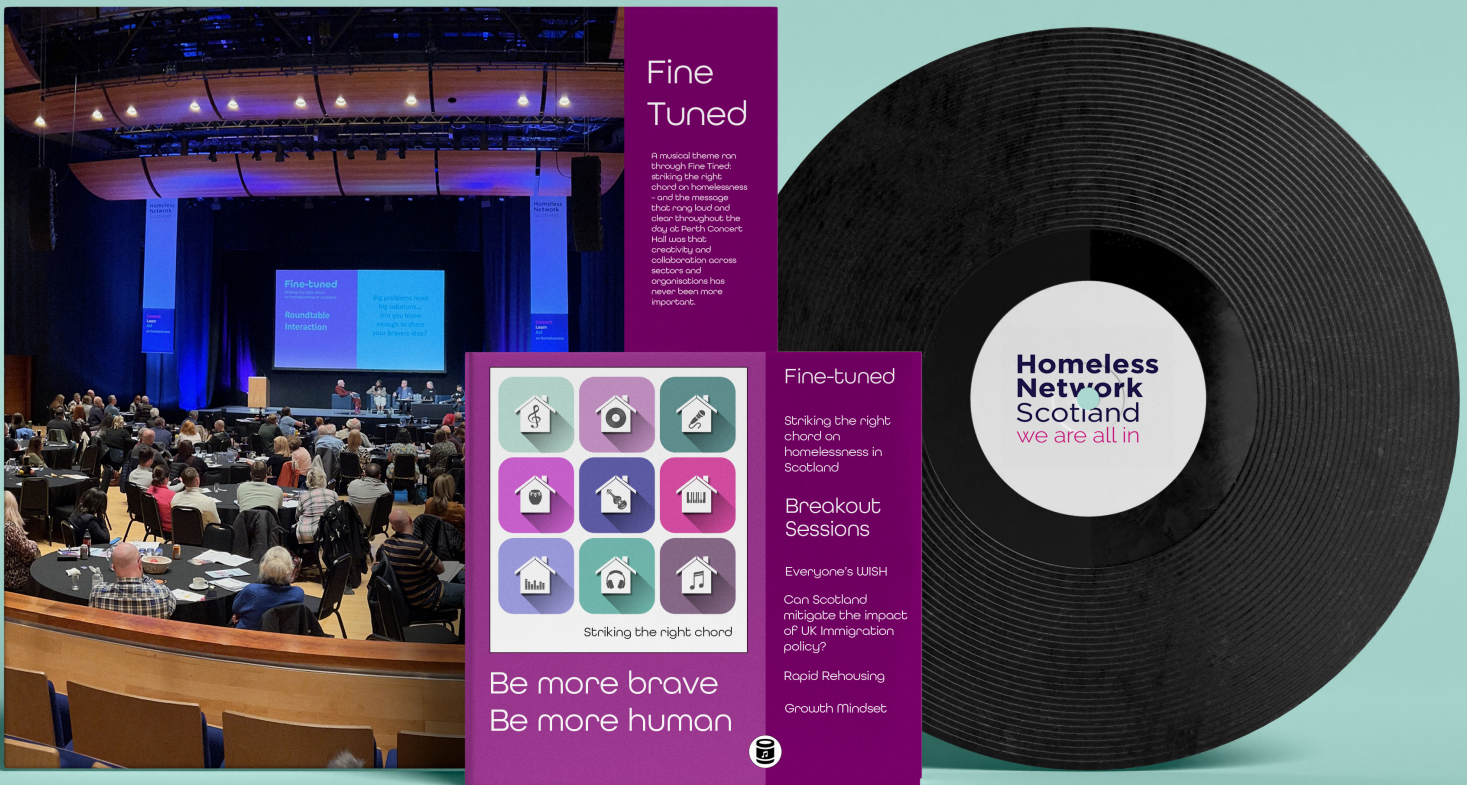


Fine-tuned

Striking the right chord
on homelessness in Scotland



Take Away Messages

Scotland's Annual Homelessness Conference
Perth Concert Hall | 31 October 2023

Fine-tuned

Striking the right chord on homelessness in Scotland

A musical theme ran through Fine-tuned: striking the right chord on homelessness – and the message that rang loud and clear throughout the day at Perth Concert Hall was that creativity and collaboration across sectors and organisations has never been more important.

This year's annual homelessness conference brought together more than 200 people to focus on unlocking solutions to the unprecedented pressures weighing down on local housing systems.

It was a day packed with speakers, workshops, roundtable discussions, passionate debate and panel sessions – with musical interludes adding to the energy and inspiration in the air.

Issues in focus this year included providing safe homes for women, making Housing First work, being braver and more human, helping those facing serious disadvantage to thrive and counteracting the destitution caused by UK immigration policy.

Thank you to all who took part including speakers, facilitators, exhibitors and delegates. Together we can make progress towards ending homelessness for every person and community in Scotland.

Online delegate pack:

homelessnetwork.scot/fine-tuned



Summary

In keeping with the event's musical theme, Homeless Network Scotland chief executive Maggie Brünjes boiled down the five 'key changes' we need to take to combat homelessness: build more homes, reduce poverty and inequality, challenge UK Government policy, modernise homeless services and ensure a No Wrong Door approach. The conference supported her calls for a route-map to sequence, cost, target and time each of the actions in the Ending Homelessness Together Plan.

Housing Minister Paul McLennan addressed conference and emphasised the Scottish Government's priority to secure new investment in housing, reduce numbers in temporary accommodation, address rural challenges, the importance of the upcoming prevention duties – and the sector's need for more money.

Taking questions from the floor on the new Ministerial Oversight Group on homelessness, he was pressed on the need for a joined-up approach to homelessness through the new National Care Service and the housing and budget pressures local authorities face.

Two sofa sessions posed questions on how we can be more human and braver in all we do, with wide-ranging conversations covering the personal and the political, organisational and system angles – fuelled by a “favourite biscuit” icebreaker from host Maff Potts.

Our sofa panel considered the vulnerability of being human and the power of deep connection, and the hall was asked to hold a person facing homelessness in their thoughts as Maff played Nina Simone’s I Wish I Knew How it Would Feel to be Free on the piano.

After lunch, the session on bravery focused on changing systems by making services more joined-up and person-centred, pushing back on hostile UK Government immigration policy, continuing to bang the same drum on homelessness, and even turning up for work each day despite the challenges.



Breakout sessions

Humanity, bravery and connection were core to breakout sessions that delved into the many efforts underway across the country to support people facing some of the hardest adversity.

Everyone’s WISH

Cyrenians and Scottish Women’s Aid outlined the progress of the Everyone’s WISH (Women In Safe Homes) initiative, which harnesses social investment to fund homes for women who have experienced domestic abuse – the largest cause of women’s homelessness in Scotland.

Can Scotland mitigate the impact of UK Immigration policy?

The Fair Way Scotland session heard from Heriot-Watt’s I-SPHERE institute about the first-year impact and future priorities of the partnership, which aims to prevent homelessness and destitution among people denied access to state support because of their immigration status.

Rapid Rehousing

A workshop on Rapid Rehousing heard about the transformational success of Perth & Kinross Council in reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation through flipping, buybacks and a Housing First approach, as well as challenges including the cost-of-living crisis.

Growth Mindset

CATH Perth set out their achievements in employing Growth Mindset theory to help people facing barriers including homelessness and mental health through their Positive Pathways programme.

10 Takeaways



1 Play nice! Across sectors and organisations, and as individuals, we can achieve more through good collaboration. It's not always easy to stay positive when things aren't getting better quickly enough, but let's face the music in a constructive way.



2 People are never beyond being helped – with the right tools to help them thrive. The Growth Mindset workshop showed how a strengths-based approach helps people facing complex challenges to improve their talent and abilities by thinking differently about themselves.



3 Don't let good policy go to waste. Scotland can be rightly proud of its homelessness legislation. Let's continue pushing to implement the policies we have to improve homelessness systems and make more affordable housing available for everyone who needs it.



4 Strength in numbers. The Fair Way Scotland breakout showed how a range of sectors and organisations are working together to help people who face being left destitute by hostile UK immigration policy – showing that collective efforts can counteract big barriers.



5 We need to innovate. Lack of social and affordable housing is a factor that everyone in the housing and homelessness sectors is confronted by daily. We need to explore fresh funding models – and use social investment – so we can build more. Scotland has a long tradition of innovation, after all.



Use Lived Experience – but the right model. Decision makers may have great ideas for improving things. But these can only have real impact if people with experience of homelessness are fully involved in the change process – not just consulted after the work is done.



Put people first. A stigma-informed approach to systems, services and day-to-day interactions needs to be the norm. Let's commit to fighting negative perceptions of people experiencing homelessness, which have lingered too long and obscure what drives homelessness.



Don't give up. Adverse times must not mean that we slow down the push for progress. We can allow ourselves to celebrate the small wins, whether that be something achieved for one person or a community.



Be bolder. We need to take really brave decisions on what we can do within our powers and budgets, because people don't have the luxury of waiting for things to change. If you do what you've always done, you get what you've always got. Step out of your comfort zone – it could pay dividends.



Be more human. Be true to yourself and others and walk people's journeys with them. Stay compassionate, get alongside people and treat others the way we would expect to be treated – with dignity and respect.





WATCH: We put delegates at the conference on the spot and asked them what being more human and being more brave means to them. What did they have to say?

www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjMMf9VVby8

