

Dear Aberdeen City Councillors,

We, as frontline housing, homelessness and social justice organisations in Aberdeen, are writing to urge you to vote to declare a housing emergency at the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

Scotland is in the grip of a devastating housing emergency - the result of decades of underinvestment in social housing, welfare changes, Covid-19, the cost-of-living crisis, and the war in Ukraine. The Scottish Government recognises that this is a national problem, however the housing emergency affects different parts of Scotland in different ways. The challenge is more acute in certain areas, including in Aberdeen. Aberdeen's housing emergency is evidenced by:

- The council's homelessness services are under increasing pressure with the number of breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) increasing 143% in just one year.
- The number of children and households trapped in temporary homeless accommodation are at record highs - with the number of children in temporary accommodation more than doubling (up 105%) from March 2023 to March 2024.
- Scottish Housing Regulator's report showed that Aberdeen City's housing system is at heightened risk of systemic failure.
- 350 council properties deemed to be unsafe due to the presence of RAAC.

'Business as usual' is not working, and inaction is continuing to damage the lives and opportunities of thousands of people in Aberdeen. An emergency requires an emergency response. We believe that declaring a housing emergency in Aberdeen, 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 Aberdeen City Council can take the lead in tackling the root causes of the housing emergency.

As frontline organisations and critical friends of Aberdeen City 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 Aberdeen 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 Aberdeen and commit to taking action to address it.

**Signed by:**

Alison Watson, Director, Shelter Scotland

Aileen Forbes, CEO, Grampian Women's Aid

Ali Elder, Homelessness Prevention Coordinator – North Scotland, Bethany Christian Trust

Josh Littlejohn, Executive Director and Founder, Social Bite

Kristi Kelly, Bureau Manager, Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau

Leona McDermid, Chief Executive, Aberdeen Foyer

Peter Kelly, Chief Executive Officer, Poverty Alliance

Sophy Green, Chief Executive, Instant Neighbour

Susan Bains, Project Co-ordinator NRPF (No Recourse to Public Funds): *Tackling and Preventing Destitution*, No Recourse North East Partnership