

Shelter Scotland submission on the Housing Emergency, 24 July 2024

Dear Convener,

We were pleased to note that your committee is seeking views in advance of a possible inquiry into Scotland's Housing Emergency, and we very much welcome the focus being placed on local authorities and other housing providers as part of this initial gathering of opinions.

As you will be aware, Scotland's housing emergency devastates lives across the country every single day. It is trapping 10,000 children in temporary accommodation and leaving thousands of people unable to access their hard-won housing rights.

It is not just campaigning organisations like Shelter Scotland that are saying the system is broken. The Scottish Housing Regulator's landmark intervention that two local authorities are in systemic failure, and eight others are at heightened risk of systemic failure, simply must awaken us all to the reality of the situation in Scotland right now. Systemic failure means local authorities are unable to respond to demand on their services. It means they are breaking the law.

Nobody would tolerate law breaking in other areas of public life. This should be absolutely no different in the context of housing and homelessness. Housing and homelessness rights and legal duties are just as important as other legal rights, and they simply must be upheld.

The fact that in so many parts of the country – covering 47% of Scotland's population – these rights are not being upheld is a national scandal. This is before we consider the fact that ten local authorities have themselves declared housing emergencies.

The housing system is not just broken, it is also biased - reflecting the wider social structures of oppression and inequality. Groups with protected characteristics are disproportionately impacted by the housing emergency and face additional barriers to accessing safe, secure and affordable housing.

Your committee's work in investigating the nature of the housing emergency and how we go about tackling it will be vital in pushing the government to go further and faster, and we hope this will be a process that amplifies the voices of those at the sharp end of the housing emergency in Scotland.

Key voices from across Scotland's private housing, social housing and anti-poverty sectors [presented our vision to the Scottish Government on how to tackle the housing emergency](#). We believe it is long since time that they delivered the action we need.

Best wishes,

Gordon MacRae
Assistant Director, Communications and Advocacy
Shelter Scotland