

26 July 2024

Ariane Burgess
Convener - Local, Government, Housing and Planning Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Ariane,

Glasgow's Housing Emergency Situation

Thank you for the invitation to share information regarding the Housing Emergency situation in Glasgow and the work we are undertaking with partners to address the housing and homelessness need and demand pressures.

On 30th November 2023, Glasgow City Council's (GCC) City Administration Committee declared a 'housing emergency'. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis, lack of housing supply across all tenures and the UK Government's decision to introduce a streamlined asylum process have all contributed towards an increase in homelessness demand both within domestic and refugee populations.

The introduction of a streamlined asylum process has made the pressures more acute and disproportionately affect Glasgow more than any other Scottish local authority due to the number of properties managed by Mears in the city to house people seeking asylum. Homelessness Services have also experienced an increase in the number of households granted leave to remain from elsewhere in the UK moving to Glasgow to access support with homelessness and housing.

Further information relating to the Council's declaration of a housing emergency can be accessed [here](#).

As of June 2024, there were:

- 6,380 live homeless applications. This has increased by 39% (+1,777 live applications) when compared with the dataset for March 2022.
- 3,752 households living in temporary accommodation.
- 1,372 households living in bed and breakfast/hotel accommodation (an increase of 92% (661 households) when compared with the dataset for April 2023).
- 1,195 homeless households that have children.
- 3,100 children living in temporary accommodation.

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Financial analysis indicated that the potential cost of supplying emergency accommodation could be in the region of £53.4million to the Council over the 12-month period between November 2023 and November 2024.

The following key factors relate to the city's housing emergency:

- Glasgow's population is forecast to grow by 2.4% (15,255 people) between 2022 and 2032. The modelling does not take account of recent migration trends or changes in homelessness legislation.
- Glasgow has the highest concentration of people living in deprived circumstances as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020. 80% of all social rented homes (around 88,000 households) in the city are in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland.
- The supply of housing does not meet the need and demand of the city's population. Data suggests that for every social rented home let there are, on average, 10 applicants on housing registers. There is a severe shortage of family housing across the city with, on average, 60 applications on housing registers for every 4-bedroom home let by RSLs. Available data also shows that that average listed rents of private rented properties in Glasgow increased by 92% from 2011 to 2023. The average number of private rented property listings decreased by 58% during this period.
- Figures indicate that Glasgow experienced an increase in the number of enrolled students of 41% from 2014/15 to 2021/22 (compared to 33% for Scotland).
- The impacts of changes in homelessness legislation (the abolishment of local connection) continue to be monitored and data shows that homeless households are choosing to present in Glasgow from out with the city boundary for support with homelessness and housing.
- There has been an increase in notifications of Judicial Reviews due to the Council not providing emergency accommodation and breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

Glasgow's Response to the Housing Emergency

GCC and Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (GCHSCP) Homelessness Services are working with partners to progress the following key actions in response to the housing emergency:

- As the Council is a non-housing stock owning authority, we rely on working positively with our Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners to provide housing to homeless households. RSLs provided 49% (3,332 lets) of all social housing lets in Glasgow during 2023/24 against an ask of 60%. This was a 15% increase (428 lets) compared with 2022/23. Homelessness Services have requested 67% of social housing lets from all RSLs during 2024/25 for the resettlement of homeless households. It is important to highlight that RSLs have indicated that they are experiencing pressures associated with the number of people registered on their waiting lists or requiring to move to another property that meets their housing need.

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- Continuing to work with RSLs to increase the development of new affordable homes going forward to meet housing need. The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024/25-2028/29 sets out proposed projects that could potentially deliver 7,500 homes, 80% for social rent, over the next 5 years. Additional funding is required to accelerate and deliver affordable homes in the city.
- Relaunching the Housing Transfer Incentive Scheme. The Council is providing funding towards the provision of incentives that will support households who wish to move to a property that meets their housing need and reduces under occupation of family housing owned by RSLs. The subsequent void is then offered by the RSL to a homeless family via an agreement with GCHSCP/GCC.
- Working to bring empty homes back into use. Further information is outlined in the Voids and Empty Homes section of this letter.
- Supporting RSLs to acquire private sector properties. In response to the pressures, GCC was able to fund RSLs to acquire 127 homes during 2023/24. Unfortunately, GCC is only able to offer very limited funding to RSLs to acquire private sector properties during 2024/25 due to our Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) budget being reduced.
- Supporting families living in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) who are at risk of homelessness and/or living in poor quality housing through the work of the Council's PRS Housing and Welfare Hub. The current homeless prevention rate achieved by the Hub is 81%.
- Exploring ways to increase access to affordable housing and letting. This includes working with RSLs to explore the potential of offering Mid-Market Rent lets to homeless households who meet the qualifying criteria.
- Pursuing more suitable emergency accommodation options as alternatives to the use of bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation.

Funding

GCC had anticipated being allocated £104m to deliver the city's AHSP during 2024/25. However, the budget allocation was reduced and they Council was allocated £78.687m (a reduction of 24%). If this is not reversed, then this will make our target to deliver 6,500 new affordable homes during the period between 2023/24 and 2028/29 impossible to deliver, particularly in the context of construction cost inflation during recent years. It will also impact on the Council's ability to alleviate the pressures associated with the housing emergency through meeting the needs of homeless households and supporting the development of much needed family housing. There is no indication of future years funding and the lack of certainty on the AHSP budget level beyond 2024/25 will impact on planning delivery going forward.

The Council is preparing its new Strategic Housing Investment Plan for the period between 2025/26 to 2029/30. Whilst the reduction in budget and uncertainty is constraining delivery, the Council will set out, in the plan, options to accelerate the development of new affordable homes and support RSLs to acquire private sector properties that meet strategic priorities and can be used to provide housing for homeless households. These options could be progressed should additional funding be allocated. GCC would be willing to discuss with the Scottish Government how financial resources could be targeted towards the local authorities in greatest need and with the largest homelessness pressures.

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Voids and Empty Homes

Need and demand for affordable homes in Glasgow is high and there is no evidence of housing stock owned by RSLs being unlettable due to low demand.

As a stock transfer authority, we do not hold a single, centralised record of void RSL properties, timescales and reasons for voids. We do collect information on long-term empty properties via Council Tax Services and through engagement by the Empty Homes Team are able to state that longer-term void properties (greater than 6 months) constitute less than 0.5% (c.500 of 110,000) of RSL supply across the city. Most longer-term void properties are identified as either requiring major works as part of a planned investment or part of a regeneration programme.

Reducing the number of empty homes was identified as a key priority within Glasgow's Local Housing Strategy 2023 to 2028. The Council has an Empty Homes team who work proactively with RSLs and private owners to investigate opportunities to bring properties back into use. A total of 1,710 empty homes were brought back into use during the last five years (between 2019/20 and 2023/2024).

There are specific challenges relating to the time it currently takes for utility companies to resolve meter issues and this is delaying the letting of properties by RSLs. The Council is aware that this issue has been highlighted to the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and Scottish Government.

RSLs have suggested that the provision of funding towards implementing works to empty properties would reduce the time taken to improve and bring void properties back into use.

Whilst increasing the supply of new homes is critical to addressing the city's housing emergency, we would also suggest that nationally there should be exploration of funding provision towards the cost of works that would improve the condition of void properties owned by RSLs. A key aim of such of funding would be to support RSLs to reduce the current timescales it takes to bring empty RSL properties back into use. This approach was successfully demonstrated through the projects delivered by RSLs that received funding via the Scottish Government's Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund. A total of 206 properties that were long term void in Glasgow were brought back into use as a result of RSLs being able to access grant through this fund.

Acquisitions

Strategic Acquisitions have been achieved by supporting RSLs to acquire private sector properties in the city, wholly or partly funded via the AHSP. This approach has been used during recent years to quickly increase the supply of social rented housing, particularly in response to housing pressures, and address maintenance issues/facilitate regeneration programmes.

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The following strategic acquisition housing priorities have been established by GCC:

- Increasing the supply of affordable larger family housing.
- Increasing investment to preserve Glasgow's built heritage by improving the condition and management of the housing stock in housing partnership areas. This includes flatted dwellings, pre-1919 tenement stock and blocks of flats that have maintenance issues or do not have a factor in place.
- Targeted acquisition of Empty Homes.
- Providing housing for homeless households.

RSLs are required, as a condition of funding and agreement with GCC, to offer a let to a homeless household via a section 5 referral from GCHSCP.

As outlined previously, the Council is unfortunately only able to offer very limited funding to RSLs to acquire private sector properties due to our 2024/25 AHSP budget. We are able to work effectively and support RSLs to acquire private sector properties and target investment towards meeting our strategic priorities should additional funding become available.

Summary

I trust the information outlined in this letter is helpful and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the challenges and funding that would assist in implementing responses to improving access to housing and increasing the supply of affordable homes in the city with you.

Yours sincerely,

George Gillespie
Executive Director
Neighborhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability
Glasgow City Council

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