

Everyone Home respond to Consultation on Temporary Accommodation Standards

In October 2021, the Scottish Government established a working group to help produce a new standards framework for temporary accommodation in Scotland. In June 2022, the group published a comprehensive draft framework to consult with wider stakeholders. This is the response from the Everyone Home Collective to the working group's draft framework.

BACKGROUND TO CONSULTATION

Ensuring standards in temporary accommodation are consistent and of a good quality is needed due to the variance across different types and in different parts of Scotland. In 2018, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group recommended a new framework to underpin temporary accommodation which was taken forward as an action in the joint Scottish Government/COSLA Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan in 2018, updated in 2020.

EVERYONE HOME RESPONSE

The Everyone Home Collective welcomes these updated standards and the opportunity to inform their development. We hope the comments below help to further strengthen the standards and we look forward to hearing from Scottish Government about implementation and enforcement in due course.

A number of points were raised around **implementation and enforcement** which we understand is still being developed and we look forward to hearing more from the Scottish Government as this work progresses. In particular:

- The standards need to be legally enforceable.
- Organisations providing (or commissioning) temporary accommodation need to be held to account when the standards are not met.
- People living in temporary accommodation need to know their rights in terms of the temporary accommodation standards they should expect.
- Consideration should be given to the standards forming part of the commissioning process.
- How will any exemptions be decided? There are specific challenges in different local authority in terms of availability of suitable temporary accommodation (especially in rural areas). Instead of allowing areas to not meet the standards, the Scottish Government should ensure that sufficient resources are available to address these challenges so that the standards can be met.
- Consider adopting the human rights law approach around 'progressive realisation.'
- The role of the Regulator in leading enforcement is key.
- Practice-focused guidance will help implementation and can be strengthened with the addition of personal accounts of good practice.

The collective discussed the implications of the increasing **length of time** people are having to stay in temporary accommodation. There are a number of implications we would like Scottish Government to consider when finalising the standards:

- We understand that the HPSG Task and Finish Group will make recommendations on how to reduce the use of, and time spent in, temporary accommodation. We encourage the group to consider how to reduce the costs incurred through the high use of temporary accommodation as well as the importance of increasing supply of accommodation, of the right size and in the right places.
- Suitability of temporary accommodation should be reviewed at regular intervals, as people's health and other support needs are likely to change the longer they are in temporary accommodation.
- A number of local authorities practice 'flipping' of temporary tenancies to permanent tenancies, where this arrangement meets the needs of the tenant. How will the temporary accommodation standards impact on this practice, which can be a very positive outcome for tenants?

The standards need to ensure the standards **meet the needs of all groups** and we recommend giving specific consideration to the following:

- The standards state that the accommodation needs to be accessible. Limited accessible stock can mean that disabled people are asked to make compromises such as accepting accommodation in an unsuitable location. Local authorities need to equality impact assess their practices and ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- As noted above, people's needs regarding accessibility (and other parts of the standards) are likely to change over time and the ongoing suitability of the accommodation should be reviewed regularly.
- People experiencing domestic abuse should feel safe in temporary accommodation and receive the specific support they need. This is predominantly women, but male victims will also need accommodation and support and there is currently a lack of appropriate services for male victims.
- Temporary accommodation support needs to be trauma informed.
- Women with experience of sexual abuse will need safe accommodation and access to specific support and services.
- Single-sex accommodation should be available where people would feel unsafe in mixed-sex accommodation.
- Gender identity is a sensitive topic and the Scottish Government should seek specific advice to ensure everyone accessing temporary accommodation is treated with dignity and feels safe.
- The impact of these standards on people with different protected characteristics should be monitored and reviewed over time, with commitments made to address any changes needed.