

24 October 2024

For the attention of:

Secretary of State for the Home Department, The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

Dear The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

We are writing as representatives of organisations from across Scotland who work with people affected by homelessness to express our serious concern that people's lives will be put at risk this winter due to the significant rise in rough sleeping, **and to urge the Home Office to recognise their part in preventing homelessness in Scotland.**

Homelessness statistics that were published on 24 September show that rough sleeping is rising steeply in Scotland. During the last year, there was an increase in the number of people who had slept rough to 2,931, now 7% of all households making a homeless application. Notably this is a higher number than pre-pandemic.

Every person who is forced to sleep rough is one too many. Being left with no choice but to sleep in doorways and tunnels and parks severely damages people's health and wellbeing, risks their safety and their lives, strips them of dignity and affects our wider communities too. In Scotland in 2024, no one should be left with no choice but to sleep on the street, **and we emphasise that forcing people to do so at any time of year and particularly during winter puts their life at risk.**

We have today written to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and the COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson to ask for their immediate and coordinated action to provide, at a minimum, safe accommodation to keep people off the streets this winter. (Copy of letter enclosed) We have also written to the Scottish Human Rights Commission to urge them to explore this serious risk to people's fundamental right to life.

We are writing to you today to ask for the UK Government to play your part too.

We are concerned that the number of households becoming homeless from supported accommodation in Scotland more than doubled from 932 in 2022-23 to 1,978 in 2023-24, and this is in large part made up of people who have been in asylum accommodation. We are very concerned that the Home Office's lack of effective transition support for those who have had asylum decisions is leading to entirely preventable rough sleeping and all of the harms that causes for people's health and wellbeing, and the risk to their lives during these coming Winter months. The UK Government is currently washing their hands of any responsibility to support people newly out of the asylum system and as a result, is directly contributing to very

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significant pressure on housing and homelessness services, including provision of accommodation this Winter.

We are writing to call on the Home Office to take your fair share of responsibility for prevention of homelessness in Scotland. We ask that the Home Office works more closely with Scottish local authorities to prevent the homelessness of people with recent asylum decisions, including providing financial resource to local authorities to help ensure a smooth transition from asylum accommodation to settled housing. We note that this is vital for many local authorities in Scotland and particularly for Glasgow.

We look forward to receiving your assurance that you will urgently do all that you can to work with Scottish councils to address this preventable crisis - those sleeping outside tonight on Scotland's streets in the cold and damp and with their safety and wellbeing at serious risk, deserve no less.

Yours sincerely

The Everyone Home Collective



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