



legislation

12 December 2024

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

cc:

Paul McLennan MSP, Minister for Housing and co-chair of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group and Housing to 2040 Strategic Board

Cllr Maureen Chalmers, COSLA Community Wellbeing spokesperson and co-chair of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group and Housing to 2040 Strategic Board

Dear Cabinet Secretary

In light of the political leadership on housing and homelessness prevention demonstrated by the Scottish Government in last week's budget, we write to urge you to **centre people's rights** to housing and support in all action that happens next.

Every person in Scotland experiencing or at risk of homelessness is equally protected by the world's strongest legal rights to safe, suitable housing and to housing support. This safety net was borne out of devolution and is something that Scotland can rightly be proud of in the 25 years that have passed since.

But now, in the midst of the housing emergency, we see the unprecedented pressure on local authorities and partners, and we bear witness to the desperate toll on those at the hardest edge of the emergency. For some this toll is life changing, or even life threatening.

Homeless Network Scotland

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Priority actions to respond to the housing emergency must start with the question: How will this benefit people affected by housing inequality and homelessness? There is not one single benefit to people who are homeless in having their rights suspended or even questioned. Financial problems are fixable, but rights are foundational.

The housing emergency is already resulting in people experiencing a breach of those rights every day – being able to exercise rights in full must be a key measure of Scotland's rights-based approach and the next phase of fixing the housing emergency.

Having these rights goes well beyond the discharge of duties. They create an empowering environment that benefits people's fundamental sense of self, of their importance to government – and to society as a whole. Evidence has already shown us the difference this benefit alone makes to people's aspirations in Scotland compared to other countries.

We know from colleagues in All in for Change with personal experience of homelessness that these rights make a difference on the ground. Ending priority need means we are all on a level playing field when it comes to getting help. Suspending local connection rules treats people facing homelessness with dignity by letting them choose where they live, like anyone else.

And the Unsuitable Accommodation Order means that individuals, families and children should be shielded from temporary accommodation that may be unsafe, unhealthy or miles from support and their friends and family networks.

Rights and duties are the pillars that support local authorities to provide quality, fair and efficient public services. In homelessness and housing, these services can save people from the worst crisis of their life or help someone to build their life in a settled home. Local authorities who are duty bound to make these rights real need proper resourcing to do so.

The Everyone Home collective, made up of nearly 40 third and academic sector organisations focused on housing and homelessness, is ready to work with all levels of government to find solutions to the problems we face and to protect these rights.

And we stand together with All in for Change in asking you for a public commitment to supporting these legal rights and ensuring that they are upheld no matter the challenges we face.

We look forward to receiving your reassurance that all of Scotland's housing rights will be defended and strengthened now and in years to come. We also invite you to meet with representatives of the collective to discuss how we and your officials can work together in 2025 toward our shared objectives.

Yours sincerely,

The Everyone Home Collective

Signatories below



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Chief Executive
Aberdeen Cyrenians



Leona McDermid
Chief Executive
Aberdeen Foyer



All in for Change
The platform for lived and
frontline experience



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