

Can we fix
Homelessness
in Scotland?

Aye we can

Final Report
March 2018



CRISIS



Thank you ...

To the 425 people with experience of homelessness who gave time and expertise, using their own experiences, challenges and aspirations to help identify the best solutions for ending homelessness in Scotland.

To the 5 Housing Options Hubs across Scotland who helped coordinate and support local consultation.

To the many frontline service providers who hosted focus groups and encouraged and supported people to participate. Particular thanks to the Scottish Prison Service for facilitating access to HMP Perth.

To Crisis for providing financial support to cover the costs of people taking part.

To the members of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group for prioritising the views of people with lived experience, listening to people at events across the country and making sure that recommendations are based directly on people's experiences and priorities.



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Glasgow Homelessness Network ('GHN') is a charity registered in Scotland (SC0 03453) and company limited by guarantee (SC112361).

Hello

In December 2017 we published our first report sharing what 122 people with first-hand experience of homelessness from all over Scotland think we need to do to transform temporary accommodation and end rough sleeping and homelessness.

The report was delivered to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group which is making important recommendations to the Scottish Government about the priorities for the next 5 years and how to best spend an additional £50 million.

But we didn't want to stop there. We wanted to hear from more people, in more detail, in more places.

To do this, SHIEN at Glasgow Homelessness Network designed and delivered a national programme of consultation and discussion, based on a number of important principles:

- That as broad a range of opportunities to participate were offered, allowing people to choose the way they wanted to take part (if at all), making best use of technology to reach people in all parts of Scotland;
- That people with lived experience would be focusing on the same core questions as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group so they could directly influence the recommendations to the Scottish Government;
- That sessions would be designed to capture both headline information and dig deeper to better understand the important issues, and that people would be encouraged and supported to use their own stories to help find positive solutions;

- That particular experiences and routes into homelessness would be explored directly, e.g. youth homelessness, homelessness and multiple needs, homelessness as a result of leaving prison/rehab and the experience of homelessness amongst people new to Scotland; and
- That people with lived experience would be reimbursed for their time and participation.

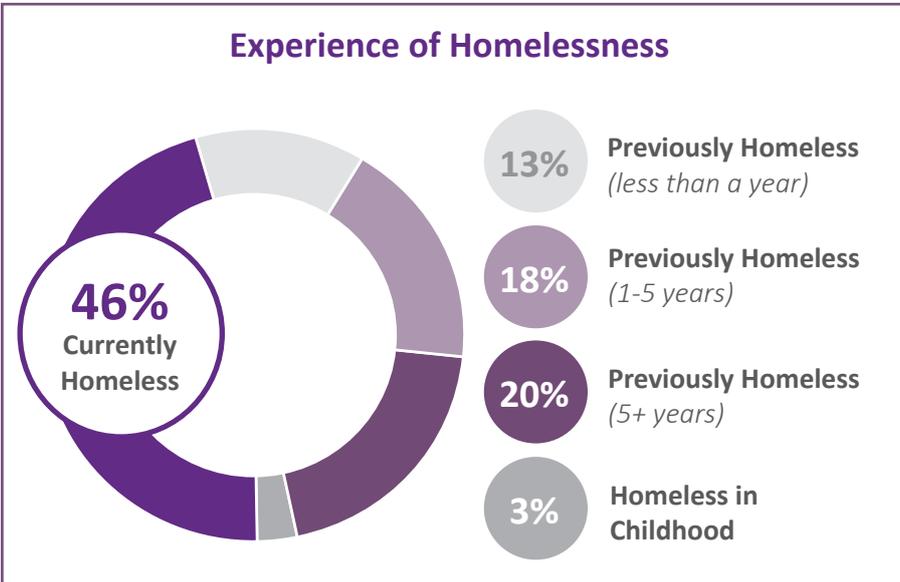
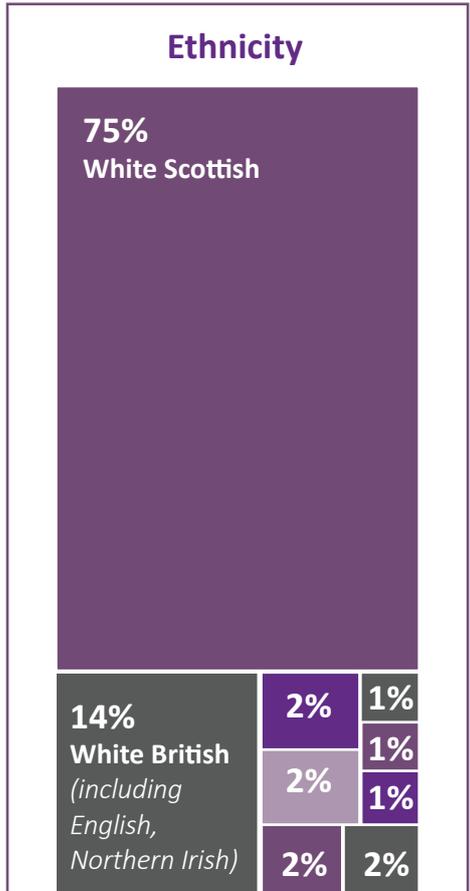
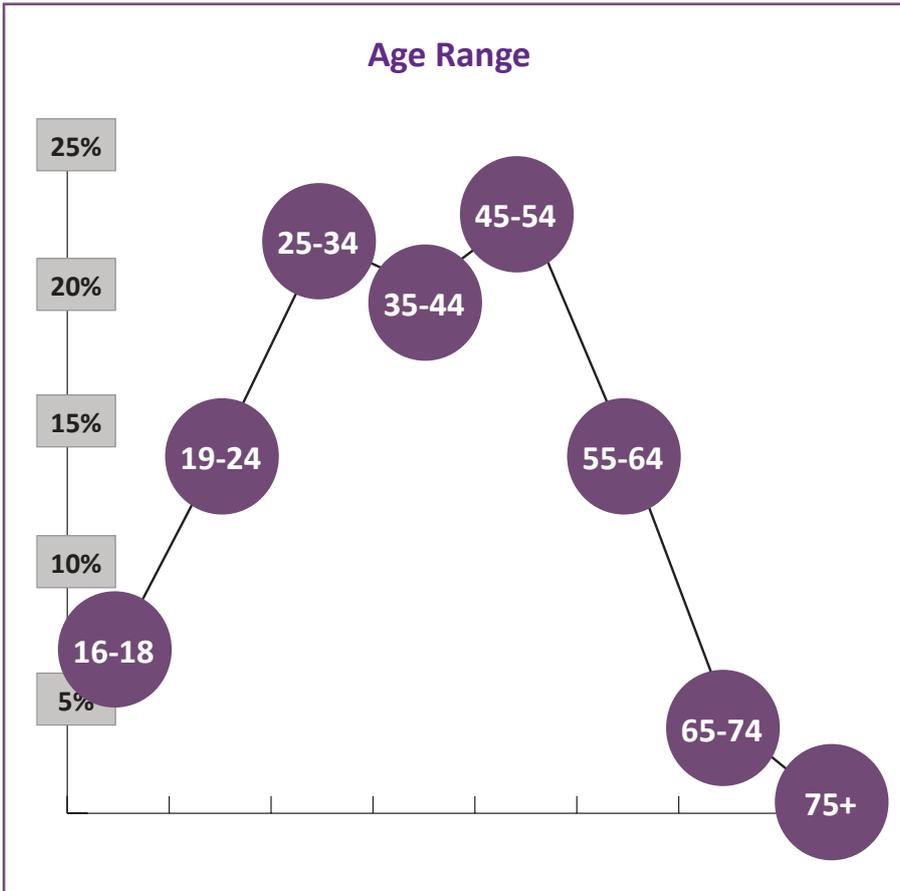
So between December 2017 and February 2018 we:

- Hosted an online survey for 10 weeks completed by 165 people from all across Scotland;
- Held 5 regional discussion events (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Perth and Dumfries) attended by 122 people;
- Held 8 thematic focus groups attended by 80 people;
- Undertook 58 one-to-one interviews in person or over the phone.

The rest of this report will tell you more about who took part, about the main themes that people wanted to talk about all over Scotland, and also look a little bit more about what people said in different parts of the country. One message was very clear.

People welcomed with energy this new focus on homelessness and the additional money that will be available, but want to be sure it is spent in an open and honest way. People also want direct feedback on what is changing for the better as a result of their participation - and to stay involved and keep connecting to Scottish Government in some way over the 5-year programme.

1. Who Took Part?



- 2%** White European (including Irish, Polish)
- 2%** Mixed Race
- 2%** British Asian
- 2%** Other White Background
- 1%** Black African
- 1%** White Traveller
- 1%** Any Other Ethnic Group

Current Accommodation at the Point of Participation



25% Supported Accommodation



21% Own Home
After a period of homelessness



11% Hostel



10% Other



8% Temporary Furnished Flat



7% Own Home
At risk of homelessness



6% Prison
At risk of homelessness on release



4% B&B



2% Rehab



2% Sofa Surfing



2% Rough Sleeping



1% Night Shelter

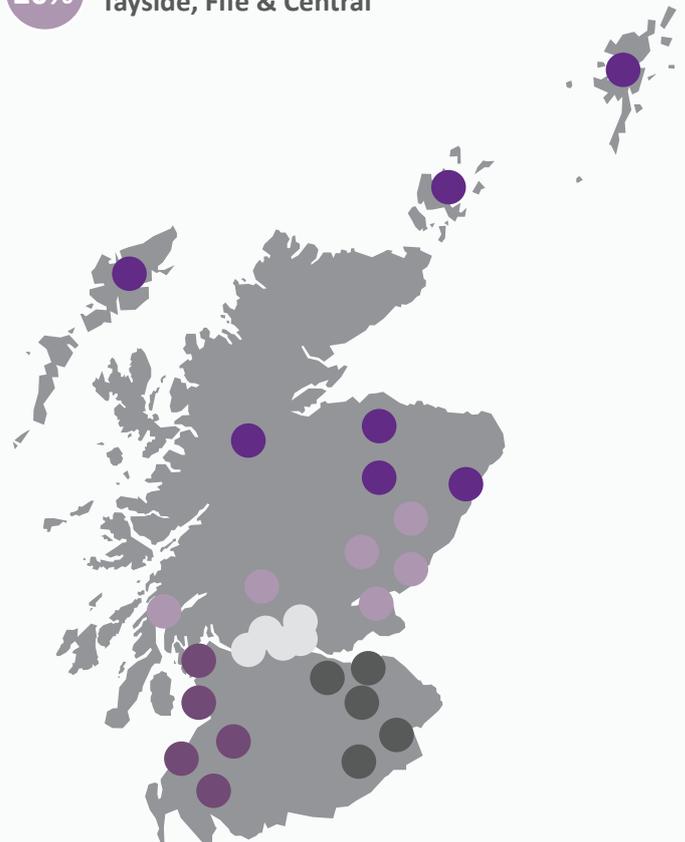


1% Asylum/Refugee Accommodation

Participants by Hub Area

13% North & Islands

20% Tayside, Fife & Central



7% Ayrshire & South

39% West of Scotland

21% Edinburgh, Lothian & Borders

As responding to demographic questions was not mandatory across any engagement methods, the data reflects only the responses of those who chose to answer these questions.

2. National Key Themes

(1) Housing First and Fast

Having a safe, affordable home of your own in an area you want to live is the absolute priority for people. Whether keeping your home when you are at risk of homelessness or being offered your own home quickly instead of temporary options, responses to homelessness must be housing led with access to flexible local support.

All over Scotland people have been clear that they don't want to live in temporary accommodation. In rural areas this is because people often have to move miles from their home town or village to access it, leaving behind support networks, or sleeping rough or sofa surfing locally.

“**The area is very rural, two towns have emergency help, but nothing in the smaller towns for people. So if I moved into a small town the support might be far away.**” (Tayside, Fife and Central Hub)

In urban areas, while there is thought to be more temporary accommodation, people felt that it is in places that aren't safe or that can make problems worse. Traditional models where people live in the same building together – including hostels and B&B – are very difficult for many people. For people with multiple needs, it makes it more difficult to maintain recovery or avoid reoffending. It places you back alongside negative influences, undoing positive progress and leaving people feeling safer elsewhere:

“**Better off in here - than out there sometimes**” (Prison Focus Group, HMP Perth)

And for people without a lot of support needs, including many New Scots, it leaves people feeling unsafe. People in work – or who want to get work – also don't want to live in temporary accommodation because it is very expensive, impacting on employment and benefits.

“**Had to cut my hours down at work to save me having to pay so much rent in the unit**” (West of Scotland Hub)

And for others, including people with children, the rules within accommodation projects, such as curfews, no visitors' policies, make it difficult for people to live an ordinary life.

“**Not being allowed visitors means my children cannot come to see where I stay, and they worry about the conditions I am living in.**” (West of Scotland Hub)

Focusing on access to a home of your own as quickly as possible when becoming homeless, including for those with multiple needs, was described as the most important way to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

(2) Joined Up

Homelessness can only be ended when services work together, recognising the need for urgent responses. In all parts of Scotland people are 'stuck' between different services and responsibilities, which often don't work together or work towards the same outcomes. This was described as people struggling to get the support they needed for physical and mental ill health, addictions and social isolation either before or after becoming homeless. People not knowing who to ask for help and local services not always being able to advise who else can help is common, particularly for New Scots.

For people with multiple needs - often leaving prison or rehab - the aims of the homelessness system do not always complement the aims of recovery organisations or the goal of reducing reoffending, with limited focus on the provision of a tenancy (rather than a B&B or hostel) as someone prepares to move on.

People also noted conflict between the aims of homelessness services and those of the benefits system, describing that the DWP does not understand the realities faced by vulnerable people and also that delays in benefit payments often as a result of services not working together can either cause or prolong homelessness crisis. But when there is a joined up approach better outcomes are achieved:

“**We need personalised services – my two workers from housing and housing support have worked hard together and got me a good outcome.**” (Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Hub)

(3) Staff Awareness

People are clear that in many situations the power to achieve positive outcomes still often lies with staff in a range of different services and is determined by their knowledge, values and awareness.

Consultation through LGBT Youth highlighted that young people often report their experience of homelessness being classed as ‘intentional’ because of a lack of understanding of the realities of family breakdown when ‘coming out’.

Others with multiple needs report that a lack of understanding of mental ill health and addictions leads to people being classed as intentionally homeless, or sanctioned by the DWP.

“*staff should avoid tarring residents with the same brush because residents are all individual people*”(Addictions Focus Group)

Rethinking the role of intentionality decisions within homelessness legislation can play an important role in finding solutions for vulnerable people.

Staff who are respectful, approachable and adaptable are an important part of improving lives, and they should be trained and supported to fully understand and respond to trauma and multiple needs, working alongside people to build confidence, self-esteem and trusting relationships.

“*I need to build up that trusting relationship with staff first before I feel ready to talk or accept support*”
(Family Homelessness focus group)

(4) Stop It

There was a universal message that the best way to end homelessness is to stop it happening in the first place.

So many of people’s adult experiences are related to their childhoods and early work with children and young people should recognise the future risk of homelessness, taking all necessary steps to prevent it.

For people in institutions such as prison, there needs to be long term plans for people to have a home to go to when they leave and consideration of what else can

be done to avoid people losing their tenancies when they are serving short-term sentences.

And for vulnerable people in mainstream housing and homelessness accommodation, more thought has to be given to not evicting people too quickly and forcing them into homelessness.

(5) Count It

While homelessness is counted through local authorities and reported by the Scottish Government, people with first-hand experience report hidden homelessness and rough sleeping that is not counted anywhere.

We need to get better at knowing how many people are actually homeless and using the information to deliver housing and support to prevent repeat homelessness.

“*There’s a lot of hidden rough sleeping in closes and sofa surfing.*”
(Ayrshire and South Hub)

(6) Collaborate

Like approaches to homelessness being joined up, wider collaboration is also needed with people with lived experience. Listening and learning about where we still aren’t getting things right, taking advice about solutions and what it is that makes the difference.



Also, creating opportunities for people with lived experience to be directly involved in delivering solutions, with a prioritisation of peer-based approaches that can embed positive, trusting relationships based on shared experience and understanding of people’s lives, can play a vital and lasting role in ending homelessness.

3. Key Themes Across the Housing Options

Ayrshire and South

31 people participated across:

Dumfries & Galloway ✓
North Ayrshire ✓
East Ayrshire ✓
South Ayrshire ✓
Inverclyde ✓

Priorities:

- Focus on making sure homeless households get a home of their own as quickly as possible, avoiding or cutting down on stays in temporary accommodation which is too expensive for people who are working and often too far away from people's families and communities;
- Make sure there is enough affordable housing in all areas, with a particular focus on one bedroom and larger family homes;
- Do more to stop people from becoming homeless, particularly working with children and young people to prevent them experiencing homelessness as an adult;
- Consider making better use of outreach services to proactively respond to homelessness, particularly as outside of bigger towns it is difficult for people to get to services;
- Think about how local connection legislation works in the area and whether it can be changed to allow sustainable solutions to be found across neighbouring local authorities.



Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders

91 people participated across:

City of Edinburgh ✓
Midlothian ✓
East Lothian ✓
Scottish Borders ✓
Falkirk ✓
West Lothian ✓

Priorities:

- Focus on making sure homeless households get a home of their own as quickly as possible with all the support they need;
- Make sure there is local, easy-access accommodation to prevent rough sleeping, but avoid using B&B accommodation which is often poor quality with strict rules;
- Make flexible support easy to access, particularly support that focuses on people's assets, building positive relationships and self-esteem with delivery by highly skilled staff;
- Do more to stop people becoming homeless in the first place and don't stop working with people described as 'difficult to engage';
- Have enough affordable housing locally so people don't have to move away from their communities.



Hubs Areas

West of Scotland

166 people participated across:

East Dunbartonshire ✓
Renfrewshire ✓
East Renfrewshire ✓
South Lanarkshire ✓
Glasgow ✓
West Dunbartonshire ✓
North Lanarkshire ✓

Priorities:

- Focus on making sure homeless households get a home of their own as quickly as possible with all the support they need, moving away from providing support in residential buildings;
- Aim to not use hostel and B&B accommodation, particularly for vulnerable people who might be in recovery or at risk of reoffending. And if they are used, make sure they are high quality and don't have strict rules on visitors, curfews that see people lose their places;
- Simplify homelessness systems that can be difficult to navigate (in bigger towns and cities) particularly when people are also using other services (addictions, mental health, counselling);
- Look closely at transitions from prison, rehab etc. to prevent people becoming homeless by making sure they have a home (rather than temporary accommodation) to move into;
- Look specifically at the types of support needed by young people so they are confident in sustaining their tenancies;
- Make sure that services are trauma informed;
- Make better use of peer-based approaches to help build up positive relationships.

Glasgow



North and Islands

51 people participated across:

Aberdeen City ✓
Moray ✓
Aberdeenshire ✓
Orkney Islands
Eilean Siar ✓
Shetland Islands ✓
Highland ✓

Priorities:

- With difficulties providing accessible services to respond to emergencies across rural areas, work to prevent homelessness is the most important thing;
- But when people do become homeless focus on making sure they get a home of their own as quickly as possible with all the support they need;
- Make sure there is local, easy-access accommodation to prevent rough sleeping, but avoid using B&B accommodation with is often poor quality with strict rules;
- Consider more outreach services to go to people in remote areas who can't get to towns and cities to access services and ensure coordinated responses to people with multiple needs, including addictions, mental ill health;
- Have enough affordable housing locally so people don't have to move away from their communities.



Tayside, Fife and Central Scotland

87 people participated across:

Angus ✓
Fife ✓
Argyll & Bute ✓
Perth & Kinross ✓
Clackmannanshire ✓
Stirling ✓
Dundee ✓

Priorities:

- The focus should be on providing permanent homes as quickly as possible as people spend too long in (often unsuitable) temporary accommodation;
- More flexible support needed that is easily accessible and coordinated for people with multiple needs and focuses on positive relationships;
- Work with vulnerable families and young people to prevent them becoming homeless;
- Work more closely with good quality private landlords to open up housing options for people on low incomes;
- Have enough affordable housing locally so people don't have to move away from their communities.



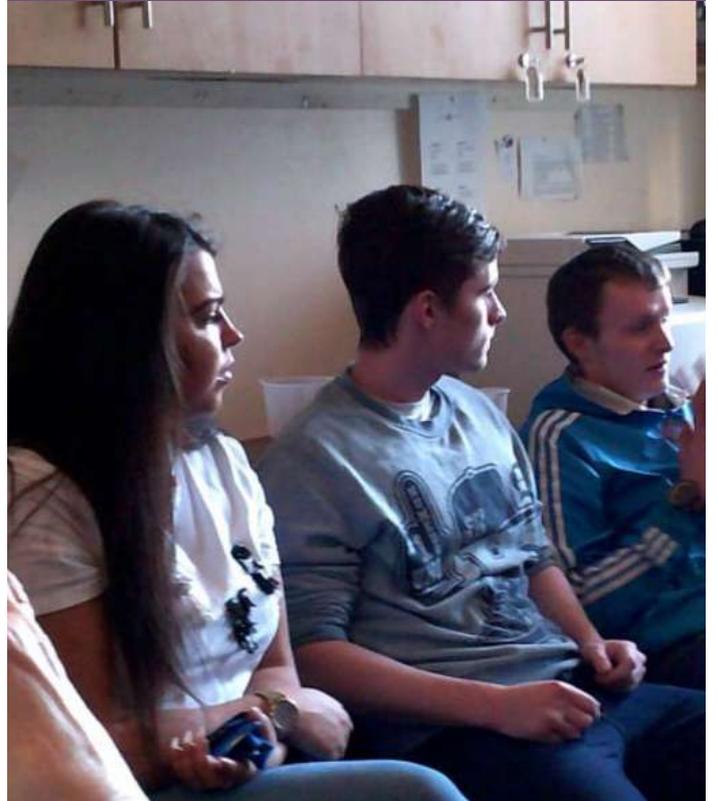


We visited Kevin Stewart MSP on behalf of all the people who took part in our Aye We Can collaboration.

Edinburgh



Paisley



Aye
we can

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