

Dear City of Edinburgh Councillors,

We, as frontline housing, homelessness and social justice organisations in Edinburgh, are writing to urge you to vote to declare a housing emergency at full council on the 2nd of November 2023.

Scotland is in the grip of a devastating housing emergency - the result of decades of underinvestment in social housing, welfare changes, covid, the cost-of-living crisis, and the war in Ukraine. This is a national problem; however, it is acutely felt in our capital city. It has become clear that Edinburgh's housing system is not supported to meet the needs of the city:

- There are huge increases in the numbers of households and children becoming homeless.
- Record numbers of people stuck in temporary accommodation, often for years at a time.
- There is a chronic lack of social housing in the city.
- Renters face higher and higher rents.
- Students are unable to undertake their studies due to a lack of affordable and safe accommodation.
- The council's homelessness services are busier and under more pressure than ever before.
- People are often denied access to temporary accommodation or given temporary accommodation which is unsuitable to their needs.
- There are currently stark increases in the number of people forced to sleep rough on the city's streets.

'Business as usual' is not working, and inaction is continuing to damage the lives and opportunities of thousands of people in Edinburgh. An emergency requires an emergency response. We believe that declaring a housing emergency in Edinburgh, and acknowledging the scale of the problem, is an important first step towards fixing our broken housing system.

Passing a declaration must only be the beginning. It took more than a generation to break the housing system and it will take many more years to turn it around. Declaring an emergency must be matched by committing to an action plan that involves tenants, businesses, the third sector and the communities worst affected by the housing emergency. This way Edinburgh can take the lead in tackling the root causes of the housing emergency.

As frontline organisations and critical friends of the City of Edinburgh Council, we will continue to advocate for our clients and challenge individual council decisions where we think it necessary. We recognise however that the Council alone cannot be expected to pick up the

pieces of a failing system when the levers for change often sit with the UK and Scottish Governments.

The citizens of Edinburgh need our councillors to be bold, take the lead and show that by coming together we can face up to the scale of the emergency. We are willing to stand alongside you and play our part. Please support calls to declare a housing emergency in Edinburgh and commit to taking action to address it.

Signed by:

Alison Watson, Director, Shelter Scotland

Aaliya Seyal, Chief Executive, Legal Services Agency

Eilidh Keay, Chair, Living Rent Edinburgh

Ellie Gomersall, President, NUS Scotland

Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive, Cyrenians

Jakub Stojek, Advice Services Manager for Housing, Citizens Advice Edinburgh

Karen Barr, Chief Executive, Rowan Alba

Kate Polson, Chief Executive, Rock Trust

Lindsay Fyffe-Jardine, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home

Lorraine McGrath, Chief Executive, Simon Community Scotland

Neil Cowan, Head of Policy and Communications (Scotland), Crisis

Peter Kelly, Director, Poverty Alliance

Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council