



BRIEFING PAPER: HOUSING EMERGENCY MINISTERIAL STATEMENT, 2 SEPTEMBER 2025

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.

Scotland is in the grip of a devastating housing emergency that damages lives every day. The Scottish Government must take urgent and radical action to reduce the number of children living in temporary accommodation, deliver the social homes we need, and uphold and enforce people's lifeline housing rights. We cannot normalise a situation which sees over 10,000 children in temporary accommodation, laws being ignored on a daily basis, Scotland's three largest local authorities being in systemic failure in their homelessness services, and 13 local authorities declaring housing emergencies. Political and market failure has led to this situation, and it is long overdue for politicians to take the emergency actions needed to reverse decades of decline.

We welcome the fact that Housing has been given its own seat at the Cabinet table, and we hope that the new Cabinet Secretary delivers the urgent, immediate action needed to make progress towards ending the housing emergency. That means ending systemic failure in local services, ending breaches of lifeline housing rights, reducing the number of children trapped in harmful temporary accommodation, and reducing affordable housing need in Scotland.

Our emergency asks

We know there is not much time to make progress before now and the election in May next year. That is why we are calling for some specific, immediate actions to be taken to help reduce harm in the system right now, but also actions which can set the system up for longer-term ambitions post-2026. This risks being a lost parliament – but the Cabinet Secretary has one final opportunity to begin turning the tide.

Immediate actions:

- **Reduce the number of children being harmed in unsuitable, unsafe and unending temporary accommodation by the end of this parliament**, including by:
 - increasing investment in **acquisition of larger family homes** specifically for families stuck in temporary accommodation. This should include reinvesting any forecast or actual underspend in the wider AHSP budget into acquisitions.
 - strengthening government guidance on **allocating social homes to homeless households** for an emergency period, including mandating of Section 5 referrals to force Registered Social Landlords to do more to clear the temporary accommodation backlog.
- **Ending failures to provide temporary accommodation** by providing local authorities with all the resources they need to uphold housing rights.
- Supporting **on-the-ground prevention work** by ensuring resources are in place for wraparound support such as in mental health services, addiction services, social work, domestic violence support, and welfare and benefits advice.

- **Reaffirming the commitment to Scotland’s existing housing and homelessness rights framework and no rolling back of these lifeline rights.**
- **Restating that the housing emergency has not been caused by Scotland’s minoritised ethnic communities, migrants, refugees or asylum seekers.**

Longer-term actions:

- **Committing to long-term investment in social homes post-2026**, including a commitment to deliver the homes needed over the next parliament to reduce affordable housing need, and providing the funding needed to achieve this.
- Making the **stated goal of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme that of reducing affordable housing need in Scotland** by the end of the next parliament.

Scotland’s housing emergency

- A record **10,360 children trapped in temporary accommodation** – up 149% since 2014.
- **43 children become homeless every day.**
- **A household becomes homeless every 15 minutes.**
- **30,000 children in Scotland are pushed into poverty by housing costs.**
- A **4% increase** in households becoming homeless compared to last year.¹
- **Local authority homelessness services in systemic failure across the country.**
- **7,545 instances of gatekeeping** between April and September 2024.
- **Glasgow City Council breaking gatekeeping laws at least 34 times every day.**
- **More children in temporary accommodation in Edinburgh than there are in temporary accommodation in the entirety of Wales.**
- A **significant slowdown** in new social housing developments in recent years.

***In Their Own Words* research**

In March, Shelter Scotland published new groundbreaking research on children’s experiences in temporary accommodation.² This research is a call to action for all levels of government to do more to alleviate the harm being done to children across the country as a result of our broken housing system. Reducing the rising rates of child homelessness in Scotland will prevent trauma and adverse effects temporary accommodation has on children. There is evidence of children’s rights under the UNCRC being breached due to their housing situation – this cannot be accepted as normal.

The research detailed the devastating consequences of Scotland’s housing emergency on Scotland’s children across the themes of safety, health and education.

Affordable Housing Need in Scotland

Long term investment in new social housing is only way to permanently reduce homelessness not simply manage it. Failure to deliver the affordable homes projected in the 2015 and 2020 reviews of Affordable Housing Need has directly contributed to rising homelessness, increasing harm. Falling short of the target has directly resulted in what the Scottish Housing Regulator describes as ‘systemic failure’ in homelessness services in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Fife alongside seven other local authorities deemed to be at a heightened risk of joining them.

¹ Scottish Government (2025) [Homelessness in Scotland, update to 30 September 2024](#).

² Sviryzdenka, Prof N. (De Montfort University), Lakhanpaul, Prof M. (University College London), and Williams, Dr J. (De Montfort University)(2025) [In Their Own Words: Children’s Experiences in Temporary Accommodation](#). Shelter Scotland.

Along with SFHA and CIH Scotland, we will shortly publish the 2025 version of this research. We expect it to show a significant increase in need that reflects the depth of the housing emergency felt across Scotland.

To enable members to be informed ahead of this debate we have brought forward publication of the executive summary. An embargoed copy has been shared with frontbench spokespeople on housing. All members will be able to access the executive summary [here](#) from 9am on 2 September.

We believe that the Scottish Government and those that aspire to Government should make reducing affordable housing need their number one priority for housing policy in the next parliament. This can be measured by adopting the so-called 'Bramley model' used in the 2015, 2020 and 2025 research. It will require a new approach to funding and delivering social housing at scale and at pace.