

# Cross-Party Group on Housing Meeting

27 February 2024, 18:00-19:30

Minute

Present

MSPs

Graham Simpson MSP – Convener  
Paul McLennan MSP – Minister for Housing  
Ben Macpherson MSP

Invited guests

Ellie Gomersall, NUS  
Glenn Bramley, I-SPHERE, Heriot Watt  
Ross McKenzie, Independent Councillor for Sighthill/Gorgie  
Sarah Johnsen, University of Edinburgh  
Susan Gardiner, Senior Social Researcher, Scottish Government  
Janine Kellett, Head of Homelessness Unit, Scottish Government  
Olaf Stando, NUS

Non-MSP Group Members

Abigail Fletcher, Scottish Parliament  
Alistair Cameron, Rural Housing Scotland  
Andrea Finkel-Gates, Scotland's Housing Network  
Aoife Deery, Citizens Advice Scotland  
Craig Sanderson, Edinburgh Poverty Commission  
Dan Evans, Slurp  
Daniel Steel, Slurp  
David Petrie, Homes for Scotland  
Emily Lallemand, Slurp  
Gareth James, CaCHE  
Heather McCluskey, Centre for Homelessness Impact  
Jennifer Kennedy, Homes for Scotland  
Jocelyne Fleming, Chartered Institute of Builders  
Ken Gibb, CaCHE  
Lara Balkwill, Rock Trust  
Laura Taylor, Edinburgh Student Housing Coop  
Lawrence Williams, Slurp  
Lisa Innes, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living

Lorenzo Martinico, Edinburgh Student Housing Coop  
Lorna Cameron, Horizon Housing Association  
Morgan Eller, Independent  
Noah Brown, Slurp  
Norah Fletcher, HSCP  
Paul Hilton, ESPC  
Pedro Cameron, Housing Options Scotland  
Rhiannon Sims, Crisis  
Robert Toomey, RICS Scotland  
Shelley Hutton, Places for People  
Steven Tolson, RICS Scotland  
Tim Pogson, City of Edinburgh Council  
Tom Ockendon, SFHA  
Viki Fox, Cyrenians

## Apologies

John Boyle, Rettie & Co.  
Callum Chomczuk, CIH Scotland  
Daryl Mcintosh, SHARE

## Agenda item 1: Welcome

The Convenor welcomed attendees and thanked Crisis for hosting the meeting.

## Agenda item 2: Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. There were no matters arising.

## Agenda item 3: Hidden Homelessness

Rhiannon Sims noted the timeliness of the meeting, given the release of the biannual homelessness statistics on same day. These data show 30,000 homeless households in Scotland, which is an all-time high, and a sharp rise in rough sleeping prior to presenting as homeless. Rhiannon also noted that these statistics do not tell the full story because they fail to capture hidden homelessness.

## Agenda item 4: Findings from Homelessness Monitor Scotland

Glen Bramley (I-SPHERE) presented the results of the Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2024. The Homelessness Monitor is an independent study on trends in and drivers of homelessness across Great Britain. It takes an inclusive, multi-perspective approach to defining homelessness and includes the following overlapping groups: rough sleepers; statutory homeless households; core homelessness (households who experience the worst forms of homelessness). Glen concluded that local authorities are caught between an ambitious agenda and challenging context, with core homelessness expected to escalate rapidly in the short to medium term. However, it was also noted that these projections are not inevitable, and Scotland has control of

powerful levers to force homelessness trends in the other direction (e.g. increased prevention, abolish unsuitable temporary accommodation, increase supply of social housing). Concerns were however raised about cuts to the AHSP. Other policy options were also discussed including further increases to LHA rates which were shown to have the largest impact, but this is a reserved matter, and the benefits fade if not upgraded annually. You can view the slides [here](#).

## Agenda item 5: Hard Edges: The Reality of Women Affected by Severe and Multiple Disadvantage

Sarah Johnsen (University of Edinburgh) presented findings from the Hard Edges research project. The research shows that routes into and experiences of severe and multiple deprivation domains is highly gendered and exploitation by men is a key theme. Sarah spoke of intersectional disadvantage and heightened barriers to mainstream support services and noted that successes are largely due to the commitment and goodwill of individual stakeholders rather than systems change. Sarah noted attempts by some women to conceal or downplay the severity of their circumstances for fear of e.g. losing access to children, presence of men, deterrence by partners, prior negative experiences, shame, embarrassment, etc., and that this can exacerbate or prolong exposure to risk. Sarah noted several missed opportunities for intervention in both childhood and adulthood. The research also found pockets of good practice, but this can be a postcode lottery. Sarah highlighted some key ingredients for promoting engagement and positive outcomes (e.g. enabling choice, low threshold access requirements, rapid response, relational approach, long-term support, etc.) and policy/practice recommendations (e.g. all relevant stakeholders sharing responsibility for and risk in responding, clear leadership at national level, greater cross-sector commitment, trauma and gender-informed services, women only provision, a greater focus on prevention). You can view the slides [here](#).

## Agenda item 6: Student Homelessness

Lawrence Williams and Dan Evans (Slurp) presented an overview of the student housing crisis in Edinburgh, based on their own work and research, which includes a housing survey and student testimonials. The research shows how students experience hidden homelessness. They presented some insights into current issues producing student homelessness, using Edinburgh as a case study. It was suggested that the lack of affordability in the private rented sector contributes to the problem of student homelessness, as well as problems created by purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). They also noted that it is unclear what actions students should take in the event of experiencing homelessness, since it is not clear which institutions are responsible for mitigating student homelessness. Lawrence and Dan also presented some potential solutions for consideration, including e.g. better data collection on student homelessness, better transparency on the part of HEIs on their planned student intake, setting student numbers in relations to housing stock, local planning authorities to take student numbers and behaviours into account when making planning decisions, and the potential use of Emergency Accommodation Guarantees. The impact of the student housing crisis on other parts of the housing market/system were also discussed, with participants noting that the problem and potential solutions should be seen in this wider context. You can view the slides [here](#).

## Agenda item 7: AOCB

No other business.

## Agenda item 8: Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place 18:00-19:30 on Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024.