



SAFE AS HOUSES

Homelessness, Health and a Global Pandemic



Homeless Network Scotland | Conference Report 2020



SAFE AS HOUSES

Home has never been more important than in 2020. A global pandemic that locked down our communities, and restrictions that needed isolation indoors. As we moved through the personal and professional challenges posed by the pandemic, the links between housing and health were laid bare. From the very start of lockdown two urgent questions were posed: how can you stay at home if you don't have one? And how can you be safe at home if that home isn't safe?



Over three days in October, Scotland's annual homelessness conference offered a unique opportunity to connect in a new way, with over 500 delegate places registered and more than 60 speakers sharing ideas and insights in our first online conference. Safe as Houses provided a menu of live lounge discussions, keynotes, video features, speed training and briefing with insights from sector leaders, politicians and people with an experience of homelessness.

The conference covered 25 sessions over five key themes. We wanted to create space to celebrate the extraordinary efforts across all parts of Scotland in response to COVID-19 – from colleagues on the frontline to policy makers shifting focus to protect those most at risk.

Together, we reflected on what we've learned and how to build forward from this year. Here's what we're taking with us into 2021:



Ten Conference Takeaway Messages

- 1** The method adopted to end homelessness in Scotland, prevention and rapid rehousing, is also the best platform for recovery from the pandemic. Don't be distracted, keep going!
- 2** Housing ends homelessness, and a housing-led recovery must be a key part of Scotland's recovery. More homes are needed for good health for everyone.
- 3** Homelessness was always a public health emergency; we now need to go further with integrating health and social care with housing and homelessness.
- 4** Don't miss the opportunity to keep building from what was strong during the pandemic: collaboration, collective action and leaderships at all levels and layers. Listen to each other.
- 5** Harness the community action to connect with local groups and networks to prevent homelessness before it happens. All homelessness starts in a community.
- 6** Grow quality relationships that focus on people, not problems or labels and centred on personal choice. Change that people make happen for themselves is more likely to last.
- 7** Competition and tendering for work can be a barrier to good relationships and cooperation within the charity sector, commissioners and funders should keep addressing this.
- 8** Scotland's homelessness policy and legislation is cutting edge; improved operational and strategic partnerships with other sectors is key to this working every time, for every person.
- 9** A defined role for supported accommodation can make a clearer contribution to Scotland's response to homelessness. The Shared Spaces research during 2021 is the 'missing piece'.
- 10** We already have common ground between Scottish political parties in their commitment to end homelessness. Identify and bank common ground and focus on what's needed.



Theme 1

A Global Pandemic

Drawing out international learning and comparisons on responses to homelessness

Conference Opening & Welcome

Maggie Brunjes, chief executive of Homeless Network Scotland welcomed everyone to an annual event that has become a force in itself, thanks to the insights and energy that everyone brings each year. The pandemic through a homelessness lens has forced faster progress on a number of fronts, and for many a real rethink of what's possible:

- **Not all in the same boat:** the pandemic has hurt people at the sharpest end of health, social and economic inequality and also exposed the inequality and the unfairness at the root of homelessness. Homelessness does discriminate and this affects some people and places more.
- **Not let up in our responses:** People haven't stopped becoming homeless during lockdown, but in many areas local housing systems have only recently started moving again. We need to keep up this pace to mitigate the expected surge in homelessness as a result of the social and economic consequences of the pandemic.
- **Take a short-cut:** So much work has been done to put Scotland on the best possible track to resolve homelessness. Many people here today have been through every cycle of change and are building up a sharp knowledge of what works and what matters. We need to short cut that learning for everyone so we can keep moving forward.
- **It costs more to get this wrong:** A lot of money is spent on homelessness, but not always in the most effective or evidence-based way. It costs more to keep people homeless in a temporary system; it costs more to get this wrong than it does to get it right. A housing-led recovery can help mitigate the worst impacts of the pandemic.
- **Stop talking about homelessness?** If we only ever respond to homelessness after it happens, we will always have homelessness. We need to go earlier and wider, actively increasing and targeting prevention efforts and connecting with local services and networks that can prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.

Keynote

Getting it Finished

Juha Kaakinen

CEO of Y-Foundation in Finland

For many years Finland's response to homelessness has been an inspiring example of what can be achieved with planning, resources, and collective determination. Juha opened the conference with a detailed overview of the journey Finland has been on since the 1980s and the significant reductions in homelessness that have been seen as a result; the Housing First approach, the importance of housing, and some of the lessons that can be learned from Finland's experience.

Some of the key elements that have worked include:

- Facilitating a long-term, systemic change away from shelters and hostels towards Housing First where people are supported in a home of their own.
- Small, supported housing units with a maximum of 33 self-contained flats
- Well trained, knowledgeable housing advisors who are able to work proactively to prevent evictions.
- A steady increase in social housing supply.
- The inclusion of people with expertise via their own experiences being involved in planning.
- An ongoing commitment to creating a culture of collaboration.
- Setting up and maintaining a strong development network.

Some of the key challenges Juha noted included:

- Realising that more people need more support than was previously thought.
- Intensive case management is not always intensive enough, and flexibility is required in service delivery and planning.
- Basic social and health services need to be well integrated, and when this isn't the case it can have a negative impact.
- An insufficient availability of rehabilitation can impact individuals' progress.
- Prevailing NIMBY – 'not in my back yard' – attitudes.
- A sense of nostalgia and habits remain for the old system of temporary accommodation, and it can be easy to default back to this way of working.
- There is an uneven development of Housing First thinking and practice.
- A lack of small affordable flats; supply not appropriate to demand.



Live Lounge What just happened?

To share international learning in response to the pandemic as well as the examples that inspired them and those we can learn from, **Maggie Brunjes** welcomed to the panel: **Janine Kellett**, Scottish Government, **Dr Indu Prakash Singh**, Citymakers Mission International, **Freek Spinnewijn**, FEANTSA, **Lydia Stazen**, Institute of Global Homelessness, **Louise Winterburn**, World Habitat.

A number of key learning areas were highlighted:

- Maintaining the urgency of the pandemic secured accommodation for people sleeping rough in many places, noting that decisions that would typically take weeks were being made in 24 hours resulting in a dramatic reduction in rough sleeping numbers.
- The importance of collaboration; the pandemic response has shown what is possible when efforts are collective and urgent across sectors and geographies enabled quick and effective decision making to implement responses at scale.
- Community-led efforts in many places when social services and outreach services were interrupted were remarkable in many places. Local people and groups self-organised, for example arranging PPE and communicating how people could stay safe.
- In the urgency to ensure people were housed, it became clear that there are many people who are at risk and unsafe in their home, with women and children particularly at risk.
- Public guidance was often not clear to everyone, especially for example ‘stay at home’, ‘social distance.’
- By-name lists enable quick responses – knowing who needs support and being able to collaborate and share data among services to respond.
- The close involvement of the health sector played a key role and needs be further developed. Housing-led responses like Housing First proved effective in combatting an infectious disease, and there is an ongoing need to convince partners in the health sector that housing should be prescribed as a health intervention.



Theme 2

Whatever the Problem, The Answer is Relationships



Exploring the role of relationships as the lynchpin for professional and personal wellbeing

Facilitated by **Martin Gavin**, Homeless Network Scotland, this theme explored the extent to which relationships are pivotal to efforts to end homelessness. By building and nurturing good relationships we can 'upset the set up' and bring about the system change needed. Some of the questions posed included:

- *How did the system designed to help people, when did it become about the system and less about the people in it?*
- *Why do we label people and the experiences they have?*
- *How can 'them and us' become just 'us'?*

Keynote: The Heart of the Matter

Pat McArdle, CEO, Mayday Trust

Pat is a passionate advocate for systemic change and led the transformation of Mayday from a traditional supported housing provider to a national influencer for systemic change.

Mayday is working to deconstruct a system that people told them was dehumanising with services trying to 'fix' problems. Instead, a system characterised by quality relationships working with people not problems or labels and centred on personal choice. Change that an individual makes happen for themselves is more likely to last. Pat finished with a poem that she wrote after a difficult meeting where people's lives were being discussed without them present.

If the System Could Talk

Pat McArdle

*When I manage and control your life
you become my risk.*

*When I manage and control your life
I need your outcomes, so I need you to
comply with my idea of morality.*

*You will not use drugs, you will not drink,
you will work to sustain your accommodation.*

*When I manage and control your life,
I cannot afford to give you choice or a voice.*

*When I manage and control your life I will determine
your problems, and I will not ask you what you can
manage yourself.*

*When I manage and control your life you will be
rewarded when you comply and when you tell your
story widely with gratitude so you can help me raise
funds to manage and control the lives of others.*

*When I manage and control your life you will be
owned by me and you will never leave.*

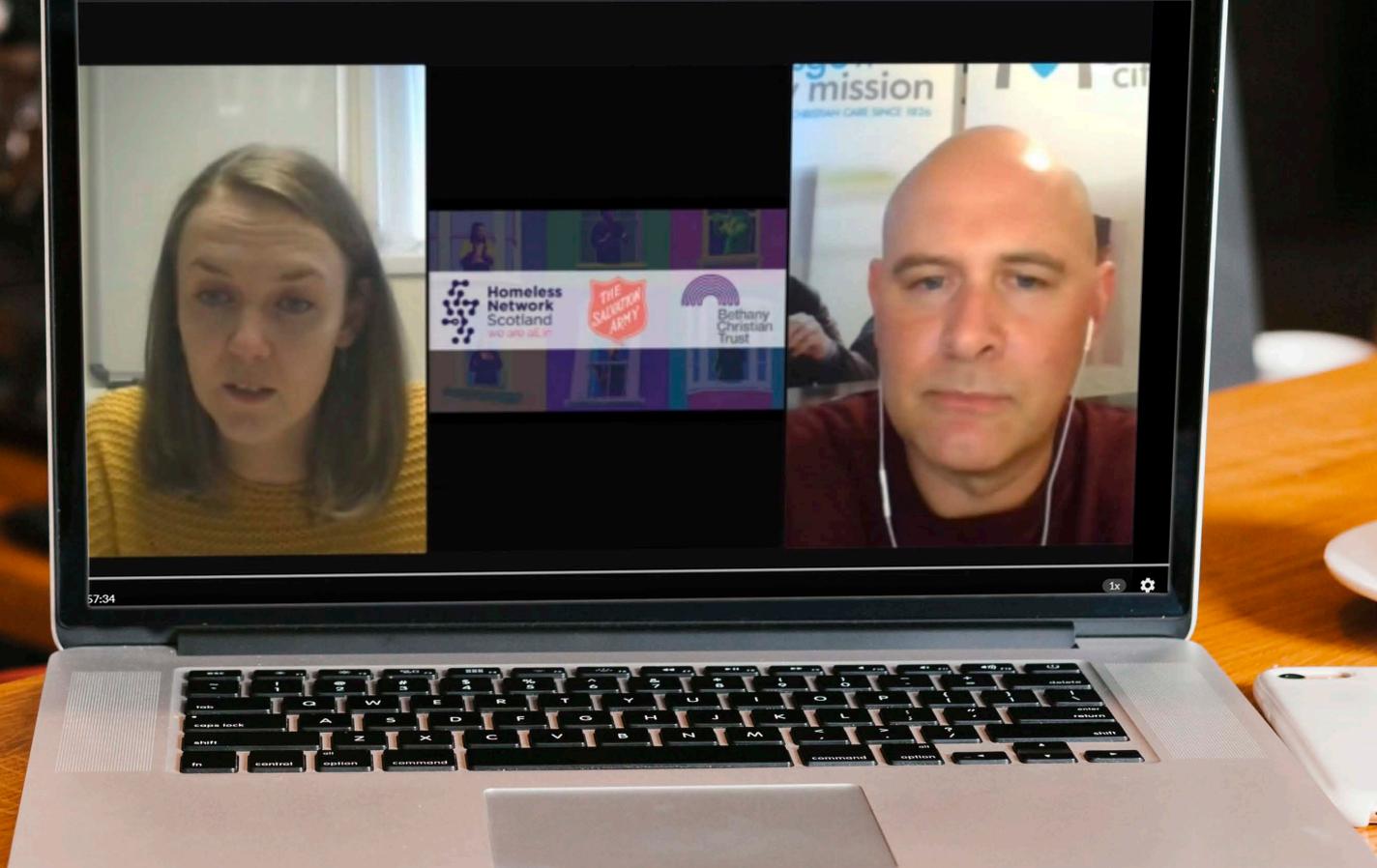




Live Lounge Flattening the curve

Senior and frontline colleagues **Becky Elton**, Deputy CEO, Changing Lives, **Alison Kennedy**, City of Edinburgh Council and Change Lead, All in For Change, **Janet MacKeller**, Help Argyll and Bute Ltd and Change Lead, All in For Change and **Lorraine McGrath**, Chief Executive, Simon Community Scotland, joined a shared learning session focusing on how we can make choices based on connections and kindness — in an environment focused on targets and outcomes:

- Until we value relationships as much as we value statistics, we are not going to see significant change. The response to COVID-19 showed people ‘you matter’.
- Top-level vision is often not filtering down to frontline staff, and the other way too. Relationships must be valued at an organisational level and built into the way an organisation operates rather than included in someone’s workplan.
- Professionals should be empowered and trained to open up more in a work setting and build normal relationships with those they meet.
- Relationships are too often driven by where a service is located, or what it is called, rather than the needs of a person who is going through tough times.
- Competition and tendering for work can be a barrier to good relationships and co-operation within the charity sector, commissioners and funders should consider this.
- The importance of youth work, often the prevention touchpoint has been undervalued and paired back significantly.
- Some relationships have been nurtured by the pandemic, for example people asking one another, ‘How are you?’ and really meaning it. This new openness should be encouraging members of staff to think, ‘How can I help you?’ rather than referring to a list of interventions.



Briefing Warm winter welcome

Ruth Longmuir from Bethany Christian Trust in and Charles Maasz from Glasgow City Mission briefing on the significant changes to traditional winter night shelters in Scotland.

In Edinburgh, Bethany Christian Trust has operated a Care Shelter for people who have no shelter since 1996; this year taking the best of the care shelter and combining it with a COVID-safe response. During lockdown, more than 71% using the service moved onto accommodation such as tenancies and temporary accommodation. Moving into winter, Bethany have secured a block booking of 65 rooms and exclusive use of an Edinburgh hotel for a Welcome Centre. Accommodation is 50 bedrooms, with potential extra capacity if required, plus staff rooms, offices, storage area, consultation rooms and use of reception area and main reception hall. In the five weeks since opening, Bethany have supported more than 240 guests, with both with accommodation and support.

In Glasgow, a 24-hour Overnight Welcome Centre based in a city-centre hotel will be operated by Glasgow City Mission. The centre will provide safe, emergency accommodation to anyone at risk of rough sleeping in Glasgow over the winter.

The service will open on 1 December and run till 31 March with capacity for 25 guests at any one time. Although the service will offer a single-occupancy room, rather than a shared hall, it is still considered emergency accommodation as a last resort. For those people who access emergency accommodation in Glasgow everything is focused on recognising the humanity, dignity and relationships with people using the facilities. To operate the hotel facilities Glasgow City Mission has partnered with GCHSCP and the Scottish Government among many others.

For other parts of the UK looking to move away from communal shelters there are lessons to be learned from Scotland's response. The model has been developed in partnership, with strong leadership from existing service providers toward ending the need for communal sleeping space while still recognising the continuing need for emergency, direct-access accommodation. A key component is the focus on moving on from this type of accommodation to something more permanent.



Theme 3

A Day in The Sun for Good Law and Policy

Building from recent successes to ensure it is upheld on the ground every time and for every person

Ministerial Address

Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing & Planning



Kevin Stewart MSP described the progress made in delivering on the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan in the first year, and how the pandemic changed the homelessness system overnight, meaning we had to respond collectively and with speed to protect the most vulnerable. The Minister reinforced the collective commitment to ending homelessness in Scotland, noting that:

- While significant resources needed to be directed towards emergency accommodation options during the pandemic, the long-term focus remains on everyone having access to their own home, with the right support.

- The rapid and dramatic decrease in rough sleeping achieved during the pandemic adds to the motivation to protect this progress by ensuring positive move on options for everyone.
- The recommendations of the reconvened Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group act as an important blueprint to ensure we maintain positive momentum as we move into the recovery phase.
- There is continued commitment to expanding Housing First across Scotland, where the provision of safe, secure tenancies allows people the time and space to establish new lives.
- Plans are now underway to deliver on the shared vision of a Scotland with no need for night shelters, with the establishment of the new Rapid Rehousing Welcome Centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

At the heart is a focus on rapid rehousing, homelessness prevention, partnership working, and the involvement of people with lived experience of homelessness. Local authority Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans are at the core of our ambition to deliver the significant systems and culture change we need to end homelessness in Scotland. Many challenges remain ahead, but the partnerships formed, and successes achieved during the pandemic, stand us in good stead to tackle them head on.

Briefing A day in the sun

Marion Gibbs, Team Leader, Scottish Government

*Much has changed in Scotland's homelessness law and policy, with some changes long planned and others coming into force in response to the pandemic. With the priority need test already removed from homelessness legislation, attention turned to the legal provisions around intentionality and local connection often seen as barriers to households accessing the best housing option for them. And with the long-term efforts to equalise homelessness rights, there has been significant focus on the **Unsuitable Accommodation Order** and who benefits from it. In response:*

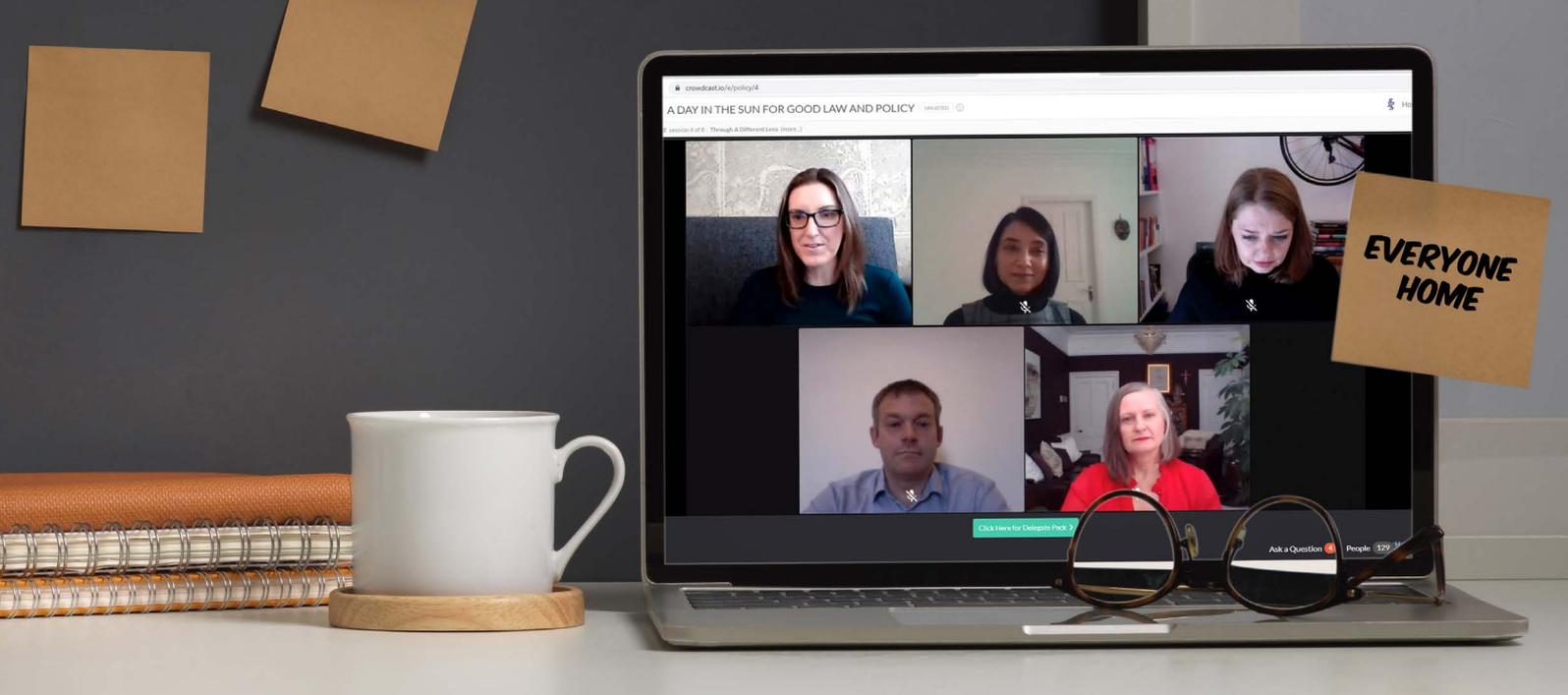
- The law was changed in November 2019 to allow local authorities the option not to assess whether someone is homeless intentionally (changing it from a duty to a power). While the numbers are relatively small, the legislative change is intended to reduce still further any barriers to settled housing.
- A consultation is currently coming to an end on plans to suspend local connection referrals, with the option to make further changes if the suspension leads to adverse circumstances locally. The Ministerial Statement to set out the parameters of these changes will be made in Parliament early in 2021 with new legislation, if passed, coming into force in May 2021.
- The Unsuitable Accommodation Order was extended in May 2020 to cover all homeless households rather than just households with dependent children and/or pregnant women. The revised Order defines types of accommodation that will not be classed as unsuitable and sets temporary exemptions in response to challenges faced by local authorities during the pandemic. Temporary exemptions are to the end of January 2021, from which point the Order will be breached if accommodation defined as unsuitable is used for more than 7 days.

The public health emergency created an impetus to look differently at several policy areas including:

- Protecting people in both the social and private rented sectors from eviction, extending the notice period to 6 months in most cases, and 3 months for instances of anti-social behaviour.
- Prioritising a public health approach and offering emergency accommodation to households with no recourse to public funds to protect them and others from the spread of the virus.

Focus was maintained on the importance of homelessness prevention including:

- The Prevention Review Group convened by Crisis and chaired by Prof Suzanne Fitzpatrick continue to meet to develop proposals for new legal prevention duties in Scotland.
- Ongoing development of Prevention Pathways for people most at risk of homelessness such as young people leaving care, people leaving prison.
- Linking the emergency provision of hotel rooms during the pandemic with the delivery of Housing First, offering it as a positive move on option for those who will benefit from it.



Live Lounge Through a different lens

Panellists considered what more can be done to make sure laws and policies work on the ground every time and for every person. Facilitated by **Claire Frew**, Homeless Network Scotland, on the panel were: **Ian Brennan**, Director of Regulation, Scottish Housing Regulator, Professor **Suzanne Fitzpatrick**, Director of I-SPHERE, Heriot-Watt University, **Aaliya Seyal**, Chief Executive, Legal Services Agency, **Graham Thomson**, Team Leader, Scottish Government and **Alison Watson**, Director, Shelter Scotland.

- Homelessness policy and legislation remains cutting edge in Scotland with a willingness to tackle fundamental issues, with successes including the abolition of priority need, ending the Right to Buy, improving the security of tenure in the Private Rented Sector, and establishing Rapid Rehousing and Housing First as a cornerstone policy objective.
- In recent years we have also improved the way in which decisions are made about policy and legislation, building cross-sector consensus and bringing people with lived and frontline experience of homelessness into the decision-making process, for example through the establishment of the All in for Change Team, has been a positive step forward.
- While Scotland performs well internationally in terms of delivering on the ambition of our policy and legislation, we continue to face significant challenges including some areas not meeting statutory temporary accommodation duties. HARSAG recommendations focused on systemic level change and, while agreed it is the best way forward, the positive impact is not going to be felt on the ground as quickly as we want.
- Improved strategic and operational partnerships with other sectors, especially health, is key to closing the gap between our good intentions and people accessing their rights. The response to the pandemic required the formation of new local collaborations and a faster pace. These steps forward need to be maintained alongside a strong commitment from national government to build enough safe, secure, affordable, warm homes for everyone.

Briefing

HARSAG recommendations...made easy!

104 recommendations in 10-minutes. The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group was reconvened by the Kevin Stewart MSP at the start of lockdown. This speed briefing session is a must for busy people who want to know the bottom line. [You can watch the video animation here.](#)

Live Lounge

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans: the platform for recovery

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans have been described at the right platform for recovery from the pandemic. Panellists shared their perspectives on the state of the nation and when we are likely to reap the rewards we all want to see. On the panel were: **Marion Gibbs** (host) Team Leader, Scottish Government, **Clare Mailer**, Head of Housing, Perth & Kinross Council, **John Mills**, Head of Housing Fife Council, and ALACHO Co-Chair, **Jon Sparkes**, Chief Executive, Crisis & HARSAG Chair and **Sally Thomas**, Chief Executive, SFHA

- Local authorities have described the importance of the joint planning and local partnerships aligned with Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans providing a strong platform to respond to the pandemic. Perth & Kinross with a long-standing rapid rehousing approach that preceded the 2018 policy objective reported minimal negative impact from the lockdown period.
- The pandemic created common purpose leading to more and better partnerships, including Housing Associations making available empty homes to Local Authorities to meet demand for temporary accommodation. This common purpose will be required to quickly tackle the backlog of people in temporary accommodation, not losing sight of our primary focus of settled housing for everyone and ensuring the supply is in place to meet the ambition.
- Expected increases in unemployment and poverty in the coming period present challenges in terms of homelessness prevention to ensure we don't see a further increase in the demand for temporary accommodation.
- Scotland is demonstrating confidence and commitment scaling up Housing First, but there remains a lot of work still to do. This will need adequate housing supply, availability of frontline support, and full integration with health & social care frameworks. The Pathfinder infrastructure has benefits that need maintained, including the cross-sector learning events, communities of practice, training and tracking information.

Seminar

Taking the P out of homelessness

How can we take the politics out of homelessness? Ahead of the Scottish Parliament Elections in May, representatives from the main Scottish political parties discussed a cross-party manifesto and answered questions from the Everyone Home Collective, the All in For Change Team, and other conference delegates. On the panel were:

Sir Andrew Cubie (Chair)

Caron Lindsay

Spokesperson on Housing & Social Justice Liberal Democrats

Pauline McNeill MSP

Scottish Labour

Shona Robison MSP

Convener of the Social Justice and Fairness Commission,

Member of the Social Security, Justice and Covid-19 committee, Scottish National Party

Graham Simpson MSP

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

Andy Wightman MSP

Scottish Green Party

- Elected representatives have in common a large number of constituent enquiries about housing concerns, both before and during the pandemic. Finding common ground between is an important step forward, evidenced by the Parliament's cross-party Local Government and Communities Committee achieving consensus on the way forward when undertaking the 2017 enquiry into homelessness. Understanding where there is agreement is important in creating space for discussion and debate when genuinely held differences of view exist.
- The significant achievement of finding emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough during the pandemic shows what can be delivered with a real sense of urgency. It is crucial to ensure the consensus remains to avoid any return to rough sleeping across the country.
- While there is a principle that no Parliament can bind its successor, it is important to build and protect the consensus around the need for a long-term vision for the provision of safe, secure, warm, affordable housing for everyone. In the short-term, parties can commit to following the research evidence identifying the need for 53,000 new affordable homes during the life of the next Parliament (2021-2026).
- The Local Government and Communities Committee recommended a national approach to Housing First and the successes achieved through the Pathfinder so far have been impressive. Important to maintain the consensus and scale up Housing First across the whole country.
- To make sure politicians make the best decisions housing and homelessness organisations should make bold, forward-thinking demands, being clear about what is needed and the ways in which it can be achieved.



Theme 4

Same Storm, Different Boat

Redressing the unfairness at the root of homelessness and the impact of the pandemic



Margaret Wheatley provided a poem for the Conference

Turning to One Another

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Ask "What's possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.

Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

Talk to people you know.

Talk to people you don't know.

Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.

Expect to be surprised.

Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.

Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.

Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

The risk and impact of homelessness is not distributed equally or in the same ways. Some groups of people are more affected by, overrepresented in, or excluded from the homelessness system. This theme explored how homelessness discriminates in a similar way as the pandemic and its consequences, how this health, social and economic inequality affects us all — and what levers we can pull to increase equality and advocate for a fairer society for all of us.

Keynote: Homelessness is Always a Public Health Emergency

Ruth Robin, Healthcare Improvement Scotland

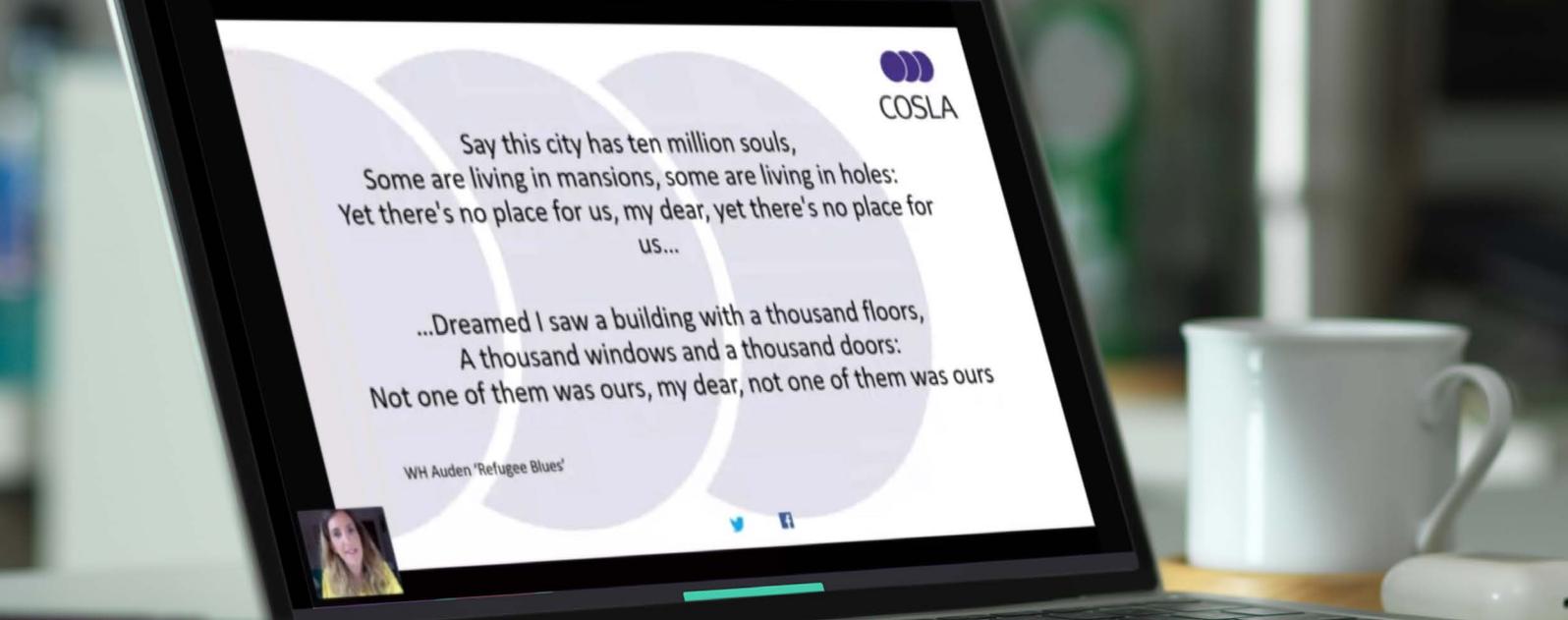
As the pandemic hit, HIS sought to find out how to best use their resources, and to understand the experiences of those using and delivering housing and homelessness services during the crisis:

- Housing organisations supported people by having a deep understanding of their communities and those they support. Recognising relationships that help centre people within communities and community support and being embedded within communities in a trusted and valued way were key.
- Housing organisations can be assets to the health and social care system by anticipating and understanding individual and collective needs, helping people access health and social care support, supporting preventative health and social care approaches and developing new community responses through direct funding.
- Trusted relationships and places: changes to how services were delivered highlighted the importance of trusted relationships to support access and navigate services.
- Proactive person-centred responses: restrictions meant changing the way services were delivered to meet people's needs e.g. innovative prescribing and delivery of medicines.
- Digital services: use of digital platforms such as NHS Near Me to provide health and care services emerging as alternatives to face to face contact.

Ruth outlined some key considerations for building back better, so that homelessness is always treated as the public health emergency it has always been:

Some key features of health service responses for people experiencing homelessness are:

- Access to accommodation: Local Authorities were able to act quickly to find housing for people experiencing homelessness allowing for increased access to health services.
- Connected services: the challenges of keeping people safe created a greater appetite for partnership working and collaboration.
- Services must be codesigned.
- Trusted relationships reach people and support digital access .
- Digital should be seen as part of a suite of options to access services.
- Housing organisations are community anchors.
- We must remove traditional barriers to access.



Keynote: Ending Destitution and Protecting Human Rights

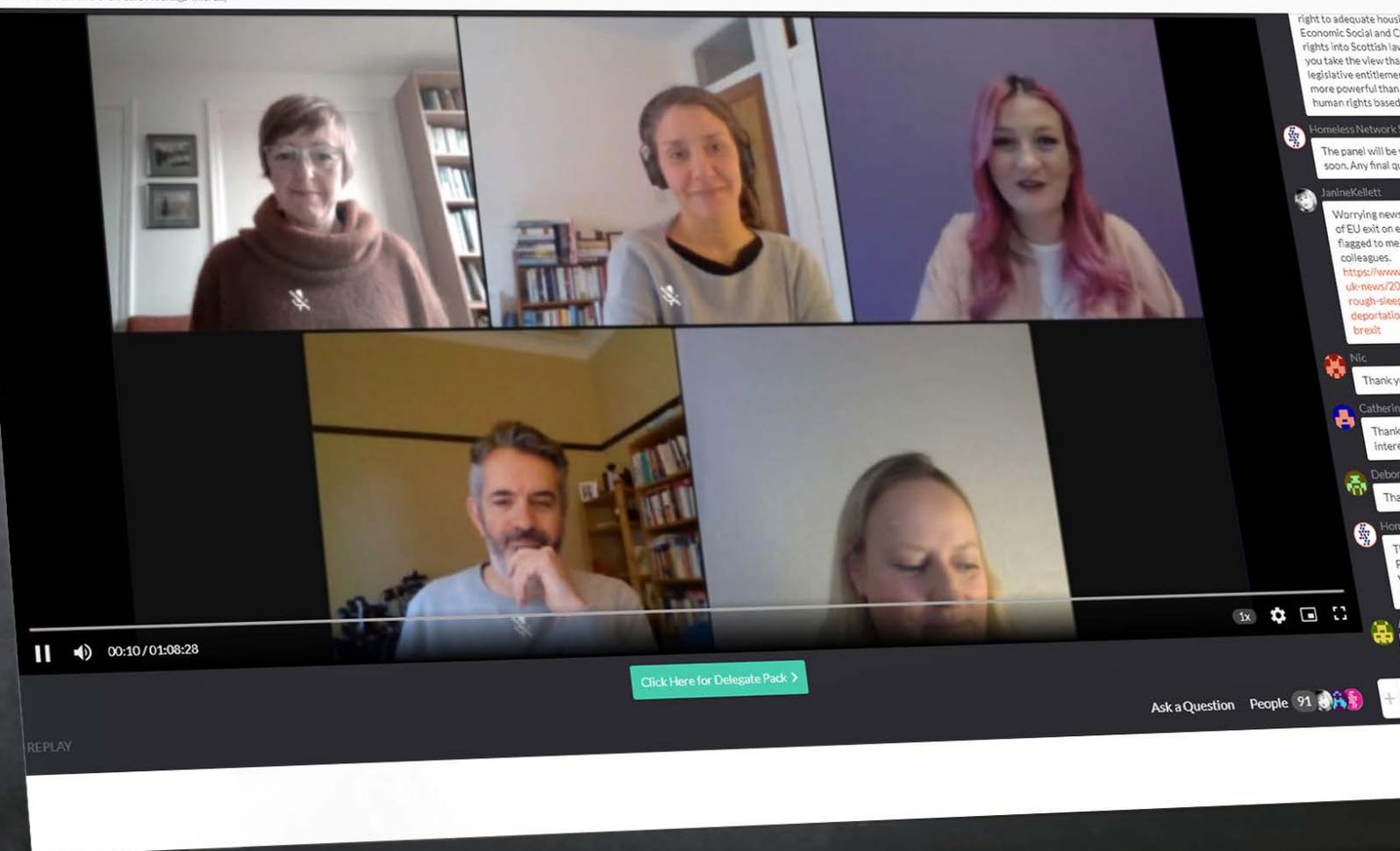
Eloise Nutbrown, COSLA

A person with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) will typically not be eligible under UK immigration rules to make a homelessness application, receive temporary accommodation or make an application to the local authority's mainstream housing allocations list for a social housing tenancy. The human impact can be highly significant:

- Acute risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Insecure accommodation or housing arrangements where people are at risk of eviction or exploitation.
- Reliance on community-based services for access to food and essentials, presenting additional difficulties during the pandemic.
- Loss of income if unable to work.
- Barriers to accessing health services and other essential information.
- EU nationals may face challenges in claiming benefits they are entitled to because of difficulties evidencing residency or contributions.

Eloise noted there are mechanisms to support people with NRPF in Scotland that may not be widely known or understood. Someone with NRPF is not prevented from accessing other publicly funded services, although their length of residence or immigration status will be a relevant factor in establishing their entitlement. Local authorities have a duty to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, which can include providing accommodation and financial support.

And where there is a risk of homelessness, it may be necessary to provide accommodation and financial support while a community care or GIRFEC assessment is carried out. And during the pandemic, we have been able to widen the support available through flexible funding for local authorities and third sector, free school meals including food provision and other “in kind” support and the ability to create new benefits through Scottish Social Security Agency.



Live Lounge Safe moorings

Facilitated by **Michelle Major**, Homeless Network Scotland, on the panel were: **Deborah Hay**, Policy & Partnerships Manager, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, **Peter Kelly**, Director, Poverty Alliance, **Elodie Mignard**, Programme Manager, Scottish Refugee Council and **Ruth Whatling**, Team Leader, Scottish Government.

Live Lounge Safe moorings

The panellists key reflections were that:

- It costs roughly £78 billion across the UK to deal with the consequences of poverty so while particularly damaging for people experiencing it, poverty and inequality has a negative impact on all of us as a society.
- Homelessness is caused by poverty, and experiencing homelessness leads to further poverty and inequality. From a government perspective it's key that the homelessness sector feeds into anti-poverty strategies.
- The pandemic has not only highlighted inequalities, but in many ways compounded them. There are specific areas of Scotland who are most at risk and certain sectors, hospitality, leisure and tourism, where people are more likely to have insecure hours, low pay experienced by women, people with NRPF, BAME people, and young people. In short, those with the least resources at the beginning of the pandemic are those who have taken the biggest hit. There is a class grounding to the early decisions, delivery workers and care workers continued to go to work, but those with more "middle class" jobs worked from home so we must consider how we rebuild to place more value on those who are not valued equally.
- There has been an increase in people accommodated in hotels which we know in the long term is not suitable. For those in the asylum process this is particularly unsuitable as their Home Office cash support has been withdrawn as meals are provided in the hotels, meaning people are trapped and without freedom to make basic choices.
- Inequality manifests across many parts of our society. For those in the asylum process, support from the Home Office is £37 per week, and those who have NRPF are not eligible for benefits so cannot access some of the new Social Security payments from Scottish Government.

When people are granted refugee status, they are automatically made homeless by the system, and so there is in-built inequality for the population going through the asylum process at all stages.

Where can we look for solutions to promote equality in Scotland?

- The unified efforts to protect people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic was like nothing that came before it. The National Task Force for Human Rights Leadership are working on a statutory framework to provide human rights protection to everyone, and this has potential to include the right to housing. Incorporating the UN Charter of the Rights of Children also has potential to impact on how we help people at risk of homelessness.
- The pandemic has shown how crucial community infrastructure and support from grassroots and third sector can provide, and this should be supported long-term. We've seen the importance of digital inclusion and a lot can be done to promote digital inclusion in rural communities and people with low incomes who don't have access to digital tools.
- We have an opportunity to push back on the fatalism that these issues are too big to solve. People being accommodated quickly sets a precedent that we can move quickly if we want to and capture the energy so that people no longer tolerate these societal issues and accept them as a normal part of life, because they are not. We mustn't lose the energy behind that change. We need to have the social housing that we require in place, particularly as this is entirely controlled by Scottish Government, and is key to reducing child poverty.



Theme 5

If We Don't All Row, The Boat Won't Go

*Getting alongside each other, in all our different roles,
to make a collective impact on homelessness*

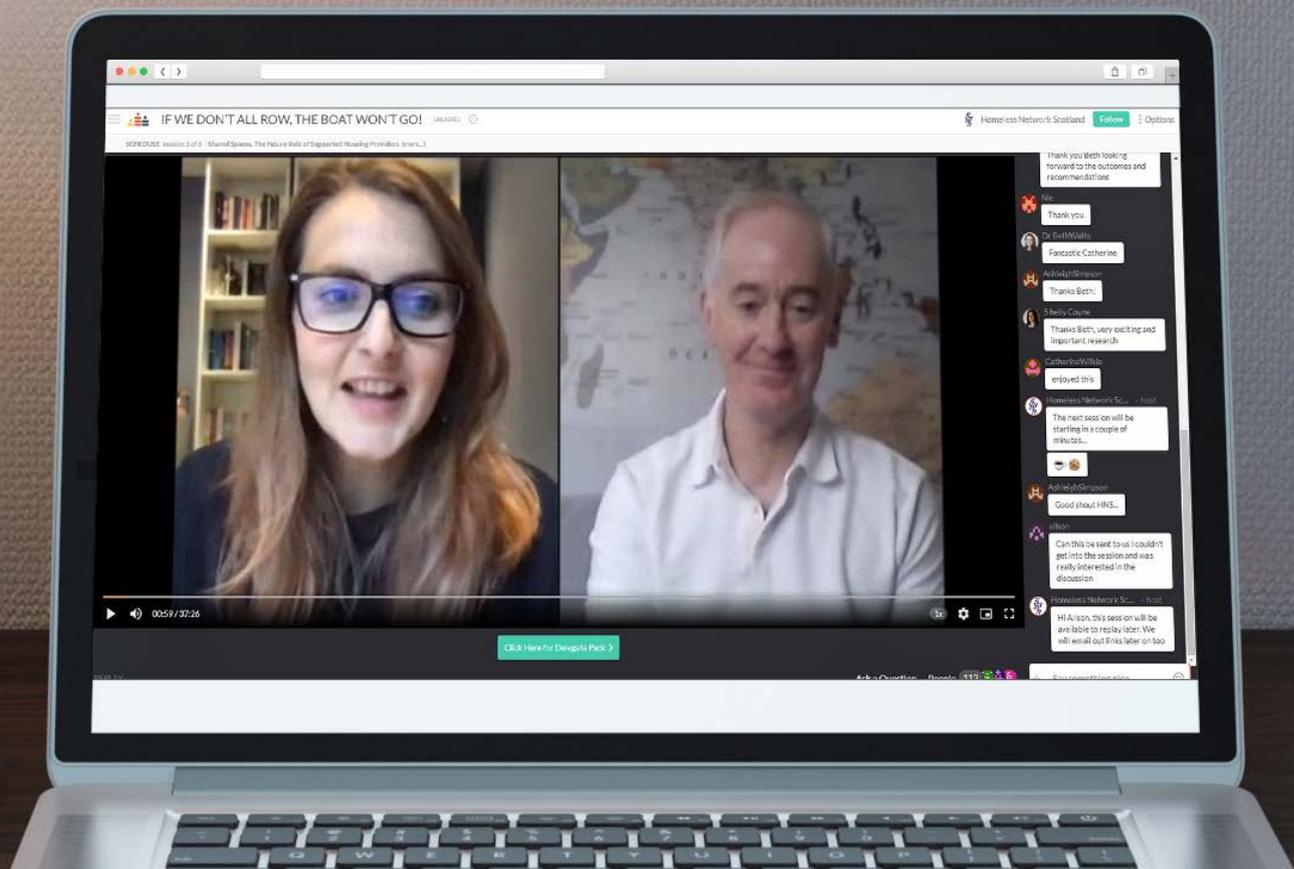
Live Lounge

All homelessness begins in a community

The panel agreed the homelessness sector responded quickly, noting the pivot to digital and online service provision was achieved in smaller organisations, while the larger public sector with larger operations and mechanisms experienced more challenges. The pandemic had shown new opportunities for how services might be delivered differently in the future, but some weaknesses too. The panel highlighted:

The panel agreed the homelessness sector responded quickly, noting the pivot to digital and online service provision was achieved in smaller organisations, while the larger public sector with larger operations and mechanisms experienced more challenges. The pandemic had shown new opportunities for how services might be delivered differently in the future, but some weaknesses too. The panel highlighted:

- Use of language and terms in describing a person's homelessness status, with more awareness needed to frame this in a way that draws on evidence and avoids the harm caused by labelling people.
- The pandemic has shown the wider public the real-world risks of homelessness. If a person loses their job and has no access to a safety net to protect their home too.
- Panel discussion centered on particular groups, such as those with no recourse to public funds, the challenges they face and the lack of resources available, to organisations, who work with this client group. Agreement around the table that Scotland can do and must do more to change policy at UK level for this group.
- The need for a Scotland wide approach, backed by resources from Scottish Government. People with lived experience at the heart of policy making and organisations delivering a trauma informed, person centered approach will give us the best chance of eradicating homelessness within a generation.



Keynote: Shared Spaces — the Future Role of Supported Housing Providers

Beth Watts, ISPHERE at Heriot-Watt University

Beth Watts from ISPHERE at Heriot-Watt University is chair of a new Research Advisory Group that will oversee ‘Shared Spaces’ – a research project on the future role of supported accommodation as a response to homelessness in Scotland. Anna Evans from Indigo House is leading the research which has been commissioned by Homeless Network Scotland.

In the new policy context of rapid rehousing (including Housing First) as default, the qualitative research will seek to understand the role of ‘other’ housing options where mainstream housing is not possible or preferable and where this is centred on personal, not professional, choice. This will include supported accommodation and some consideration of small, shared living in mainstream private and social rented tenancies.

The research will seek to understand the scale of these alternative options, how much is needed, who they are for and who funds them. It will seek to distinguish between types of supported housing – temporary (part of the homeless response) and longer term/permanent (part of the health & social care response), and how aligned health and social care strategy and commissioning frameworks are.

Delegate discussion focused on the importance of this programme as the ‘missing piece’ and how a defined role for supported accommodation can make a clearer contribution to Scotland’s response to homelessness.



All in for Change

We are all in – toward a new culture of collective leadership and impact

An inspiring group of people who are closest to the issues of homelessness on the ground, this session was led by **Viki Fox**, **Sabrina Galella**, **David Pentland** and **Joyce Juma Phiri**. They are representatives from the 'All In for Change' Team and provided an overview of their work and the different ways they have made in impact. The group is a blend of colleagues on the frontline and people with personal experience of homelessness systems and services. They connect directly with decision makers with a seat at the table of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group, and provide 'real-world' feedback, information and expertise. The team are recognised as a crucial component of Scotland's response to homelessness.

We are All In

Toward a new culture of collective leadership and impact

A new culture of collective leadership and impact is emerging across the homelessness sector – diverse leaders, across sectors and organisational layers and including people with lived experience. Ending homelessness in Scotland is possible if we work together on what works and what matters, so what can we learn from those already reaching across sectors and professional boundaries to make a collective impact? This session shared some thoughts and ideas from the Everyone Home Collective, Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder, All in For Change and the Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness.

With thanks to our special video stars, [you can hear their reflections here.](#)

Pat Coltart

GCHSCP

Shelly Coyne

Cyrenians

Viki Fox

AIFC and Cyrenians

Sabrina Galella

Rock Trust

Doug Gibson

Homeless Network Scotland

Allan Jones

Aberdeenshire Council

Janine Kellett

Scottish Government

Eleanor Lee

GCHSCP

Pauline Lunn

Ypeople/GAEH

Ricky McAddock

Street Connect

Jim McBride

GCHSCP

Andrew McCall

Salvation Army/GAEH

Patrick McKay

Turning Point Scotland

Gerry Milne

Sacro/GAEH

Una Munro

Mungo Foundation/GAEH

David Pentland

GAEH

Laura Pluck

Wheatley Care/GAEH

Celeste Singleton

GAEH

Graham Thomson

Scottish Government

Vic Walker

Crossreach/GAEH

Beth Watts

Heriot-Watt University

GAEH — Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness

GCHSCP — Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership

AIFC — All in for Change

Thank You!

To our amazing speakers for your time and insights – and to everyone who connected to review a difficult year and draw inspiration for 2021. And our special thanks to Ishbel Smith, Heart in Mouth, who closed our conference with a visual story of the highlights of the 3-date conference. If we don't all row, the boat won't go – this closing story was among the highlights of the conference – uplifting, positive and motivational.

We were proud to welcome Bethany Christian Trust and The Salvation Army as our event partners



And with thanks to our event sponsors and supporters CCPS, Corra Foundation and Housing First Academy



**Homeless
Network
Scotland**
we are all in

0141 420 7272 | hello@homelessnetwork.scot | www.homelessnetwork.scot |  
Homeless Network Scotland is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.
Charity registered in Scotland SCO03453. Company registered in Scotland SC112361.
Registered office: Unit 16a, Adelphi Centre, 12 Commercial Road, Glasgow G5 0PQ