

F/T: 0300 244 4000  
E: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Collette Stevenson MSP  
Convener  
Social Justice and Social Security Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

By email

12 July 2024

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June, for inviting me to give evidence to the committee on 27 June, and your clerk's email of 3 July. In this reply I seek to provide clarity about the specific issues these raised on housing and homelessness.

I have set out at Annex A the information requested in your letter of 26 June; and at Annex B provided further details on issues we discussed at the Committee, and which you included in the email of 3 July. On the specific issue of my engagement with stakeholders over the summer recess I have provided a summary of this at Annex C.

Finally, during my evidence session with the committee I now realise I made a minor error and in accordance with paragraph 9 of the Members' Correction Guidance, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that this is in the process of being corrected with the Official Report. The corrections relate to the responses I gave to Kevin Stewart and Bob Doris which referred to the number of ministers involved in the ministerial oversight group on homelessness, specifically there are in fact nine Ministers currently on this group not ten as I previously said. This includes me as chair of the group. The details of the corrections I have set out at Annex D.

I trust my reply will help inform the committee's considerations, and I would of course be available to the Committee on 5 September if needed.

Yours sincerely,

**PAUL MCLENNAN**  
**MINISTER FOR HOUSING**

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## INFORMATION REQUESTED ON 26 JUNE 2024 - IN THE COMMITTEE'S LETTER

No	Question asked	Reply
1	How is the Scottish Government ensuring that it is providing “ <i>added urgency</i> ” to the measures being implemented to help respond to the challenges councils are experiencing in their homelessness services, as the Scottish Housing Regulator has recommended?	In declaring a housing emergency, we recognise that this is not an issue that one organisation can solve on its own. In these difficult times, the Scottish Government calls on all partners to play their part in responding to the challenges and for all partners to work together collectively to find solutions to Scotland’s housing emergency. That is why we have pledged to work constructively and in good faith with the UK Government, local authorities and stakeholders across Scotland to consider what more can be done to tackle the housing emergency.
2	How is the Scottish Government monitoring the impact of the actions it is taking in response to the recommendations from the Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group? Can the Scottish Government provide details on the impact of the national acquisition plan, including information on spend and the number of homes approved to date?	<p>The actions the Scottish Government committed to in its response to the Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group recommendations have been subsumed into our response to the housing emergency. We working at pace to establish monitoring processes in order to track progress against the actions mentioned in my statement.</p> <p>In 2023-24 we invested more than £83m to support the National Acquisition Programme and brought almost 1,500 homes into affordable use.</p>
3	What is the impact of the affordable housing supply budget on plans to reduce homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation?	The reduction in budget will impact the pace of delivery of homes through the AHSP programme. We will, however, invest almost £600m in affordable homes in 2024-25 which includes an additional £40m to specifically support acquisitions, helping to reduce homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation. Discussions with COSLA on the allocation of the £40m are ongoing.
4	What specific additional action will the Scottish Government take to end homelessness in light of the declaration of a national housing emergency?	I made a statement to parliament on 20 June 2024 on the Scottish Government’s response to the housing emergency. In that I set out the actions we will prioritise under our existing strategies to end homelessness and our ambitious strategy for housing to 2040, in order to address the housing emergency. Our priority is increasing supply, with actions organised under three strategic pillars: more high quality homes; the right homes in the right places; and a permanent home for everyone.

We have set out the action the Scottish Government will take to address levels of homelessness and improve the supply of social and affordable housing as follows:

- We are investing almost £600 million in the Affordable Housing Supply Programme in 2024-25, which includes up to £40 million for acquisitions announced this year, and a further £40 million next year. This will enable social landlords to secure larger family houses where needed, helping households with children to find a permanent home and to reduce the numbers and average time spent in temporary accommodation.
- Our Open Market Shared Equity scheme will reopen to new applications, which will deliver hundreds of homes for priority groups.
- We are working to develop specific options to attract private investment through the Housing Investment Taskforce.
- The new National Planning Improvement Champion will monitor performance, look at trends, share good practice and identify efficiencies to ensure we have a well-resourced planning system.
- The feedback we received in response to our ‘Investing in Planning’ consultation will support planning services through increasing resources and skills development.
- We are continuing to engage with stakeholders to ensure the rent control measures in the Housing (Scotland) Bill contribute to our vision of a private rented sector that works for tenants and responsible landlords, and is attractive to investors.
- We are working closely with our local authority partners in ensuring the Strategic Housing Investment Plans reflect the full range of housing priorities, including high quality homes for larger families where they are required, wheelchair users and older people, as well as high quality general needs housing.
- We are building on the delivery of over 10,000 affordable homes in rural and island communities up to March 2023 through the implementation of our Rural and Island Housing Action Plan. This includes substantial mainstream investment for affordable homes, complemented by the Rural and Island Housing Fund and the Rural Affordable Homes for Key Workers Fund.
- We are consulting with COSLA to determine how best to allocate additional support to those local authorities with the greatest temporary accommodation challenges.
- We will support the work of local authorities and registered social landlords to better understand what they need to do to reduce turnaround times for empty homes and voids.
- We will back efforts to address problems the sector has raised about delays in reconnecting energy supplies.
- We are widening responsibility for homelessness prevention and investing in rapid rehousing transition plans for the sixth consecutive year.

I am of course happy to keep the Committee updated as our work on this progresses.

5	<p>During the housing emergency debate, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice said <i>"it is the asylum process that caused the housing crisis and emergency in Glasgow."</i> Can the Scottish Government explain the reasoning for this statement?</p>	<p>At the City Administration Committee on Tuesday 30 November 2023, Glasgow City Council councillors agreed to declare a housing emergency. The report submitted to the City Administration Committee by Allan Casey, City Convenor for Workforce, Homelessness and Addiction Services noted <i>"the challenges faced by the Council in relation to the provision of homelessness services, in particular, following the decision by the Home Office to make circa 2,500 batched asylum decisions in Glasgow by the end of the year"</i>.</p>
6	<p>What update can the Scottish Government provide on the policy for the wider dispersal of asylum seekers in Scotland and the impact this may have in Glasgow and other local authority areas?</p>	<p>As the Committee will be aware, the UK Government announced a significant change to asylum dispersal policy in 2022 with the introduction of full dispersal. Full dispersal presumes that dispersal asylum accommodation can be procured in any local authority across the UK, whereas prior to that policy change dispersal only took place in areas where local authorities had voluntarily agreed to participate. Prior to full dispersal, Glasgow was the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland.</p> <p>Scotland's first asylum dispersal accommodation outside Glasgow was procured in 2022. I understand that over half of Scotland's local authorities now have asylum dispersal accommodation in their area, though the majority of dispersal properties continue to be in Glasgow.</p> <p>The Scottish Government supports the widening of asylum dispersal in principle, but believes participation by local authorities should continue to be voluntary. Genuine partnership working and information sharing are needed to enable wider dispersal to be managed. We are clear that the UK Government must engage with local authorities and COSLA on these matters. There also needs to be a long term commitment to funding for local authorities to enable planning and better support for people seeking asylum as well as local communities.</p> <p>Scottish Ministers will seek to engage with the next UK Government on future asylum dispersal plans and policy.</p>
7	<p>What dialogue has the Scottish Government had regarding a partnership approach to tackling the housing challenges presented by the UK Governments policies including their recent efforts to fast track asylum claim decisions when</p>	<p>In October 2023, the then Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees, Emma Roddick MSP, wrote to the then Minister of State for Immigration, Robert Jenrick MP, to raise our concerns about the UK Government's Streamlined Asylum Process. That letter called on the UK Government to provide funding to local authorities and work constructively with them to ensure that newly recognised refugees are supported during the asylum move-on period, without creating unmanageable pressures on housing and homelessness services over a short space of time. Scottish Ministers were disappointed to receive a reply of 3 January from the former Minister of State for Legal Migration and the Border, Tom Pursglove</p>

led to Glasgow City Council declaring a housing emergency?

MP, confirming that there was no additional funding available to local authorities as a result of the increase in asylum support cessations.

Scottish Government officials attend the Asylum and Refugee Partnership Board, convened by Glasgow City Council, which discusses asylum and refugee matters across Scotland.

In March the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice convened a roundtable discussion with representatives of key organisations including COSLA, SOLACE, ALACHO and the Scottish Refugee Council. The purpose was to develop a shared understanding of the scale of issues and consider if there was more that could be done collectively to address challenges and pressures on public services arising in connection with the UK asylum system, refugee resettlement schemes and arrival of displaced people. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice plans to re-convene this group following summer recess.

INFORMATION REQUESTED AT [SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE 27 JUNE 2024](#)

No	Question asked Time within the meeting in ( ) and Collum in the official report in [ ].	Reply
1	<b>Kevin Stewart</b> (09:15) [Col 7-8] Ministerial Oversight Group on Homelessness - agendas, and action points from those quarterly meetings.	<p>The Terms of Reference, membership, and minutes (which detail resulting actions) of the ministerial oversight group on homelessness are published on the Scottish Government website.  <a href="http://www.gov.scot">Homelessness: Ministerial Oversight Group - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a></p> <p>The minutes of the fourth meeting will be published in due course.</p>
2	<b>Jeremy Balfour</b> (09:55) [Col 21-22] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the reporting and monitoring framework of the measures in practice?</li> <li>• How is all of the information being pulled together, and reported?</li> </ul>	<p>The reporting and monitoring framework is a live consideration which will be considered further over the Summer period in conjunction with stakeholders. Following this work an update can be provided to the Committee.</p>
3	<b>Katy Clark</b> (09:59) [Col 22-23] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the timescales of the implementation?</li> <li>• Write to the committee on that?</li> </ul>	<p>This will be discussed with stakeholders over the summer following which an update will be provided to the Committee.</p>
4	<b>Kevin Stewart</b> (10:06) [Col 25-26] What engagement programme over the summer recess?	<p>The planned programme of stakeholder engagement is provided at Annex C. However, I will update the committee with the outcome, proposed next steps, and which stakeholders have actually participated this process on completion of this engagement.</p>
5	<b>Kevin Stewart</b> (10:25) [Col 31-32] How is legislation and regulation is to be embedded to ensure compliance?	<p>We are committed to commencing the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 which will provide additional protection to those at risk of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Part 1 of the 2021 Act will provide both Police Scotland and the court with new powers that will enable a person suspected of causing harm to be removed from the home they share some or all of the time with the person at risk of harm, through a scheme of domestic abuse protection notices and orders. This is</p>

		<p>with the intention of providing breathing space for up to three months so a person at risk can consider their longer term options.</p> <p>The Scottish Government is currently developing statutory guidance to support social housing landlords to use the provisions at Part 2 of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) Scotland Act 2021 once commenced. Part 2 of the Act provides social landlords with new grounds to apply to the court for an order which, if granted, will have the effect of enabling the landlord to transfer a tenancy to a victim/survivor. The guidance currently in development encourages social landlords to adopt a victim/survivor centred approach and work in close partnership with other agencies to determine the best immediate and long term housing options which will provide safety, security and tenancy sustainability for the individual and their household.</p>
6	<p><b>Roz McCall</b> (10:30) [Col 33-34] Homeless network Scotland highlighted the need to look through an equalities competence lens.</p>	<p>It is important that the legislative changes, as well as the guidance and training that will support the delivery, take account of the equalities impact in an appropriate way.</p> <p>We know people’s experiences of homelessness are very different and we need to take into account those different experiences to respond effectively to a person’s housing circumstances. We also know that intersectionality issues need to be considered at all times.</p> <p>As part of our engagement with stakeholders, we want to hear from them on how we progress the guidance in a way that takes account of equalities issues. We want to harness their expertise so we get the guidance and training materials right. Annex C provides further details on the proposed stakeholder engagement over the summer period.</p> <p>I now attach links to both the EQIAs for the <a href="#">Homelessness Prevention Duties policy</a>, and the <a href="#">Housing (Scotland) Bill summary</a>.</p>
7	<p><b>Katy Clark</b> (10:38) [Col 36-37] On the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act when will it be implemented?</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is committed to commencing its Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 which will provide additional protection to those at risk of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Following Royal Assent an Implementation Board was established to work with relevant partners including Police Scotland, the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service and Scottish Women’s Aid. In addition, an Operational Working Group comprising of justice agencies that will be operationally impacted by the 2021 Act, was established to work through the detail of how the legislation could operate.</p> <p>There are several challenges in relation to the implementation of the legislation. In summary these include but are not limited to, an estimated higher than anticipated volume of cases, how the timescales laid down</p>

in the legislation impact on operational justice agencies and challenges in how the views of children can be gathered in a way that does not cause additional harm or trauma. These issues all have associated resource implications. In addition, there are a number of practical aspects to the implementation of the legislation for operational justice agencies that require further consideration as to how these could be resolved. However, despite the challenges in implementing the Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order scheme, the Scottish Government remains committed to working with stakeholders to deliver a scheme that realises the intended benefits of the legislation.

The Scottish Government also remains committed to implementing Part 2 of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021. We are developing the necessary secondary legislation and statutory guidance and are working with the Scottish Court Service to develop changes to court rules to allow for implementation as soon as possible.

Part 2 of the Act will help protect victims by giving social landlords the ability to apply to the court for an order which, if granted, will have the effect of allowing the landlord to transfer a tenancy to the victim-survivor. We know this is vital to support social landlords in their efforts to ensure positive housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.



## HOUSING (SCOTLAND) BILL – HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION DUTIES – SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME – SUMMER 2024

Please note that my participation in all of the proposed engagement on homelessness prevention duties below is subject to both my Ministerial and Parliamentary commitments. In the event I am unable to attend any of these meetings then my officials will proceed and report back to me on the outcome, proposed next steps, and which stakeholders have actually participated in order to ensure this action progresses at pace. I will of course provide the committee with an update in due course. I should note that my engagement with housing and homelessness stakeholders over the summer period will not be limited to only meetings with a focus on homelessness prevention duties as outlined below.

<b>JULY</b>				
<b>Who</b>	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA)	Chartered Institute for Housing (CIH)	Public Health Scotland (PHS)	Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)
<b>Why</b>	Ask and Act and Domestic Abuse provisions	Domestic Abuse and other provisions	Ask and Act for health bodies	Regulatory framework for new duties
<b>Attendees</b>	Housing Management and Community Investment Forum	Lead Officials	Lead Officials	Lead Officials
<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	Agree approach to RSL involvement in proposed national events	Stakeholder views on measures, agree stakeholder input into national events	Identify role of PHS in supporting work of health bodies to implement duties, including on guidance and training	Identify actions to be taken on strategic scrutiny, consider Social Justice and Social Security Committee questions on regulation and monitoring.

<b>AUGUST</b>				
<b>Who</b>	Health - as relevant bodies listed in Bill.	Police - as relevant bodies listed in Bill.	Housing Providers - as relevant bodies listed in Bill.	Prisons - as relevant bodies listed in Bill.
<b>Why</b>	National event on Ask and Act	National event on Ask and Act	National event on Ask and Act and Domestic Abuse provisions	National event on Ask and Act
<b>Attendees</b>	Minister for Housing, Health boards, special health boards, Integrated Joint	Minister for Housing, Police Scotland representatives, third sector homelessness	Minister for Housing, Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords, representatives,	Minister for Housing, Prisons representatives (e.g. 'Integration and Case

	Boards, third sector homelessness organisations presenting on current practice, people with lived experience of homelessness.	organisations presenting on current practice, people with lived experience of homelessness.	people with lived experience of homelessness.	Management teams, Governors in Charge, Heads of Offender Outcomes, Integrated Case Management (ICM) Teams and Links Centres'), third sector homelessness organisations presenting on current practice, people with lived experience of homelessness.
<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	Explore detail of 'ask and act', identify what is needed in guidance and training, thoughts on implementation timescales.	Explore detail of 'ask and act', identify what is needed in guidance and training, thoughts on implementation timescales.	Explore detail of 'ask and act' and domestic abuse provisions, identify what is needed in guidance and training, thoughts on implementation timescales.	Explore detail of 'ask and act', identify what is needed in guidance and training, thoughts on implementation timescales.

<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	
<b>Who</b>	A range of bodies and organisations impacted by the homelessness prevention duties.
<b>Why</b>	National Event on Homelessness Prevention Duties.
<b>Attendees</b>	Minister for Housing, local authorities, relevant bodies, third sector, people with lived experience, regulators, etc.
<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	Identify links and joint working required across different bodies to make duties successful, identify appropriate timescales for introduction and plan working groups for guidance and training.

**CORRECTIONS TO THE OFFICIAL REPORT FOR THE 27 JUNE 2024 AT THE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE**

The corrections relate to the number of ministers involved in the ministerial oversight group on homelessness, specifically there are in fact nine Ministers currently on this group not ten as previously said.

*At page 8, col 7, paragraph 6 –*

*Original text -*

**Paul McLennan:** *"One of the key things that I asked for when I came into post, 15 or 16 months ago, was the setting up of a ministerial group on homelessness. Ten ministers are taking part in that, and it has already met four times. There are ministers with responsibilities on domestic abuse, the Promise, mental health, public health and so on. We have had various discussions with stakeholders on how it could work with one minister having specific responsibilities on domestic abuse and one having specific responsibility for the Promise, for example. The group meets quarterly and it is now reviewing what it needs to do after the first year. It is looking at funding for various projects that might impact on homelessness."*

*Corrected text -*

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*At page 8, col 8, para 1 –*

*Original text -*

*"We will continue to make sure that opportunities in policy development and budgetary processes are maximised. The group has 10 ministers, including me, and we talk about that specific issue."*

*Corrected text -*

We will continue to make sure that opportunities in policy development and budgetary processes are maximised. The group has 9 ministers, including me, and we talk about that specific issue.

*At page 11, col 13, para 5 –*

*Original text -*

*"I talked earlier about why we have 10 ministers on the ministerial oversight group. In some of the more complex homelessness cases, four or five specialist areas can be involved. A case could concern somebody who has suffered domestic abuse and mental health issues, which has led on to substance abuse, so there can be a range of measures."*

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I talked earlier about why we have 9 ministers on the ministerial oversight group. In some of the more complex homelessness cases, four or five specialist areas can be involved. A case could concern somebody who has suffered domestic abuse and mental health issues, which has led on to substance abuse, so there can be a range of measures.