

HOME FOR 10

*Journal of insights into
homelessness in Scotland*



*Learning from the
past 10 years...
facing forward to
the next 10 years*



With many thanks to Tasmin Maitland of Teasle Consulting for editing this journal and to all the contributors for sharing their personal insights.

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Foreword

Patrick McKay, Chair and Maggie Brunjes, Chief Executive of Homeless Network Scotland

Insight

NOUN

1. the ability to perceive clearly or deeply

Welcome to this fascinating and timely journal of key insights from key people across the housing, homelessness and related sectors.

It has been compiled this year to mark 10 years since the '2012 commitment' which provided an almost universal right to housing and set Scotland apart internationally in how seriously it took the task of ending homelessness.

We were among those contributing to the developments that resulted in the Scottish Parliament passing legislation in 2003 that placed a duty on local authorities to provide every unintentionally homeless person with a home by 2012. Some of us even called the 2012 target the target to end homelessness, such was the optimism that we were on our way home.

But homelessness didn't end in 2012, despite a promising downturn over the several years that followed. Frustratingly, a small upturn over the recent period has been coupled with the highest use of temporary accommodation on record, now understood as an unintended consequence of housing rights, without corresponding housing supply or access in all places.

We've also been among those contributing to the developments that have resulted in the Scottish Government adopting a series of progressive measures from 2018-22 to adjust the course. More focus on rapid rehousing, prevention and on housing access and supply. And in ensuring that the right to a safe place to stay is for everyone, regardless of immigration status.

There are many people that have walked this walk over the last 10 years – through living or working with homelessness or through increasing our knowledge and understanding of it. This journal includes insights from 10 people who we know see the issues clearly and deeply. While a focus on the future is provided by 10 people with fresh insight, new hats – or viewing the issues from a pivotal angle.

Our warm thanks to everyone who contributed their insights, and to Tasmin Maitland from Teasle Consulting for her oversight and arrangement of this journal. We hope you enjoy reading all insights as much as we did and that you take away from them something that is valuable and useful.

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Introduction

Homeless Network Scotland asked a diverse group of individuals and organisations to reflect on what has happened over the past 10 years in Scottish homelessness, and what they think should be done over the next decade. We asked them about the successes, but also the opportunities missed and the lessons learned. We asked them to tell us what should, or could, come next. And we asked them for their provocations to the sector: what cosy consensus might we tear up, which assumptions need challenging, and whose needs have never been met?

We share their experiences and ideas to inform and inspire, and to remind us that our work to end homelessness is not yet done.



Learning

from the past

10 years



Marion Gibbs

Building partnerships and trust

So I was asked to write an insight into the last 10 years and have some thoughts about the next 10. Not as easy a task as you might think. I started to mull it over and the one take-away that was as important then as it is now, is partnership – real partnership with trust, openness and honesty, not just saying the word but meaning it, involving everyone with an interest (and sometimes even if they thought they didn't have an interest!).

The abolition of priority need was an immense milestone, one that hasn't been met anywhere else – and it meant that Scotland's response to the pandemic was more established as single people already had rights to accommodation so a whole new system didn't have to be developed, although new approaches were required to keep people safe.

Thinking back to the years before the abolition of priority need, one of the important developments was the establishment of the local authority led Housing Options Hubs. They were set up to ensure that prevention was foremost in minds to enable abolition to happen without the homelessness system crashing. These brought together all local authorities (and Glasgow Housing Association as was) to share experiences, learning and research. The fact that they continued after the target was achieved was testament to the value placed on them by local authorities. They have persisted, even with changes in hub membership which, as we know, can bump progress off track. What we didn't know then was that they would have a crucial role during the pandemic, increasing the frequency of meetings so that they could share new approaches, learning and act as a support network through the most challenging of times. This built on well-established and trusted relationships without which the response to the pandemic would have been slower and people experiencing homelessness would have been more negatively impacted than they were.

And we definitely can't ignore the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group, bringing together experts across the sector who worked hard and at pace to develop recommendations for the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Important to remember that this benefitted from very high political buy-in, not just lip service to homelessness. Again, a measure of how important partnership can be. The importance of the recommendations on new Prevention Duties, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and Housing First are changing systems and practices to ensure a person-centred approach and the importance of putting lived experience at the centre of all developments are critical.

However, there have been challenges and costs during the last 10 years: it's not all been plain sailing – people have had to work hard to effect the changes.

I can't do justice to all the incredible work that has been done over this period, but just a quick mention of the Housing Options Training Toolkit: this has now seen the light of day after around nine years of graft with many challenges. My thanks to the steering group and all local authorities with sticking with it over the years – a true example of partnership working!

It is tempting to give a roll-call for all the people who have helped deliver the achievements and ambition so far, but there are too many and I'll inadvertently miss someone out, so I won't – you know who you are! On a personal note, thanks to everyone who has helped me and my team along the way.

So the next 10 years? We'll build on the progress we've made and will strive to keep this momentum going. We generally all agree on the way forward, and even though there will be disagreements on the detail, we all understand the importance of working to end homelessness together.

Kate Polson

Embracing solutions that disrupt

The removal of priority need 10 years ago signalled a change for the housing and homelessness sector and was perhaps the start of the process of asking people to think differently. I have worked in the sector most of my working life and I have never seen the sector come together as we have on Rapid Rehousing and Housing First. Change may have been slow to start – it took one provider testing it in our environment, a few well kent faces in the sector supporting it, and some champions to lead the way. To bring about this change, we had to challenge the status quo, not just our knowledge and experience but the models of service the sector had built our names on and funding sources we relied upon.

It took us all to leave our egos at the door, to get involved in the discussions, debates and even disagreements. It took us all to work together to learn, plan, prepare for change and then to deliver. For it to happen, we needed to be disrupted, thrown from what we understood to be true, we needed to have belief and faith that better was possible. Disruption. That's what we needed to get us moving.

In a display of bravery, determination, investment, partnership and a movement which included the Scottish Government, local authorities, funders and third sector we were able to get Rapid Rehousing and Housing First started and to keep it going. Look at what we have done, what we are doing and what is possible when we all get behind the evidence, redesign or reimagine how our system should work, what it should offer and how it should feel to experience.

Can we picture a world where young people leaving home and care have a choice of housing, with hosts, peers or on their own, close to their place of education or work, near to peers and family which is safe, secure and affordable? When emergencies happen, when crisis occurs, a world where very temporary, emergency options are safe and short term and young people are supported into the next safe and secure accommodation to meet their needs and aspirations. It's not so hard to imagine, is it? But if you had asked us 10 years ago if we thought Housing First would have been possible, many would not have believed it.

It was five years ago we launched the coalition A Way Home and the world we envisioned then is already taking shape. We know what is working elsewhere, we continue to build evidence of the potential solutions.

Young people are best supported at home, in their schools and communities and it's there we need to identify those at risk of homelessness and provide early interventions and housing education.

Young people who are already involved with care, justice or health systems should not be discharged into homelessness as housing can be planned.

Young people need to have affordable and appropriate housing options, so we need to ensure that there are options for community hosting, sharing with peers and affordable long term housing available to them and that crisis situations are prevented.

Young people should have the opportunity to build skills, make mistakes and learn safely as they transition into adulthood. Flexible and appropriate youth support needs to be available to ensure there is a safety net.

We know what it will take and we know what we have achieved in the last 10 years. What can we achieve in the next 10 years? How brave can you be and how open are you to solutions that disrupt us in the housing and homelessness sector?

David Pentland

Breaking the cycle of trauma

I now work for the Scottish Government. However, between 1988 and 2021 I had experience of rough sleeping and frontline working. This piece reflects experiences that pre-date my current employment and all views expressed are my own.

The removal of priority need in 2012 was the first step in attempting to end homelessness in the programme of government. I believe that, for the ordinary person, it certainly removed the barrier for access to temporary accommodation. For the most vulnerable people in our society, there maybe wasn't as much of a shift with the legislation as they would have been classified as priority need before.

Since the removal of priority need our understanding of homelessness has improved dramatically, although our resolve as a society to make the necessary changes to accommodate our citizens has been very slow.

The people I am most concerned with in housing are the 5-10% who experience severe and multiple disadvantage. These are the people where, although we understand more about the trauma (including childhood trauma) and poor mental health, we could do more to understand what leads them to remain in such intolerable situations of existence.

When I was working for a frontline homelessness service, I saw people continually nursed back to health, put in custody for very short periods several times a year, and sent to rehabilitation units to dry out. I saw members of the public walk past people on the street on a winter's night as they panhandled for spare change. There are a number of considerations that we need to have before we move forward with trying to rehabilitate those with high ACE scores. I often think about the people I knew in the late 1980s and early 1990s. How many of those people have recovered? How many people are warehoused in flats on prescribed medications awaiting the next cycle of chaos that will wipe them off this planet having never experienced a job, a loving family or a foreign holiday? Until we understand the price on the whole system of people cycling around our statutory services, we will never see the financial benefit of investing whole-heartedly in them getting well.

My experience of watching my peers cycling through the systems of trauma is that the vast majority are dead, having never lived a normal life, and having cost the public purse vast sums every year to keep them entombed in the chaos.

What made the biggest difference to me in my journey through rough sleeping was one service that worked with me on my terms, whilst every other banned me from their buildings. The homeless outreach project transformed me from a feral care leaver, who had no skills for living, into someone who was able to deal with the world on its terms without a chemical cloak of heroin and crack cocaine. This was done by propelling me forward with an assertive outreach model that was at my pace but challenging. It didn't really incorporate control and choice because my fear of the unknown world I was entering prohibited me from wanting to go there. They broke it all down for me into palatable bite sized portions. I always emulate this model on the frontline.

My experiences showed me very clearly that we need to break our siloed care provision, we need to link up services, we need a cost benefit analysis on how much people who suffer severe and multiple disadvantage cost the taxpayer and how much a professional wrap-around service would cost in comparison with a No Wrong Door Approach. We need to look at the barriers faced by people who have been exposed to the most horrendous trauma in their developmental years, that have forced them to opt out of our structured society and to medicate the suffering they have felt, in the same way as I once did.



Janeine Barrett

A change in thinking

The Scottish homelessness policy framework is world leading, with the abolition of priority need heralded as a landmark moment in history – a point where, as a country, we recognised that homelessness in the 21st century is not acceptable. The change was seismic and made way for a suite of changes which would see local government and partners working together to deliver strategies to prevent and alleviate homelessness; tackle rough sleeping; challenge us on the type and condition of our temporary provision; work to promote diversity; challenge gender-based violence; and put the needs of children and the most vulnerable at the centre of our decision-making.

However, is homelessness provision still the safety net or has it become the only way to access housing and integrated service provision? With pressure on social rented housing at an all-time high, new build programmes to provide affordable housing are not moving at a pace which meets demand. Together with the cost of living crisis, the decline of the private sector, recession and high interest rates, we have a homelessness crisis looming which requires not a change in policy, but a change in thinking and service delivery.

Whilst policy provides the mandate to focus diminishing resources on key provision, this is not what drives change, especially at the pace and extent required. The real difference comes when the hearts and minds of partners are focused on a shared set of high level priorities. Often policy can restrict, getting in the way of the best outcomes for people. We need to re-focus our vision, highlighting the devastating long-term impact that homelessness has on people's mental and physical health and wellbeing, and for children the significant impact on their security and self-worth. Housing First as an ethos is effective as it recognises the importance of 'home' and how, when we get this right, it enables us to focus on other areas of our life. This model does not require a medical plan, an education plan, a housing plan, a mental health plan etc, it only requires a personal plan which ensures the best outcomes for the individual based on their priorities.

As we move towards a prevention and early intervention model of service delivery which details the role that different agencies have to play in recognising and responding to the risk of homelessness, we need to ensure policy does not restrict creativity and innovation. Services must understand the impact that homelessness has on their area of work when responding to individuals. We must be careful not to create a culture whereby risk is identified and the outcome is a referral to a housing provider. If this is what we achieve, then we will fail.

We need to start seeing people in the whole, understanding their needs and aspirations and working in partnership to achieve the best outcomes. We must however recognise that, for some, the best outcome may not be a home and whilst this is more challenging to address, we must work closely with people who do not want the responsibility of housing, listening to their aspirations without imposing social norms to identify what will meet their needs to keep them safe.

The cost of living and energy crisis will result in a level of despair, insecurity and trauma which many people will not have experienced before. Without an appropriate inter-agency response, this will have a lasting impact on a whole generation. Every local authority must coordinate the package of support and provisions available to mitigate impact, every partner must understand how to access these resources, and services must work together to steer vulnerable people through this period. The learning from this will act as a catalyst for how we deliver integrated services in the future.

Jim Strang

A long way to go

I've worked in public sector housing for 43 years, and the last 10 years have seen some wonderful things achieved by some wonderful people in the sector, but we haven't done enough. We may pride ourselves on having among the greatest homelessness legislation in the world but, as so often with politicians, they didn't really walk the talk. They made the announcements and brought in the legislation, but they didn't resource it properly. They didn't give homelessness the political capital it truly requires to be resolved. That's why we're sitting here today with 8,600 children living in temporary accommodation – what an outrageous situation to be in.

Tackling the scourge of homelessness means providing good quality, affordable social housing for rent. We lost around 600,000 units to right to buy. Housing associations and local authorities did their best to back-fill the gap, but they just couldn't do it. So now we've got a grand target of 110,000 units, but we're probably not going to meet that target because of the impact of cost of living, rent rises and increased interest rates. Yet it's crucial that the rise in homelessness is matched by an increase in public sector housing supply if we're going to make any progress.

We're constantly let down by lack of planning. Whether it's the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees or the number of people with dementia ageing in unsuitable homes, Scottish Government isn't listening to the housing sector and using their expertise to plan and solve problems before crisis point. Look at the freeze on social rents, or the double whammy of the zero carbon and retrofit agendas. These undermine the ability of housing associations to build new homes, despite the 110,000 target. When the private rented sector starts to offload people because of the rent freeze and private landlords start selling properties on, where will those people go? They'll turn up on local authority and housing association waiting lists. And there they will languish because we don't have the stock.

The first role of a government is to protect its people, yet we're steadfastly failing in this responsibility. Look at prevention – evictions by social landlords aren't high, but every eviction is a failure. We can't forget how deeply eviction affects that family or individual, their friends and community. Not everyone who finds themselves homeless requires significant support but, over the years, we've failed to provide thousands of struggling families with the support they need and so they've fallen into the trap of repeat homelessness. Despite the sector's best endeavours, homelessness is still stigmatised within communities. It is circumstance – unemployment, mental illness, physical illness – that leads to people becoming homeless, and we're failing to help them deal with these issues at the critical time. Prevention calls for effective training and support, backed up by enough houses. Evictions could be avoided if we resource homelessness prevention properly, and this can make a huge difference to our society.

In my view, despite some progress in the last 10 years, we haven't done enough and things won't get better unless we take collective action. Now is the time for the housing sector to stand united with one voice and demand of Government: invest in the sector. Because if they don't, families will continue to get torn apart. The cost to the public purse of dealing with the aftermath of homelessness is huge and its impact lasts for generations. We need a National Housing Strategy that puts housing at the core of Government activity. Give support to the organisations with the skills and expertise to prevent homelessness and to support people. Properly finance Housing First. We have to stand strong and, with one loud clear voice, say: enough is enough, put your money where your mouth is.

Alison Watson

10 years on, why is homelessness getting worse not better in Scotland?

2022 marks 10 years since the Scottish Parliament implemented the 2012 homelessness commitment. MSPs of all parties promised that nobody who becomes homeless could be denied a permanent home. And yet at the start of 2022, that promise remains unfulfilled for thousands of households. Instead, they are trapped in temporary accommodation for longer than ever before, often in substandard conditions that damage their health and their children's prospects.

In the 10 years since the 2012 homelessness commitment became a legal right, progress towards ending homelessness and bad housing in Scotland has stalled. We are not where we need to be. Homelessness is once again rising, a record number of children are trapped in temporary accommodation, councils are struggling to provide safe homes for people experiencing homelessness and families still wait too long and pay too much for a secure affordable home.

The answers are surprisingly simple. We think there are two things Government can do.

The first is to deliver enough homes to reduce the housing need. Academics say Scotland needs 38,100 social homes by 2026 or homelessness, poor conditions, waiting times and inequality – known collectively as housing need – will get worse. Scottish Ministers committed to a 10-year target but will not give an answer to what will be delivered when.

The second is to make the right to housing legally enforceable for all.

There is still a long way to go to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. Escalating rent arrears, the health impacts of people trapped in hotel rooms for months, and the challenge of ensuring no return to the streets pose real challenges for the months and years ahead. But something has changed. That we did not see a spike in homelessness, eviction and destitution is proof that political will, money, and more housing works. When there was no way to ignore the housing emergency, change was suddenly possible.

In recent years there has been no shortage of new initiatives, all well-intentioned, all promising something must and will be done. So why then was homelessness still increasing and waiting lists growing more quickly than the homes we can build? The human and financial cost of continuing to tolerate Scotland's housing emergency could be seen in every A&E waiting room, every school, every GP surgery, every women's refuge, every prison, and young offenders institute before Covid-19 hit. And yet it was accepted, placed in the 'too difficult to do' box. We cannot allow a return to that past.

The next three years will need us to focus on transforming rights into a reality for more people in Scotland. Laws and rights that exist only on paper are of no value to the people who depend on them. We need to put power in their hands, equip them with the skills, knowledge, and capacity to lead their fight for home. We will work to make sure everyone in a position of power views ending the housing emergency as their responsibility.

The first step is to make sure that there are homes for people where they are needed most. At Shelter Scotland we want everyone who needs social housing to get it. To bring us closer to that vision we must first address those abandoned in temporary accommodation. There are 8,635 children and 13,945 households denied their right to a permanent home. That is unacceptable and must be the first test of our goal to increase social housing. We will advocate for a new generation of sustainable social housing. Social housing that is of a higher standard environmentally and socially than previous decades and that can bring existing empty homes back.



Suzanne Fitzpatrick

Towards social justice

As an academic who has studied homelessness systems in many parts of the world, I can start by saying with conviction that we're doing really well. The UK's homelessness legislation is unique. No other country has created a legally enforceable entitlement to settled housing for any group of people experiencing homelessness. Within the UK, Scotland has gone furthest in offering this protection to single people as well as families with children. This legislative foundation has changed the culture, moving us towards greater consistency of response and shared efforts to tackle homelessness. We can look to the disaster of 'localism' in the English homelessness system to see what happens when the central state absents itself from responsibility for protecting its most vulnerable citizens, and compare this with Scotland's progress over the past 10 years and more, with the Scottish Government working in close partnership with local authorities, social landlords and the voluntary sector. We should celebrate our achievements. At the same time, we have to challenge ourselves if we want to see meaningful progress continue over the next decade.

Our key weakness is that Scottish policy has lacked a systematic approach to homelessness prevention. The 2012 abolition of priority need improved the response for single people who became homeless, but the root causes of homelessness presentations have not been addressed. Scotland is behind England and Wales on prevention, and I would challenge the sector to recognise that our legislative framework, vital as it is, is sometimes applied in a way that stymies prevention. Local authorities feel constrained to bringing people into the statutory homelessness system – into temporary accommodation, often for long periods – and can be exposed to legal challenge if they explore other options. As most people who fall within the (very broad) statutory definition of homelessness are still living somewhere, it makes sense to consider whether they could remain there with appropriate help. For example, assistance with paying off rent arrears, negotiating with landlords, mediating with 'host' friends or family, or excluding perpetrators of domestic abuse and providing security and support for survivors to remain in their own home if they wish.

For those who do have to leave their accommodation, we shouldn't assume that a permanent social tenancy is always the best outcome. The private rented sector can offer a more appropriate choice of location for employment and social networks, and supported lodgings may suit some young people better than a flat on the city outskirts. We need to have conversations about options in a context where people at risk of homelessness have more choice and control over the housing outcome that works for them.

Nor should we obsess about new social and affordable housing supply. While new housing need is creating challenges in the present day, and some areas of Scotland struggle with excess demand or with stock profile, in many areas social housing supply is sufficient and the issues are of allocation and access. I welcome the Rapid Rehousing policy, and the boosted priority given to homeless households in social housing allocations, which is so crucial in reducing length of stay in temporary accommodation. But in the longer term the percentage of allocations absorbed by homeless households should decrease, as prevention measures become more effective. We don't want to be in the situation whereby people must reach crisis point and declare themselves 'homeless' to be able to access social housing.

Finally, a word on 'rights'. I am absolutely committed to a rights-based approach to tackling homelessness. That is why I am so proud that Scotland already has one! Clearly delineated, enforceable, democratically endorsed statutory entitlements represent the apotheosis of an effective rights-based approach. However, I regret the current drift within the housing sector in Scotland towards an abstract 'Human Rights' approach which risks handing over wide-ranging policy-making power to unelected judges. We can look to the US and the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* to see the dangers of relying on courts to uphold abstract rights, or the folly of assuming that this will necessarily lead to progressive results. Instead we should value and extend the democratically endorsed entitlements that we have worked to secure in Scotland, continuing our radical tradition towards social justice in this field.

Jim Hayton

Less talk, more action please

Over the last 10 years, we have often heard that we in Scotland have ‘the most progressive homeless legislation in the world’ or similar self-congratulatory statements. But legislation is only ever a part of the solution. For a system aimed at ending homelessness to succeed, it must be based on more than legal rights and aspirations, vital though those are. It must be backed by the financial and human resources required to make a real difference to the quality of human lives, both by preventing homelessness before it occurs, and in speedily mitigating the situation for vulnerable households when it does.

Such a system would include relevant training for housing and support staff on the specific vulnerabilities of many people experiencing homelessness, the need for appropriate responses relative to individual characteristics, and evidence of what works in practice.

This would entail, for example, staff having knowledge and awareness of the mental health issues which frequently affect people who are homeless and their families. It would acknowledge how domestic violence can affect women and their families, and of how prejudice and discrimination on personal matters of gender and sexuality inhibit human growth and development. It would also include trauma informed approaches where appropriate.

Fundamentally however, an effective system would involve everyone having a decent permanent home to live in, one with good quality standards relating to interior and exterior condition. Such a home would include modern amenities, an efficient heating system, effective energy efficiency measures, in a location suited to the composition and characteristics of that household. And critically, provided at a price they could afford without having to choose between a decent place to live and the ability to take meaningful employment.

Sadly, our latest homelessness statistics present a depressing picture, suggesting we are a long way from that objective. Data just published reveals that at March 2022 Scotland had 28,682 homeless households (containing 32,592 adults and 14,372 children) with a further 26,166 applications currently open.

Almost 14,000 households are living in temporary accommodation, including 8,635 children, with long waits for permanent settled accommodation of 343 days on average for a couple with children.

Moreover, Scotland faces significant additional challenges. One relates to the influx of Ukrainian refugees, where over 30,000 have the right to live in Scotland. Their case is just, and a humane response is essential, but accommodating such a large number puts a huge strain on a system already stretched to the limit. The looming cost of living crisis is another challenge, with some experts concerned that huge energy bills and double figure price inflation could make many Scots destitute.

The answer is not simply to have a plan to end homelessness in Scotland (only the heartless would disagree with that aim) but also to provide the means of doing so. It is not enough to develop and enact ‘progressive’ legislation, such as the removal of priority need, without increasing housing supply accordingly. To assert that people have a human right to housing and support, in the knowledge that current resources are insufficient to deliver this, is at best misleading, and at worst dishonest.

So, we absolutely need to support people experiencing homelessness, and to support those who support them with adequate training and resources. But, most of all, we require an adequate building programme of socially rented housing, at rents genuinely within the reach of low-income households. A programme which also would generate large economic and social benefits for Scotland and its citizens. And don’t forget that many homeless Scots have no special support needs. They just need a decent home to keep themselves and their family safe, secure and warm, something most of us take for granted. Not too much to ask, is it?

Yes, Scotland can be proud of its humane, and perhaps even progressive, homelessness legislation developed and implemented in the last 10 years. But it’s time to back the fine words with hard cash and deliver many more fine new social rented homes too.

Peter Millar

Going beyond bricks and mortar

It is 10 years since the priority need test was removed in Scotland. That major change confirmed, for the first time in Scotland, that every person who is homeless is regarded as having priority need for housing. Yet homelessness continues to be a significant problem in this country and it's a cause of misery for the men, women and children who suffer because of their direct experience of homelessness. Changing this for the better will require less rhetoric and more demonstrable actions whose impacts can be accurately measured and clearly reported.

In May of this year, the Scottish Government published its Resource Spending Review, highlighting that the new National Care Service would "bring social care into parity of esteem with healthcare and transform the provision of this essential service". It's important to note that that Spending Review is not a budget as such, but sets out the high-level parameters for resource spending up to and including 2026-27. It is not fixed in tablets of stone and can thus be amended according to changes in policy and circumstances. It is clear to all that the UK has pressing financial problems, which also affect Scotland, so there is no certainty pertaining to those figures.

The Scottish Government's role both directly and via the National Care Service is central in promoting the levels of positive change required in striving to eradicate homelessness. That will require a high level of sustained commitment to be successful. It will need to evidence that it is prepared to increase an ongoing commitment to both promote and help support the development of more housing stock from both the social housing and the private sectors on an affordable rent basis.

It has often been said that 'housing is the cornerstone of community care'. Its crucial importance, not least for those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, is self-evident. However, bricks and mortar are not always enough, often requiring the complement of timeous and effective provision of support services provided by housing associations and community care provider organisations. The Scottish Government's National Care Service will be of crucial importance in this sphere in terms of the planning, funding and monitoring the delivery of those services and the outcomes they achieve across Scotland.

An urgent issue that needs to be addressed is the real difficulties social care support provider organisations are having in recruiting and retaining staff. A major factor is that most of those organisations are constrained by funding levels from local authorities via service contracts, whereby providers can only afford to pay their care/support staff the Scottish Living Wage. In a competitive employment marketplace, this means that potential and actual social care employees find employment at better rates of pay elsewhere. This is a serious problem that needs to be addressed nationally, including by Scottish Government.

There are many successful examples of community care organisations in formally constituted membership organisations such as Homeless Network Scotland, Scottish Care, CCPS, and specific client-focused groups such as Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness, working together on a formal and informal basis across Scotland. My personal view, based on experience, is that this is an important trajectory to develop further. No person or agency has all the answers (in homelessness or any other field of community care). Brainstorming and working together with other concerned parties can provide creative outcomes that may not have been anticipated at the outset: the whole (working together) can indeed be greater than the sum of its individual parts.

It is important that people who receive services are as centrally involved as possible in a collaborative approach. These individuals have experience of what has or hasn't worked for them. The lessons they have learned need to be carefully and respectfully listened to and fully taken into account, because they – and those who follow them in receiving homelessness services – have more to gain, or lose, from the decisions that are made.

Martin Smith

Transforming homelessness locally

Perth & Kinross Council has seen transformational change over the last 10 years in our offer to people experiencing homelessness. We started by making much-needed improvements and ended by leading the way with Home First – the only example of a fully developed, Rapid Rehousing model being delivered in Scotland.

Our improvement journey began in 2008, having received the lowest possible grading from an inspection by Communities Scotland. This triggered a programme of service redesign, delivering improvements to temporary accommodation standards, reduction of B&B usage, development of an in-house private sector leasing scheme, private rented sector access initiatives, and substantial investment in support.

In 2014, after significant progress, the Home First concept was first discussed. At this point there was still a large backlog of people waiting to be rehoused, lots of people in temporary accommodation and, on average, waits of 300+ days for people's homelessness to be resolved. We needed a more ambitious approach.

Following a corporate commitment to Home First, developments from 2015-16 onwards aimed at enabling delivery of rapid rehousing. This involved reducing both the backlog of people waiting for an offer of permanent housing and the number of people in temporary accommodation.

We reduced the backlog by increasing the proportion of lets to homeless applicants and converting temporary tenancies to secure tenancies where appropriate. We invested resources in prevention and tenancy sustainment. We gradually reduced the temporary accommodation portfolio using a 'what would it take to achieve this' approach. We increased affordable housing supply through our new-build programme, buying back ex-council properties, a vacancy-chain approach to matching, continued investment in private sector access initiatives and improving void performance.

Alongside this, we redesigned our staff model, merging homeless, temporary accommodation and allocations teams into one Housing Options team. We revised our Common Allocations policy and expanded the Common Housing Register partnership to new housing association members.

As a result of these actions, Home First is now fully mature and is our default response to homelessness. Home First has delivered a range of positive outcomes – in many cases, homelessness has been prevented altogether. For those experiencing homelessness the impact, duration and cost, along with the likelihood of having to go into temporary accommodation, have been significantly reduced. The average time to discharge homelessness duty reduced from 310 days in 2015 to 64 days in 2022, while the average length of stay in temporary accommodation reduced from 160 days in 2015 to 60 days in 2022.

Homelessness nationally in the last 10 years is a bit of a mixed picture. Homeless presentations have reduced by around 10,000 which suggests effective prevention activity. However, the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased by 30%, suggesting that most local authorities have a long way to go to implement a rapid rehousing approach. The pandemic has undoubtedly stalled progress with RRTPs. The combined pressures of cost of living and the Ukraine humanitarian response will further stall or, indeed, shift progress into reverse. Delivering homelessness services over the next few years is going to be tough. Demand will almost certainly increase so it is vital that the Scottish Government's affordable housing supply ambitions are met or exceeded.

I would urge policy makers to join the dots in terms of the private rented sector. On the one hand, the PRS is seen as a key contributor to discharging homelessness duties, the Ukraine response, asylum dispersal etc. On the other hand, policy interventions continue to disincentivise private landlords – increasing regulation, rent control proposals, rent freezes, eviction moratoria etc. Most landlords are ordinary, responsible citizens with one or two properties to supplement their income or pension. In my 22 years in housing, I have yet to come across a Rachman-esque landlord, but at times it seems that this is the benchmark for policymaking. In Perth & Kinross, the private rented sector has very much been part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Facing forward

to the next

10 years



Priorities to end homelessness

I strongly believe that homelessness is preventable, not inevitable. And while it is very difficult with limited words to comprehensively make a case for actions to end homelessness within the next 10 years, I will attempt to highlight key areas from my standpoint.

We need to see transformative changes at a structural level to reduce commodification of housing, increase affordable homes (prioritising social housing), and decrease the number of short-term lets. This in turn will mitigate the over-reliance on temporary accommodation in many areas.

The welfare safety net should be made more robust, including improvements to Universal Credit such as removing sanctions and the 5-week wait, along with unfreezing Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, removal of the benefit cap and Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR). Provisions should be made for those who currently have no recourse to public funds, as the system places them into destitution by design. The cost of living crisis is a grave concern to those already living in poverty, and many more will face homelessness and destitution unless steps are taken to alleviate these pressures financially in the longer term.

Homelessness is often a symptom of wider inequalities, so upstream approaches tackling trauma and childhood poverty are key. The predominance of family breakdowns causing homelessness suggests that support for families with children should be a priority, as well as mediation to prevent the homelessness of older children.

There is a need for more investment in high-quality, longer-term support provision, including Housing First and specialist support for young people. Service providers should focus on the whole person, without the need to access support in siloes. This would increase tenancy sustainment, confidence and self-esteem while decreasing recurring homelessness. Gender-specific support should be available for women who often avoid male-dominated homelessness spaces. Additional support should be provided to those who identify as LGBTQI+, who are over-represented in the homeless population and should have appropriate support to meet their needs.

Specific support and accommodation should be available for those with disabilities, who are more likely to experience homelessness. Interventions at key points, such as when individuals are leaving institutions, can prevent the cycle of homelessness.

Investment from organisations should be made in the upskilling of support staff, who should work to trauma-informed principles. Retention of support staff is key to service delivery and building trusted relationships, so more attention should be paid to this issue.

As a sector we should keep pushing for transformative structural change to end homelessness through a public health lens. Some services have become depoliticised and less challenging of policy as a result of the need to submit to funder priorities, making it harder to voice their independent views. Challenging the use of competitive and short-term funding will lead to greater stability in service provision and better support for those experiencing homelessness and frontline workers. We should be vigilant in regard to policy changes such as the National Care Service and Homelessness Prevention Duties, ensuring that decision-making is evidence-based and grounded in lived and frontline experience of homelessness at all levels. Responses to homelessness such as the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 have had some elements of success but have been described as 'sub-optimal' as they do not tackle underlying causes such as poverty and lack of housing, meaning that homelessness continues. Stigma around homelessness and co-occurring injustices such as poverty should be tackled by the sector and beyond, as it limits the potential of individuals. This includes tackling public perceptions perpetuated by the media.

Scotland has strong homelessness legislation compared to elsewhere in the UK, but a huge amount of work and resource is still required. I believe that by listening to those who have living and lived experience of homelessness we stand a better chance of seeing this become a reality in the next 10 years.

Jack Rillie

Replacing competition with collaboration

Scotland is a progressive country, and much has been achieved in our efforts to end homelessness. Yet we're all still here and the failings in civic society continue to result in thousands of people becoming homeless. Change is needed.

There's a certain level of competition that sparks innovation. Conflict (however polite and civilised) can result in amazing feats of innovation as people and organisations are pushed outside their comfort zone. But too much competition can cause precious resources to be squandered, and I don't believe we've got the balance right yet.

We have real opportunities for change in how we design and commission services. Glasgow is a beacon in terms of how we are upending the commissioning model, moving to an alliancing approach and championing collaboration over competition. It takes courage and, bluntly, a 'JFDI' approach to move things forward, especially when change involves loss as well as gain. Each Alliance partner knows that what they deliver – and how they deliver it – will change, but we're ready because it's about what's best for people, not about what's best for us.

Ultimately, our current reactive homelessness responses need to be replaced by preventative measures that, over time, are held within health, education and social work services. The challenge has always been dual funding – how can you continue to fund resource-intensive reactive provision alongside investing new resources in prevention? The answer is collaboration, the pooling of resources and specialisms from across sectors and organisations.

As an Alliance, we want to take the best parts of the private sector – agile working, data analytics and insight – and maintain the strong balance of integrity, values and what is best for people that shines through the third and public sector. The Alliance can do this by its very nature, in terms of co-production and technological innovation in service delivery. An alliancing structure allows us to embed sophisticated digital offerings, always coupled with as-needed in-person support. We will use data analysis to design, implement and deliver continuously adaptive and improving provision.

We are removing the static commissioning specification that says you have to deliver a service in 'X' way over 3-5 years. Instead, we are placing people at the forefront and working with them in a 'whatever-it-takes' way to ensure homelessness does not occur and, when it does, it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

So, a challenge to the nature of procurement of health and social services in Scotland is here. Change your ways and prioritise partnership working to massively reduce the scale of competition for services in Scotland. Let's end the unwanted creep of assessing 'value' through the lens of the three E's of efficiency, economy and effectiveness, that wasn't meant for this sector in the first place.

In the next few years I want to see the establishment of more than one homelessness alliance in Scotland so that, in 10 years, truly transformative change will be achieved in our provision and in people's lives. What do I mean by transformative? We should expect to see some homelessness services close, because their crisis services are no longer required as we massively reduce the amount of homelessness in Scotland. The skilled and talented people working in those services will instead be on the frontline of prevention. Colleagues in this publication will highlight the welcome focus on prevention-based services, supported by Scottish Government, that means we're already seeing this change begin. The challenge now is for local authorities in implementation and understanding how their resource allocation will differ in 10 years' time.

The very nature of our sector (third, private and public together) means there is duplication, with competing providers sometimes delivering very similar services. Over the next 10 years, instead of civic society sprouting new charities every year to plug yet another gap, the sector's size will reduce as we deliver more innovation by focusing resources on collaboration rather than competition. Glasgow can be the first of many alliances as we work together to end homelessness in Scotland.

Ruth Robin

Integrating housing, health and social care

Removing the priority need test as part of a homeless application created the conditions for us to ensure accommodation is provided for all. However, the considerations and accountability of meeting the wider health and social care needs of individuals remained elusive. Prevention duties certainly offer reassurance that individuals are identified and steps taken to resolve homelessness. Importantly though, we still need focus on how we ensure the system addresses the range of health and social care needs for this population.

As homelessness affects everyone within a household, our challenge is to leverage equitable contributions to meet the broadest range of needs. Our evidence suggests that we expect people experiencing homelessness to identify their health and social care needs, plan for those to be met, negotiate with multiple services and coordinate a number of professionals – who each have different asks. This is what drives complexity.

The Oxford dictionary defines complexity as “the state of having many parts and being difficult to understand or find an answer to”. Our housing, health and social care services operate in a complex environment and the multiplicity of needs makes this more intense. We mustn’t lose sight of how complex this system is for people: the emotional journey of homelessness to home; the reasons behind people facing homelessness; the housing process; systemic responses to these life-changing situations – all of these are complex.

Complexity in our system of care for people experiencing homelessness evidences itself daily. Resolving homelessness is interwoven with health and wellbeing, so we need to get better at responding. There are no silver bullets here – our system requires integrated strategic planning and systems thinking to re-design and transform the system responses. Only then can we ensure safe, effective care.

Our role as duty bearers should solidify our commitments to ensuring a human rights based approach to housing and good health. Our ADP and Homeless Programme ‘Reducing Harm, Improving Care’ evidenced the unintended consequences of our referral-based system.

People told us they were uncertain about who was involved in their care and what choices were available to them and were left feeling confused and misinformed about options. The single most important thing the sector should be doing is considering how we embed effective coordination of care that is inclusive of housing, health and social care. It is now no longer sustainable for us to work in isolation – we must apply a system thinking lens that recognises that effective coordination requires agency and accountability for people to leverage in contributions across the range of services and specialisms. We must design a system that ensures we share responsibility for care needs and drive up standards of care for people experiencing homelessness.

Co-design of standards of care and guidance, tools and resources that support effective care coordination for people experiencing homelessness is critical. A human rights based approach will enshrine in legislation choice and control and, in order to achieve this, we need to develop the system that activates these rights in real time for people at greatest risk of harm. In 10 years from now, our whole system of care should have a tried and tested, safe and effective response to homelessness and, critically, a health and social care system that identifies housing instability and responds by mobilising prevention activities. It is achieving this integration of health, social care and housing that will mean more people can stay in their homes for their life course.



Sally Thomas

The role of housing associations

While there is a strong legal safety net in Scotland for people who become homeless, the most recent Scottish Government statistics (2021–2022) show that we have not solved the problem. The pandemic demonstrated that it is possible to make a significant impact on homelessness, and the positive legacy of that is that we are still seeing a reduction in numbers of people sleeping rough. However, last year, there was an increase in homeless households (6%) and, even more worryingly, the numbers of homeless children rose by 17% compared with the previous year. Whilst most of the increase in homelessness can be attributed to family breakdown, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that having previously been homeless is an indicator for further homelessness, especially for children.

Housing associations and co-operatives have a major role to play in preventing and ending homelessness. Indeed, the majority that are working today emerged as a result of influential 1960s film *Cathy Come Home*. Along with homelessness campaigning by the newly formed charities Shelter and Crisis, many new housing associations were founded at that time with a clear aim of helping to tackle rising homelessness.

Today, this role is as important as ever. The numbers of people becoming homeless from housing association property has remained constant at 5% over the last three years, despite the rise in overall figures. That doesn't mean the sector can be complacent – there is always more that can be done. Our focus must be on preventing homelessness in the first place, with the sector drawing on an extensive range of tried and tested approaches. We have moved on from the days of large hostels or shared temporary accommodation. There is now a wealth of experience in delivering supported housing for people, directly or in partnership with other organisations. The move to mainstream housing with tenancy sustainment and support services or Housing First has been a positive step to help people with significant support needs to maintain a home. And there will still be a role for models of supported housing for people who don't want a mainstream tenancy or can't cope with one.

Looking to the next 10 years, the first and most important thing to say is that we need more affordable social housing in places where people want to live. It's worth noting here that this is becoming increasingly challenging as housing associations, as businesses, are faced with spiralling costs at the same time as needing to support tenants through major cost of living challenges, including energy price rises.

The second is that there must also be ongoing, customised and flexible support for people to stay in their homes and become part of the communities they live in. While housing associations already do this successfully across the country, they can always do more. Our members help alleviate poverty through welfare rights advice, the provision of grants, working with food banks and community larders, all of which contributes to homelessness prevention.

The sector cannot solve the problem of poverty and homelessness on its own but is increasingly looking at new and alternative solutions to support tenants and prevent homelessness. As well as increasing the supply of social housing, other solutions include providing furnished tenancies, shared homes for younger people and, increasingly, tailored support in response to specific individual and household needs.

We know that early help to target people most at risk, and partnership working with local government and the health and social care sector, are both vital. The proposed duties for public bodies and housing associations to prevent homelessness are key to delivering these essential ways of working. Homelessness is not just a housing issue – we need the entire system to work together, with the necessary resources to prevent homelessness in the first place. Housing associations are committed to ending homelessness, working together with government and partners for a future where everyone has the safe, warm, affordable home that's right for them, with the support they need to stay there.

John Mills

Will we ever experience Scotland without homelessness?

We should all work to that end, but is it realistic when we are still amid a housing crisis? Right now, facing other significant challenges with the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine, local authorities are perhaps justifiably feeling overwhelmed.

10 years ago, at the point of abolishing the priority need criteria for homelessness, we had high hopes of making decisive reductions in the incidence of homelessness. We adopted a proactive housing options approach to prevent homelessness crisis. For the next few years to 2014, we succeeded in achieving this. This progress was interrupted by a Regulatory Thematic Housing Options report criticising local authorities for 'gatekeeping'. As a result, we turned away from housing options. We lost our way. However, performance continued to improve to 2017. At that point, homelessness began to increase again and there was a need for urgent action to tackle rough sleeping and increasing homelessness. HARSAG was born and the rest, as they say, is history.

I have had the real privilege of guiding and supporting the development and implementation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) in Scotland. Under normal operating conditions I am convinced that, given more time, the RRTPs would have delivered significant transformation and reductions in homelessness again. Indeed, this is happening in some parts of the country, so let's keep pushing for action that will help each RRTP to achieve its potential.

To reduce homelessness, we also need to keep building affordable housing for the 14,000 homeless households stuck in temporary accommodation and record numbers on housing lists across Scotland. As the post-Covid and post-Brexit impact bites in terms of construction and materials inflation, there is an inevitable slowdown in the rate of new affordable house completions. This is a significant challenge to reducing homelessness as we slow investment in new build to pay for higher EESSH2 energy efficiency standards to tackle fuel poverty and the climate emergency.

That is why I am calling for a National Property Acquisition Programme to encourage local authorities and housing associations to buy properties from the private housing market, to support the need to move people out of temporary accommodation in significant numbers and enable RRTPs to be truly transformational.

The pandemic has been a progress interceptor in RRTPs. Regaining momentum in recovery is the key to reducing homelessness once again. We need more time to get RRTPs moving but, as they are due to come to an end in March 2024, time is against us. They may be replaced by a prevention-focused 'mark 2' version to mirror the anticipated Prevention of Homelessness Act within this Parliament. Effective prevention of a housing crisis and new house building is the key to getting us back on track to reduce homelessness again in Scotland. I fully support the development of RRTPs into a prevention-led vehicle for radical change in how we approach homelessness services across the partnership.

The housing sector is delighted to be talking with Government about the human right to access adequate housing. We would hope that a Bill could be introduced into Parliament before the next National Election in 2026. However, we are far from being able to guarantee that right to everyone in Scotland due to the current pressures we face, and responding to the needs of Ukrainian refugees is another significant challenge to reducing homelessness.

We need to step up our game to respond adequately and continue our work towards a Scotland without homelessness. People who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness deserve our full attention and effort to assist them with access to housing, support if required, and the means to sustain their accommodation to build better lives.

The non-negotiables: rights and protection

For Scottish Refugee Council and for myself, the non-negotiables for homelessness in the next 10 years are simple: Scotland is a place where everyone who arrives seeking protection, regardless of how they arrive are welcomed in dignity, receive safe and secure accommodation, and benefit from integration from day one.

We continue to challenge the UK government's attempts to penalise people seeking protection, but challenging is not enough. We need the Scottish Government to maximise its human rights incorporation agenda and devolved competence to restore or protect the rights of people seeking safety. This means in practice that:

- We are actively involved in the delivery of Fair Way Scotland so people facing no recourse to public funds get support, ensuring dignity and accommodation while they explore avenues to protection.
- We uphold the rights of all people seeking protection regardless of how they arrive, not creating dual systems for people based on their country of origin, which conflict they are fleeing, or how they arrive. Recognising everyone needs safe and secure accommodation to thrive and to start progressing towards their goals.
- For people displaced from Ukraine we advocate for a holistic approach to integration. A stable, safe and secure home is a building block to successfully integrating, and the lack of it is a barrier leading to multiple deprivations, including homelessness, poverty and destitution.
- For people seeking protection in our communities across Scotland, we adopt good practice where it exists as a national model. We have examples in Scotland where people recognised as refugees are supported in the transition from asylum accommodation into mainstream housing provision in a dignified way.

Homelessness and destitution affect the most vulnerable most acutely – those surviving in poverty with precarious lives, including complex trauma. Many people are forced into poverty and destitution by the UK government's asylum system.

Seeking protection and fleeing conflict is not a crime. Arriving in a country, whether you arrived through a resettlement scheme or a visa scheme or on a boat across the channel, does not mean you are any more or less in need of protection. The Nationality and Borders Bill endangers this by creating two classes of refugees, and denies rights based on how you arrive in the UK. It is unacceptable, an affront to the law and culture of protection established by the Refugee Convention. It is in this context that Scotland can and should, wherever possible, reject the policy and direction of a Westminster Government increasingly dogmatic and cruel in its application of policy and practice.

People seeking protection continue to arrive in Scotland through the widening of the asylum dispersal system, the war in Ukraine and the evacuation of Afghanistan. People arriving in Scotland should be offered the fullest possible support. We strive to uphold the rights of people seeking protection, and we will work with all stakeholders in that process to ensure it does.

Integration begins on day one, by action not words. It begins by offering those seeking protection a safe space: humane trauma-informed accommodation, not a police cell or 'hotel' room isolation or immigration detention. It must instil safety. Increasingly it does not. We will work to uphold the rights of those seeking protection in Scotland. We identified four points, in practice, which we hold as the non-negotiables. Challenging an increasingly hostile Westminster government means we need the support of others to do so, and Fair Way Scotland is an example of this work. We will continue to build partnerships with all stakeholders to ensure the rights of those seeking protection are upheld – that regardless of how someone arrives in Scotland, regardless of their country of origin, they are offered dignity and a safe and secure home.



Implementing a gendered response

Every year thousands of women and children in Scotland are made homeless, forced to leave their homes because of the coercive, controlling, abusive and sometimes violent behaviour of their partner or ex-partner. Shockingly, domestic abuse continues to be the main cause of women's homelessness in Scotland in 2022, with a high incidence of repeat homelessness. For many women looking for support, this can mean that they are made homeless by the very services that are meant to help them: forced to leave the family home and then move multiple times.

Over the last few years, several policy initiatives have been undertaken to prevent and end rough sleeping and homelessness. However, women have been largely invisible in these developments. While people experiencing homelessness will share some common experiences, homelessness is inherently gendered. An understanding of women's distinct experiences and the underlying causes of their risk of homelessness is essential if Scotland is to tackle and prevent women's homelessness. A critical finding from our own research has been that existing inequalities experienced by women are repeated and reinforced by the lack of national or local gendered policy and practice response to homelessness as a result of domestic abuse.

Women's unequal access to resources and safety underlies women's homelessness and housing situations, whether that is in relation to women's pathways into and out of homelessness, as the majority of renters in social housing, or as the minority of homeowners in Scotland.

Systemic gender inequality underpins this. Women are much more likely to work in part time low-paid employment to manage childcare and other caring responsibilities, as well as being more likely to experience interrupted periods of employment and lower incomes, making them twice as dependent on social security as men. Reforms to the social security system over the last 12 years have had a devastating impact on women. The benefit cap, which particularly affects single parents (95% women); the two-child limit; freezing of child benefit; and the single household payment of Universal Credit have all resulted in women experiencing deeper and sustained poverty.

These structural inequalities have been exacerbated by the unequal impact of the pandemic with disabled women, black and minority ethnic women, women with caring roles, younger women, and older women being particularly affected. Covid-19 highlighted a 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women and research has shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic abuse, intensified.

At the same time, we have not seen a consequent gendered response to homelessness. In a recent survey of our members almost a third of Women's Aid groups in Scotland reported that the response victim-survivors received from social landlords was worse now than before the pandemic. With the exception of a small number of social landlords, very few were implementing measures to prevent victim-survivors' homelessness.

Women's poverty is one of the critical enabling conditions for perpetration of domestic abuse. Current soaring energy and food costs, coupled with stagnant wages and an inadequate social security safety net, enable perpetrators of domestic abuse to entrap women and place more women and children at increased risk.

It is in this context that we urgently need national and local government to resource, undertake and effectively integrate gender mainstreaming into homelessness prevention policy. They must ensure this is well integrated with other policy areas that are crucial in tackling women's inequality, including social security, poverty reduction, employability, preventing violence against women, and criminal justice.

The Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan: annual report (2020) included a commitment to 'apply a gendered analysis to actions, ensuring the homelessness system meets the needs of diverse groups of women'. Until this happens, the homelessness system will continue to fail women.

Claire Longmuir

Homelessness and substance use: crossing the divide

Covid-19 has undoubtedly had a huge impact on service design and delivery. During the pandemic we saw monumental efforts in innovation and partnership working, services coming together to meet people where they were at with dignity and compassion; creating pathways into care and support that were accessible and available at the right time, by the right person. These are core principles of harm reduction – based on the rights of people that use drugs and embedded in a social justice philosophy that aims to meet people without judgement, offering advice and support to allow the person to make informed decisions about their life and health.

Simon Community Scotland purposely started our journey of embedding more harm reduction practices and thinking into our approach from policy into practice during the pandemic. This was driven by a year-on-year increase in people losing their lives to preventable drug-related deaths within our services. There was a realisation that, as a provider of homelessness services, we had a responsibility to do everything we could to reduce the harm associated with substance use. Looking forward to the next 10 years, the question is: how much have we, and should we, cross the unwritten divide between homelessness and substance use?

Simon Community Scotland has been on a journey to understand more about the impact of trauma on people's lives and on their ability to interact with services and support. As a sector, 'trauma informed' has become a recognised approach when working with people experiencing what are often prolonged and recurring periods of homelessness. This experience is often characterised by a history of childhood abuse, sexual violence, abandonment and loss. Our ambition as an organisation is to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness – to support people where they are at, to offer kindness, compassion, hope and dignity to those we are here to support. We have learned over recent years that harm reduction is, and needs to remain, an integral part of that approach.

Simon Community Scotland has shifted organisationally into a policy environment of high tolerance, allowing us to further embed harm reduction and trauma informed practices into our approach. Shifting away from a zero tolerance environment has allowed us to truly meet people where they are at, be relational-focused and open up conversations which were less available before. This has seen us move from losing 11 people to drug related deaths in 2020, to one person in 2021. We know that harm reduction saves lives.

The key to any meaningful intervention is the relationship, but how do we build these trusted, compassionate relationships within a policy environment that forces the person to hide a behaviour which is often acting as a coping strategy for poor mental health, trauma and grief? How much of a role can homelessness organisations play in reducing drug-related deaths over the next 10 years?

When we look to evidence-based approaches to supporting people experiencing homelessness and who use substances, such as Housing First, harm reduction is a key pillar of this approach. In the next 10 years, we need to move away from the siloed working that pigeonholes people's life experiences into neat boxes that each 'specialist' provider is responsible for addressing. We need to recognise, through the way we commission and think about service delivery, that people come as whole, complex human beings whose life experiences are not so easily untangled to meet service needs. We need to take the learning gleaned from Covid-19 and cut through the invisible red tape that exists between homelessness services, substance use services and mental health. By doing this, we will make it easy for people to access the help and support they need, when they need it, and in a way that makes sense to them.

Suzie McIloney

Homes and a human connection

We continue to live in a time of change and challenge. The change of direction through rapid rehousing, the new prevention duties, and new ways of working post pandemic. The challenges include the current cost of living crisis, meeting housing demands to make rapid rehousing a reality, and resourcing meaningful prevention work. We'll have to improve the way we respond if we want to meet these challenges and see positive change in the next 10 years.

One of the most effective ways to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Using data collected and listening to people with lived experience of homelessness can provide sound foundations to drive forward prevention work. If we can predict homelessness, then we should have the awareness and resources to prevent it from happening. Homelessness is infinitely complex, therefore we need to adapt our responses while bringing all partners to the table – including housing and homeless teams, private sector landlords, housing associations, social work, justice services, alcohol and drug partnerships, mental health services and organisations within the third sector. We need to continue shifting our thinking and moving in the direction of more upstream work to prevent homelessness. For example, taking action in response to signs like self-neglect, hoarding, or change in income. Where we can identify a problem, we should be already thinking of a solution, together.

For housing providers, the single most important factor is recognising that a property is only the beginning. Building more homes is only part of the solution. We must utilise what we have, which will require cross-sector collaboration and working in ways that we have not done before. The Housing First model is evidence that providing a home first, with intense wraparound support, delivers remarkable successes in tenancy sustainment. This is the result of clear principles, meaningful relationships and working with partners in a different way than we have done in the past. Having a place to call home provides the foundations for people to be able to grow and flourish.

Choices should be about what is best for the person, not what is convenient for the housing provider – it's all about finding not just any home, but the right home.

Recognition that homelessness is a trauma, a preventable trauma, should be at the heart of our work. Travelling in the direction of being trauma informed and trauma responsive, we need to remind ourselves that, when facing uncertainties, people need caring and compassionate connections. The language we use is so important to allow meaningful relationships to be established and continue to develop. Too often the system focuses on process and rules, but without human connection we can't meet individual needs. Staff need time to build relationships, and training in areas where there are gaps due to changing needs. More co-production on areas of focus will enable better collaboration with much wider partners.

We don't have all the answers and there is always room for improvement. So, finally, we need to listen to what people are telling us from their own experiences of homelessness, to hear not only where we can do better but also what worked well. Currently in South Ayrshire we are asking just that, in a joint approach between the local authority and charity organisations to evidence what matters to people, getting the right help at the right time.

Looking to the next 10 years, we should be relentless, never giving up on the idea that homelessness can be prevented. In this way, we will ensure that people have the homes they need.

Will Scotland lead the way again?

After more than 20 years with FEANTSA I have become careful when looking to the future and making predictions, but I see a new political momentum growing that makes ending homelessness for good possible. In June last year, the responsible Ministers of all 27 EU Member States signed the Lisbon Declaration in which they committed to work towards ending homelessness by 2030. I am sure Scotland would also have signed up to this commitment, and with conviction, if it were still part of the EU. If policy-makers at the highest level believe homelessness can be solved, we cannot afford not to. Whether the 2030 target is too ambitious for the EU is an open question, but for some countries it is certainly achievable, and Scotland is one of them.

Scotland would fit well in the list of high achievers such as Ireland which integrated the 2030 target in a new national homelessness strategy, or Germany which included it in the new government programme, or even Finland that wants to solve homelessness already by 2027. But we should not be naïve about the challenges and obstacles to overcome, especially in the context of a severe cost of living crisis.

There are many factors in success but, in my view, the following are fundamental:

- A solid consensus between all relevant stakeholders, including policy-makers, on the approach to take. This consensus should hold longer than one political mandate because more time will be needed to solve homelessness for good.
- Housing First as the basis of any approach. We know Housing First works and can be cost-effective over time. But we also know that Housing First will only last if it is accompanied by a comprehensive and well-targeted prevention strategy. No government can sustain its support for Housing First if homeless numbers don't go down.

- A healthy dose of pragmatism. Don't try to anticipate all possible problems beforehand. It makes policies too heavy and difficult to implement. Make sure that there is a commitment and space to address problems when they arise, and don't turn a problem into an argument against the overall approach.
- Make sufficient funding available, especially for the transition from a shelter-based to a Housing First approach. We know that this systemic change can be costly.
- Sustain the momentum by integrating the efforts to end homelessness in a distinct strategy with clear intermediate objectives.

I see no reason why these conditions cannot be met by Scotland. So, I am confident that Scotland can end homelessness in the foreseeable future.

For years, Scotland has been the best pupil of the European class. Many policy-makers and stakeholders came over to Scotland from abroad to learn more about the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act of 2003 and how it made the right to housing for people who are homeless enforceable in a very practical way. Because of the financial crisis and discouraging statistics, homelessness gradually disappeared as a social policy priority. I guess Scotland has to find a way to reconcile ambition and practical progress again and try to become once more the European example to follow. Being a star abroad makes it easier to sustain the momentum at home. Ask the Finns...

Good luck!



Concluding Summary

The themes running through this journal remind us of the multi-faceted nature of homelessness and the corresponding need for versatility in how we respond. Contributors highlight the diversity of individual experiences and needs, along with the importance of trauma-informed approaches to support, and the power of offering flexible, personalised solutions. There are calls for systems change by streamlining and collaborating to break down siloes, all the while listening to people who have been there. And we are reminded of the impact of policy and legislation over the past decade and more – that these were not easy gains, and it will require tenacity if we want to expand rights and entitlements based in law, to build new homes and to focus on prevention so that progress continues towards ending homelessness in the years to come.

Our contributors highlight the impact of trauma on individuals as they attempt to navigate housing and other systems. They suggest that we are still at an early stage with trauma-informed responses and, to realise fully their transformative potential, staff need greater depth of understanding. But questions are raised about workforce resilience and the sector's struggles to recruit, train and retain the skilled staff it needs.

Economic concerns are not confined to the workforce – the rising cost of living at a time of great uncertainty and challenge is a thread running through these pages, for households and for local authorities. There is fear that Scotland might struggle to build on its achievements in the face of these new pressures.

We're reminded that change takes time and effort, and progress can be piecemeal when consensus is hard to come by. Successes of the past decade such as reducing rough sleeping, introducing Housing First and removing priority need are significant and lead the way compared to other countries. They also enabled the sector to respond effectively during the pandemic.

There are calls now to focus on homelessness prevention, on reducing length of stay in temporary accommodation, and on housing options to make personalised offers that truly meet individual needs. There's both agreement and difference in these pages – many, but not all, call for a focus on supply through building new social homes; and many, but not all, call for the right to housing to be further embedded in law.

Contributors also advocate for change, in both policy and practice, to tackle the marginalisation of people by our current system. Their understanding of the experience of women, refugees, young people, and people using drugs enables us to see where investment is needed to achieve equality of access and a system that works for all.

A final theme to highlight is collaboration – with people with lived experience, between organisations and local authorities, and with government. Partnerships have enabled the changes we've seen in the past decade and in response to Covid, but there are calls for an evolution in what that collaboration looks like: being open to change and to take risks for the greater good – not only in delivery, but also in funding and commissioning. This is a call for system change across the sector, embracing alliance and integration as the way forward.

| **Biographies**
& Glossary

Biographies

Janeine Barrett is Senior Manager (Homelessness and Community Safety) at North Ayrshire Council. Having worked in homelessness for more than 30 years, Janeine remains committed to making a difference within local communities by delivering proactive people-centred services focused on the needs and aspirations of service users. She has made significant contributions to national homelessness policy development and the sharing of best practice across the UK. Joining North Ayrshire Council in 2001, Janeine has transformed the way homeless services are delivered with a focus on ending homelessness through prevention and early intervention.

Suzanne Fitzpatrick is Professor of Housing and Social Policy in the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University. She has worked in homelessness research for almost 30 years and was a member of the Homelessness Task Force that laid the groundwork for the abolition of priority need in Scotland. More recently she was a member of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group, and chaired the Prevention Review Group convened by Crisis at the invitation of the Scottish Government.

Viki Fox is based in Edinburgh and works for Cyrenians, a charity which challenges the causes and consequences of homelessness. She is Policy & Participation Manager and Lothians and Edinburgh Abstinence Programme (LEAP) out of hours care Service Manager. Viki is also a Trustee for Crisis UK and St Martin-in-the-Fields charities. She is finishing her studies in MSc Social Justice and Community Action, where her dissertation is focusing on homelessness support provision in Scotland. Viki has lived experience of recurring homelessness over a 15-year period and she is a strong advocate for the power of lived and frontline experience in ending homelessness.

Marion Gibbs leads the local engagement and rapid rehousing transition plan team in the homelessness unit in the Scottish Government. This also includes responsibility for Housing First and the scaling up of Housing First across Scotland. She has been in this role since 2009 and was the Homelessness Team Leader when the abolition of priority need was commenced. Marion has been employed in homelessness roles in local government, the third sector, the private sector and now Scottish Government since 1989.

Jim Hayton has worked in Scottish housing for almost 40 years. He started in the community-based housing association movement in the early 80s but spent most of his career with South Lanarkshire Council, latterly as Director of Housing & Technical Resources, where he oversaw a large department of some 1800 staff, and the management of 30,000 council homes. He retired from SLC in 2010 and became the first policy manager at the Association of Local Authority Chief Officers (ALACHO) in 2011, in which capacity he was elected the first joint chair of the newly established national Joint Housing Policy Delivery Group. He now works for Scotland's Housing Network on private sector housing policy, and is a board member at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland and West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA). He currently chairs the Scottish Government's national working group tasked with reviewing the standards for temporary accommodation.

Claire Longmuir is Policy and Practice Lead for Harm Reduction in Simon Community Scotland. Simon Community Scotland is the largest provider of homelessness services across Scotland operating across Edinburgh, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Dunbartonshire; our ambition is to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness. Claire has responsibility for embedding a harm reduction philosophy and practices across the organisation, which involves workforce training and development, supporting national policy development, embedding best practice across Simon Community Scotland's teams and coordinating a harm reduction champions network, as well as delivering innovative new approaches including how using digital to embed harm reduction into practice.

Suzie McIloney is Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Officer at South Ayrshire Council and Change Lead with All in for Change. The role reflects a national push to prevent homelessness and minimise stays in temporary accommodation. A key element in this approach involves preventing homelessness from happening in the first place, considering what more can be done to prevent homelessness, and how to work better with partners to achieve this. Over the last 16 years Suzie worked in various social care settings including prisons, justice services and later progressed into management. She led on a multi-agency approach to young people moving into their first home which was recognised with a COSLA award and Outstanding People award with South Ayrshire Council.

Peter Millar started his career in social work in 1972. As Principal Social Worker (Mental Health) he was responsible for all social work mental health services across East/North Glasgow 1984-88. As Contracts Manager with Greater Glasgow Health Board 1988-92, his team enabled several hundred people to be resettled from long-term hospital care into a range of community facilities, and set up Glasgow's first multi-disciplinary Community Mental Health Teams. In 1993, he founded The Richmond Fellowship Scotland and, as CEO, developed it into the largest community care third sector organisation in Scotland. In 2002, Peter founded Aspire Housing & Personal Development Services, an independent sector organisation providing services to individuals with homelessness issues and other support needs. In 2019, Aspire became an employee-owned organisation. Peter retired as CEO in February 2020 and remains Chair of the Board of directors and Trustee at Aspire. He also served as a member of Glasgow City's Integration Joint Board (IJB) for six years.

John Mills is currently Head of Housing Services with Fife Council. He is Co-Chair of the Association of Local Authority Chief Officers (ALACHO). John was a member of the Scottish Government's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group in 2017/18 and in 2020, and a member of the Prevention Review Group. A member of the Scottish Government/CoSLA Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group, John currently chairs the Sub-Group on RRTPs and Co-Chairs the Temporary Accommodation Task & Finish Group. John is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Institute of Leadership and Management. He was Chair of the Institute of Housing in Scotland in 2005 & 2006. He is a Tutor in Housing at the Fife Council Housing Training Academy and an SQA External Verifier for Housing.

Jo Ozga is a policy worker with Scottish Women's Aid.

David Pentland was a complex needs client between 1988-2001, forming Homeless Users Group Edinburgh (HUGE) 1999-2001. From 2001-10 he worked on the frontline of homelessness provision for various agencies and contractors. David left to work in other sectors, but eventually returned to homelessness roles. David started volunteering for Homeless Network Scotland from 2019 and joined the Change team. He became a Homeless Network Scotland associate in 2020, and since 2021 David has been seconded to Scottish Government as a policy officer bringing lived experience to the homelessness unit.

Kate Polson has been working in the homeless sector for over 25 years, delivering and leading homeless and youth services. For the last 12 years she has been Chief Executive at Rock Trust. Rock Trust aims to end youth homelessness by designing services and improving systems to ensure that young people have the resources they need to avoid, resolve and move on from homelessness. Kate is Chair of EYH UK, a founding member of the Housing First Europe Hub and a member of the steering group for the Youth Minimum Income programme in Grand Lyon. Rock Trust also leads A Way Home: Scotland, a National Coalition to End Youth Homelessness who most recently developed Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathways with the Scottish Government.

Jack Rillie is the Alliance Director for the Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness. Prior to this, Jack was a senior leader within the youth homelessness field and has a background in social care, programme management and business development.

Ruth Robin joined Healthcare Improvement Scotland's ihub in 2018 as the Portfolio Lead for Housing, Homelessness and Healthcare with strategic responsibility for substance use programmes. She is an avid champion of multi-disciplinary teams driving Quality Improvement methodology alongside people with lived experience to ensure autonomy and agency in the delivery of care. Ruth has 20 years' experience across health, local government and the voluntary sector. This includes delivering statutory functions, designing social care services and leading national programmes. Now based within Scotland's National Quality Improvement Body for Health and Social Care, Ruth is uniquely placed to understand preventative interventions for homeless people embedding the view that good housing is critical to good health and wellbeing.

Martin Smith joined Perth & Kinross Council's Housing Service nearly 22 years ago after completing a Masters in Social & Urban Policy and Post-Graduate diploma in Housing. He has delivered homelessness services, amongst other things, since around 2012 and has taken a lead role in the development and implementation of the Council's Home First model over the last five years. Prior to 2012, Martin set up and managed a range of private rented sector access initiatives including a Private Sector Leasing Scheme, Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme and Social Letting Agency.

Freek Spinnewijn has been the director of FEANTSA since 2001. FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with Homeless People, is a European network of NGOs working on the issue of homelessness with members in 30 European countries. After some short work placements at the UN in Geneva and the EU in Brussels, Freek became director of EPSO, a European network of seniors' organisations. In 2001, he took up his current position of director of FEANTSA. Freek sits on board of several European organisations such as the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), and Social Services Europe.

Jim Strang has been in the social housing sector for over 40 years. He is currently chair of Riverside Scotland and sits on the boards of Homeless Network Scotland, Shelter, The Scottish Pantry Network and Ferguslie Park Housing Association. Jim is a retired CEO of a Glasgow-based community-controlled housing association and is a former President of the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Sally Thomas is Chief Executive of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), the membership body for, and collective voice of, housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland. She has worked for several housing associations in London and the North East of England, most recently as Head of Community Investment at North Star Housing Group. Previously, she worked for the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), on regeneration at an urban development corporation, as director of a consultancy specialising in community-based development and leading on social purpose and wider role at the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT). She has co-authored several publications for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Chartered Institute of Housing, HACT, think tanks and government departments. She has chaired, and served on, a variety of boards in the housing, arts, health and charitable sectors.

Alison Watson became Director of Shelter Scotland in June 2020, having previously been Deputy Director, with responsibility for the leadership and development of services across Scotland and for all aspects of volunteering and involvement. Alison joined Shelter Scotland in 2002, bringing extensive leadership experience in health and social care, mostly in the third sector, but also within local authorities and the NHS. Immediately prior to joining Shelter Scotland, Alison worked in the mental health field, where she played a leading role in the development of several innovative services, as well as making a major contribution to pioneering the involvement of people who experience mental health issues in the design, delivery and management of services. Alison began her career in the late 1980s, working in a large hostel for people who had long-term experience of homelessness.

Sabir Zazai has been Chief Executive of Scottish Refugee Council since September 2017. Sabir arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker in 1999, fleeing the conflict in Afghanistan. He was dispersed to Coventry, where he lived and worked. Sabir has a wealth of knowledge in refugee integration that is informed by his personal experiences of going through the asylum system and his research and campaigning background in this area. His policy and research work in refugee integration focuses on community cohesion management, integration and social relations. Sabir was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Glasgow for services to community and he has received the Lord Provost's Award for human rights. In June 2022, Sabir was awarded an OBE by Her Majesty the Queen in recognition of his work advocating for refugee rights.



Home for 10 Glossary

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ADP	Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships
ALACHO	Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers
All in for Change	Platform for people with lived and frontline experience of homelessness (the Change Team) to inform and influence the national plan to end homelessness.
CCPS	Coalition of Care and Support Providers
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
EESHS 2	The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing post 2020
Fair Way Scotland	National approach to mitigating and preventing destitution and protecting the human rights of people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) in Scotland – Action 3 of the Scottish Government and COSLA Ending Destitution Together Strategy.
FEANTSA	European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless
HARSAG	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group
RRTPs	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans
PRS	Private Rented Sector

