Everyone Home

Scotland Collective on Covid-19

#EveryoneHome

Hello

Housing was the first line of defence in the fight against COVID-19. It brought into sharper focus how linked our home, health and wellbeing are and the public health challenge posed by rough sleeping. And it showed how people and families who are in unsuitable housing, or with no housing at all, are put in harm's way.

While Scotland's Ending Homelessness Together Plan is the right one, the pandemic has now forced faster progress on key fronts.

We have formed a collective to protect the progress that's been made and to protect the principles that must now guide next steps.

We have also come together to bring forward ideas, knowledge and capacity for national and local partners shouldering enormous challenges.

> **Everyone Home. This is the moment to think and act big. To put housing at the heart of Scotland's national recovery from COVID-19. To build an ambitious public programme of housing options and opportunities. And to make the right decisions that will leave homelessness and rough sleeping behind us and get everyone home.**

This is our framework for going forward.

An Equal Response

We need to place our goal within the broader context of poverty as the key driver of homelessness; that the pandemic will have a disproportionate impact on people as a result of their socio-economic status, while economic decline and job loss is expected to be a feature in post-pandemic society.

These are also the conditions that create homelessness and why an urgent, collective plan to mitigate it is needed.

We also want to help a broader equalities approach now and in the aftermath of the pandemic. This can help redress the uneven distribution of risk of homelessness - and of COVID-19 related impacts - as a result of our gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

Rapid (and right) Responses

There is a small amount of time to make the right decisions and take the right actions. We believe these principles can help guide the next steps and balance rapid responses with the right ones:

- **Choice and Control,** building from people's own strengths and successes.

- **Community and Normality**, toward normal housing in normal communities, with support if it is needed.

- **Evidence and Analysis,** using national and local data to build from what works.

- **Real-life and Real-time Experiences,** grounding plans alongside people with personal and frontline experience of homelessness. This framework includes the priorities of the Change Team.

Our Aim

To help ensure there is forward movement in local and national efforts to tackle homelessness now and in the aftermath of the pandemic. We will do this by acting together on **3 immediate priorities** and by collectively endorsing a preferable future for people living and working with homelessness regardless of their immigration status.

Our 3 Immediate Priorities

1 MORE HOMES for Good Health

Prioritise prevention, create as much housing capacity as we can now – and make a long-term commitment to increase the supply of homes for social rent.

This will need:

- To urgently target prevention activity where the greatest risk of homelessness is expected post-pandemic.
- To increase the supply of social homes for rent, focused on restarting the long term commitment to build new social housing targeted to areas of highest demand with properties of the size people need.
- A common framework for housing associations and local councils.
- Point-in-time and local audit of available housing options and support capacity.
- To bring forward ideas for national policy and incentives that create more capacity in social and private rented sector.
- Priority allocation of all available housing to people who are homeless.
- Respond to flat sharing and other preferred living arrangements that are more common among young people.

2 NO RETURN to Rough Sleeping

Permanently prevent a return to previous levels of rough sleeping in all areas.

This will need:

- Rapid learning from the urgency of the COVID-19 response and the experiences of people affected and involved.
- Cross-department priority at Scottish Government and a 'lead professional' to join-up local health and social care responses.
- Gradual step-down in use of hotels and short-term lets, with funding in place to enable a safe transition.
- Point-in-time and local audit of people in temporary and unsuitable places.
- More clarity on the exemptions of the extension to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.
- Fast-track people to Housing First and other housing options, with 1:1 advocacy and housing support based on a Personal Housing Plan.
- Prevent new cases of rough sleeping including among people with no recourse to public funds.

3 NO EVICTIONS into Homelessness

We want no evictions into homelessness, the end of avoidable evictions and the threat of illegal evictions.

This will need:

- Greater protections through the tribunal for tenants facing evictions initiated prior to the pandemic, and an extension of the tribunal's emergency discretionary powers over eviction in social and private rentals from 6 months to 12 months.
- A proactive housing management approach focused on earlier intervention, with independent advice, information and advocacy for tenants.
- A stronger prevention focus to shift the emphasis so that landlords are required to prevent evictions where possible and build a case for eviction proceedings.
- An end to evictions into homelessness from asylum support accommodation.
- More partnership working with the private rented sector to help increase housing capacity.

Our Preferable Future

We collectively want a preferable future for people living and working with homelessness in Scotland in the aftermath of COVID-19.

This will include the need to:

- **Keep the benefit changes**
  At a minimum, maintain level of benefits brought in during COVID-19, including discretionary benefits.

- **Protect people with no recourse to public funds**
  Prevent destitution by ensuring access to decent and safe accommodation and the practical and emotional support people need. More clarity on what funds local authorities can use for people seeking or refused asylum. And a programme to support EU citizens to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. Join up campaigns to lobby UK Government for a better deal for people seeking safety in the UK.

- **Think local**
  Build from the range of community and grass roots responses to COVID-19 supporting positive mental health, reducing social isolation, and providing practical support. These local structures will help all prevention efforts going forward.

- **Go digital**
  Increase access to digital technology and systems that reduce travel, bureaucracy and better assist people living and working with homelessness.

- **Better recognition for key workers**
  Incentivise and reward great frontline workers, benchmarking across the housing support and accommodation network.

- **Deliver collective impact**
  Build on joint working during COVID-19 by reducing competitive culture and inefficiencies in the homelessness system.

Our Offer *We want to help to deliver:*

1) **A Framework for Local Authorities**

   'Rapid Rehousing & COVID-19: A Framework for Going Forward'

   Supporting Scottish and local government colleagues to develop the right guidance, options, learning and outcomes framework to connect emergency COVID-19 responses back into Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans.

2) **Options for Housing Associations**

   'Social Housing, Homelessness & COVID-19: Options for Going Forward'

   Working with housing associations and their representative bodies to support guidance, options and tools to allocate housing and help test new ideas that prevent homelessness and create housing capacity and choice.

3) **Options for Private Landlords**

   'Your Property & COVID-19: Options for Going Forward'

   Working with Scottish Government and partners to create options and incentives to create more housing capacity and security within the private rented sector, or to bring private stock into social use.

4) **National Framework for Housing First**

   A framework to support rapid scaling of Housing First across all areas in Scotland. This will provide learning, guidance and tools for quality assurance, support and cost modeling.

5) **Empowering Tenants**

   'Your Housing Rights & COVID-19: Information, Advice and Representation'

   Working with Scottish Government and partners to create access to information, advice and representation for those facing eviction or experiencing homelessness due to the covid-19 crisis.

6) **Equalities Impact Assessment**

   Working with local authority and housing partners to ensure full consideration is given to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on protected groups.

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