

Mr John Swinney
First Minister
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
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9 May, 2024

Congratulations on your appointment as Scotland's seventh First Minister, in this historic 25th year of the Scottish Parliament. We welcome your commitment to working collaboratively with all parties and look forward to continuing to work closely with the Scottish Government towards achieving our shared goal of ending homelessness.

Over the last 25 years Scottish administrations have made giant leaps towards ending homelessness and have created world-class legislation. When progress stalled, the Scottish Government recalibrated to get us back on track. When the pandemic threatened to cause a homelessness catastrophe, the Scottish Government took decisive action.

Now we find ourselves going backwards again. But this can be a moment to reset.

One of your first stated goals is to eradicate child poverty. Given that **child poverty is the strongest indicator of future homelessness**, we believe ending homelessness should sit alongside this laudable ambition as your top priority. You can enable this by focusing on a handful of priorities as a matter of urgency.

Firstly, homelessness prevention should be a central plank of the child poverty agenda. Stabilising people's housing is one of the most effective ways to reduce child poverty. We need – at minimum – to see prevention measures in the Housing Bill **protected and properly resourced**, and for these to be implemented successfully through a cross-government strategy designed around preventing and acting early on homelessness. Done properly, this will create the conditions to help people before crisis point, and ease pressures on local authority homelessness teams and budgets by ensuring preventing homelessness is everybody's business.

Prevention is one key part of the solution. **We also need more social homes.** It is vital that your government fully reverses the baffling £196 million cut to affordable housing in the most recent Budget.

Building the social homes we need will help people and families escape poverty and build the foundations for life. It will help many of the 10,000 children shamefully allowed to spend some of their formative years in temporary accommodation to have a safe and secure childhood.

It will help people to get out of difficult or dangerous situations they are unable to escape from because there's nowhere else to go. And it will boost economic growth and help businesses in urban and rural areas to attract the workers they need. These are wins on top of wins.

But we need a co-ordinated plan of action. That is why we continue to support Shelter Scotland's call to appoint a Cabinet Secretary to tackle the housing emergency – if yesterday was not the right time, it now is. People in or facing homelessness, or stuck in temporary accommodation, people of all ages hamstrung by soaring rents, young people tempted to emigrate – they must have a voice at the highest level of government.

We wish you every success in your new role First Minister. We hope that in future we can look back and see the 25th anniversary of the Scottish Parliament as the moment when our ambitions to achieve the ultimate goal of the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan crystallised into real and meaningful action.

Signed

The Everyone Home Collective

The Everyone Home Collective is a group of 35 academic and third sector organisations who came together at the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in spring 2020 and who remain connected to focus on housing and homelessness in Scotland. We extend a warm invitation to meet the collective to discuss our shared priorities and how we can help achieve our shared goal of eradicating homelessness in Scotland.

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