducing and ending child poverty in Scotland. As the delivery plan argues:

“Housing has a vital role to play in tackling child poverty, it forms not only the foundation for family life – as a safe place for children to grow and learn, and for families to come together – but it also one of the most of the most significant costs which families must continue to meet on an ongoing basis. If families lose their home the effects can be devastating – and cause lasting damage to children’s lives.”⁹

We agree on the central role that housing plays in tackling child poverty – but it is clear not enough progress is being made, and in many instances we are going backwards, such as on the number of children trapped in damaging temporary accommodation which continues to rise exponentially.

‘Access to Affordable Homes’

The delivery plan notes improving access to affordable housing as a key tool to tackle child poverty. The Scottish Government pledge to “place the prioritisation of tackling child poverty at the heart of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme” by strengthening “the focus on housing needs by size and location to ensure that larger family homes are delivered where they are required, including through the targeted purchase of appropriate ‘off the shelf’ properties”.¹⁰

These are welcome commitments, and echo some of the recommendations of the recent Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish group report. We look forward to seeing how these have been delivered in the latest progress report.

However, **we remain sceptical that there is enough focus on tackling child poverty as part of the AHSP.** The criticisms noted by Audit Scotland in 2020 about a lack of targeted aims and intentions within the 2016-2021 programme¹¹ do not appear to have been taken on-board, with areas in greatest need of additional funding and support yet to be properly prioritised. This means areas in greatest crisis at the moment are struggling to meet the needs of local communities, with more children falling into poverty and homelessness as a result.

Recent cuts to the social housing supply budget, and the threat of more cuts to come in the updated Capital Spending Review this winter, do not suggest that the Scottish Government is doing all it can to use housing to tackle child poverty. **Large year-on-year reductions in new social housing starts and approvals between 2021 and 2022 show things are getting worse.**

Planning for fewer social homes means planning for higher child poverty rates, more homelessness, more families in temporary accommodation for longer periods of time, more children falling behind at school, worse health outcomes, and missing out on potential economic benefits¹². The Scottish Government’s own commitment to delivering an enforceable human right to adequate housing will also be undermined if we don’t deliver the homes needed to underpin that right.

We understand guidance was recently changed to allow AHSP grant funding to be used to purchase former private rented properties with tenants in-situ is welcome, but the purchasing of properties ‘off the shelf’ needs to be urgently stepped up if we are to deliver the homes

⁹ Scottish Government, [Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026](#), p.67.

¹⁰ Scottish Government, [Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026](#), p.67.

¹¹ Audit Scotland (2020) [Affordable Housing: The Scottish Government’s affordable housing supply target](#)

¹² [The New Economic Case for Social Housing](#) (2020).

needed to reduce housing need, tackle the backlog in temporary accommodation and lift children out of poverty.

Social justice cannot be achieved if people do not have a home they can thrive in.

We look forward to hearing more on how they will deliver the homes we need in the progress report.

'Preventing Homelessness'

"Homelessness has a devastating impact on families and children, increasing barriers to accessing employment and education, disrupting social support networks and negatively affecting mental and physical health."¹³

We acknowledge the work the Scottish Government has undertaken in forming the Task and Finish group on Temporary Accommodation, which Shelter Scotland's Director Alison Watson co-chaired alongside John Mills from ALACHO. The recommendations of this expert group have now been published¹⁴, and it is imperative that the Scottish Government urgently takes forward the recommendations to deliver the social homes we need, to make better use of our existing homes, and to provide the support people need to sustainably move out of homelessness.

Warm words, anti-poverty summits, action plans and expert groups are all well and good, **but with a record number of children trapped in temporary accommodation (up 120% since 2014) and one in four living in poverty, we need urgent action to meet the aims outlined in the Best Start, Bright Futures delivery plan.** We expect the problem to get worse in upcoming homelessness statistics and numbers of children in temporary accommodation to reach yet another record high.

Progress is not being made on tackling homelessness, and we hope the Scottish Government makes clear what action it is going to take to ensure no child has to grow up in temporary homeless accommodation as part of this progress report.

We cannot tolerate inaction any longer – too many children are paying the price.

The First Minister, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Minister for Housing must outline how the Scottish Government intend to get thousands of children out of temporary accommodation, unaffordable homes and out of poverty, and into safe, secure and affordable social homes, as a matter of priority.

For further information, please contact David_Aitchison@shelter.org.uk

¹³ Scottish Government, [Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026](#), p.69.

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2023), [Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group: final report and recommendations](#)