



SHELTER SCOTLAND BRIEFING: PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2023-24

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.

The First Minister has a vital opportunity to tackle the housing emergency through his inaugural Programme for Government, and we urge him to use every lever at his disposal to fix Scotland's broken and biased housing system as a matter of urgency.

We are in an emergency, and that requires an emergency response from government.

We welcome the strong statements of intent from Scottish Ministers, now is the time for those statements to be matched with resources.

Scotland's Housing Emergency

Scotland is in the grip of a devastating housing emergency which damages lives every single day.

- A record **9,595 children trapped in temporary accommodation**
- **45 children becoming homeless every day**
- A **household becoming homeless every 16 minutes**
- A **10% year-on-year increase** in households assessed as homeless
- Couples with children spending **nearly a year trapped in temporary accommodation**, on average¹
- A **failure to deliver the social homes** we urgently need and a significant slowdown in new social housing developments in the last year.
- Warnings of a **broken and failing housing system** from the Scottish Housing Regulator², SOLACE³, the Accounts Commission⁴, and the Scottish Government's own expert Task and Finish Group on Temporary Accommodation⁵

The **Scottish Government must acknowledge that we are in an emergency** and allocate the resources needed to tackle it through delivering more social homes, fully funding local homelessness services and ensuring councils have the funding they need to deliver on existing housing rights.

The Scottish Government's expert Task and Finish Group on Temporary Accommodation made a number of key recommendations to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and to tackle the housing emergency. The solutions were straightforward, but acknowledged the need for significant resource to deliver.

¹ [Homelessness in Scotland 2022/23](#).

² Scottish Housing Regulator (2023), [Homelessness Services in Scotland: A Thematic Review](#)

³ SOLACE (2023), [Housing in Scotland: Current Context and Preparing for the Future](#)

⁴ Accounts Commission (2023), [Local Government in Scotland](#)

⁵ Scottish Government (2023), [Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group: final report and recommendations](#)

Shelter Scotland welcomed the intent of the Scottish Government's response to the group's report, but we are concerned that their intent without resources will not drive the kind of structural change needed to meaningfully tackle the housing emergency. There are no new targets, piecemeal funding has been offered, and we have concerns about the limited leadership role the Scottish Government appears to play in the proposed National Acquisition Programme. The housing emergency demands an emergency financial response that has not so far materialised.

There is still more the Scottish Government can do to tackle the housing emergency, including ensuring Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant money is used exclusively to deliver social homes, taking a firmer leadership role in delivering the national acquisition programme, and better resourcing local authorities to ensure that the money is there to realise people's housing rights.

We also continue to advocate for more action to bring empty homes back into use as social housing – and the **First Minister should use his Programme for Government to set a legislative timetable for the delivery of Compulsory Sale Orders** which will help to bring more vacant properties back into productive use.

We cannot address child poverty without addressing rising levels of child homelessness.

We cannot end child homelessness without suitable homes now.

We will not escape the current emergency without the urgent delivery of more social homes.

Human Rights Bill

We welcome the Scottish Government's ongoing commitment to delivering a Human Rights Bill, which will include the human right to adequate housing, and we look forward to hearing more detail on the government's plans during the First Minister's statement. We will also be responding to the Scottish Government's consultation as part of the Bill process.

Incorporating the human right to adequate housing into Scots law must be matched with the resource required to make that a reality for everyone – by delivering social homes and ensuring local authorities have the resources to uphold that right.

A human rights-based approach to budgeting is needed if we are to finally make progress on tackling deeply embedded poverty in this country. We have been disappointed in the lack of movement towards this approach in recent years. The Scottish Government continues to make strong commitments to tackle poverty, particularly child poverty, but the way it delivers its budget prevents it from being able to meet these goals – meaning spending decisions do not have the intended impact. You cannot guarantee people's rights without funding the policies, institutions and systems that are required to make them a reality.

Enforce housing rights

We continue to see local authorities breaking the law and not delivering people's housing rights across Scotland. This includes failing to provide accommodation to households experiencing homelessness (445 recorded cases in 2022/23) and provision of temporary accommodation that breaches the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (3,525 cases in 2022/23, though both these figures are likely to be an undercount).

We will always support the extension and strengthening of people's housing rights, but it is important that these rights are fully resourced and local authorities are equipped to deliver them.

That means any additional rights being brought forward in this Programme for Government – whether that is through the Human Rights Bill, Housing Bill or additional extension to the Cost of Living Act – need to be funded. Failure to fully fund new duties can exacerbate circumstances in local authority homelessness services recently described as facing ‘*the risk of systemic failure*’ by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Local authorities cannot be expected to do more with less, as they have been forced to do for the past decade and more. This lack of funding has left people to suffer the consequences. The housing emergency requires an emergency response – and that includes backing up policies with the money to deliver them.

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