



STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-25



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INTRODUCTION



The message could not have been clearer. In the grip of a public health emergency we all have a responsibility to protect people, to reduce the impact on public services. We did that by staying in our own homes.

But we know this simple request was impossible for thousands of homeless households in Scotland. The pandemic exposed the housing inequality that had been tolerated for generations in our country. To their credit, Scottish Ministers, local authorities, and Scotland's third sector all acted quickly to bring people off the streets and couches into the relative safety of suddenly empty hotel rooms.

There is still a long way to go to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. Escalating rent arrears, the health impacts of people trapped in hotel rooms for months and the challenge of ensuring no return to the streets pose real challenges for the months and years ahead. But something has changed. That we did not see a spike in homelessness, eviction and destitution is proof that political will, money, and more housing



works. When there was no way to ignore the housing emergency, change was suddenly possible.

In recent years there has been no shortage of new initiatives, all well-intentioned, all promising something must and will be done. So why then was homelessness still increasing and waiting lists growing more quickly than the homes we can build? The human

and financial cost of continuing to tolerate Scotland's housing emergency could be seen in every A&E waiting room, every school, every GP surgery, every women's refuge, every prison, and young offenders institute before COVID-19 hit. And yet it was accepted, placed in the too difficult to do box. We cannot allow a return to that past.

At Shelter Scotland we exist to defend the right to a safe home. We are proud to have played our part in the progress that Scotland has made over the last twenty years. Progress to enshrine better rights for all homeless people, to improve social tenants' properties, end the right to buy, essentially end the bedroom tax and to build social housing once again.



None of these steps forward should not be understated. Along with our Shelter colleagues in England, we have set out a ten-year strategy to end the housing emergency.

OUR WORK HAS NEVER BEEN MORE URGENT

The next three years will see us focus on transforming rights into a reality for more people in Scotland. Laws and rights that exist only on paper are of no value to the people who depend on them. We will put power in their hands, equip them with the skills, knowledge, and capacity to lead their fight for home. We will work to make sure everyone in a position of power views ending the housing emergency as their responsibility.

The first step is to make sure that there are homes for people where they are needed most. By 2029 we want everyone who needs social housing to get it. To bring us closer to that vision we must first address those abandoned in temporary accommodation. There are 7,130 children and 13,097 households denied their right to a permanent home. That is unacceptable and must be the first test of our goal to increase social housing. We will advocate for a new generation of sustainable social housing. Social housing that is of a higher standard environmentally and socially than previous decades and that can bring existing empty homes back into meaningful use.

Shelter Scotland relies on the goodwill of our supporters and the dedication of our staff to deliver the change we seek. It is an honour to be part of this movement with them. Together, we will succeed in defending the right to a safe home for everyone.

Kezia Dugdale, Chair of Shelter Scotland Committee & Alison Watson, Director



SCOTLAND'S HOUSING EMERGENCY

**SCOTLAND'S HOUSING SYSTEM IS BROKEN
AND BIASED. IT CAN AND MUST BE FIXED.**

2022 marks ten years since the Scottish Parliament implemented the 2012 homelessness commitment. MSPs of all parties promised that nobody who becomes homeless could be denied a permanent home. And yet at the start of 2022, that promise remains unfulfilled for thousands of households. Instead, they are trapped in temporary accommodation for longer than ever before, often in substandard conditions that damage their health and their children's prospects.

In the ten years since the 2012 homelessness commitment became a legal right, progress in Scotland has stalled. At the start of this three-year plan, we are not where we need to be. Homelessness is rising, a record number of children are trapped in temporary accommodation, councils are struggling to provide safe homes for people experiencing homelessness and tenants still wait too long and pay too much for a secure affordable home.



NEARLY
12,000
CHILDREN

were in households assessed as homeless in 2020-21

OVER
7,100
CHILDREN

were living in temporary accommodation in March 2021,
and homelessness was on the rise pre-pandemic

27,571
HOUSEHOLDS

became homeless in
Scotland between April
2020 and March 2021

This is the equivalent of a
household losing their home

EVERY 19
MINUTES

during the worst public
health crisis in living memory

THIS IS AN
EMERGENCY

Housing inequality affects every community across our country. Shelter Scotland research shows that nearly 2 million people in Scotland are affected by our housing emergency. 36% of households in Scotland struggle with the condition, security, suitability, or affordability of their home, or report being discriminated against while trying to find one.

**WE KNOW THAT BETTER
RIGHTS DO NOT YET MEAN
BETTER LIVES. WE WILL
WORK TO CHANGE THAT.**

SHELTER SCOTLAND'S PURPOSE

**WE EXIST TO DEFEND THE RIGHT TO A SAFE HOME.
WE BELIEVE THAT A HOME IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT.**

A safe home is the foundation our lives are built on. It opens the door to employment, health, and education, and is the basis of strong communities.

We also know that housing rights do not mean anything if you can't access a home, either because they don't exist or because decision-makers ignore their duties. That is why we must go further.

Shelter Scotland will make the case for better, stronger housing rights. However, passing new laws does not guarantee new rights, and answering more phone calls will not stop the same thing from happening to someone else.

We want to make structural change. A better housing system that puts people not properties first, delivers a new generation of social housing and delivers on people's housing rights, not one that denies their basic dignity.

We know frontline staff are working hard to deliver for people who need a home. We do not accept that hard-pressed housing professionals must focus on doing better with less. When the evidence of how the housing emergency impacts on the NHS, schools, criminal justice is so stark, how can it be right that housing and homelessness services remain so underfunded?

Our role is to build a critical mass of evidence, of public pressure and of citizens so equipped to demand their rights that inaction becomes impossible. We can achieve real change by working together to fight for home.



PROGRESS TOWARDS OUR 2029 STRATEGIC VISION

In 2019, after the biggest consultation in Shelter and Shelter Scotland's history, we committed to an ambitious ten-year strategy, looking to transform ourselves, the housing system, and the country. Our strategy set ambitious goals and even in the context of the pandemic we have made significant progress towards them.

A MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

We have laid the groundwork to recruit and mobilise supporters to be the drivers of change across Scotland. Our "Are you with us?" campaign brought over 10,000 people to back our call to make housing rights human rights. Their voices were heard when the Scottish Government promised to include the UN right to adequate housing, in new human rights laws planned for Scotland.

Our "Building Scotland's Future" campaign to secure a political commitment to build a minimum of 37,100 social homes during the next Parliament was our biggest ever consumer engagement campaign. Through television and paid social media we brought another 20,000 supporters into our movement. Those supporters secured a commitment from every political party and directly led to the new SNP/Scottish Green party Government going even further than our original target during the next five years.



POWERING LOCAL CHANGE

Shelter Scotland has always been grounded in our communities. Across Scotland's four largest cities our Shelter Scotland local bases have been working with individuals and communities to provide advice and representation. Together the team challenge failures by landlords and public bodies to uphold people's right to a home. We have been working to build the capacity of our allies to fight for home through our Community Organising projects. Community Organisers work with existing local groups and individuals to put power in their hands to run the housing campaigns they want to run and to ensure a broader range of voices are heard by those in power.

STRATEGIC LITIGATION

Where people's housing rights are denied, Shelter Scotland's legal team has demonstrated that they will intervene. When SERCO threatened to lock asylum seekers out of their homes our legal team joined with other law centres to challenge their actions in the Sheriff Court and at the Court of Session. Even though the legal case was unsuccessful in the Court of Session, their action did stop 150 lock changes taking place, amplified the voices of those impacted, improving the lives of those affected.

When we exhausted all attempts to engage Glasgow City Council in their continued failure to uphold their legal duty to provide homes for people experiencing homelessness, we went to court to force change. Our high-profile strategic litigation campaign forced the Scottish Housing Regulator to intervene the day before the case was called in court. Thanks to that intervention we have seen new investment in frontline services and fewer people denied their housing rights.





PROTECTING COMMUNITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

When the pandemic hit, we had to move quickly to ensure people could continue to access our advice when people began working from home. With the support of donors and the determination of our staff, advisers were quickly set up with new systems to work from home and we ensured that our services remained open throughout lockdown. The changes and additional investment allowed us to answer more calls and be there for more people at a time when many worried about keeping their homes through furlough and lockdown.

That so few people ended up homeless during this period is largely down to the emergency protections Shelter Scotland successfully lobbied for and which our supporters pressed MSPs to pass into law. Making sure that nobody should lose their home due to covid-19 related arrears was vital to avoiding an increase in homelessness. Without Shelter Scotland's staff and campaigners making the case, proposing amendments, and putting pressure on parliamentarians, we faced the real prospect of the health crisis becoming a new homelessness crisis too.



LESSONS WE HAVE LEARNED



In the three years since our ten-year plan was published, we've had to think again about how much we are able to do and consider where we have fallen short.

RENTER'S RIGHTS

Shelter Scotland led the campaign to bring in the new Private Rented Tenancy in 2017. The greater security provided by the new tenancy is transformative for the rights of tenants. Despite our intentions to do more to empower tenants to deal with the issue of unaffordability in the sector, our attention was diverted due to the pandemic and the emergency protections tenants needed.

Three years on from our plan, we are delighted to see other new tenants' organisations and charities taking on the issues where we left off. Our advisers and advocacy teams continue to make the case for renter's rights, but our campaigning focus has now shifted towards the demand for social housing. In the spirit of collaboration, we stand alongside those now better placed to make the voice of private tenants heard by those in power.

EQUITY AND ANTI-RACISM

In June 2020, Shelter Scotland along with many other organisations publicly declared solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and made a commitment to becoming an anti-racist organisation. Since then, we've been actively working on and investing in anti-racism, recognising where we can do better.

Whilst we are making progress, there is still a long way to go. Shelter Scotland was established as a social justice organisation; and we realise that unless we are fighting against institutional discrimination in the housing system, we are not defending the right to a safe home. The fight for home must recognise that racism plays a significant role in housing inequality.

WHAT'S NEXT: 2022-25

**SHELTER SCOTLAND REMAINS ON COURSE
TO ACHIEVE OUR TEN-YEAR STRATEGY.**

Thanks to the successes of the first three years we now have a greater understanding of the scale and human impact of Scotland's housing emergency. We know our voice, our actions and our commitment to the people denied a safe home have never been needed more.

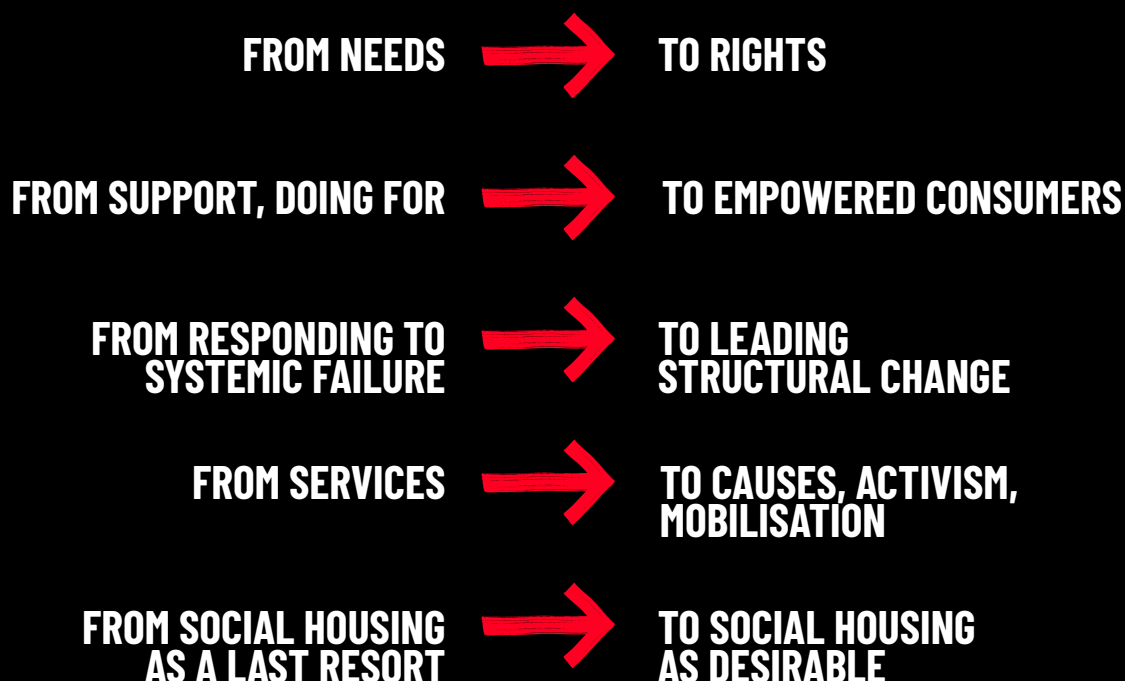
**WE WILL NOT
GIVE UP UNTIL
THE RIGHT TO
A SAFE HOME
IS REALISED.**

The next three years demand that we continue to change. To design advice services online and on the phone that empower people to act quickly to end their housing emergency; to deliver power into the hands of the communities most impacted by our broken and biased housing system, and; to advocate for long-term changes to the housing system itself. We will not accept that modern Scotland cannot provide a safe home for every citizen.

Our goals for the next three years reflect where we can make the biggest difference.

TRANSFORMING SHELTER SCOTLAND

The last three years have demonstrated to us how much further we need to go in changing how we work. We are now consolidating those experiences to place our supporters at the heart of our campaigns, people with lived experience at the centre of the design of our services and communities at the forefront of achieving change. Our strategic direction is shifting from what we do for people to what we do with individuals and communities.





OUR NEW GOALS FOR 2022-2025



1. SOCIAL HOUSING AS THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

BY 2025

**WE WANT EVERYONE
STUCK IN TEMPORARY
ACCOMMODATION TO
BE ABLE TO ACCESS A
SOCIAL HOME QUICKLY
WHERE THEY NEED IT**

WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IF:

- More people can choose to live in social housing if they want to
- Local affordable housing need and waiting times in temporary accommodation are reduced
- Social tenants, supporters and elected members can advocate for increased public investment in social housing

TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE WILL:

- Publish and promote the real stories of those people experiencing the hard edges of the chronic shortage of social housing by investing in citizen journalism and video production to reach our supporters where they are
- Lead local campaigns with communities to hold local authorities accountable for reducing social housing need in their area
- Work with local authorities through the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to bring empty private homes back into use, preferably for social rent
- Publish annual research to demonstrate the social impact on communities of new social housing and the corrosive effect that the housing emergency is having
- Engage with communities most marginalised by the bias and discrimination in Scottish society to organise their own campaigns for change





2. HOUSING RIGHTS, RIGHT NOW

BY 2025

**WE WANT EVERYONE'S
HOUSING RIGHTS TO
BE STRONGER AND
GUARANTEED BY LAW**

WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IF:

- The UN 'Right to adequate housing' is enforceable in Scots law
- Public bodies do not breach their legal duties to people in need of a home
- Everyone can defend their housing rights by accessing our advice services



TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE WILL:

- Lead a public campaign to enshrine the UN right to adequate housing into Scots Law and empower citizens to have their rights enforced
- Target strategic litigation where public bodies are failing to deliver their legal duties to homeless people and ensure the delivery of social housing
- Enhance our digital housing advice service so that anyone with a housing problem can access information and advice when they need it
- Optimise our helpline to provide emergency housing advice to people at risk of losing their home
- Train people with experience of the housing emergency to provide peer support to people exercising their housing rights
- Through community organising empower individuals and grassroots organisations to take independent action on the housing rights issues that matter to them
- Analyse and publish the evidence of failure from our casework data to advocate for rights enforcement locally and nationally
- Develop a new model of Community Advice that enables our teams to focus casework on the issues of practice and policy failure that create our broken and biased housing system



3. PEOPLE-POWERED CHANGE

BY 2025

WE WANT EVERYONE IN SCOTLAND TO BE EQUIPPED TO FIGHT FOR HOME

WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Individuals and communities are equipped with the tools to lead their own fight for home
- The voices of communities most impacted by the housing emergency, especially People of Colour and marginalised groups are heard by those in power
- Strengthened local and national strategic collaborations address housing inequalities

TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE WILL:

- Develop a new housing literacy programme to build people's knowledge of their housing rights and how they can enforce them
- Produce new evidence of the causes and impact of structural racism in Scotland's housing system
- Represent lived experience of the housing emergency by ensuring every interaction, every real story, every breach, every event count in our fight for home
- Continue to transfer power to communities through our Community Organising programme to place Shelter Scotland alongside activists rather than trying to speak on their behalf
- Tackle the practice issues at the root of the local experience of the housing emergency
- Enhance our approach to embedding lived experience in everything we do
- Develop our approach to involvement and engagement that ensures our offer is informed by users, our practice trauma-informed and the stories we tell authentic and powerful

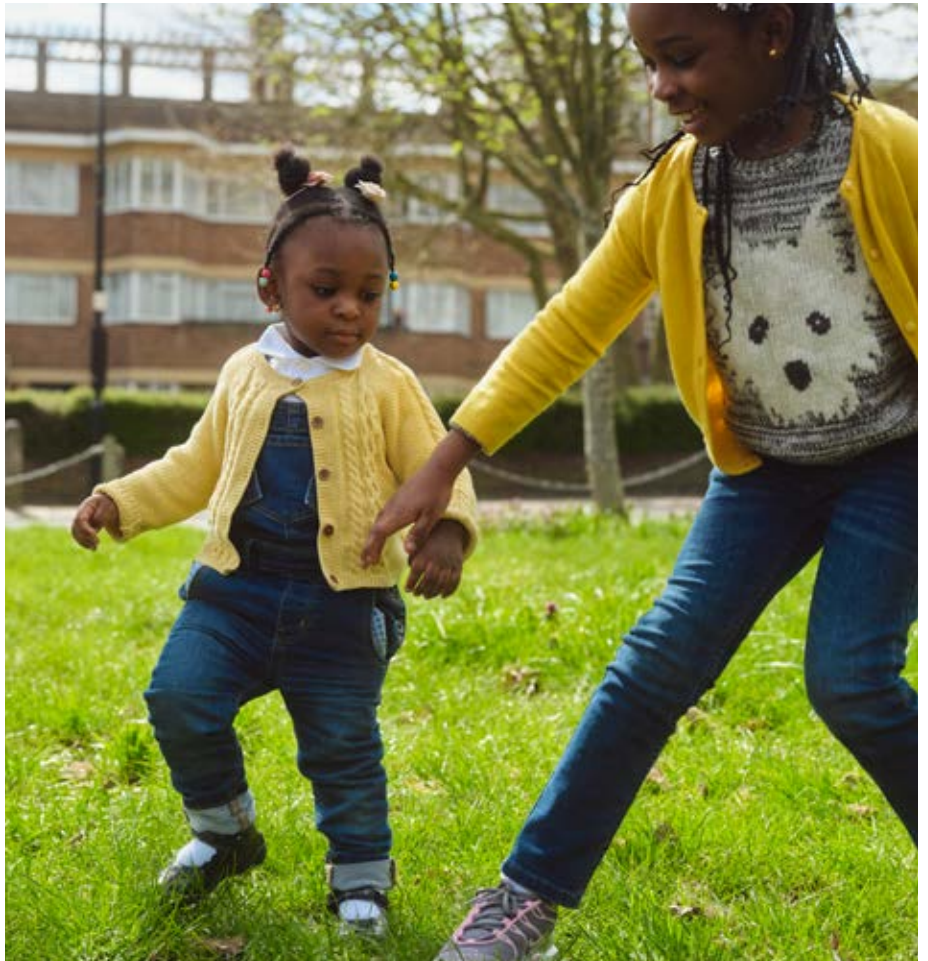


HOME IS EVERYTHING

Our next strategy period must deliver a transformation in the country's understanding of the importance of home, the sheer injustice of the housing emergency and the acute danger it causes to individuals and communities, and the fact that the solution is clear.

Whether you are reading this as a Shelter Scotland supporter, a funder or potential funder, a partner, or if you are new to Shelter Scotland and our work, you have a role to play. We set ourselves ambitious goals in 2019 and they are now more urgent than ever. Change is only possible if we do it together.

**JOIN THE FIGHT
FOR HOME.**



DRIVING CHANGE

PURPOSE

We exist to defend the right to a safe home

PROBLEM

The country faces a housing emergency

SOLUTION

A new generation of social homes

IMPACT

An end to the housing emergency and homelessness

BY 2025

- Everyone's housing rights are strengthened and enforced
- Individuals and communities are equipped to fight housing injustice
- A broad public movement exists which argues for social housing
- People of Colour will have increased access to a safe home
- Everyone waiting in temporary accommodation can access a social home

**PEOPLE
JOIN THE
MOVEMENT
FOR CHANGE,
DEMANDING:**

BY 2029

- Social housing is available to those who need it and is seen as a tenure of choice

**A NEW
GENERATION
OF SOCIAL
HOMES
IS BRINGING
THE HOUSING
EMERGENCY
TO AN END**

**Lived experience and anti-racism are
at the heart of the fight for home.**