

# Ending Homelessness Together:

## High Level Action Plan



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# Foreword

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**Everyone needs a safe, warm place they can call home. Home is more than a physical place to live. It's where we feel secure, have roots and a sense of belonging. Home supports our physical and emotional health and wellbeing and to be without one seems unthinkable. Yet for too many people this is their reality as they face the blight of homelessness.**

Over the past decade, local and national government in partnership with local authorities, the third sector and others have delivered radical changes in homelessness and affordable housing. Scotland already has some of the strongest rights in the world for people experiencing homelessness with everybody found to be homeless legally entitled to housing. Our focus on prevention through five regionally grouped Housing Options Hubs has contributed to a significant reduction in homelessness applications.



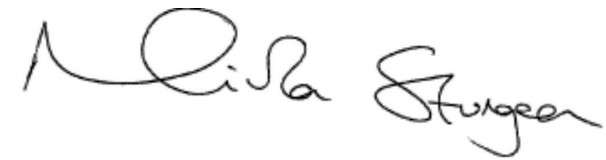
The Scottish Government has also taken concerted action on housing – ending the right to buy which will protect 15,500 homes over a decade, kick-started a new generation of council housing, and, since 2007, have delivered over 78,000 affordable homes. And in this parliamentary term, we are investing more than £3 billion to deliver at least 35,000 homes for social rent, as part of 50,000 affordable homes. This is an ambitious programme and one we are on target to reach. However, I know that people can still struggle to access the accommodation and housing, health and social care support they need during difficult and vulnerable points in their lives. In our work to build a Scotland where people are treated with fairness, dignity and respect, there is no place for homelessness or rough sleeping.

That's why, just a year ago, I set out in the Programme for Government a renewed commitment to tackle homelessness, to end rough sleeping and to transform temporary accommodation. I established the short-term Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group to identify the actions needed to achieve these ambitions. And I pledged a £50 million fund to support homelessness prevention over the next five years.

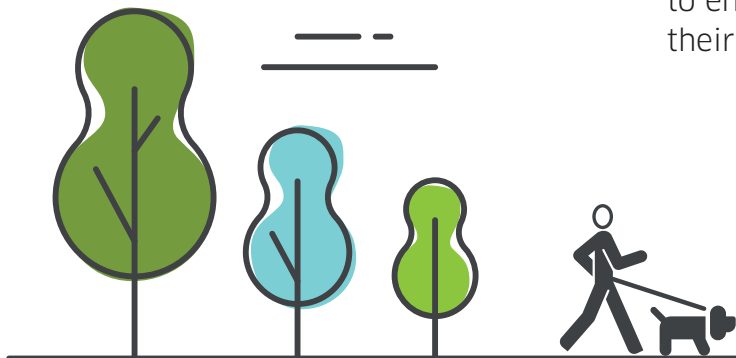
In just over nine months, the Group heard from over 400 people with lived experience of homelessness. It listened to the views of those dedicated frontline staff who are working to prevent and respond to homelessness, every hour of every day. It drew on the national and international evidence of what works. And it worked with partners to develop 70 bold recommendations all with one focus – to ensure everyone has a home that meets their needs and homelessness is ended.

I thank the Group for their hard work and dedication and am pleased to say this Action Plan responds to all of their recommendations alongside a report on homelessness by the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee. Ending homelessness is a priority for the Scottish Government.

With a concerted effort towards a person-centred approach that focuses on prevention, alongside joined-up planning, quick and effective responses and rapid rehousing, we will end homelessness.



**Nicola Sturgeon**  
First Minister



# Looking forwards

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This plan sets the direction for real and lasting change towards ending homelessness. It will be led and overseen by the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group, which is co-chaired by political leadership from both the Scottish Government and COSLA, because at its core is the need to work in partnership to deliver its ambition. The Strategy Group is clear that in addition to homelessness and housing services we need partners across services including health, education, social work, community support and justice and the third sector to recognise and act when people they work with are at risk of homelessness to ensure that homelessness is only ever rare, brief and non-recurrent.

National and local partnerships are key to leading sustained and effective change. That means we need to work across and outside traditional boundaries and continue to develop collaborative approaches. We are clear that this collaboration is as important across the portfolios of the Scottish Government – including housing, children and families, health and justice – as it is in the context of local leadership and planning. We will lay a progress report in the parliament annually to demonstrate the actions taken across government and partners, and to demonstrate the progress towards ending homelessness we are making as a result.

It is fundamental to our approach that this Action Plan is positioned within the shared outcomes agreed by Scottish Government and COSLA, described in the new National Performance Framework. This makes clear that our core value is to ensure that we are a society which treats everyone with kindness, dignity and compassion. These outcomes help us to focus our joint efforts on achieving goals that improve the wellbeing and quality of life of the people of Scotland. Tackling and ending homelessness is a clear example of where we have both opportunity and imperative to live that core value and get it right for the people we serve.



Prevention is at the heart of this. We have announced a £50 million Ending Homelessness Together Fund, over five years from 2018-19, to support local authorities and others to ensure homelessness services are more responsive, of a high standard and focused on prevention. Preventing homelessness in the first place, is just as important as how we collectively respond if and when it does happen. We need a decisive shift in both elements to achieve our aim of ending homelessness and rough sleeping. This means doing more to ensure people know where to get help, and can access support that meets their needs and puts them back on track. It means doing more to ensure that housing needs are considered when other circumstances change, and making the most of opportunities to intervene across the range

of services and support on offer. It's about building up responsive services which treat everyone with dignity and respect, whatever their needs.

Achieving a fundamental shift to rapid rehousing, including making Housing First support available to those who need it will be a crucial part of preventing and ending homelessness. The funding we have already committed, of up to £6.5 million over three years, to support the Housing First pathfinder programme in five cities, in partnership with Social Bite, the Corra foundation, and local delivery partners will be an important catalyst for the change needed. The Housing First elements of the rapid rehousing transition plans which every local authority is working towards will set the path to ensuring a range of options are available for housing and

support for everyone, including those with multiple, complex needs, in the next five years. The £15 million already announced to support those plans will help drive the transition to this new way of working.

Along with our local authority partners we will ensure the cross-government leadership required is in place to reach our ambitions to ensure a safe, warm, settled home for all, helping our citizens, families and communities to thrive.



**Aileen Campbell MSP**  
Cabinet Secretary for Communities  
and Local Government



# Introduction to this Action Plan

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Having somewhere to call home is a basic human right<sup>1</sup> and housing is one of the most important factors in any person's quality of life. We need to have a wide range of measures in place that help prevent homelessness in the first place and ensure that when it does happen, the needs of people experiencing homelessness are addressed as quickly as possible.

Homelessness has a strong legislative footing in Scotland. Under the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#) a person should be treated as homeless, even if they have accommodation, if it would not be reasonable for them to continue to stay in it.

That means that if we are to complete our ambition to end homelessness then no one

would sleep rough and no one should live somewhere that is unsuitable for them. Temporary accommodation can provide an important safety net but we need to ensure that it is of a high quality, and that stays there are as short as possible with the homeless household fully supported, and with a clear plan in place, to enable them to move into mainstream housing.

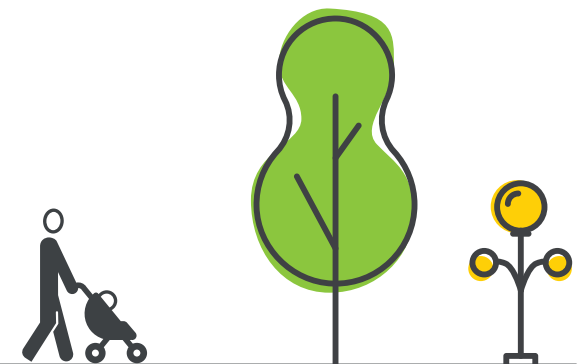


**Kevin Stewart MSP**  
Minister for Local  
Government,  
Housing & Planning



**Cllr Elena Whitham**  
COSLA Spokesperson  
for Community  
Wellbeing

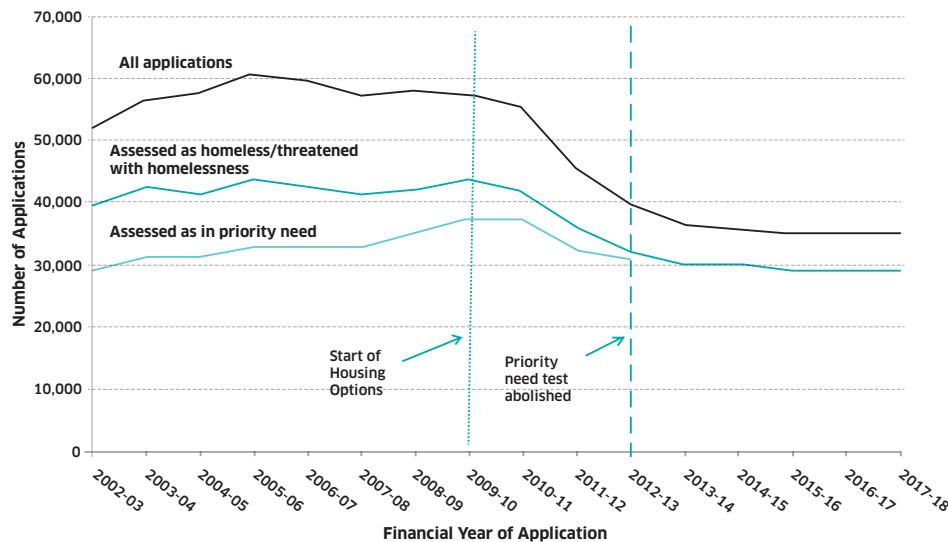
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>; <http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/economic-social-cultural-rights/housing/>





Changes in applications and assessments can be driven by changes in legislation, policy and practice as shown by the significant shifts in advance of the abolition of priority need in 2012, as set out in the chart [Chart 1]<sup>2</sup> below. This also shows that the number of homelessness applications has decreased in more recent years from 2008-09 to 2016-17, due in part to the impact of the introduction of Housing Options services in Scottish local authorities, with its focus on prevention.

**Chart 1: Scotland: Number of applications and assessments under the homelessness legislation**



2 Source: Scottish Homelessness Statistics <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

In the past year we have seen partners come together, bringing insight, creativity and a dogged determination to build on this success and go further: to end rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation and ultimately end homelessness.

We are grateful to the Local Government and Communities Committee of the Scottish Parliament who undertook an extensive and wide-ranging inquiry into homelessness which culminated in a substantive and useful report that was published in February 2018. The report highlighted the challenges we face and set out the action needed across national and local government in conjunction with other partners, to end homelessness.

The work of the Committee both complemented and informed the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group which set out in October 2017 to answer four questions.

1. What can be done to reduce rough sleeping this winter? (2017-18)
2. How can we end rough sleeping?
3. How can we transform the use of temporary accommodation?
4. What needs to be done to end homelessness?

Over the following nine months, the Action Group diligently and resolutely strived to develop recommendations that would help answer these fundamental questions. The Action Group's recommendations were firmly rooted in the views of people with experience of homelessness. The *Aye We Can* report prioritised the views of people with lived experience and ensured that the Action Group's recommendations were based directly on people's experiences and priorities.

In June 2018, the Action Group published the last of their four reports which culminated in a comprehensive set of recommendations aiming to secure strategic changes at both the national and local level which would help support delivery on the front-line.

The collaborative and inclusive nature of the work of the Action Group is something we will ensure continues going forward. We jointly chair the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group who have guided the process of turning the recommendations of the Action Group and Local Government and Communities Committee into this Action Plan.

And as co-chairs of the Strategy Group we will oversee the delivery of this Plan which is our collective commitment for a joint programme of systematic change.

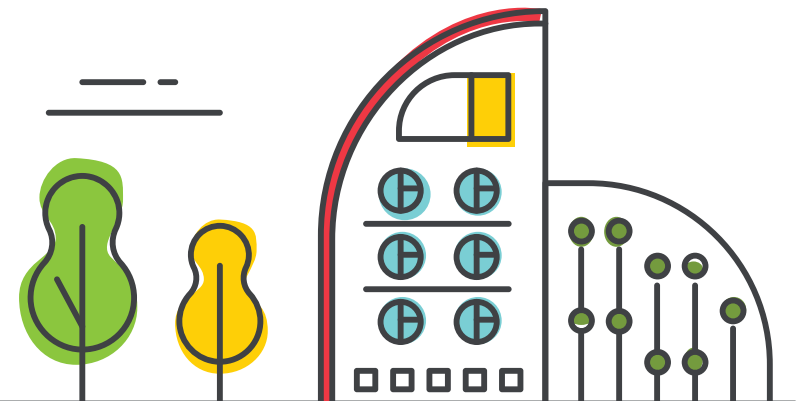
Our ambition is high and our determination to achieve is resolute. We can and will end homelessness together.



**Kevin Stewart MSP**  
Minister for Local Government,  
Housing & Planning



**Cllr Elena Whitham**  
COSLA Spokesperson for  
Community Wellbeing



# The importance of lived experience

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**Everything starts and ends with the voice of lived experience,** grounded in responding to homeless people with dignity and respect.

*Aye We Can*<sup>3</sup> reports the findings of a programme of engagement with 425 people across Scotland to gain insight into their direct experiences of homelessness. These are the issues that matter to them:

The best way to end homelessness is to **stop it happening in the first place.**

Having **a safe affordable home of your own** in an area you want to live is an absolute priority for people. To achieve this, there needs to be enough affordable housing for everyone that needs it and the private rented sector should be safe and secure.

It can be very difficult for people to live in bed and breakfast accommodation, particularly when they have multiple needs as it's harder to maintain recovery or avoid reoffending.

Services need to be organised in such a way that people experiencing homelessness can expect an urgent and person-centred response. Responses must be housing-led with access to local support, making sure a safe, secure home with support is provided as soon as possible.

Staff need to be **well informed and, where necessary, well trained** in responding to trauma, addictions and mental ill-health. Staff should be supported to develop skills and adopt values of being understanding, approachable and adaptable, in order to work alongside people to build confidence, self-esteem and trusting relationships.

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**“I need to build up that trusting relationship with staff first before I feel ready to talk or accept support.”**

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**Family Homelessness Focus Group**

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/11/Aye\\_We\\_Can\\_Final\\_Report\\_2018-1.pdf](http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/11/Aye_We_Can_Final_Report_2018-1.pdf)



**Support** needs to be flexible and responsive to changes in individuals' circumstances and a focus on **transition periods** (e.g. leaving care, hospital, prison, military) should be used as an opportunity to prevent homelessness. We must make sure that support is available for everyone who needs it, including vulnerable children and young people.

**Collaboration** between joined-up services across physical and mental health, housing, addictions services and others, as well as people with lived experience of homelessness, is essential to designing and delivering effective services.

We need to get better at knowing **how many people** are actually homeless and using the information to deliver housing and support.

**We believe it is possible to end homelessness:** to become a country where rough sleeping is eradicated, and where everyone has a home that suits their needs.



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“There’s a lot of hidden rough sleeping in closes and sofa surfing.”

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Ayrshire and South Hub



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“We need personalised services – my two workers from housing and housing support have worked hard together and got me a good outcome.”

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Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders – Hub



# National Performance Framework

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In 2018 the Scottish Government and COSLA agreed a completely revised National Performance Framework<sup>4</sup> which was developed together with the people of Scotland to reflect our values as a nation and the aspirations we hold for our future.

Central to the National Performance Framework, and the delivery of this Action Plan, is the fundamental value that we are a society which treats all our people with kindness, dignity and compassion. Ensuring everyone has a safe, warm, secure home is a key part of making sure that value is central to our society.

In addition there are five Outcomes within the National Performance Framework which are fundamental to our ambition to end homelessness in Scotland. These focus on the importance of inclusive communities, respecting human rights, tackling poverty, education and safety:

- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so we can realise our full potential
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

Achieving our ambitions of ending homelessness will support, and be supported by, all of these important outcomes which is why they provide the basis for the Ending Homelessness Together vision which underpins this plan.

To end homelessness together we will **ensure a person-centred approach** is embedded across strategy and services; **increase our focus on preventing homelessness** from happening in the first place; **prioritise settled homes for all;** **increase investment to respond quickly** and effectively whenever homelessness happens; and **join up planning and resources** to prevent and tackle homelessness.

This Action Plan sets out the steps we will take together to achieve this vision, and end homelessness and rough sleeping.

<sup>4</sup> <http://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

# Homelessness vision:

Everyone has a home that meets their needs  
Homelessness is ended



**National Performance Framework: Our Values**

'We are a society which treats all our people with kindness, dignity and compassion...'

**To end homelessness we will:**

**Embed a person-centred approach**

- MY SUPPORT IS FLEXIBLE AND BUILDS ON MY STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES
- I ALWAYS HAVE CHOICE AND CONTROL
- I AM LISTENED TO, VALUED AND TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

**Prevent homelessness from happening in the first place**

- I CAN FIND SUPPORT QUICKLY IF I NEED IT, BEFORE REACHING CRISIS POINT
- I AM HELPED TO KEEP MY HOME, WHICH HELPS ME FOCUS ON OTHER GOALS
- MY HOUSING OPTIONS ARE CONSIDERED WHEN MY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE

**Join up planning and resources to tackle homelessness**

- I KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP
- I EXPECT SERVICES TO WORK TOGETHER, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ME
- I TRUST THAT THE RIGHT PEOPLE ARE INFORMED ABOUT MY NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES

**Respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens**

- I EXPECT MY HOUSING CRISIS TO BE RESPONDED TO WITH URGENCY
- THE HELP I GET IS RIGHT FOR ME, AND REDUCES THE RISK OF HOMELESSNESS HAPPENING AGAIN

**Prioritise settled homes for all**

- I CAN EXERCISE MY RIGHT TO ACCESS AND MAINTAIN A SAFE AND SECURE HOME
- I BUILD AND MAINTAIN POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND AM PART OF THE COMMUNITY

## National Performance Framework: Our Values

'We are a society which treats all our people with kindness, dignity and compassion...'



We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

We grow up loved, safe and respected so we can realise our full potential

We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

## Housing & Regeneration Outcomes Vision:

All people in Scotland live in high quality sustainable homes that they can afford and that meet their needs

### Well-functioning housing system:

- Availability and choice
- Homes people can afford
- Growth of supply

### High quality sustainable homes:

- Safe and warm
- Resource efficient
- Promote well-being

### Homes that meet people's needs:

- Accessing a home
- Keeping a home
- Supporting independent living

### Sustainable communities:

- Economically sustainable
- Physically sustainable
- Socially sustainable

## Homelessness vision:

Everyone has a home that meets their needs

Homelessness is ended

- Homelessness is only ever rare, brief, and non-recurrent due to effective prevention and rapid response when people have become homeless or are at risk of homelessness
  - Homelessness is not caused by policies that impact on the people of Scotland
- Where temporary accommodation is required it is for emergency or very specific reasons only; it is of a high standard and it is fit for the specific purpose required
  - Nobody sleeps rough

Embed a person-centred approach

Prevent homelessness from happening in the first place

Join up planning and resources to tackle homelessness

Respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens

Prioritise settled homes for all

# Actions we will take



## We will end homelessness by embedding a person-centred approach across our public services

We have good evidence on the impact of societal and policy factors driving homelessness, but there is no single path into homelessness, or out of it, and resolving a person’s housing needs requires a personalised, tailored response.

This is why a person-centred approach must be central to our plans both to significantly improve the experience of homeless people, and to bring about the systemic change needed to end homelessness.

Table 1<sup>5</sup> shows that of the 28,792 households assessed as homeless in 2017-18, 13,504 (47%) cited having one or more support needs. This proportion has increased by 3 percentage points since 2016-17 and 13 percentage points since 2013-14.

**Table 1: Identified Support Needs of Homeless Households Scotland 2017-18**

Support need	2017-18
Mental health problem	6,672
Learning disability	808
Physical disability	1,505
Medical condition	2,815
Drug or alcohol dependency	3,303
Basic housing management/independent living skills	6,348
<b>Where at least one support need identified</b>	<b>13,504</b>

“the evidence shows that ... structural preconditions for severe and multiple deprivation [including homelessness] clearly interact with family and individual level sources of disadvantage – including childhood trauma and very poor educational experiences – to render some people at far greater risk of severe and multiple deprivation than others living in similar circumstances of material deprivation and poverty.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Source: Scottish Homelessness Statistics <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

<sup>6</sup> *Hard Edges: mapping severe and multiple disadvantage in England* (2015) Bramley, G; Fitzpatrick, S; Edwards, J; Ford, D; Johnsen, S; Sosenko, F; Watkins, D (Heriot Watt University) <https://pureapps2.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/7906947>



The *Aye We Can* programme which supported the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group consulted with more than 400 people who had been, or were currently, homeless to understand what they wanted to see change, and what would have helped better support them.

Carrying this forward into delivery of the Action Group's recommendations will require a new focus on listening and responding to the voices of those with lived experience of homelessness. It means ensuring that our services are organised around the person, with greater choice and control over what happens to them. It also means revisiting our legislation to remove all barriers to people accessing support. We must ensure that the frontline workers working directly with people experiencing homelessness, who often have the deepest insight into people's needs, are well-resourced and supported through training and access to the right resources. It will require a workforce built on shared values of respect and understanding, and empowered to act in the best interests

of the homeless person they are working with, to ensure that people have a greater degree of choice and control in resolving their housing and wider needs.

Too many people experiencing homelessness feel the sting of shame or stigma associated with becoming homeless, which can cause a delay in seeking help, a reluctance to ask or continue to ask for help, and a feeling of isolation and disconnection from society. This is both unfair and unhelpful in supporting people to tackle the root causes driving their homelessness. That is why the way we design our systems should enable people experiencing homelessness to access support and services within ordinary settings and mainstream services, rather than ones specifically labelled as being for 'homeless' people.

That is also why our actions to embed a person-centred approach must also include efforts to change the conversation around homelessness and people experiencing homelessness, through a public perceptions campaign to highlight the root causes and drivers of homelessness,

including poverty and isolation and promoting the importance of social connections as an important mechanism to tackle and end homelessness.

## **Actions we will take:**

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### **We will develop an Ending Homelessness Together lived experience programme.**

This will support a continued conversation through which we will listen and respond to people with lived experience throughout the implementation and further development of this Action Plan, and to make sure that the actions we take are leading to real change and improvement for the people these services are for.

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**We will give people experiencing homelessness greater control and choice.**

In 2019 we will explore policy options on how personal housing plans will work alongside the Housing Options approach in order to give people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness clarity and control over their housing choices and work with them to build a package of support that will lead to positive future outcomes. These plans will be at the heart of the response to individuals at risk of homelessness, and will be sensitive to all forms of inequality, as well as financial hardship as an additional aspect to ensure that no one is pushed into further poverty or destitution through efforts to address housing needs. Thereafter, we will incorporate a personal housing plan model into the updated Code of Guidance which will include practical advice to facilitate widespread implementation.

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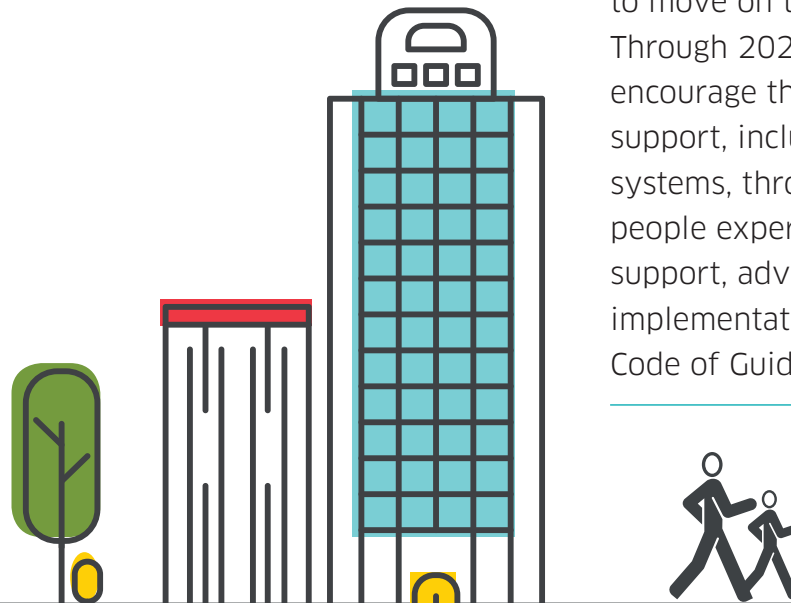
**Where children are homeless, we will ensure a wellbeing assessment is undertaken in relation to each child in the household to make certain that any additional learning or social support is put in place.** We will work with local authorities and partners, as well as people with lived experience, to establish how to best deliver these assessments and the required support to improve outcomes for children and families experiencing homelessness, and will incorporate practical advice for local authorities into the revised Code of Guidance.

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**We will provide support to ensure everyone is able to access housing, with additional support for choice-based letting systems.** We want to ensure that landlords work with people to identify the best outcomes for the household within the context of allocations frameworks. In 2019 we will organise an event for local authorities and housing providers to share best practice and consider the development of choice-based letting systems or other approaches across Scotland and further open up options for homeless people to enable them to move on to settled accommodation. Through 2020-23 we will continue to encourage the adoption and rollout of support, including for choice-based letting systems, throughout Scotland that provide people experiencing homelessness with support, advice and advocacy, formalising implementation advice into an updated Code of Guidance.

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**We will listen to front-line staff and resource and support them to prevent and end homelessness.**

The definition of front-line workers reaches beyond housing and homelessness and should incorporate outreach and day centre workers, health and social workers, NHS, police and prison staff, community safety personnel, Department for Work and Pension staff including Job Centre Plus, and food access points among others. Our leaders need to promote a culture of kindness and compassion and enable our workforce to be well informed and, where necessary, well trained in responding to trauma, addictions and mental ill-health. Frontline workers must be empowered to work alongside people to build confidence, self-esteem and trusting relationships. Our workforce must be supported to adopt values of being skilled, understanding, respectful, approachable and adaptable. We will ensure front-line staff are well equipped to carry out their work with

high quality training. We will ensure systems, policies and procedures empower front-line staff, placing resources in their hands which allow them to make the best decisions centred around the needs of the person in front of them. Through 2019 we will work with expert practitioners, housing providers, local authorities and other public bodies to determine the actions needed to support front-line staff to best support them in their work with people experiencing homelessness, which will inform the development of a national model for outreach to be further developed in 2020-23. This will include consideration of how to ensure they can secure rapid access to the services and resources needed to meet the needs of the person. This will be supported by the development of the Housing Options Training Toolkit, with the first modules of the toolkit expected to be delivered in April 2019.

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**We will produce a public perceptions campaign in collaboration with local authorities, the third sector and people with lived experience to challenge misconceptions about homelessness.**

This will highlight what the evidence tells us about root causes and drivers of homelessness – and why this means an end to homelessness can be achieved. This campaign will be aimed at changing the conversation around homelessness, both among the general public and across public sector service provision, particularly those staff working in local government. Drawing on existing evidence (such as the Frameworks Institute framing of homelessness<sup>7</sup>) and following evaluation of initial public awareness activity during 2019 we will assess what further activity is needed to shift public perceptions and build the groundswell of wide support needed to bring about a sustainable end to homelessness and rough sleeping.

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7 Finding a Better Frame: How to Create More Effective Messages on Homelessness in the United Kingdom (2017) Frameworks <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/services-and-interventions/finding-a-better-frame-how-to-create-more-effective-messages-on-homelessness-in-the-united-kingdom-2017/>



## We will end homelessness by preventing it from happening to people in the first place

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In recent years, a shift has been under way in homelessness services towards a greater focus on preventing homelessness, alongside efforts to support those who are already homeless. It is vital that we build on this progress to secure even greater efforts to prevent homelessness before it occurs, and to act quickly when it does happen to prevent the situation worsening and leading to a cycle of repeat homelessness for that person.

The evidence shows us that some groups of people are at particular risk of homelessness.<sup>8</sup> We want to see a step change in the prevention of homelessness, so we must design our systems across housing and wider public services to minimise the chance of those at risk

becoming homeless, and to maximise the opportunity to put the right support in place for the right people at the right time.

Analysis of pathways into homelessness and associated forms of severe and multiple disadvantage<sup>9</sup> concluded that:

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**“Perhaps the most significant policy implications of this research relates to homelessness prevention ... prevention interventions should focus on earlier signs of distress wherever possible, with schools, drug and alcohol services and the criminal justice system likely to come into contact with people vulnerable to ... homelessness well before housing and homelessness services do.”**

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<sup>8</sup> The HARSAG recommendations state that “Evidence suggests this would include:

- People leaving public institutions such as prison, mental health services, armed forces;
- People with previous experience of public institutions such as prison, mental health services, armed forces;
- Groups with particular needs such as women who have experienced domestic violence, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, people experiencing relationship breakdown, LGBT groups and people with experience of the care system or on leaving the care system;
- People who have experienced or are experiencing poverty and/or adverse childhood experiences; and
- Those facing potential eviction from the private rented sector, or the social rented sector including particular approaches on rent arrears.”

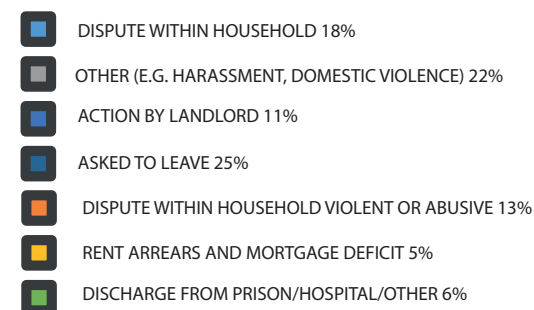
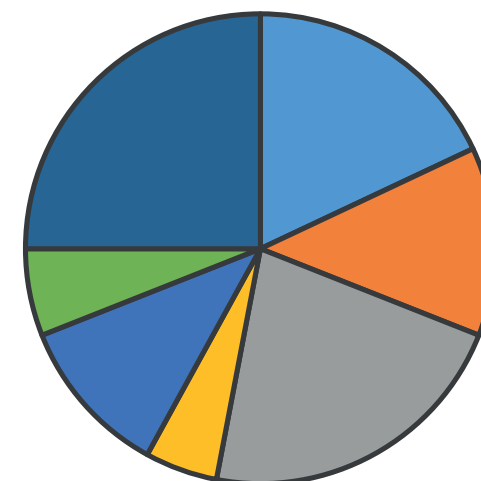
<sup>9</sup> *Pathways into Multiple-Exclusion Homelessness in Seven UK Cities* (2013) Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Glen Bramley and Sarah Johnsen – *Journal of Urban Studies*

**Adverse childhood experiences increase the risk of homelessness in adult life. Scottish Government commitments<sup>10</sup> to preventing and reducing the impact of adverse childhood experiences are critical in preventing homelessness:**

1. Providing inter-generational support for parents, families and children to prevent ACEs
2. Reducing the negative impact of ACEs for children and young people
3. Developing adversity and trauma-informed workforce and services
4. Increasing societal awareness and supporting action across communities

As Chart 2<sup>11</sup> shows, people make homelessness applications for a variety of reasons. Being asked to leave is one of the main causes of homelessness applications (25%). Dispute within the household (and relationship breakdown) is another key driver of homelessness.

**Chart 2: Reasons for Homelessness**  
**Main reason for making a homelessness application (2017-2018 statistics)**



10 Programme for Government 2018-19 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivering-today-investing-tomorrow-governments-programme-scotland-2018-19/>

11 Source: Scottish Homelessness Statistics <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

**Chart 3: Prior housing circumstances of applications 2016-17 and -18**

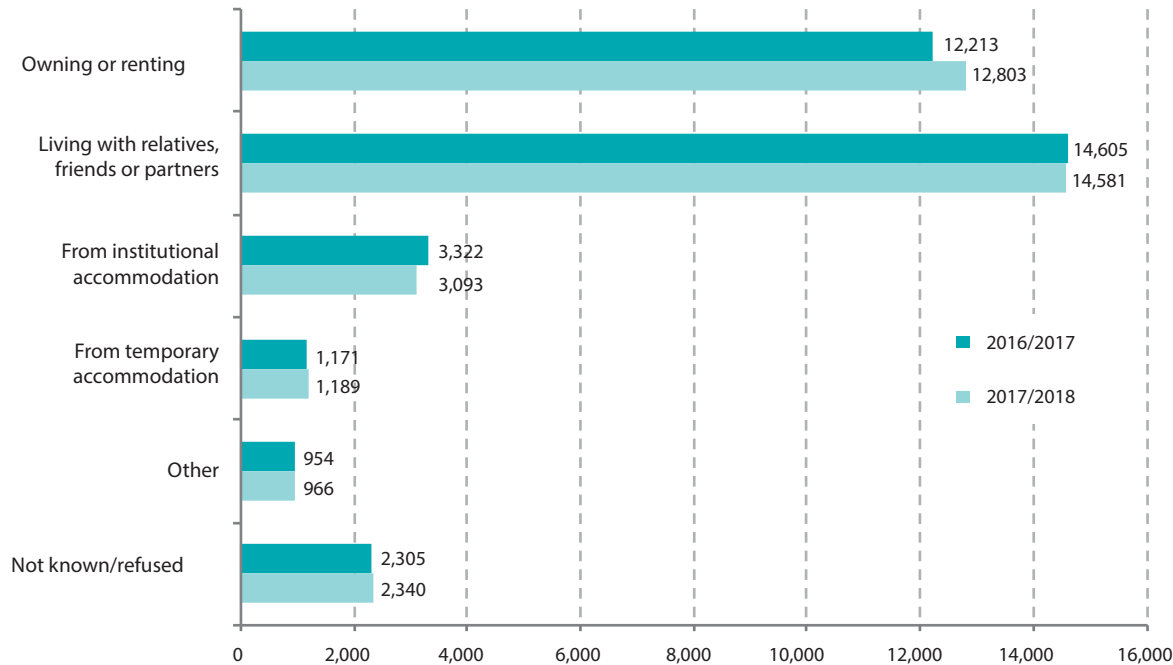


Chart 3<sup>12</sup> further illustrates the range of experience people have prior to making a homelessness application.

We have heard from those with experience of homelessness that to be effective, prevention must include a close look at transitions (e.g. leaving care, leaving hospital, leaving prison, military) and at how we support people to maintain a tenancy when a tenant is vulnerable (e.g. avoiding homelessness for women and children experiencing domestic abuse) or when challenges arise (e.g. rent arrears, anti-social behaviour).

One of the most powerful tools in preventing homelessness across our population is to continue to ensure a strong supply of affordable housing, in the right places and with the right infrastructure to support communities and individuals alike to flourish.

12 Source: Scottish Homelessness Statistics <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

Similarly, an adequate system of social security, which provides the safety net to ensure that everyone is able to meet their housing costs alongside other needs is crucial to prevent rent arrears and financial difficulty leading to homelessness for those on low incomes.

Much good practice already exists and it will be important to build on this and help great ideas spread throughout the country. A cultural change will be needed in some places, and ensuring that prevention is embedded as a defining principle of our system will support this. That is why we will develop a wide-reaching prevention duty, as a legal backstop to ensure the change needed happens everywhere and to ensure it is sustained over time.

## **Actions we will take:**

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### **We will develop preventative pathways for the groups at highest risk of rough sleeping and homelessness.**

During 2019 we will review the evidence and identify the timetable and process for the design and implementation of preventative pathways for each high-risk group. Where pathways have already been developed, such as the SHORE standards (Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone) for people leaving prison, we will support local authorities and delivery partners in their implementation. Through 2020-23, pathways will be developed and implemented with consideration of the groups at highest risk of rough sleeping and the highest proportion of people who become homeless. We will target our efforts in accordance with evidence, seeking to develop and share good practice that already exists. We recognise that effective prevention of homelessness must recognise the particular needs of people, mainly women and children, fleeing domestic

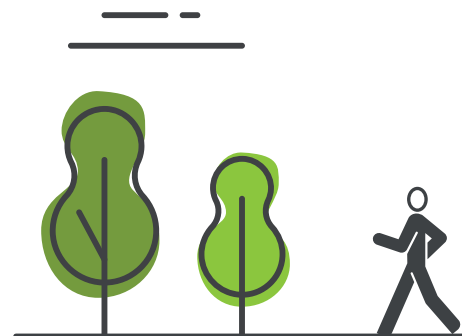
abuse. We will seek to adopt housing advice, Housing Options and housing management actions to avoid homelessness for families in this situation. This will build on the ongoing work with the Chartered Institute of Housing and Scottish Women's Aid. We will work with people with lived experience across at risk groups to ensure we are working towards solutions tailored for specific groups that will prevent people from becoming homeless.

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### **We will ensure a clear, effective focus on preventing and responding effectively to youth homelessness.**

Rapid rehousing transition plans will be required to respond appropriately to the needs of young people experiencing homelessness, and include the planning and development of pathways and a range of affordable housing options and associated supports for young people. We will ensure the consistent application of the Staying Put provision for care leavers and effective implementation of the Scottish Government *Missing Person's Framework*.

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**We will increase the focus on sustaining tenancies ensuring that support is available for those who need it.**

Preventing people from losing their home will be a priority in our efforts to end homelessness and rough sleeping. An important way of doing this is ensuring the right tenancy sustainment support is available at the right time. We will work with the Scottish Housing Regulator to understand the current position on the housing support duty, and we will audit current expectations, delivery and plans for tenancy sustainment as a part of rapid rehousing transition plans. This will inform the development of best practice/an action plan to maximise tenancy sustainment, working with the Scottish Housing Regulator. Tenancy sustainment forms part of the rapid rehousing transition plans that each local authority is working on, and we will identify ways to work with social housing providers to use all opportunities to support housing sustainment, and we will take a specific focus on how similar approaches could be applied in the private rented sector. We will specify expectations resulting from this work in the Code of Guidance.

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**We will work with local authorities to identify how to make homelessness assessments more flexible.**

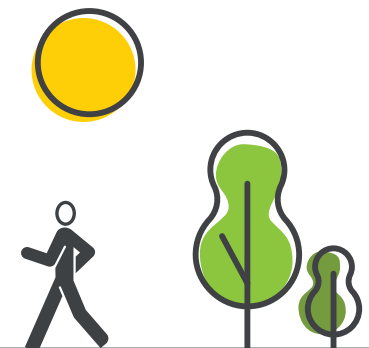
In 2019 we will work with local authorities to develop plans to make it as easy as possible for people to access their right to assistance. We want to ensure that everyone in need of accessing homelessness services is able to access those services in a way that fits with their needs. While the statutory duty for assessments will remain with local authorities, this may include how homelessness services for those in greatest need can be provided in the places where people are being supported and feel secure, as well as finding alternative ways to reach people who are not currently being supported and are vulnerable. We will explore ways that local authorities can be supported to discharge their statutory function through partnership with housing associations and the wider public sector and third sector.

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**We will embed a ‘no wrong door’ approach.**

We will lead the cultural and systemic changes required to ensure local authorities, housing providers, delivery partners and public bodies (such as housing providers; prisons; care services; health services and the police) work together to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping at every opportunity. We will seek to build links between front-line service providers across public services to ensure they understand they need to be part of the solution to solving homelessness for people, what actions they can take, and how this can contribute to key outcomes in their service areas.

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**We will continue to invest in a strong, affordable and social housing supply.**

Through 2019 we will ensure that homelessness prevention and exiting homelessness are treated as key drivers in the development of the Beyond 2021 Housing Strategy, to ensure that the levels of affordable housing and the housing supply mix helps support a rapid rehousing approach as an integral part of a longer term housing strategy. In 2020-21 we will continue to invest in housing supply as we work towards our target of building 50,000 affordable homes in the course of this Parliament, of which 35,000 will be for social rent. Going forward, the development of the rapid rehousing transition plans will identify specific pressures on the supply of properties for people experiencing homelessness to move into and we will use the information to help steer future supply policy.

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**In partnership between local and national government and the wider sector we will continue to push the UK Government to reverse the changes to the welfare system they have introduced that put people at risk of homelessness.**

This includes continuing to pursue the UKG on issues including addressing the calculation of Local Housing Allowance; the Benefit Cap, the benefit freeze and halting the roll out of Universal Credit until it is fixed, as well as seeking their support to help us mitigate the bedroom tax and ultimately abolish it at source. We recognise these issues amongst others can all contribute to debt, hardship and risk tenancies – for example the in-built minimum five-week delay in receiving a first UC payment.

In 2019 we will undertake a full analysis of the HARSAG recommendations on changes to the UK welfare system policy and delivery. Recognising that powers in this area are currently reserved, we will work collaboratively with DWP to maximise operational improvements to make sure that people experiencing

homelessness and those at the risk of homelessness are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

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**We will work with public bodies, housing providers and other partners to develop a new duty on local authorities, wider public bodies and delivery partners for the prevention of homelessness.**

This is a significant change and will require careful planning. In particular we need to ensure that a new duty does not undermine the strengths of the existing homelessness rights. We will learn from evaluation of prevention duties elsewhere and we will set out a timetable for our plans in 2019.

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# 3

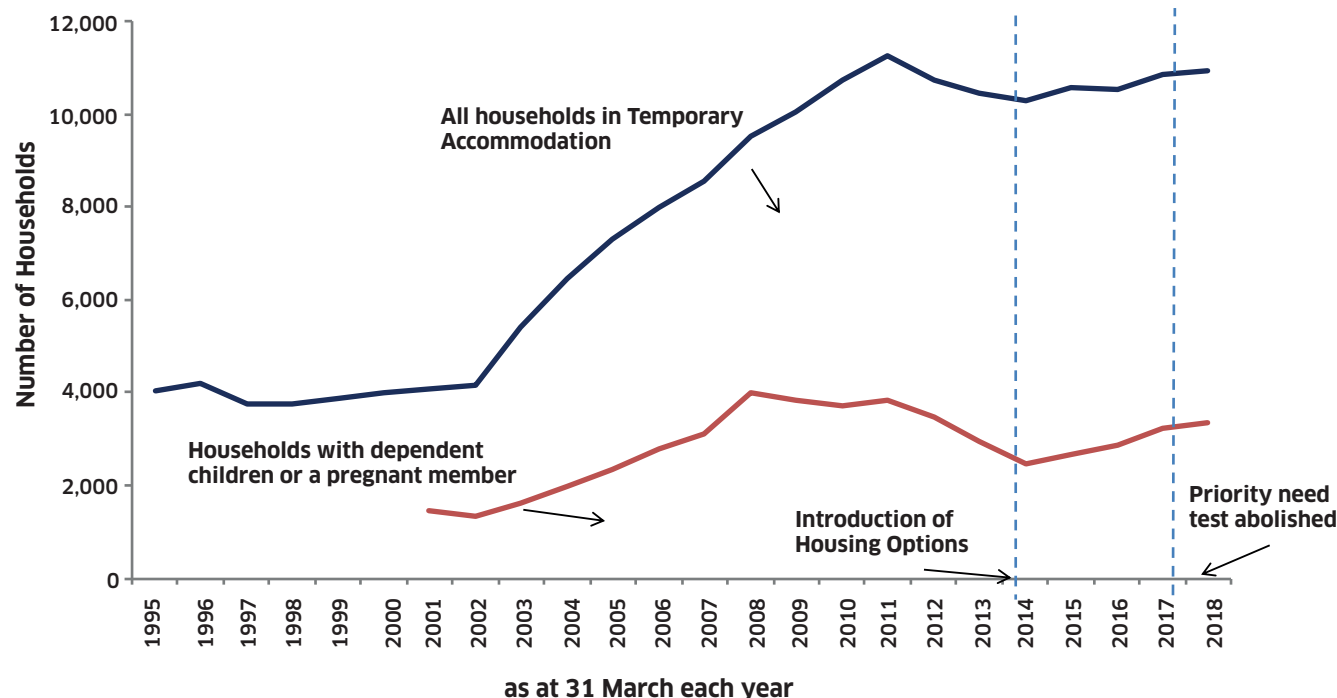
## We will end homelessness by prioritising settled housing for all

Homelessness is about so much more than housing, but having a settled home must be seen as a priority for supporting people to live their life with good health, wellbeing and a sense of community and belonging.

It is vital that we embed a housing-led response to homelessness supported by strong partnerships with other public services, and to recognise the importance of settled housing as the foundation for a person to tackle an array of challenges including poverty, addictions, mental health, physical health, learning disability, employment, and avoiding offending and reoffending.

There has been an overall rise of numbers in temporary accommodation since 2002 (see Chart 4<sup>13</sup>). The number has gradually increased between 2002 and 2011 and this increase was linked to local authorities preparing for the abolition of priority need in December 2012, as required by the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003. Since 2010, this figure has remained relatively stable. There were 10,933 households in temporary accommodation at 31 March 2018.

**Chart 4: Households in Temporary Accommodation at 31 March each year**



13 Source: Scottish Homelessness Statistics <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

Getting it right in prioritising settled housing for all will make a significant contribution to the person centred approach and is an important part of prevention. Transforming temporary accommodation and ensuring a continued supply of affordable housing will be crucial to rewire the system, and enable a prioritisation of settled housing for all. We want to see a significant shift towards rapid rehousing by default, including Housing First for those it is appropriate for.

Housing First provides ordinary, settled housing as a first response for people with multiple needs. This includes people who have a range of experiences including childhood and early years trauma, domestic abuse, mental ill health, addictions as well as time spent in local authority care or prison. Housing First recognises a safe, secure home is the best base for recovery and for addressing any other issues in your life.



Where homelessness cannot be prevented, rapid rehousing by default means that:

- Someone who is homeless or rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping should be housed in settled, mainstream accommodation that meets their needs as quickly as possible
- Someone who has complex needs and is homeless or rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping should be housed in settled, mainstream accommodation that meets their needs – with wraparound support in line with Housing First principles – as quickly as possible
- Someone who is homeless or rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping for whom rapid rehousing or Housing First would not yet be suitable<sup>14</sup> should be provided with accommodation that deals with their particular needs with the specialist support that is required

Work on rapid rehousing is already well under way, with every local authority expected to submit a rapid rehousing transition plan by the end of 2018. The research, guidance and toolkit<sup>15</sup> produced on behalf of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group have provided the framework for this activity. The Rapid Rehousing sub-group of the Homelessness

Prevention and Strategy Group will provide leadership and support to ensure we achieve the shift we want to see to rapid rehousing by default, including the scale up of Housing First, and more specialist support options for those who need it, providing additional capacity to support local areas in this process.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Either because they do not want to move into mainstream accommodation, or because they have such a severe set of needs that they cannot safely be rehoused in mainstream accommodation

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ghn.org.uk/rapid-rehousing-transition-plan/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-prevention-and-strategy-group/>

By 2023 our aim is to have transformed the landscape of temporary accommodation, ensuring that significantly fewer people spend time in temporary accommodation; and that those who do require temporary accommodation spend significantly less time there before moving on to an appropriate settled home, with the support they need in place from day one. We must ensure the right support is in place for people and households who may need temporary accommodation, and we must recognise when this needs to be in place from even before the tenancy commences to ensure that supports such as benefits, furniture and services are in place from the start.



## **Actions we will take:**

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**We will ensure a national shift towards rapid rehousing by default, including Housing First, to prevent homelessness by prioritising settled housing for all. Every local authority will submit a rapid rehousing transition plan (RRTP) by the end of 2018.** These five year transition plans are scheduled to be delivered from April 2019 and all plans will include an equalities impact assessment, to be finalised by March 2019, which will cover all protected characteristics, and additionally assess impact according to socio-economic status. Planning for the shift to rapid rehousing will be supported by £2 million of central funding, and leadership from the Rapid Rehousing sub-group. This will report into the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group who are overseeing the overall implementation of this Action Plan. Changes have been made to the Local Housing Strategy guidance to ensure rapid rehousing and the associated plans are part of the strategic planning framework, along with Strategic Housing Investment Plans.

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**We will work with local areas to support the transition. By April 2019, all 32 LA RRTPs will be evaluated and feedback will be provided to local areas.** This will include confirmation of the distribution of the £15 million being made available to support the implementation of the plans from the five-year Ending Homelessness Together Fund. Throughout 2019 we will work with local authorities and delivery partners to review and support the implementation process, and assist with the changes required to system and culture as we move to adoption of the rapid rehousing approach as the working model in every part of Scotland. We will work with partners to share learning, identifying areas that require further evidence and work, as well as showcasing the approaches shown to achieve results. Key players in this will be the Housing options hubs.

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**We will work with each local area to support the required shift towards making Housing First available for people with multiple complex needs who are homeless or sleeping rough.** Each local rapid rehousing transition plan will include plans for Housing First provision, supporting this shift. When reviewing Transition Plans we will look at the evidence supporting the development of Housing First in local areas.

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**We will support five Housing First pathfinder cities.** As part of the shift required to have Housing First available for everyone who needs it, we are supporting five Housing First pathfinder cities, working in partnership with Social Bite, Glasgow Homelessness Network, Corra and local partners to secure up to 830 Housing First placements between December 2018 and March 2022. Interim and formal evaluation of the Housing First pathfinders will provide new evidence of what works well for a Housing First approach in the Scottish context by 2021. We will ensure learning

from both the pathfinder cities and those areas who already have Housing First is shared across all local authorities as they develop Housing First provision in their own context from April 2019, in line with their rapid rehousing transition plans. The Pathfinders are being supported by money raised by Social Bite, combined with up to £6.5 million of resources over three years from the Ending Homelessness Together Fund and money for addictions from the health portfolio of the Scottish Government.

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**We will seek partnership with health and justice bodies as we embed a Housing First approach for people with multiple complex needs across health, housing and justice** to understand the wider impact and reach agreements on a partnership approach. This will include work with public health to deliver the new addictions strategy; and supporting the work of the Health and Justice collaborative in the Scottish Government.

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**We will support the development of a wider range of options for a settled home so that people housed in temporary accommodation in emergency situations are helped to find a housing solution that works well for them.** In 2019 we will highlight best practice examples from rapid rehousing transition plans and share amongst local authorities, and we will create opportunities for local authorities and RSLs (Registered Social Landlords) to promote diversification of move on options. We will work with housing options hubs to consider what changes in local and national policy will help facilitate people in moving into the private rented sector, including consideration of the potential role for social lettings agencies, rent deposit schemes and ‘help to rent’ schemes. We will identify the areas who have had success in allowing people to remain in temporary accommodation on a permanent basis and address any barriers that are preventing this from happening quickly. We will update the Code of Guidance to ensure that regular review

periods of housing and associated support are conducted to identify early options for move on.

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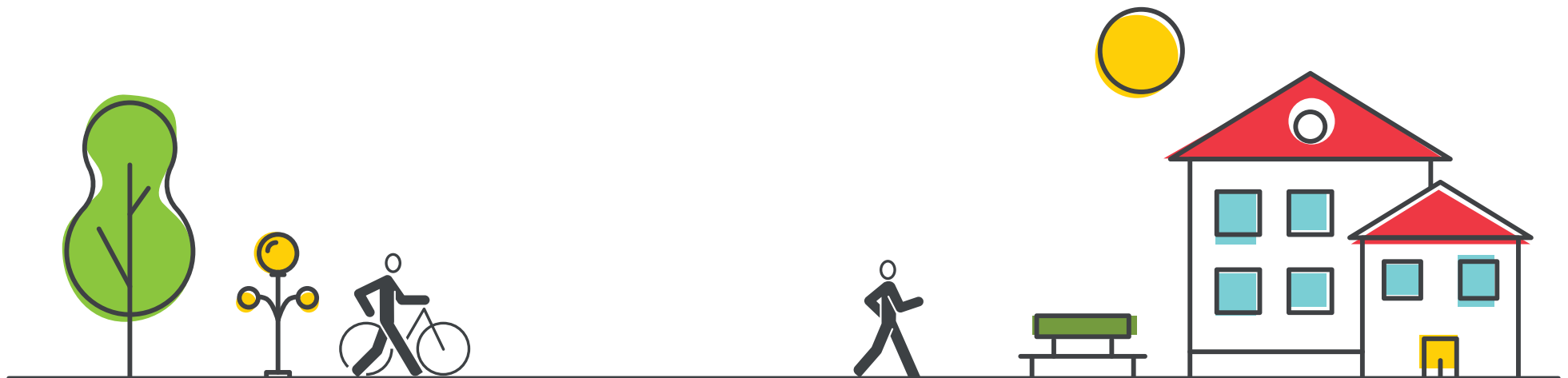
**We will assess the impacts of providing a wide range of options in different local authority areas.** We encourage the ability to choose the private rented sector, community hosting and sharing options and identifying and removing barriers that discourage adoption.

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**We will develop a new funding framework for temporary accommodation.** In 2019 we will undertake robust analysis of data gathered from local authorities on the funding of temporary accommodation, also taking account of the data gathered as part of the development of rapid rehousing transition plans. This will support discussions between national and local government in Scotland and the UK Government to explore how the data we have gathered can help develop models for funding temporary accommodation in Scotland. This will be shaped by the extent that financial responsibility rests with Scottish Government and Scottish local

authorities. By November 2021, we aim to have developed and implemented changes to the existing funding model. We want to achieve a funding model which helps to tackle poverty by lowering rents and provide people with the opportunity to access employment, training or education as well as supporting rapid move on to a safe, settled home that meets their needs. Through 2022-23 we will evaluate the impacts of the revised model and adjust and refine accordingly, ensuring that the system is not disadvantaging particular individuals and groups and is supporting people to improve outcomes.

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# 4

## We will end homelessness by responding quickly and effectively whenever it happens

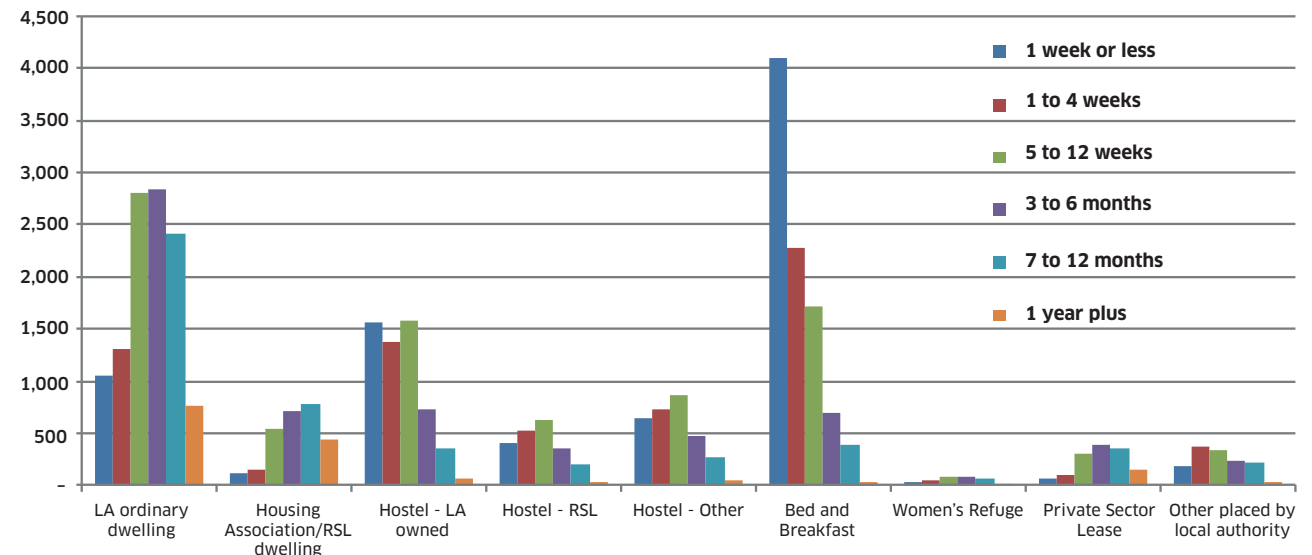
While we will focus our efforts on preventing homelessness to a far greater extent, when homelessness does occur an effective response is crucial to safeguard people and to prevent a worsening of the issues which caused the homelessness in the first place. This is particularly true of individuals who are, or who are at risk of, rough sleeping.

Understanding the circumstances which have led someone to become homeless and getting the right support and resources in place to respond to their needs quickly will be a crucial part of our actions to end homelessness. To improve the quality and availability of evidence on homelessness in Scotland, informing an effective response, we will improve the collection and sharing of information to facilitate support.

Chart 5<sup>17</sup> shows that across temporary accommodation placements which ended during 2017-18, the average length of stay can vary by accommodation type. Local authority, housing association and private sector placements are likely to involve longer periods (i.e. three months or longer).

**Chart 5: Duration in Temporary Accommodation by placement type**

*Based on the duration of individual placements that ended during 2017-18*



17 Source: Scottish Homelessness Statistics <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

Most hostel placements last 12 weeks or less. Bed and breakfast placements tend to be much shorter in length (most placements fall in the one week or less category); nonetheless, the chart shows that in some cases, such placements last for longer than seven months and in some cases, over a year.

Front-line workers perform a vital role, often being in a position to have a clear understanding of people's needs and the barriers they are facing. We want to ensure that all front-line workers are empowered to act in the best interest of the homeless person they are working with, and in some cases this will involve revisiting and revising the systems and processes in place to ensure we reorganise around the needs of the individual. Alongside housing, health and social care needs, it is important that financial hardship is addressed. We will work with front-line homeless caseworkers to understand what a reasonable caseload is that will allow the enhanced interaction with clients to deliver the best possible outcomes.

Planning for winter 2018-19 is well underway, informed by learning from winter 2017-18, with a focus on actions that will have the greatest impact. Given that we know that rough sleeping and homelessness have a significant impact on people's health, wellbeing and life chances in all seasons it is important that this work channels into the development and implementation of a national model of empowered front-line outreach which would be in place all year round.

Part of being empowered to act in the best interests of a person experiencing homelessness is in having a range of accommodation options to meet their needs. Sometimes this is about rapid rehousing, sometimes it is about being able to access specialist, supported accommodation and appropriate health, social care and housing support. Where there is evidence of the effectiveness of particular models for particular groups – such as Nightstop and other community hosting models for young people, and Housing First for those with multiple, complex needs – we will seek to support the expansion of this offer to all areas.

We will remove the legislative barriers to people accessing the help they need when and where they need it by revising arrangements on local connection and intentionality.

If we are to achieve our collective ambitions for everyone in Scotland to have a home that meets their needs, and to end homelessness, we must understand and address the needs of those who have been deemed to have no recourse to public funds and have become destitute as a result.





## Actions we will take:

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**We will support front-line practitioners to develop and implement a national model of empowered front-line outreach throughout 2019 and 2020.** We will ensure the views of people with lived experience, and the views of those who commission services, drive this process alongside the expertise and experience of front-line practitioners. Through training, access to resources and a focus on personalised housing plans this will also equip front-line workers to deploy the right evidence-based interventions, focused on people moving sustainably out of homelessness as the key outcome.

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**We will develop training and support for staff working across the wider front-line.** While our initial focus will be on front-line staff working in housing and homelessness support and outreach services, it is our ambition to work with colleagues across the public sector – and particularly with health, justice and

social work – to develop and implement appropriate training and support for all those who come into contact with people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness.

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**We will continue to support local winter planning.** We will work with the group of practitioner experts convened in Autumn 2018 to develop an improved response to safeguard people sleeping rough, or at risk, in our cities and urban centres this winter, building on learning from Winter 2017-18. This will include provision of SG funding, with the aim of responding to immediate needs this year and seeing a decline in need for next year as our wider changes start to take effect.

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**We will explore ways of providing effective support to people engaged in street begging.** Recognising that, while not necessarily rough sleeping or homeless, those involved in street begging or other street-based activity are also likely to need support with their housing and will be, almost without exception, extremely

vulnerable, we will review support available, with a view to developing a national approach as part of the wider work to develop a national model of effective, empowered front-line outreach. We will work with partners in community justice to develop this work.

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**We will continue to press the UK Government to address issues relating to migrant homelessness.** We want to ensure that nobody sleeps rough or becomes homeless due to their migration or social security status, or because they have moved to Scotland. We will explore what is possible within devolved competence across local and national government, and building on this we will develop the wider national model of front-line outreach to ensure personalised support relevant to the needs of migrant people experiencing homelessness is available and we will also seek relevant changes to social security system.

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**We will continue to explore what measures can be put in place to prevent rough sleeping and homelessness for those without recourse to public funds.**

Scottish Government, COSLA and other partners will continue to work together to respond to the findings from the Equalities and Human Rights Committee report on destitution and support the delivery of an anti-destitution strategy, covering people with no recourse to public funds. This strategy will seek to mitigate the impacts of destitution and homelessness. While there are limited powers for the Scottish Government to mitigate the impact of immigration legislation which is a source of destitution and homelessness for this group, we want to prevent rough sleeping and homelessness for everyone and we will continue to pursue solutions.

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**We will seek to work with the UK Government to clarify the protection to be afforded to those without recourse to public funds.**

We will clarify in the updated Homelessness Code of Guidance the role and responsibility of local authorities to support people who are deemed to have no access to public funds – drawing on the updated Scottish guidance on no recourse to public funds which is currently being developed. The Scottish Government has agreed to support training and dissemination activities in early 2019 to promote the new guidance to key audiences, particularly front-line staff.

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**We will support local areas to develop a broader range of options for accommodation in crisis situations, including the development of community hosting.**

We want to ensure that nobody sleeps rough or becomes homeless because the right accommodation options are not available to them to meet their needs in a crisis situation. In particular, we want to ensure that those experiencing danger or trauma are able to access an immediate, emergency response to meet their needs. In Edinburgh, we have already seen a front-line organisation bringing forward options for emergency accommodation that will cater to the needs of women, including but not limited to those with experience of domestic violence, in response to feedback that this would help them feel safer accessing support. This intervention underlines the need to consider whether particular groups are well served by appropriate accommodation in crisis situations, and we will consider this further during 2019.

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**We will facilitate sharing of information during 2019 about how short-term community hosting can broaden options within local areas and provide support to local authorities.**

This will include exploring the impact of Nightstop, which is particularly tailored to support young people, in Scottish local authorities where it is already used. We will share experience and best practice as well as seeking evidence of cost savings and policy outcomes to encourage other areas to follow suit. Through 2020-2021 we will respond to this early work to explore best options to support the adoption and expansion of a version of Nightstop throughout Scotland. We will explore the potential for a model which includes Shared Lives placements, working in particular with health and social commissioners and providers on how this provision can support people with long term health conditions. By 2023 we will have developed best practice guides to allow all local authorities to facilitate Night Stop and Shared Lives placements

in their area, in partnership with health and social care provision where relevant, and as an embedded element of the locally developed rapid rehousing approach.

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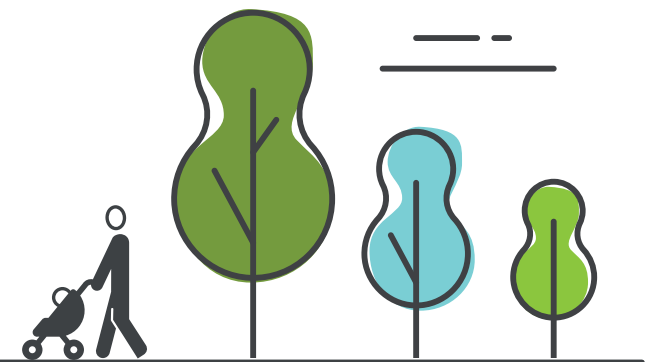
**We will publish an options appraisal for a new national rough sleeping data collection in 2019.**

We will also set out our next steps towards implementing a new data collection so that front-line workers have accurate information about rough sleepers locally and are able to respond to their needs and secure appropriate accommodation and support quickly. As recommended by HARSAG, we are exploring options for a system that enables real-time data sharing between agencies as well as regular reporting to support monitoring the reduction in rough sleeping across Scotland. This includes learning from systems used elsewhere, such as the CHAIN database in London, to understand the most effective approach for Scotland.

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**We will revise legislative arrangements on local connection and intentionality.**

We will commence the local connection and intentionality provisions in the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 in 2019, following consultation with stakeholders. Within 12 months after the commencement, we will publish a Ministerial Statement setting out the circumstances in which the power is to be exercised, as well as the criteria to be considered before using the power. We will amend current data collections as required to ensure we can measure the impact of the changes, and we will update the Code of Guidance.



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**We will develop options for the definition of intentionality to focus on ‘deliberate manipulation’ of the homelessness system.**

We will work with lawyers and stakeholders in 2019 to explore the most effective way of changing this focus. We will update the Code of Guidance to reflect any changes.

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**We will extend the Unsuited Accommodation Order, restricting time spent in unsuitable accommodation to seven days.**

We will review the implications of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans being developed for the end of 2018 by local authorities to inform the development of options for extending the seven-day restriction on time spent in unsuitable temporary accommodation to all people experiencing homelessness. In the course of 2019 we will consult on our plans to extend this restriction to all households experiencing homelessness and on the implementation timetable for the extension.

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**We will introduce the means to enforce and monitor standards for temporary accommodation in all tenures.**

Building on existing work, we will consult on and co-produce new standards for temporary accommodation with stakeholders, including, providers, commissioners and those with direct personal experience of living in temporary accommodation. These standards will ensure that any time spent in temporary accommodation causes minimal harm and disruption to people’s lives and supports them in getting back to a settled home that meets their needs. We will work with the Scottish Housing Regulator to explore options for enforcing new standards and we will review relevant data collections to ensure we can assess impact. We will publish and implement the new standards by 2023.

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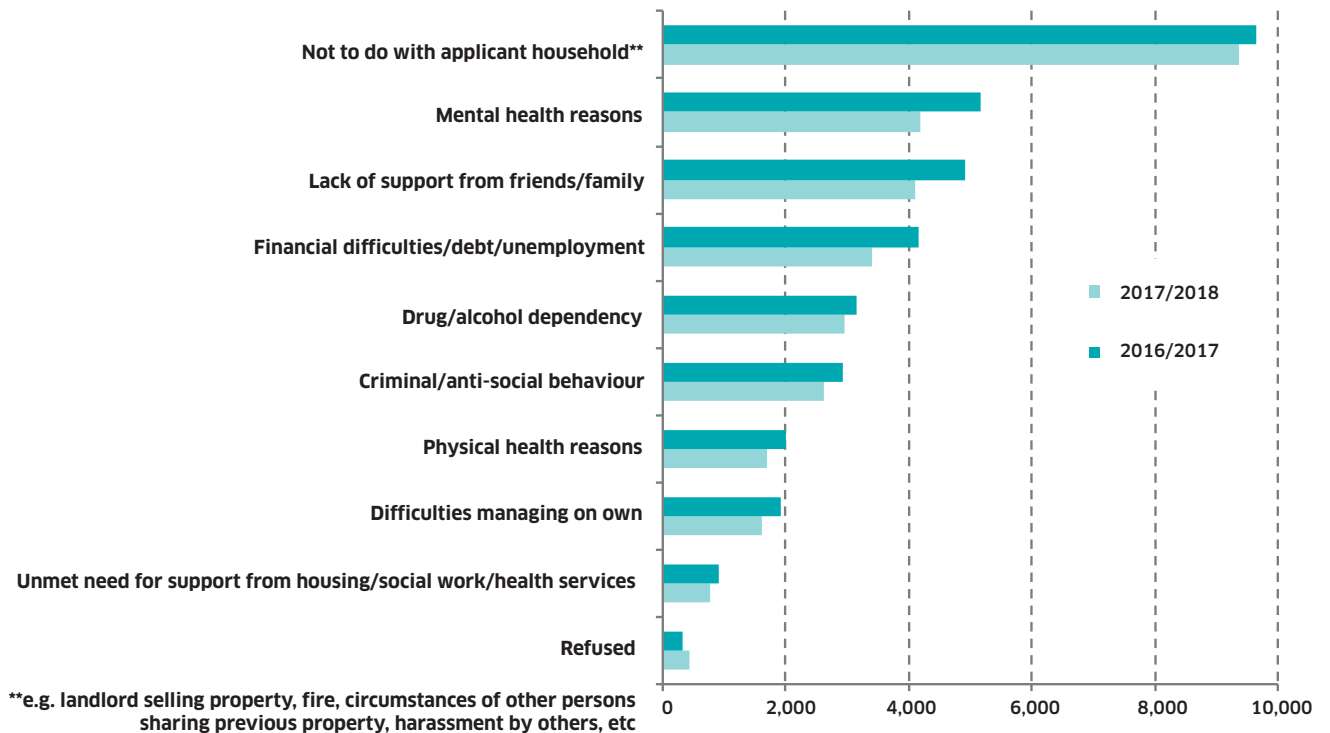
## We will end homelessness by joining up planning and resources

We must do more to ensure planning and resources are joined up around a person-centred approach, keeping the needs of the people the services are for at the forefront and talking more with each other about how to make this a reality.

The causes of homelessness can be complex and are often not the result of a single incident or event. 65% of applications cited a main reason for the application as well as additional reasons (22,646 out of 34,972 applications during 2017-18) (see Chart 6)<sup>18</sup>.

Forty-three per cent of those completing the question cited that their reason for homelessness was 'not to do with the applicant household'. This includes reasons such as the landlord selling the property, fire, circumstances of other persons sharing the property or harassment by others.

**Chart 6: Reason(s) for failing to maintain accommodation: Scotland**



18 Source: Scottish Homelessness Statistics <http://www.gov.scot/homelessstats>

Enabling the shift to prevention, and supporting quick, effective responses to housing crises, will both be best served by planning and working together effectively, both across housing partners and the wider third and public sector responsible for supporting vulnerable people. We must move to a position where the support that we commission is flexible, working well across traditional boundaries to ensure support responds to changes in individual's circumstances.

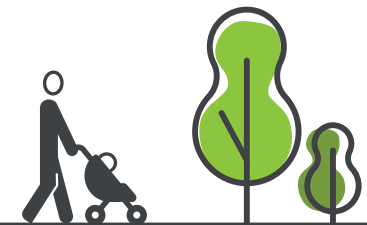
With an updated Code of Guidance and Code of Practice addendum to provide a clear framework to operate in, we must set out clear expectations for those working with people experiencing homelessness in terms of priorities, behaviours and outcomes.

The SHORE standards is an example of a powerful collaboration between the Scottish Prison Services and local authorities to develop joined up responses to solve homelessness which occurred when people are released from prison. These were published in November 2017 and local authorities and prisons are actively working to implement them in all areas. New partnerships are developing and people are recognising their shared role in preventing homelessness as well as how getting this right can contribute to reducing re-offending and results in benefits for Scottish society as a whole. It is still a work in progress and we recognise there is more to do to ensure implementation is effective everywhere, but it is right to shine a light on what can be achieved where services work together.

The Scottish Government's Health and Homelessness in Scotland research,<sup>19</sup> published on 19 June, brings into sharp relief what those working with people suffering from or at risk of homelessness have always known – that people's health and homelessness outcomes are closely intertwined. The research highlights opportunities for preventing homelessness and more effective targeting of resources:

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- **Increased interactions** with health services preceded people becoming homeless
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- **A peak in interactions** with health services was seen around the time of the first homelessness assessment
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19 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-homelessness-scotland/>



It is clear that effective joint working at all levels from leaders and policy developers to service commissioners and front-line staff will be necessary to develop a coordinated web of support with the individual's needs at the centre, based on the best available evidence of what works.

Meeting the needs of young people, including those with experience of the care system, is crucial. Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 was a game changer, but the true impact will be seen in implementation. The change needed is cultural and behavioural – young people have rights they did not have before but we need to do more to ensure they are always able to access them.

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## **Actions we will take:**

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### **We will ensure local authorities, housing providers and public bodies work together to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping at every opportunity.**

As part of the development of the prevention duty (see above), we will work with expert practitioners, public bodies and housing providers to develop the ways in which they can support those they come into contact with at an early stage to prevent them becoming at risk of homelessness. Our work on public perceptions will seek to draw in those in public services other than housing to explain the range of issues that can contribute to homelessness and help staff see more easily how they can join the dots for people.

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### **We will update the Code of Guidance.**

In 2019, following consultation and development with partners, we will publish a new, accurate and up-to-date version of the Code of Guidance reflecting current legislation and setting out a clear process for future updating of the Code. Future updates will follow in light of the significant wider changes set out in this five year plan, with the first update expected during 2021.

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### **We will confirm the legislative options for possible development of a Code of Practice addendum for the Code of Guidance.**

We will commence engagement in 2019-2020 with stakeholders to design the content, delivery and enforcement that will best support our efforts to end homelessness and keep people at the centre of our action. We will confirm our planned approach to take this forwards by 2021.

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**We will embed homelessness as a priority for improving public health, with all areas of Government prioritising it as such.**

We will work in collaboration with health colleagues at all levels to realise the vision set out in the public health priorities, recognising that a safe, warm, settled home is crucial to securing good health outcomes and forming a strong foundation for families and communities to flourish.<sup>20</sup>

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**We will improve the join up between local health, social care housing and homelessness planning.**

We recognise that Integration Authorities are responsible for planning, designing and commissioning health and social care services and supports for their local populations; and that housing services and tackling homelessness is an integral part of delivering personalised approaches and the wider delivery of health and social care integration. We will support closer join up in the planning and delivery of these services. Relevant aspects of local rapid rehousing transition plans, as part of the local housing strategies, should be considered and included in housing contribution statements as part of Integration Authorities strategic plans and we will seek other opportunities to develop and improve the approach to joint planning.

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**We will join up housing, employment and employability support.** We will explore how Local Housing Strategies at a strategic level, and personal housing plans on a personal level, can address how employability, equalities and digital and financial inclusion support will be provided for people who are at risk of homelessness as part of the Housing Options service. We will also support Housing Options teams (including Housing Staff from both RSLs and Councils) to work collaboratively with local authority employability teams and wider partners so that employability, employment and housing support is provided in a joined-up way.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-public-health-priorities/>





### Other drivers of joint working

Ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing on an ongoing basis will rely on securing good joint planning and collaborative thinking on resources. Particularly relevant during times of tightened resource across all parts of the public sector.

Our work to develop a new wide-ranging prevention duty will help drive better join-up in planning, resourcing and delivery.

Improving the quality and availability of evidence on homelessness, and then ensuring this evidence informs and drives policy and practice, will promote understanding among partner organisations of their vital role in tackling homelessness as well as the broader impact their contributions could have.

We know that achieving our ambitions to end homelessness and rough sleeping will contribute to achieving a number of the outcomes from the new National Performance Framework, highlighting the need for cross government action at national and local levels, and cross sector commitment to act:

- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so we can realise our full potential
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

This will include ensuring that national data collections reflect the evidence requirements to underpin our plans to prevent, tackle and end homelessness. This can help plan what is needed in a strategic way as well as supporting delivery through tracking and better understanding of progress.

In addition to the development of a new national data collection, this links to work which will build the evidence base on the impact of new initiatives, including Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, and legislative developments, including local connection. We will start taking this forwards in 2019, and develop over time as further changes are implemented.



# 6

## Other actions to support the work

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**Equality:** An Equality Impact Assessment is an important part of the policy-making process. It helps understand how policy impacts on people and is an opportunity to promote equality. There is a legal duty for us to consider equality issues as we develop new policy and in particular the impact of the policy on people who share certain ‘protected characteristics’: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race and religion or belief.

Discussions at HARSAG meetings helped to highlight areas where we could do more to address the needs of specific groups and equality issues will be fully considered as the recommendations are taken forward. The group also made specific recommendations about specialist support for young people and in relation to people experiencing domestic abuse.

As HARSAG noted, above all other factors, homelessness is a result of poverty. To end homelessness, we need to ensure both the long-term drivers and the short and long-term impacts of poverty are addressed. Although HARSAG did not examine this area in depth, they pointed to the role of the Poverty and Inequality Commission as the key driver for change in this area and recommended that the Commission places a clear focus on the prevention of homelessness as part of its ongoing work.



## Actions we will take:

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**We will summarise data available for people with the range of protected characteristics who are experiencing homelessness in 2019.**

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**We will conduct Impact Assessments to inform the development of our work and help us promote equality as we take forward the HARSAG recommendations:**

- Equality impact assessment (including socio-economic impact)
  - Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment
  - Data protection impact assessments
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**We will collect, publish and learn from good quality information about people with protected characteristics in the new national data collection.**

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## Evidence

We need to build on past successes, learn from the most recent evidence and to apply this to our current and future challenges. It is essential that we build the right foundations and create the right conditions to achieve our ambition to end homelessness and rough sleeping, and improve outcomes for people at risk. Evidence based policy making will be an important part of this.

We will continue to develop, analyse and apply the best available data and evidence, both nationally and internationally, to guide and measure progress, investigate economic impact, as well as to inform the actions we take through an understanding of what works most effectively to deliver positive change.

Good evidence is key to understanding and communicating the problem, developing the solution and monitoring and managing progress. HARSAG's recommendations in this area aim to provide a robust suite of information on the complete picture of rough sleeping and, ideally, broader homelessness in Scotland.

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**We will ensure existing Scottish Government data collections reflect the increased priority of tackling homelessness.**

This will complement the commitment we have made to implement a new national data collection.

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**We will develop the evidence base as we take forward the actions set out in this plan.**

This will include the evaluation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and we will ensure we share learning about the impact of new initiatives to help partners deliver services that are effective.

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**Using our current homelessness data collections and the analysis set out above, we will report annually to the Scottish Parliament on our progress towards delivering the actions and outcomes.**

The first report will be submitted at the end of 2019.

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**We will undertake an analysis of the economic impacts of the actions set out in this Plan.**

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## Conclusion

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The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group and the Local Government and Communities Committee have provided a comprehensive set of recommendations which provide the basis for transforming the homelessness system in Scotland.

This High Level Action Plan is an important milestone, marking both a culmination of the work undertaken over the past year to deliver proposals to change the homeless system in Scotland for good; and it's also the launch pad for the activity required to deliver on that ambition.

Homelessness, first and foremost, affects people and that is why their views have guided the formation of this plan and why understanding and addressing their needs is embedded in this document through a person centred approach.

Prevention remains a top priority going forward. If we can prevent homelessness in the first place, then we can devote more of our energy and resources to those that find themselves without a home. We recognise that even with a robust preventative approach, there will still be occasions where someone becomes homeless. In those circumstances this Action Plan sets out how people will be rehoused more quickly and provided with the support they need to move into a settled home.

This document has been produced in partnership with the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group and they will also oversee its delivery, with a continuation of a collaborative approach. Ensuring that planning and resources are focused on supporting people when they are at their most vulnerable requires a joined-up approach right across housing partners and the wider third and public sector. This Action Plan clearly sets out how we will do that.



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