

Joint letter from:
Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland
Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO)
Contact: ashley.campbell@cih.org
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Dear Housing Minister,

We are writing to highlight significant concerns regarding the lack of strategic response to the obvious and growing pressures on the housing and homelessness system.

What was already a fragile situation has been exacerbated by the ongoing recovery from pandemic, cost of living crisis, and under-resourced refugee resettlement schemes. Urgent and radical action is now needed to avoid a deepening crisis in our response to homelessness across Scotland.

The latest [homelessness statistics](#) show:

- 39,000 homeless applications during 2022/23, up nine per cent compared to the previous year, and the highest since records began;
- More households and children than ever in temporary accommodation, up six and nine per cent respectively;
- Longer stays in temporary accommodation, now averaging 223 days;
- More local authorities having to resort to the regular and repeated use of unsuitable temporary accommodation; and
- Increasing numbers of open cases as people face longer waits to be rehoused, an increase of 15 per cent to 29,652 households in 2022/23.

In addition to the official homelessness statistics, thousands of households are being accommodated in unrecorded temporary accommodation through resettlement schemes and may still present as homeless in the future with no indication that resources will be available to deal with additional demand. At the same time, there has been a decline in the number of social lets available, limiting local authorities' capacity to meet rising demand across all groups of people in housing need.

Many are also struggling to access the support they need when they do seek help - 22 per cent of households presenting as homeless where there was a duty to assess support needs did not have an assessment carried out and no support was provided. In a further seven percent of cases where a support need was identified, it wasn't provided for ([Scottish Government homelessness statistics Table 57](#)). This lack of support puts households at greater risk of repeat homelessness.

These stark figures are not the result of local failures of policy or implementation, they are the result of systemic weaknesses in our housing system and failure to address them at a national level.

The Scottish Housing Regulator's [thematic review of homelessness](#) states that some local authorities are under such extreme pressure they are facing systemic failure. The recent report from [SOLACE, ALACHO and CoSLA](#) details significant pressures across housing and homeless services. The Scottish Government has acknowledged the scale of these pressures, but we have not yet seen a comprehensive response from the Scottish Government or the short-life Housing Review Group which we understand has been considering the report and a range of other evidence.

CIH Scotland's recent work with local authorities on [Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans](#) (RRTPs) in partnership with Fife Council warns that failure to continue focus on RRTPs and funding for services will result in loss of progress made in homelessness prevention, service transformation and the roll out of Housing First. RRTPs provided a catalyst for change, supporting joint work on preventing and responding to homelessness and supporting the transformation of services, but longer-term support is needed to ensure these approaches are fully implemented and embedded in a sustainable way.

The sector is still waiting for details of the £2million additional RRTP funding for this year announced by the First Minister [in July](#). We understand that some local authorities will have to start terminating contracts at the end of this year and winding up RRTP activity if the position on funding is not clarified urgently.

RRTPs were always intended to be a transitional tool to support transformational change in the homelessness system and that journey is not yet complete, not least due to the unprecedented pressures caused by external factors. RRTPs need to be extended to support the transition to towards a more proactive approach to preventing and responding to homelessness with meaningful input from key partners.

Considering the current state of services, details of the proposed Homelessness Prevention Duty must be brought forward so that services can plan for the legislative changes expected in the forthcoming Housing Bill. We are calling for the Scottish Government to:

- Urgently update local authorities on the distribution of £2million RRTP funding to prevent loss of staff and projects grinding to a halt.
- Commit to extending RRTPs beyond the current five-year timescale.
- Provide adequate funding to support RRTP work for at least a further five years.
- Work with the housing sector and key partners to develop details of the homelessness prevention duty in tandem with the development of the Housing Bill.
- Review the Homelessness Code of Guidance taking account of the new Homelessness Prevention Duty ahead of implementation to support understanding of the new requirements and allow time for changes to be planned and implemented. This should include clear guidance on the contribution that key partners should make towards tackling homelessness.

Ahead of the draft budget later this year both CIH Scotland and ALACHO are keen to explore with you and your officials the practical steps that can be taken immediately to ensure that we deliver on our shared ambition of tackling homelessness in Scotland.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.



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Chair of CIH Scotland



Tony Cain
Policy manager, ALACHO