

# Dundee campaign briefing

## Are You With Us?

October 2019

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# Are you with us?

Shelter Scotland helps over half a million people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through our advice, support and legal services. And we campaign to make sure that, one day, no one will have to turn to us for help. We're here so no one has to fight bad housing or homelessness on their own.

We're fighting for a Scotland where everyone has a place to feel safe. Where no one chooses between food and rent, and no one sleeps on the streets. We all have the right to a good home and we want to make it the law. **Are you with us?**

Scotland has some of the most progressive housing legislation in the world, and over time people should be finding it easier to secure the safe home that is so vital to a fulfilling life. **But whilst housing is a human right, there is a gap between this technical right and what is protected under domestic law.** And too often the existing laws and housing rights remain beyond the reach of too many. **People don't know what their rights are** and public bodies, struggling under the weight of cuts in services and increases in demand, are **unable to enforce them.** For thousands, a safe, secure and affordable home is still out of reach. We believe that citizens need better protection to secure their right to a home.

We are campaigning for a Scotland where:

- Stronger laws ensure there is a right to a safe, secure and affordable homes for all.
- Everyone knows and can defend their housing rights.
- Laws are not broken, and rights are upheld

This briefing focuses on the local iterations of these issues in Dundee, using official statistics, insight from our local advice and support service, as well as a consultation with Dundee-based stakeholders in August 2019. It also makes recommendations for local and national action to help more people achieve their right to a safe, secure and affordable home.

More information on the campaign is available at:

[shelterscotland.org/areyouwithus](https://shelterscotland.org/areyouwithus)

A national campaign briefing is also available for download.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shelter Scotland (2019), [Are you with us? National campaign briefing](#)

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## SHELTER SCOTLAND IN DUNDEE

- Last year, 1,017 households in Dundee approached Shelter Scotland for support with their housing, including through our national helpline and our Dundee Community Hub.<sup>2</sup>
- 123 of those households were either currently homeless or facing homelessness that night.
- 352 of those households were at risk of homelessness after that point.

The Dundee Community Hub is a one-stop shop for anyone who is homeless, facing homelessness or needs advice about a housing related problem. The Hub offers specialist advice on housing, money & debt, and welfare benefits as well as access to a team of solicitors who all make sure people's rights are represented and fairly enforced. We work to engage with and involve those with lived experience of homelessness in the city and to reach new individuals and groups in need of help through our innovative Time for Change approach. We help and support anyone dealing with issues affecting their ability to find or keep a home.

## KEY STATISTICS IN DUNDEE

- In 2018-19, 1,466 homeless applications were made to Dundee City Council.<sup>3</sup>
- 1,019 households were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, and 40 households were reassessed as homeless within the same year.
- 262 households were living in temporary homeless accommodation on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, including 170 children.
- The night before making a homeless application 65 households slept rough, and 135 households slept rough in the 3 months leading up to their application.
- 54% of households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness assessment identified as having a least one support need.
- One in three children in Dundee live in poverty.<sup>4</sup>
- 31% of households in Dundee live in fuel poverty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> All statistics in this section are taken from internal Shelter Scotland data from 2018/19

<sup>3</sup> All statistics relating to homelessness are taken from Scottish Government (2019) [Homelessness in Scotland 2018/19](#)

<sup>4</sup> End Child Poverty [Poverty in your area 2019](#) Accessed October 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Under the current definition. Scottish Government (2019) [SHCS Local Authority Analysis 2015-2017](#)

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# HOUSING IN DUNDEE

## Rights awareness and awareness of services

Too many people are unaware of their housing rights or find the process of ensuring these are upheld complex and daunting, from navigating the homeless system to reporting repairs in a privately rented home. This is reflected in the experience of Shelter Scotland in Dundee and that of local stakeholders who attended the consultation. There is also a power imbalance here: it was highlighted through our local consultation that tenants aren't as aware of their rights as social or private landlords, which can put households at an immediate disadvantage. Preventative work is often lacking, with people seeking information or support only when they fall into crisis.

There is also a lack of knowledge of some services: whilst there are a lot of good local projects, awareness is low particularly amongst people who are not currently engaged with a service. In addition, on occasion projects have ended prematurely because of funding shortfalls and sometimes without a legacy plan for the groups that they are seeking to support.

- **Rights awareness:** Housing rights should be promoted in a national sense and in their broadest form. More people need to know where to go to access these rights, challenge them and ensure they're upheld i.e. advice and support services, the First-tier Tribunal (Housing and Property Chamber), and the local authority. Education in schools is part of the solution here in making people aware of their housing rights, and how people go about challenging and upholding these. The development of peer mentoring schemes such as within Shelter Scotland's Time for Change approach can also help to raise awareness of rights and support people making their way through the homeless system.
- **Continuity of services:** Funding should be longer term to allow better understanding of the issues, and to assess the long-term impact of preventative projects.

## Prevention of homelessness amongst high risk groups

There is a need for more preventative work to tackle homelessness among 'high risk' groups in Dundee. Homelessness amongst ex-offenders was raised as an issue consistently throughout our consultation and has been a theme of Shelter Scotland's work in Dundee, accentuated by our advice in prisons over the last two decades.

Not enough is being done to ensure that prisoners are made aware of their housing rights ahead of leaving prison or helped to prepare their housing options. It has been anecdotally reported that prisoners have been denied the opportunity to make a homeless application ahead of their release. Standards on housing

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advice for prisoners, known as ‘Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone’, or SHORE standards were developed by a range of sector partners.<sup>6</sup> The common purpose of the standards are to ensure everyone should have suitable accommodation to go to on the day they are released from custody. Shelter Scotland’s experience and that reflected in our consultation suggests the standards are not working sufficiently in practice.

- **Implementation of SHORE standards:** Revisiting the SHORE standards with relevant prisons and partners working in the area may help to remove some of the barriers and result in a smoother transition for prisoners on release.

## Quality of temporary accommodation

Whilst availability of temporary accommodation is less of an issue than some other cities, its quality provides cause for concern. Much of Dundee’s temporary accommodation consists of hostels, and at the last count on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 56% of households in temporary accommodation were in hostels, compared with a Scottish average of 14% of households.<sup>7</sup>

On the positive side, B&B hotel usage in Dundee is low. However, hostels, alongside B&Bs, are in our experience generally of the worst physical standards. We cannot overemphasise the poor quality of some temporary accommodation enough - we know that many people have turned down temporary accommodation due to certain accommodations’ notoriety and poor standards. At the consultation event it was shared that some people have said they’d prefer to stay in prison than use the emergency accommodation on offer. In some instances individuals are struggling with the strict rules for example curfews and behaviour restrictions imposed on those in hostel accommodation, and which essentially rise from the accommodation being unfit for purpose in terms of meeting the individual’s support needs.

- **Strengthen housing rights:** Minimum legal standards of temporary accommodation must be introduced to improve the quality of accommodation offered.
- **Increase supply of socially rented homes:** To tackle issues of housing availability, an increase in housing supply is essential. Stakeholders agreed that providing councils with more money for home building, particularly social housing, will tackle a lot of the problems around lack of appropriate and affordable homes. We must ensure that the building of social homes

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<sup>6</sup> SFHA, SPS, Shelter Scotland, ALACHO, CIH Scotland [Scottish Quality Standards Housing Advice, Information And Support For People In And Leaving Prison](#)

<sup>7</sup> Scottish Government (2019) [Homelessness in Scotland 2018/19](#)

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continues at pace into the next parliamentary term to overcome the decades of underinvestment.

## Private rented housing: quality and enforcement

Dundee has a high proportion of private rented households with one in five households in Dundee living in the private rented sector (PRS): 21% compared to 14% across Scotland.<sup>8</sup> This is mirrored in the high proportion of private rented households seeking advice and support from the Dundee Hub, often because of quality issues.

Though there are many good landlords in Dundee, too often tenants seeking advice from the Dundee Hub have found their landlord unresponsive to complaints about repairs or other issues. There needs to be a proactive and consistent approach to identifying landlords who are non-compliant or acting inappropriately and enforcing standards on landlords and letting agents who are not operating in line with the law.

- **Accountability:** There is a need for greater enforcement of private landlords in Dundee. Dundee City Council is already running a private landlord support officer programme which seeks to engage with landlords at an early stage to address issues of compliance, and provide support and assistance including raising awareness of responsibilities with landlords. However in some instances this action is not enough and further enforcement is needed, including for example removal of landlords from the landlord register. Other suggestions from our consultation event on proactive steps to improve standards in the PRS include carrying out quality checks on PRS properties to ensure they are compliant with the repairing standard and duties as a landlord, and using the landlord register and registration fees to facilitate this.
- **Rights awareness:** Increasing awareness of rights and how to enforce rights amongst tenants for example by using the First-tier Tribunal (Housing and Property Chamber) is also part of the solution.

## EU nationals

Advice and support providers in Dundee are seeing an increase in the number of EU nationals seeking help with housing, welfare, money and debt. The growth in this client group is expected to continue, and there is a concern about the lack of support available for people, especially those with no right to remain.

- **Strengthen housing rights:** Exploration of how housing rights and support available to this group could be strengthened would be welcomed in Dundee.

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<sup>8</sup> Scottish Government (2019) [Scottish Household Survey: Local authority tables 2018](#)

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# Are you with us?

Shelter Scotland is seeking your support in campaigning to make housing rights front and centre nationally, and locally in Glasgow. **Are you with us?**

**1. Sign the petition today** to make housing rights, human rights at [shelterscotland.org/areyouwithus](https://shelterscotland.org/areyouwithus)

**2. Adopt the Charter for Change:** Get your employer or organisation to adopt the [Charter for Change](#) and commit to make the changes Scotland needs to ensure there's a safe, secure and affordable home for everyone.

Your pledge of support could be to take forward some of the actions identified in this briefing as crucial to strengthen people's housing rights and experiences in Glasgow.

**3. Become a housing rights defender:** Use your voice to raise awareness about the housing emergency - and the solutions. Share information on social media with the hashtag #areyouwithus, and stay in touch with our campaign for more information and some specific acts you can take.

**4. Sign up to be a Shelter Scotland campaigner:** and hear from us on new campaigns, policy work, opportunities to get involved and information on what's going on in your area [https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get\\_involved/campaigning](https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning)

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We're here so no one has to fight bad housing or homelessness on their own.

Please support us at [shelterscotland.org](https://shelterscotland.org)

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