

Home

Choice & Challenges





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Glasgow's Annual Homelessness Conference 2016

***Home: Choices and Challenges* – invited delegates to consider the contrast between a city-wide housing system that, while complex, has broadly enough mainstream housing to accommodate everyone and the reality of too many people not getting the accommodation they need.**

This was achieved by bringing together the widest range of people from Glasgow and across Scotland – academics, decision makers, frontline workers, service managers, housing providers and the direct insight of people who are currently homeless or in housing need.

The conference debated three key, and sometimes controversial, housing options that may have a part to play in resolving the current housing problems. There were no easy answers, no simple solutions; just bringing together as broad a range of people as possible to consider alternative solutions and their potential implementation in Glasgow.

Format of the Day

The aim was to fully explore each topic from as broad a range of perspectives and experiences as possible; allowing delegates to hear many different views. The sessions were interactive, allowing the Chair to ask a range of questions, panel members to respond to, and ask questions of, each other, and delegates to ask questions of the panel members.

Each session was followed by a round-table discussion on the topic, focusing conversation on a specific question to allow us to collectively move the issue forward. And each session ended with voting cards to broadly determine balance of opinion in the room.

The day was expertly facilitated by Grant Campbell, Chief Executive of Glasgow City Mission who warmly welcomed over 200 delegates from across Scotland and from our partner organisation in Denmark, SAND.



Civic Reception

Councillor Matt Kerr, Executive Member for Social Justice in Glasgow City Council

Councillor Matt Kerr, welcomed everyone to the conference, noting both the progress made and challenges still facing us in relation to homelessness. He outlined his vision of social justice as people having access to:

- The economy through well paid employment;
- A vision of a better future; and
- A home that is safe and secure.

Councillor Kerr stated his personal commitment to overcoming the problems we face in the city and working with everyone to improve the way we respond to people's experience of homelessness, with a key focus on joint working to prevent homelessness crisis.

Keynote Address

***Jim Kearns,
Housing Access Team,
Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership***

Jim Kearns from Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership's Housing Access Team looked at the past, present and future of homelessness and housing in Glasgow considering the ways in which our current homelessness problems are have deep structural roots in the old 20th century housing system.

From his extensive experience working in homelessness in Glasgow Jim made a number of observations to help us better understand the city's current challenges and potential solutions:

- While homelessness is not just a housing issue, as access to housing is the main causal factor of the specific problems we face in Glasgow today. Moving away from a century-long system of council housing and hostels throughout the 20th century, the 21st century has seen the transfer of the city's social housing stock to Registered Social Landlords and the closure of the large scale hostels that had been the bedrock of the traditional approach to housing single men. While this has been highly ambitious, the transition from one system to another has not been managed and is at the heart of the challenges we currently face.
- The new housing system requires real partnership working to ensure that homeless households get access to settled tenancies and this partnership approach has been challenging due to the differences in approach between the Local Authority (a hierarchical organisation) and Registered Social Landlords (a network of smaller, autonomous organisations working together on a voluntary basis). The vast differences in approach and understanding of the issues have contributed to a 'mutual misunderstanding' and underdeveloped relationships that have hampered progress.
- To move beyond these misunderstandings and differences work is ongoing to improve and develop working relationships to support genuine partnerships and planning to ensure the access to housing that homeless people in Glasgow need. A new approach is now in place that builds on concrete local plans to deliver the amount of housing we need and to ensure that casework services in the city can match up demand with the improving access to housing supply.

Sofa Session 1

Private Rented Sector

Paul Brown

Chief Executive and Principal Solicitor, Legal Services Agency

Anne Halsey

Director, Scottish Association of Landlords

Janice Kent

Operations and Business Manager, Y People

Nigel Sprigings

Lecturer in Housing and Director of Housing Studies Programme, University of Glasgow

Some Key Facts about the Private Rented Sector in Glasgow:

There are **57,000 – 60,000** homes in the Private Rented Sector in Glasgow, with over half of the stock located in parts of the city with traditionally lower levels of Social Rented housing.

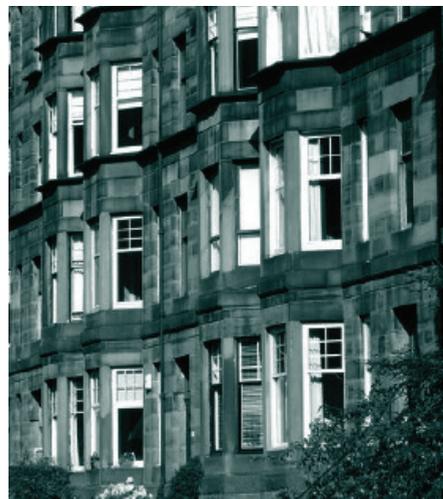
Homelessness statistics tell us that last year **13.5%** of homeless applicants in Glasgow had been in the PRS, and that the sector was the housing outcome for less than **5%** of homeless households.

Challenges

Challenges of using the Private Rented Sector include concerns about the lack of security of tenure, concerns about the affordability of rent levels in the sector and concerns about the quality of some of the housing stock.

Opportunities

Opportunities in relation to using the Private Rented Sector include the potential to open up a wider choice of areas to live in, the growing interest in Social Lettings Agencies which can take better account of the needs of vulnerable tenants, and the changes to the tenancy regime in the sector which may offer more security to tenants.



Overall, should we make more use of the PRS for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?

- People have different needs and aspirations and the flexible locations offered by the Private Rented Sector may be the best option for many homeless households;
- In Glasgow we don't make enough use of rent deposit schemes to overcome the main barriers to accessing the Private Rented Sector. Could we expand our use to prevent homelessness or offer an alternative route out of homelessness?
- The Private Rented Sector may be more expensive than the Social Rented Sector, but it can be less expensive than long stays in temporary and supported accommodation;
- Could the development of Social Lettings Agencies help ensure that the needs of vulnerable people are met in the Private Rented Sector and help improve the quality of housing available?
- To be a viable housing option for homeless households we need to make better use of Landlord Registration to ensure people are offered the highest quality tenancies;
- The new tenancy regime for the Private Rented Sector is a big step forward and may allay the fears people have about the sector being too insecure.



The voting cards indicated that delegates were largely in favour of considering how we can make more use of the Private Rented Sector as a housing option.



Sofa Session 2

Shared Tenancies

Neil Guy

*Housing Practice Manager,
Crisis Scotland*

Val Holtom

*Homelessness Manager,
South Lanarkshire Council*

Jennifer Kent

*Private Sector Co-ordinator,
Perth and Kinross Council*

Kate Polson

*Chief Executive,
Rock Trust*

The age profile of homeless people in Scotland makes the Shared Accommodation Rate a very relevant restriction, but there is limited availability of affordable shared accommodation in Glasgow.

Challenges

Challenges related to the use of Shared Accommodation includes the safe management of people living together (and associated costs) as well as uncertainty about demand and whether it is a housing option that people want to access.

Opportunities

Opportunities of shared tenancies may be in relation to using the restrictions caused by the Shared Accommodation Rate to test new accommodation models, potentially offering an affordable and settled housing option for people, and learning from approaches outside of Glasgow where shared tenancies have operated successfully.

Some Key Facts about Shared Tenancies in Scotland:

Shared Accommodation is defined by the Department for Work and Pensions as **‘the sole use of a bedroom and shared use of at least a living room, kitchen or bathroom.’**

The Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) is the maximum amount of Local Housing Allowance paid to single people under 35 renting their home from a Private Landlord, which in Glasgow is under **£70** per week.

Overall, should we make more use of Shared Tenancies for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness?

- Homeless households have a diverse range of needs and we should make available a diverse range of housing options, including shared tenancies;
- Shared tenancies can help counter the social isolation that many people experience, but will only work if it is a genuine option based on choice rather than necessity;
- An intermediary organisation would be required to manage it, but if resourced properly it could add a positive housing option to the city;
- There remain practical questions around what happens if one tenant leaves, but there are ways to manage this;
- There are examples of different models in other parts of the UK that we could learn from;
- The culture in Glasgow for many is for their own independent tenancy – will this limit demand for shared tenancies?
- It could be considered more widely than just for homeless households in the city, embedding within the Housing Options process.



The voting cards indicated that a significant majority of delegates were interested in finding out more about developing Shared Tenancies as a housing option.

Sofa Session 3

Supported Accommodation

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick

*Director of I-Sphere,
Heriot-Watt University*

Marion Gibbs

*Team Leader,
Scottish Government*

Raymond Moffat

*Citizen Advocate,
Navigate at GHN*

Scott Robertson

*Operations Manager,
Quarriers*

Eric Steel

*Head of Homelessness Services,
Glasgow City Health and Social Care
Partnership*

Some Key Facts about Shared Tenancies in Scotland:

Glasgow's Homelessness system currently commissions 16 third sector organisations to provide around 60 residential projects described as either supported or emergency accommodation, with an average monthly service capacity of **800-1000** places.

Housing First

The Housing First model departs from this approach by rapidly rehousing people with complex needs directly into independent tenancies with wraparound, but flexible, support and is internationally evidenced as a successful model for **8 out of 10** people. Turning Point Scotland's Housing First pilot was the first in the UK and worked with 22 people between 2010 and 2013 achieving very successful outcomes in terms of tenancy sustainment and wider health and wellbeing gains.

Challenges

Challenges in relation to the provision of supported accommodation currently exist as a result of welfare reform, with existing questions about how such accommodation will be funded in the future; but opportunities exist around whether we can make more use of Housing First.

Opportunities?

There is a growing consensus that Housing First is the most effective option for homeless people with complex needs; particularly in relation to sustainability and cost-effectiveness. This presents us with a timely opportunity to review the balance of the different housing options we currently provide.

Do you think we currently have the right balance of residential and mainstream housing options?

- The international success of Housing First challenges our assumptions about 'tenancy readiness' and the role of supported accommodation in preparing people for a tenancy.

Are we ready to leave the idea of 'tenancy readiness' behind?;

- Housing First can offer flexibility and choice that can be difficult to achieve in residential accommodation;
- We need to ensure we get the right balance, which we don't have at the moment;
- Some people will always benefit from residential housing models and we should always retain some;
- If Housing First is evidenced to work for 8 out of 10 homeless people with complex needs it is important to learn.



The voting cards indicated that there was an almost universal agreement that we don't currently have the right balance between residential and mainstream housing options.

**“Really good, it was all beneficial to me ...
I really liked the guest speakers and it was good
that we were given the chance to ask questions”**





Evaluation

Over 200 people attended on the day, with 114 people returning an evaluation form. Grant Campbell, the conference chair, received very positive feedback as did the speakers participating in the sofa sessions.

Overall people told us that:

- The information provided was new and relevant;
- They gained insight into choice and challenges in relation to housing options;
- All questions and discussions on the day were handled well;
- They gained new insights and in some cases changed views based on the information presented and discussed;
- They felt they could take action on what they learned;
- That they made contacts that they would follow up with; and
- That overall the conference was very worthwhile.



Sofa Session 1
The Private Rented Sector in Glasgow

Some key facts

- 1. The private rented sector in Glasgow is growing rapidly, with a significant increase in the number of properties available for rent.
- 2. The sector is becoming increasingly diverse, with a mix of private landlords and social housing providers.
- 3. The sector is facing a number of challenges, including high levels of homelessness and a shortage of affordable housing.
- 4. The sector is also facing a number of opportunities, including the potential for new investment and the development of new housing models.

Comments from the Day



“Good to listen to other people’s perspective”

“Excellent insight into issues, challenges and opportunities. Came away with a better understanding”

“The sofa sessions were a dynamic part of the day”

“Provocative new ideas and concepts for future homelessness options”

“A really well organised event with thought provoking discussions”

“The City Chambers is an excellent venue, but the echo in the banqueting hall can make it difficult to hear.”

And Thanks...

With thanks to our chair, **Grant Campbell**, and our keynote speakers and sofa session guests – *you were great!*

Thanks also to everyone who participated so fully and helped create new thinking and learning – and with a special note of thanks to those who shared their important stories and life experiences.

Thanks to Harald Thisted Gjersøe for his photographs of the day.

See you all next year!



