

Debate - More investment for more Housing

Shelter Scotland briefing for the debate on Tuesday 13 September

Shelter Scotland helps over half a million people in Scotland each year across all housing tenures. We believe that everyone has the right to a safe, secure affordable home and that housing is vital to people and families being able to flourish in their communities.

Shelter Scotland welcomes this debate on **More investment for more housing** and welcomes the commitment from the Scottish Government to build a further 50,000 affordable homes over the lifetime of the next parliament, 35,000 of which will be socially rented housing. However, we do not think this should be the limit of ambition for housebuilding.

There are over 150,000 households on council waiting lists, over 10,000 households stuck in temporary accommodation and nearly 30,000 people assessed as homeless last year - that means every 20 minutes a household becomes homeless in Scotland. It is clear that we are in a **housing crisis** and that the **supply of affordable housing** must be a top priority for both Scottish Government and local authorities.

Building enough affordable housing is essential but not the end of the story. For any programme of affordable housing supply to be effective in its primary aim of ensuring a safe and affordable home for everyone, it should support a new cross-departmental **National Homelessness Strategy** to focus on preventing and tackling homelessness in Scotland. Our **Homelessness: Far From Fixed** campaign is calling for a national homelessness strategy and the policy report can be found [here](#).

Key points

- We welcome the commitment by the Scottish Government to build 50,000 affordable homes, 35,000 of which will be socially rented housing. This is a welcome step change in affordable supply, but to provide a home for everyone in housing need it cannot be the limit of ambition.
- Research commissioned by Shelter Scotland, the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations published in October 2015 shows we need **12,000 affordable homes** a year in Scotland for the next 5 years to address the backlog of housing need and the needs of new households forming over that period.¹
- Benefits of an ambitious commitment to building **12,000 affordable homes** per year include doubling the money through additional finance levered in, sustaining over 18,000 jobs and supporting other education, health, economic, community and environmental policy priorities.
- The independent Commission on Housing and Wellbeing, focussed on the central importance of having a safe, secure and suitable home that allows people to fulfil their potential. A home that is

¹ 'Affordable Housing Need in Scotland' – report (September 2015) summary also available http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_library/policy_library_folder/affordable_housing_need_-_final_report_september_2015

embedded in and linked to a strong, vibrant local community where people can live good lives. The independent [Commission on Housing and Wellbeing](#) report found that if we want to ensure that all households have a decent home, making a significant contribution to the nation's wellbeing, we need to build more houses - particularly affordable housing.²

- Building the right houses in the right places is vital so that we can create thriving communities which meet people's needs. It is essential that we don't hit the housing target but miss the point – we need to ensure that mistakes of the past are not repeated such as building ill-designed, isolated new communities at scale, in places where no one wants to live. We need to build to a high standard and this must include ensuring energy efficiency. The [one year on report from the Commission on Housing and Wellbeing](#) which has recently been published highlights the importance of well-designed homes for the wellbeing of tenants.
- Affordable housing is a catch-all term for a range of housing options that are below market cost. We recognise the case for a continuing mixed programme, but it is important to anchor current programmes of intermediate housing (mid-market renting or low cost home ownership) far better with evidence of how well they match to the profile of need and the longer term benefits offered. We support the Scottish Government commitment that the affordable housing programme must have at least three-quarters of homes provided through social renting. That will give a programme with a solid backbone of development through the tried and tested model of social housing but still allowing plenty of scope for innovation.

Building enough affordable homes which meet people's needs and allows them to thrive in their communities is essential. Both the Commission on Housing and Wellbeing and the Affordable Housing Need Report placed the main focus on the chronic undersupply of *affordable homes*³ and the research shows that Scotland needs **12,000 new affordable homes a year** for each of the next 5 years to meet backlog need and projected household growth over this period. Much greater attention needs to be placed on the affordable housing programme as part of the overall debate about the future of housing supply.

We also need to see a renewed commitment to addressing homelessness and we are calling on the Scottish Government to introduce a new cross-departmental **National Homelessness Strategy** to focus on preventing and tackling homelessness in Scotland.

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² <http://housingandwellbeing.org/>

³ By "affordable" we mean homes which are below market price, from mainstream socially-rented homes provided by councils or housing associations through to intermediate option like low cost home ownership or mid-market renting.