

Dear Members of Scottish Parliament,

We, as representatives of Scotland's civil society, are writing to urge you to vote to declare a housing emergency at the housing debate in the Scottish Parliament on the 15th May 2024.

It is undeniable that 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.

Our housing system is failing to meet the needs of Scotland's people:

- According to the Scottish Housing Regulator systemic failure is becoming a risk or a reality in 10 local authorities.
- This means 47% of people in Scotland live in an area where the council does not have a fully functional homelessness service.
- 5 local authorities in Scotland have already declared that they are in a Housing Emergency.
- A record 9,860 children are trapped in temporary accommodation – up 138% since 2014.
- 45 children become homeless every day.
- A household becomes homeless every 16 minutes.
- A 10% increase in households becoming homeless compared to last year.
- Couples with children spend just under a year trapped in temporary accommodation, on average.
- There is routine failure by local authorities to uphold housing rights, including a 1400% increase in failures to provide suitable temporary accommodation. These failures are not by choice but are the result of the significant pressures local authorities are under.
- A failure to deliver the social homes we urgently need and a significant slowdown in new social housing developments in the last year.

'Business as usual' is not working, and inaction is continuing to damage the lives and opportunities of thousands of people in Scotland every day. An emergency situation requires an emergency response. You have an opportunity to show the people you represent that you understand the harsh reality of their situation, and that you are determined to act by declaring a housing emergency.

Declaring a housing emergency in Scotland, and acknowledging the scale of the problem, is an important first step towards fixing our broken housing system. However, it must then be matched by commitment to action in the form of buying and building the social homes we desperately need, fully funding local homelessness services, and ensuring that existing housing rights are upheld and enforced. It took more than a generation to break the housing system and it will take many more years to turn it around.

The citizens of Scotland need our politicians to be bold, take the lead and show that by coming together they 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 Scotland and commit to taking action to address it.

Signed:

Alison Watson, Director, Shelter Scotland

Councillor Jane Meagher, Convenor of Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, City of Edinburgh Council

Councillor Gurpreet Singh Johal, Convener of Housing and Communities Committee for West Dunbartonshire Council

Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive, Cyrenians

Karen Barr, CEO, Rowan Alba

Margaret-Ann Brunjes, Chief Executive, Homeless Network Scotland

Matt Downie, Chief Executive, Crisis

Roz Foyer, General Secretary, STUC

Janet Haugh, Chief Executive, Right There

Peter Kelly, Director, The Poverty Alliance

Charles Maasz, Chief Executive, Glasgow City Mission

Lilian Macer, Scottish Secretary, UNISON

Aaliya Seyal, Chief Executive Officer, Legal Services Agency

Sally Thomas, Chief Executive, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations