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Dear Convener,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to respond to the evidence heard at the Committee session on 4 November on homelessness and rough sleeping. I would now like to address the points from your letter in my response to the Committee.

Working with the third sector

Our updated Ending Homelessness Together action plan reflects on what was achieved during the pandemic through improved partnership working between national and local government and the third sector and commits to build on that learning. We continue to work with local authorities and the third sector to ensure people have access to safe and self-contained accommodation. This includes ending the use of night shelter type provision. Officials will continue to meet regularly with third sector frontline services across Scotland to understand local issues and identify partnership-led solutions with COSLA and local authorities.

The National Care Service for Scotland

The consultation proposed that introducing a National Care Service, will end the postcode lottery of care provision which currently exists across Scotland, ensuring quality, fairness, and consistency of provision through the setting and monitoring of national standards and processes. Services should continue to be designed at a local level, with the input of those with lived and living experience, promoting a person centred, outcome focused approach.

The public consultation closed in November 2021 and in line with standard Scottish Government practice, an independent analysis of responses to the consultation was commissioned. That work is currently underway and we expect to publish the analysis report early this year. This will form a key part of the evidence base for work on the detailed design of the National Care Service.

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Local authority funding

The funding provided to support measures to reduce the number of people at risk of rough sleeping during the pandemic was resourced from investment specifically in response to Covid-19.

In 2020-21, the Scottish Government provided over £1.5 million to third sector organisations in Edinburgh and Glasgow through the £350 million communities funding to enable them to acquire emergency hotel accommodation for people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness, including people with NRPF.

Funding of £5.14 million was also made available through the £100 million Winter Plan for Social Protection to boost rapid rehousing and support people experiencing homelessness.

- £5 million enhanced existing support for rapid rehousing transition planning to enable LAs to deliver on recovery plans faster;
- £50,000 was used to support the 'Winter Warmer', administered by Homeless Network Scotland on our behalf;
- £50,000 was provided to frontline homelessness services for personalised budgets; and
- £40,000 was allocated to Simon Community Scotland to support digital inclusion for people experiencing homelessness.

In both 2021-22 and 2022-23, local authorities have been allocated an annual share of £23.5 million for homelessness prevention and response measures and an annual share of £8 million to support the implementation of rapid rehousing transition plans. The Scottish Government has also offered a range of non-financial support to help local authorities comply with the Unsuited Accommodation Order following its extension to all households. This includes clarifying the process for funding to build new accommodation, dedicated engagement with local authorities facing the most significant challenges and hosting an event that brought all Scottish local authorities together to share good practice to support compliance with the Order.

Recent engagement has shown that all local authorities are making positive progress towards reducing the use of unsuitable accommodation. The Scottish Government will continue to work with local authorities to sustain this progress and identify support to help overcome barriers.

Allocations to Scottish local authorities are made annually as the UK Government only provides the Scottish Government with resource for a single year at a time. The Scottish Government will publish a Resource Spending Review in May 2022 which will provide the opportunity to consider options for multi-year funding.

In terms of RRTPs, initial funding of £26 million was made available for the first three years of the plans (2019-22). The allocation formula was agreed with COSLA and distributed to local authorities on the basis of three years of homelessness assessments. In 2020-21, a floor was introduced of £50,000 to benefit the smaller local authorities (Western Isles,

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Shetland, Orkney and Inverclyde) whose number of assessments had translated into small awards of additional funding.

As stated above, in 2020-21, an additional £5 million was provided through the Winter Plan for Social Protection to enable rapid rehousing transition plans to be implemented faster to respond to the pandemic and the pressures that brought.

Local authorities have recently been informed that additional funding of £16 million will be provided over 2022-24 to enable future planning and the recruitment and retention of staff.

This, along with the up to £6.5 million for the Housing First Pathfinders, amounts to £53.5 million being made available for RRTP and Housing First since 2019.

The Ending Homelessness Together fund

As we have said previously, our £50 million Ending Homelessness Together fund is a multi-year fund that covers the period 2018-19 to 2022-23. In the last programme for government, we said we would invest a further £50 million over this parliamentary term so we can continue to deliver the actions in our Ending Homelessness Together action plan. This means we are making a total investment of £100 million to tackle homelessness between 2018-19 and 2025-26.

We previously set out in response to a [freedom of information request](#) on 6 October 2021 that funding of c. £14 million from the initial £50 million fund remained to be allocated in 2021-22 and 2022-23. We are making £10 million available in 2022-23 to build on the significant progress made in the last year. The remaining funds were used to prevent homelessness by creating a new grant to help tenants facing rent arrears. As a result, the initial £50 million fund has now been fully allocated.

Available accommodation audit

The Scottish Government has not undertaken an audit of all available accommodation in each local authority: this would be a matter for COSLA in conjunction with local authorities. Each local authority will have an understanding of its stock and that of its partners and is best placed to determine what could potentially be used as temporary accommodation when required. The role of RRTPs is, however, to move households through the homelessness system without long unnecessary stays in temporary accommodation so it is anticipated that temporary accommodation will reduce.

The Scottish Government has also established a working group in October 2021 to develop a temporary accommodation standards framework. This will help ensure temporary accommodation is of good quality, safe, warm, affordable and that there is a consistency of standards across all local authority areas. The working group will bring forward concrete proposals in 2022 on a standards framework for temporary accommodation, as well as identifying the legislative changes needed and advice on how these can be regulated and enforced.

Our priority has been to keep people safe during the pandemic which has inevitably resulted in higher numbers in temporary accommodation. We are working with local government and their partners to move people in to settled homes as quickly as possible and to also upscale

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Housing First across Scotland to provide settled, mainstream accommodation with intensive support for those with more complex needs. We are working with COSLA to review how funding provided to local authorities is used to prevent homelessness and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation – an action in our homelessness strategy.

The Ending Homelessness Together annual report

Our Ending Homelessness Together action plan sets out actions we are taking in the short to medium term to end homelessness and our annual report to parliament summarises the progress made. Some actions have timescales associated with them while others involve system-wide reforms. We regularly review progress against the actions in our Ending Homelessness Together action plan and our Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) was set up to ensure Scotland can demonstrate measurable progress towards our shared goal of ending homelessness. At the most recent meeting in November 2021, HPSG members agreed to work with us to improve the way we monitor outcomes and measure the impact of our interventions.

Rapid rehousing transition plans

Rapid rehousing transition plans (RRTPs) are intended to be five year plans and local authorities were given flexibility in how they developed them. The Scottish Government asks for completed activity and spend templates to be provided in June for the previous financial year to show progress towards meeting the plan and where the RRTP funding has been used along with funding from other sources e.g. from health and social care partnerships. Feedback is given to all local authorities on this to enable sharing of learning and ideas across all local authorities.

This is supported by the network of housing options hubs covering all local authorities in Scotland which share learning and practice which can be used to develop RRTPs. The Scottish Government also convenes meetings of RRTP co-ordinators/leads to ensure practice is shared throughout local authorities and their partners.

In response to themes coming through the RRTPs, the Scottish Government has recently set up a Private Rented Sector forum to look at how local authorities can prevent homelessness from this tenure, access it as a housing option and discharge its statutory homelessness duty into it.

Evictions from private rented housing

The Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 introduced the new Private Residential Tenancy in 2017, with an aim of improving security, stability and predictability for private tenants in Scotland. However, during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in recognition of the gravity of the health crisis facing the country, the Scottish Government introduced a range of further emergency measures to support tenants – including extended notice periods, private landlord pre-action protocols for rent arrears cases and ensuring all private rented sector eviction cases were considered on a discretionary basis.

As we respond to the impacts of Covid, we have consulted on which legislative responses to the pandemic should continue in order to support a fair, safe and secure recovery. This includes consideration on whether the pre-action requirements for the private rented sector

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and the Tribunal's discretion in eviction cases should continue and we are currently considering the large number of responses received on that.

Furthermore, as part of the Shared Policy Programme agreed by the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party, we now want to build on learning from the temporary Covid-19 eviction ban in order to consider how we could support and further protect tenants from being asked to leave or being evicted from their rented property over the winter period and we are currently seeking views on this through our ['A New Deal for Tenants'](#) consultation.

Prevention review group and legislation

A joint Scottish Government/COSLA consultation on new legal duties to prevent homelessness was launched on 17th December and will run until 31st March 2022. This consultation has been informed by the package of proposals provided in the final report of the Prevention Review Group, published in 2021, which provided recommendations on public bodies and landlords and on changes to homelessness legislation. Once responses to the consultation have been considered, it is our intention to introduce legislation in the upcoming Housing Bill in year two of this parliament.

Children in temporary accommodation

A review in summer 2021 of Scottish Government statistical information on the composition of households making homelessness applications showed that there were a high number of households containing children that have been in temporary accommodation for several years across Scotland.

The Scottish Government understands that housing market pressures can make it difficult to move families into settled accommodation that meets their requirements, so temporary accommodation might be the most appropriate option in these circumstances. Although households containing children often require temporary accommodation for longer periods of time in order to ensure that the local authority is able to provide settled accommodation that is most suitable for the household, it is unacceptable for children to be in temporary accommodation for lengthy periods.

While temporary accommodation offers an important safety net and not all temporary accommodation is unsuitable, it is important that any stays in temporary accommodation are short-term. This is because not being in permanent settled accommodation can be stressful and detrimental to a household, especially where children are involved.

Guidance already exists to help local authorities carry out their duties in relation to children facing homelessness or threatened with homelessness to ensure that the best interests of children are met across the country.

We will continue to encourage local authorities to share alternative models that allow homeless households a greater degree of choice and control over their temporary accommodation placement. We will also encourage the diversification of property portfolios in order to provide applicants with a wider range of options for temporary and permanent accommodation.

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The most effective way to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. That is why the Scottish Government has committed to introducing new legislation which will place a duty on relevant public bodies to ask about people's housing situations to ensure there is a collective responsibility across public services to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. When enacted, this legislation will help identify homelessness risk at an early stage, and ensure action is taken where a problem is identified, to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

The Scottish Government agrees with the importance of people with lived experience of homelessness informing, shaping and influencing public policies on homelessness, which is why people with personal and frontline experience of homelessness are represented on our Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group. To strengthen the role and influence of the Change Team, a member of staff from Homeless Network Scotland with lived experience was seconded to the Scottish Government's Homelessness Unit in August 2021. The secondee is contributing to the policy development process and ensuring that policies and practice are grounded in real life experience of what works to prevent homelessness.

The Scottish Government and COSLA also appointed someone with gender expertise to our Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group in 2020.

Domestic abuse is the most common reason for women making homelessness applications, which is why the Scottish Government commissioned a working group to look at preventing homelessness for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

Jo Ozga from Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) and Callum Chomczuk from the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland co-chaired the working group with members including representatives from COSLA, ALACHO, Fife Council, Shelter Scotland and Brodies.

The 'Improving Housing Outcomes for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse' in the social rented sector report was published on 15 December 2020. Within six work streams there are a total of 27 recommendations. These cover a range of actions relating to human rights, equality, homelessness data collections, Scottish Housing Regulator thematic reviews, and refuge provision.

The recommendations also include putting guidance for social landlords published by SWA and CIH on a statutory footing: all social landlords should have a housing domestic abuse policy and Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) should include a robust EQIA and gender analysis with specific measures to support women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

The Scottish Government has accepted all the recommendations and have convened a Scottish Government-led implementation group to take forward the actions to implement the recommendations.

The basis of the report and the guidance for social landlords has come from SWA's, 'Change, Justice, Fairness: "Why should we have to move everywhere and everything because of him?"' report published in 2016. The report was co-produced by SWA and the Community Research Team, led by women with direct experience of domestic abuse and homelessness in partnership with Fife Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership.

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In addition, there are a number of proposals on tackling domestic abuse which are addressed in the current consultation on new prevention of homelessness duties in Scotland. This consultation opened on 17 December and runs until 31 March 2022. Once responses to the consultation have been considered, it is our intention to introduce legislation in the upcoming Housing Bill in year two of this parliament.

Once again I hope this further information is useful to the committee and look forward to continued constructive engagement.

Yours sincerely,



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