

Glasgow campaign briefing

Are you with us?

October 2019

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 Glasgow, using official statistics, insight from our local advice and support service, as well as a consultation with Glasgow-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

A national campaign briefing is also available for download.¹

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

SHELTER SCOTLAND IN GLASGOW

- Last year, 1,977 households in Glasgow approached Shelter Scotland for support with their housing, including through our national helpline and our Glasgow Community Hub.²
- 598 of those were either currently homeless or facing homelessness that night
- 430 households were at risk of homelessness after that point.

The Glasgow 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 having a team of solicitors who make sure people's rights are represented and fairly enforced. We also have expert workers focusing on the needs of families and 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 community organising and 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 GLASGOW

- In 2018-19, 5,679 homeless applications were made in Glasgow.³
- 4,660 households were assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, and 400 households were reassessed as homeless within the same year.
- 2,191 households were living in temporary homeless accommodation on 31st March 2019, including 1,950 children.
- Glasgow City Council broke the law and denied people their right to temporary accommodation 3,365 times last year: this figure is an increase on 2017/18. Many people were forced to sofa surf or sleep on the streets as a result.
- The night before making a homeless application 425 households slept rough, and 540 households slept rough in the 3 months leading up to their application.
- One in three children in Glasgow live in poverty: that's over 37,000 children in Glasgow.⁴
- One in five households in Glasgow live in fuel poverty.⁵

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

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

⁴ GCPH, Infographics, [Children and families](#). Accessed October 2019.

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

HOUSING IN GLASGOW

Rights denials: gatekeeping for households experiencing homelessness

The official statistics show that in 2018/19 Glasgow City Council failed to provide temporary accommodation on 3,365 occasions to households that needed housing help and to whom they owed a statutory duty.⁶ Shelter Scotland refers to this practice and system of preventing people from accessing the homeless services to which they are entitled to by law as gatekeeping. Our experience, and that of several other services in the city, shows that Glasgow City Council is not delivering on its legal duty to house homeless people in the city, both in terms of accepting a homeless application and failing to provide temporary accommodation to those they have a duty towards.

Gatekeeping is the key rights denial in Glasgow in relation to housing, and can be attributed to both a lack of awareness of individuals about their rights, and a lack of accountability on the local authority's part in regularly breaking the law.

"Homeless people can't just be an easy target anymore"

"Denying people access to accommodation is denying them safety, decent food, health services"

"Being rejected from statutory services is one step forwards two steps back"

"Even finding strength to ask for help is a barrier"

"How can we really expect a homeless person to solve any of their issues if they don't even have a roof over their head"

There are several actions that could tackle this issue:

- **Increasing awareness of rights:** A number of people consulted at Shelter Scotland's community conversation in Glasgow in August 2019 advised that they did not know what gatekeeping was, or that it even happened. There is a lack of public awareness, but more concerningly, a lack of rights awareness from those who are in need of help and support. Awareness of rights and common rights denials is needed so locally people can be aware and prepared. For example, Shelter Scotland has been conducting a programme of rights awareness workshops to help frontline workers and individuals affected to understand their rights.

⁶ Scottish Government (2019) [Homelessness in Scotland 2018/19](#)

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- **Training:** Mandatory training for housing officers is essential to ensure the law is being adhered to. Training needs to be revised and regularly monitored.
 - **Accountability:** There is little enforcement action used when the council acts illegally. There are currently no statutory consequences to breaking the law – stakeholders broadly agree that this must change, in order to create systems change rather than relying on the third sector to challenge individual rights violations. A public campaign on this issue, like that being run in 2019 by Shelter Scotland, and work by all organisations to report gatekeeping cases publicly as they happen, are all part of the solution.

“Does anyone even audit the councils and hold them to task if they break the law?”

Rights gaps: quality of temporary accommodation

In Glasgow, the quality of the accommodation offered to individuals presenting as homeless varies considerably depending on their circumstances. With households spending an increasing amount of time in temporary accommodation, the current stock – too much of which is hostels – needs to be revised. Hostels are not a suitable form of temporary accommodation and do not meet the right of an individual to housing which is adequate.

“Homes must be suitable, don’t just give people anything”

“There’s a difference between housing and accommodation”

- **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:** Building more socially rented housing will tackle a lot of the problems around lack of appropriate and affordable homes.

“How do we enforce rights if there’s no stock?”

Rights awareness and a lack of supports

More widely, whilst there are a number of services in place throughout Glasgow there are many barriers in place for people trying to access them. Many people are unaware of what is available, or how to access services, and there can be a lack of signposting. For others, they may have a fear of rejection and many still face the age-old issue of not having a registered address. Without advocacy or support from organisations, many people struggle to access the help they need.

Delays and waiting lists for over-subscribed and under-funded services can mean that many people aren't given the support they need at the time they need it. These concerns are accentuated recently in Glasgow particularly around mental health, addiction, and housing support services, many of which have seen their funding cut in recent times.⁷

“Need an increase in long term funding, not 3-year tenders”

Shelter Scotland's own community-led action research programme emerged from a mapping exercise carried out with stakeholders across Glasgow in early 2018, where the majority of our own staff and external stakeholders identified access to mental health services as a key barrier facing people who are homeless.

In line with our Time for Change ethos, we began this piece of research with a participatory photography project working with individuals with personal experience of mental health issues and the homelessness system and are now on our second iteration of this programme. Over 6 weeks, we worked with local participatory photography organisation Open Aye CiC and 10 participants through a mixture of 'visual inquiry' activities, photo inspirations, group discussions, camera upskilling and photo walks.

We simultaneously ran action learning sets (solutions-focused workshops) with service users and service providers across the city to identify and analyse key themes in relation to barriers to accessing mental health services and potential solutions to these barriers.

A report will soon be launched alongside a photo exhibition, and a change pilot within our own services based on its findings.

- **Increase participation in decision making:** Decisions around the closure of services need to be made in partnership with those using the services.

“Lived experience needs to be involved in decision making”

“People with lived experience should be in decision making positions”

Furthermore, there can be a 'revolving door' aspect to some services, where issues are dealt with on an individual basis and a particular order rather than ensuring someone is given the holistic support they need at the time they need it. For example, reports that people are often turned away from mental health services or those supporting people with addictions until their housing issues are resolved. This leads many people circling services – sometimes for years – until they receive the help they need. There is not enough recognition that these issues often go hand-in-hand. Glasgow already has a drug deaths issue – the closure of homeless services risks exacerbating addiction problems.

“A house isn’t a solution, we need support as well”

“About 95% of homeless people need drug and alcohol service – yet everything is being closed”

“Why are there empty beds in services and rehabs. Why are people having to show commitment before getting in?”

“People are looking for treatment and are being turned away”

“Council refuse to help dual issues at same time, addictions and mental health. Some say you need to “sort” one before the other”

A “one stop shop” service would be better, that looks at the problem in its entirety, rather than the departmentalising of homelessness and health. Programmes such as Housing First might go some way to tackling some of these issues but they must be properly resourced.

- **Increase awareness:** Increase awareness of services, including training amongst service providers limited not just to housing and homelessness, but broadened to encompass wider issues such as mental health and addictions.
- **Participation of those with lived experience:** Individuals with local experience of the homeless system and housing difficulty must be involved in tackling these issues. There is huge demand for peer support, not just in housing but also addiction and mental health services.

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

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

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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

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