

## CIH Scotland Briefing

### Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan



*The following briefing was prepared by CIH Scotland and sent to all MSPs in advance of the Scottish Government debate on the 29th of November 2018 on the 'Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan.' It is now available to download for CIH Members.*

#### About CIH

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple – to provide housing professionals with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world including over 2,000 in Scotland.

Further information is available at: [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)

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#### Rapid Rehousing and Housing First

CIH Scotland warmly welcomes the publication of the new **Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan** and commends the ambition to bring about real and lasting change towards ending homelessness in Scotland.

Although homelessness is falling overall in Scotland, the use of temporary accommodation is rising and homelessness remains one of the biggest challenges facing society today.

We are particularly pleased to see a strong focus on providing a person-centred approach to tackling homelessness as well as an ambition to transform the use of temporary accommodation by moving towards a Rapid Rehousing and Housing First approach, as per the recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group.

Guidance for local authorities, detailed Market Area Analysis and a Rapid Rehousing transition tool [have now been published](#) to support the development of local five year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, which are due to be submitted by local authorities to the Scottish Government by the end of this year. It is anticipated that if the plans are implemented successfully, the volume of temporary accommodation and length of stay will be significantly reduced across Scotland over the next five years.

While CIH welcomes this approach, it is clear that the transition will be challenging and a number of crucial questions remain around how the principles of Rapid Rehousing and Housing First will work in practice. The market analysis shows that:

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- During 2016/17, local authorities had a duty to house 25,125 homeless households.
- Almost 11,000 households were living in temporary accommodation, an increase of 161% since 2003.
- Of those who were provided with settled accommodation, 17,476 households were housed in the social rented sector (92%) and 1,395 in the private rented sector (8%).
- Moving to a Rapid Rehousing model would mean increasing lets to homeless households by 45% across the social and private rented sectors.
- If all need was to be met within the social housing sector, 52% of all social lets across Scotland would have to be made to homeless households.
- Currently an average of 41% of all local authority lets and 26% of RSL lets are made to homeless households, although figures vary significantly across Scotland.

In developing transition plans, local authorities will need to consider:

- How to balance the needs of homeless households with those who have other needs.
- How choice can be maintained while attempting to move people out of temporary accommodation much more quickly.
- How to involve partners and ensure that everyone is on board with the new approach.
- How support services will be provided and funded, especially for those with complex needs.
- How staff will be supported to change ways of working.

Crucially, if more people are going to be rehoused into permanent, mainstream housing faster, more social housing will need to be made available to let to homeless households and this will require strong partnership working between local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

It is also vital that the Scottish Government maintains its focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing beyond this Parliament and that we ensure that we are building the right homes in the right places across all tenures.

#### Protecting the most vulnerable

CIH Scotland is also pleased to see that the Action Plan recognises the need for homelessness prevention measures to be put in place for the most vulnerable, including women and children fleeing domestic abuse. CIH recently launched its 'Make a Stand' campaign<sup>1</sup> which encourages the housing sector to come together to make four easily deliverable pledges aimed at tackling domestic abuse for their tenants and staff.

Domestic abuse is one of the leading causes of homelessness amongst women in Scotland, and according to the latest homelessness statistics, a 'dispute within the household; violent or abusive' was given as the main reason for homelessness by 4,395 applicants, with 78% of these applications made by women.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CIH Make a Stand Campaign: <http://www.cih.org/makeastand>

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government Homeless Statistics 2017/18: <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables>

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In addition to the measures outlined in the Action Plan to support victims of domestic abuse, we would also like to see a review of legislation<sup>3</sup> to ensure that survivors, and not perpetrators, of domestic abuse have a legal right to stay in their home if they choose to do so. This would allow survivors to rebuild their lives free from the threat of homelessness or the need to move away from their family home.

For those who may have to move, CIH Scotland is also calling on the Scottish Government to commit to the creation of an Emergency Fund to help survivors of domestic abuse access grants quickly to pay for items such as furniture for a new home, should they be required to move. This funding should go beyond what is available through the Scottish Welfare Fund and would help to minimise the financial hardship experienced by those forced to move due to domestic abuse. This would also reflect and build on the findings from the Equalities and Human Rights Committee in 2017 that called for:

"The creation of a new 'Destitution Fund' by the Scottish Government for women experiencing domestic abuse unable to access other sources of help." <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/59>

<sup>4</sup> Equalities and Human Rights Committee Report: May 2017:  
<https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/EHRiC/2017/5/22/Hidden-Lives---New-Beginnings--Destitution--asylum-and-insecure-immigration-status-in-Scotland>