

Shelter Scotland: 3-point plan

Shelter Scotland's 3-point plan to make sure people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are protected both during and after the pandemic.

Context

At the start of the pandemic lockdown period the Scottish Government moved quickly and positively to make sure people sleeping on our streets were put into safe emergency accommodation and most tenants were protected from eviction until the end of September. We would like the Scottish Government to build on this progress and continue to protect people.

Context for the 3-point plan

Time is now running out for the homeless people living in emergency accommodation, as this support is due to run out at the end of June. We can't return to people sleeping on the streets and support needs to be in place to ensure that doesn't happen

Tenants are also facing a very uncertain future with rent arrears racking up due to the pandemic, and many are worried about how they can keep their home once the courts reopen and evictions can take place again.

Unemployment figures have increased, and social security claims have spiked, which indicates that there is the real prospect that when the furlough scheme ends, many thousands more will be unable to pay their rent or their mortgage. The scale of this prospect can be seen in the 8.7m jobs that are currently furloughed¹ and the 1.5m claims to Universal Credit, 6 times more than the same period last year² Unless we act quickly, we will face a tsunami of homelessness in the coming months.

In the short term we need the emergency measures to be in place to protect people during, and in the immediate aftermath of this pandemic. The government will be playing a role in making people homeless if these measures are not secured in to protect people in the long term. We must get to a place where we no longer work to end an individual's experience of the homelessness system but instead **stop homelessness from happening in the first place.**

That means passing new laws to allow individuals to enforce their right to a home, a binding commitment to build enough social homes to actually reduce housing need, a zero-tolerance approach to councils that routinely breach their legal duties, and putting housing rights into human rights law so that everyone has the basic right of a safe secure home. Importantly we must also sure the laws are enforced, and people are empowered with knowledge and support to assert their rights.

What we are calling for on our 3-point plan

1. Build 53,000 affordable homes to reduce housing need and housing poverty in Scotland.

Recent independent academic research commissioned by Shelter Scotland, CIH and SFHA shows that if we build just two more affordable homes each day (compared to the rate of the current affordable housing programme) it would allow us to reduce housing need. That's a commitment to build **53,000 affordable homes** over the next five years compared to current target of 50,000 during the current parliamentary term. A blog post summarising the need for affordable housing can be found [here](#).

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-29-april-2013-to-9-april-2020/universal-credit-29-april-2013-to-9-april-2020>

2. Extend the emergency coronavirus powers to protect people from being evicted from private rented housing, social housing, and temporary accommodation for any reason other than anti-social behaviour until at least April 2021

There must be no return to living on our streets for people at risk and no return to using emergency night shelters or sofa surfing. Supporting people to be able to stay in suitable temporary accommodation or in their own homes is the best way of protecting people during, and in the aftermath of, this pandemic.

3. Empower people to guarantee their right to a safe home

Scotland already has some of the most progressive housing and homelessness rights in the UK, but too often when people try to assert their rights, they are turned away. This creates more problems within an already struggling homelessness system. Tenants, home owners and all housing consumers should have the power to enforce their rights. We are calling for a new human rights bill to be introduced which will include having a safe, decent and affordable home. Link [here](#) for more information. This must be supported by stronger consumer protection to make sure nobody can be denied their right to a safe home.