

A man with a beard and a backpack is shouting into a megaphone. The background is blue with a red dashed line and icons of houses and buildings. The word 'Crisis' is written in white on a red square in the top right corner.

**Crisis**

**We can end  
homelessness in  
Scotland by 2040:**

**your step-by-step  
guide to campaigning  
for change**

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# Together we are powerful

## Who we are

Crisis is the national charity for people experiencing homelessness. We help people directly out of homelessness and campaign for the social changes needed to solve it altogether.

**We know that together we can end homelessness.**

## About this toolkit

You've received this toolkit because you believe in a society where homelessness doesn't exist. You know that a decent home is a basic need. And you're willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with people experiencing homelessness until we get there.

In this toolkit you'll learn more about homelessness and how to end it for good. And you'll find out how you can use your voice to bring about change.

Join our movement to end homelessness in Scotland by 2040. Because together, we are powerful.

[End homelessness in Scotland | Crisis UK](#)



**To me, campaigning is about connecting with others who share the same commitment to ending homelessness. It matters because when we unite, one voice becomes many and together, we have the power to make change happen.**

Manoel Filho, lived experience campaigner



# Ending homelessness in Scotland by 2040

A safe, stable home is the foundation for a healthy life. But across Scotland, more people are being forced into homelessness every day.

Scotland has one of the most progressive homelessness systems in the world. But rising living costs, shortages of affordable homes and a lack of support are pushing more of us towards poverty and homelessness.

With the upcoming election in May 2026, **we have the chance to change this**. All parties must commit to ending homelessness in Scotland by 2040, because it's only possible with the right political action.

This election is our chance to tell political parties that they need to prioritise ending homelessness. Because getting your vote will depend on it.

**Together, let's vote to end homelessness by 2040 this election.**



# Why 2040?

We have set a target of 2040 to put in place a date that the Scottish Government must work towards to achieve this ambition. This matches the Government's plan to deliver enough homes for everyone by 2040. This is a great step forward, but it will not in itself end homelessness.

We need more homes, but we also need to support people to stay in their homes and prevent homelessness from happening in the first place. This requires the services we all rely on for support, such as councils, health and social care and education to work better together, much earlier on.

We need a bold, long-term commitment to end homelessness in Scotland from all political parties that will stand the test of time, regardless of who is in power. This shared goal will help us hold future governments to account. It will mean that they must deliver on building a Scotland where everyone has a safe, secure place to call home.

No action means no change. The time to commit to ending all forms of homelessness in Scotland is **now**.

# Progress made so far

Crisis has been campaigning to end homelessness in Scotland for over a decade. The best way to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. That's why since 2016 we've been calling for stronger laws that protect people from homelessness.

**2016:**

Crisis calls for a new strategy for tackling homelessness during the Scottish Parliamentary election.

**2017:**

Crisis chairs the Scottish Government's **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group**. Made up of experts from local and national government, the third sector and homelessness services, this group proposes how to end rough sleeping and reduce the number of people trapped in temporary accommodation.

**2018:**

The Scottish Government publishes its **Plan to End Homelessness**, including a commitment to new laws to prevent homelessness. This is based on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group's recommendations.

**2019:**

Crisis organises the **Homelessness Prevention Review Group** to develop new laws to prevent homelessness. This group finds two effective solutions: allowing people to get help earlier, before they reach crisis point, and making public services such as health and justice play a bigger role in spotting and preventing homelessness.



2021:

Crisis successfully campaigns for every party to back its call to change the law to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place. Then First Minister announces her government's plans, including a commitment to introduce **new laws** that would require public services to work together to prevent homelessness.

2022:

The Scottish Government launches a consultation to invite feedback on their proposals for a new law to prevent homelessness.

2023:

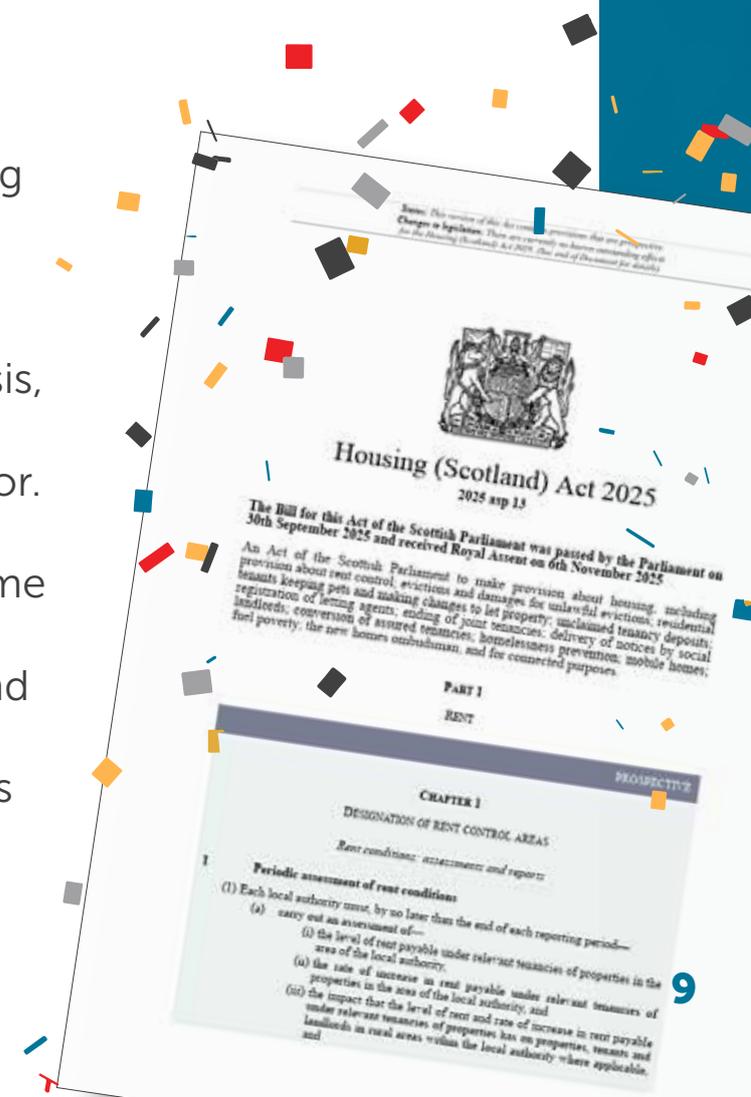
Crisis and Cyrenians publish the **Homelessness Prevention Task and Finish** Group report, setting out what needs to be done to prepare for the introduction of the new homelessness prevention laws.

2024:

Housing (Scotland) Bill is introduced to the Scottish Parliament.

2025:

Housing (Scotland) Bill passes into law – meaning that new laws to prevent people's homelessness have been created! This is a huge win for Crisis, its supporters and the wider homelessness sector. The new homelessness prevention laws must come into effect within three years, after which Scotland will have one of the most progressive homelessness systems in the world.



# How to end homelessness by 2040

We need to combine plans to build enough homes with changes to public services, so that people experiencing or at risk of homelessness get the help they need, when they need it. Over three parliaments, we can end homelessness by 2040 by:



## 1. Building enough genuinely affordable homes

Building 15,693 homes per year over the next five years is needed to make sure everyone in Scotland has a safe and settled home. This would need to include a mixture of social, private and mid-market rent homes, as well as homes in different sizes, to suit single people to large families.



## 2. Giving people better support earlier on, before they become homeless

This means making public services that many of us use, such as health and education, work together to prevent people's homelessness. It also means providing wraparound support when people move out of homelessness and into a settled home, so they don't become homeless again.



## 3. Committing to long-term funding linked to clear results

The change we need is only possible with long-term funding linked to clear outcomes. For example, prioritising investment in new affordable homes and transforming public services so that they can better prevent people's homelessness.



**Homelessness is the result of political decisions, and Scotland can end it altogether with the right political will.**

Crisis Lived Experience Campaign Group

# You can help end homelessness! 5 things everyone can do



**Your actions are vital to ending homelessness in Scotland by 2040, and we can't make this happen without you.**

Homelessness doesn't need to exist. With collective action and political will, we can end it once and for all. But we know we can't do it on our own. We work with people with lived experience of housing insecurity and homelessness, with thousands of Crisis campaigners, allies and politicians to get the lasting change we need to end homelessness.

**Join our movement to end homelessness in Scotland by 2040.**

## 5 ways to play your part

Change happens in many ways. Here are five things you can do right now to help end homelessness in Scotland.

### ✓ **Be informed**

Knowing more about homelessness will give you confidence when speaking up and campaigning for change. It will help you raise awareness and inspire others to do the same. Go to [page 15](#) to learn more about homelessness.



### ✓ **Support people experiencing homelessness in your local area**

Seen someone sleeping rough in your local area and not sure what you can do to help? We have lots of tips on offering support in an empathetic and safe way. Find out more on [page 20](#).

### ✓ **Speak up**

One of the most powerful ways to create change is by speaking up against injustice. By talking to people about how and why homelessness must be ended in Scotland by 2040, you're helping to grow the movement. See [page 26](#) for helpful ways to talk about homelessness.



## Demand change from decision makers

Use your voice to demand change from politicians by [taking our campaign actions](#). During the election period, political candidates might be knocking on your door asking for your vote. This is your chance to speak about issues that are important to you and show candidates that your vote depends on their actions. [Check out our handy questions to ask your candidates.](#)

## Fundraise

You can also make a difference [by fundraising](#) to support our vital services for people experiencing homelessness.



# Things you should know about homelessness

A safe and settled home is the foundation on which people can build a decent life and meet their true potential. Having a home is essential for good health and wellbeing. It makes it easier for people to succeed at work and in education, to maintain relationships with family and friends and to contribute to their community.

Yet homelessness affects 1 in 4 Scots. 11% of people in Scotland have experienced homelessness, while a further 13% have a close friend or family member who has experienced homelessness.

## What is homelessness?

Homelessness is much more than 'rooflessness' or a lack of physical shelter, it is the lack of a home, and a home is much more than a place to stay.

Homelessness takes many different forms. Rough sleeping, the most visible form of homelessness, saw a surge of 28% in Scotland in the last year.

Staying on a friend's sofa is also a form of homelessness, because it's short-term and insecure.



Living in temporary accommodation such as hostels and bed and breakfasts provided by local councils is another form of homelessness. People can be moved on at any time, and temporary accommodation often has only basic cooking and washing facilities. Without a settled home, lives and plans for the future are put on hold.

Temporary accommodation is no substitute for the stability of having a proper home. Last year saw a 6% increase in households trapped in temporary accommodation in Scotland. That's 17,240 individuals and families, including 10,180 children, stuck in temporary accommodation while they wait, sometimes as long as 5 years, to find a long-term home.

## What causes homelessness?

Homelessness is caused by multiple pressures in a person's life. There are external pressures such as rising rents, shortages of affordable homes and cuts to services. And there are life events such as job loss and relationship breakdowns which can result in housing insecurity. If this pressure builds up, people can be pushed into homelessness.





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**I was sleeping in my car for over two years and working for most of that time. I used public toilets to wash, and my mates would do my washing for me. I would live on takeaways. Crisis supported me to secure a council flat. I feel safe and settled. I can do anything I want now, and I don't have to worry about things.**

Paddy, supported by Crisis Skylight Edinburgh

## How can we end homelessness?

At Crisis, we know what it takes to end homelessness. Through research and working directly with people experiencing homelessness, we have the solutions. We need to build more genuinely affordable homes. And we also need to make changes to public services, so that people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, get the help they need, when they need it. All of this will require long-term investment that is linked to clear results. By doing this, we can create a country where everyone has a safe and stable home.

## What is homelessness prevention?

The best way to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. That's why we've worked closely with the Scottish Government to change the law to help people before they reach crisis point. By widening responsibility for preventing homelessness across public services in health, justice and beyond, we can stop people being forced to spend long periods of time in the homelessness system.

After years of hard work, the Scottish Parliament voted to back our campaign for new laws to prevent people from being made homeless. The Scottish Housing Act 2025 contains new protections to do that, helping to create one of the most progressive homelessness systems in the world.





**We need to move beyond short-term solutions and address the underlying problems that drive homelessness.**

**That means building enough homes for everyone, providing support for people that need help, so they can keep their home, and backing up homelessness services with the funding they need to do their jobs. If we can do that, we can end homelessness in Scotland.**

Michelle, Engagement and Assessment Manager



# How to help people experiencing homelessness in your area

If you have seen someone sleeping rough, and would like to help, here are some ways you can provide support.

We all deserve dignity and respect, and we all have our own needs. There is no 'one size fits all' way to offer help to people who may be sleeping rough.

We encourage everyone to consider the human aspect of homelessness, especially rough sleeping, which is most common in big cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow. From speaking with our members, we know that when a person experiences homelessness, some people simply stop seeing them as human. Even just an acknowledgement and a smile go a long way in making someone feel seen and respected.





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**On the streets there's  
no escape. I don't feel  
like part of society.  
When you never hear  
your own name, you  
lose who you are.**

Anita

## 1. Stop and speak

If you see someone sleeping rough in your area, a key thing you can do is to reach out and find a way to connect with a person. It's important to remember that when someone is experiencing loneliness and isolation, something as seemingly small as a conversation can make a real difference.

If you feel safe and comfortable to do so, you can try and make eye contact, and you could ask them if they are open to having a chat.

Everyone experiencing homelessness will have their own story and reasons why they have been forced into this position, with nowhere else to go. Try to be open-minded as you listen and avoid judgment. It can be difficult to access support if you have no fixed address, and some solutions that may seem simple for those of us with a home are much more challenging for those without.

Remember, not everyone is always in the mood for a chat, and that's OK.



## 2. Research the services that are available to help

The person you are helping might not have access to the internet and so they may not have been able to find out about all the support available to them. If they want, you could help with this research simply by using your phone.

A useful resource to remember is our [Get Help page](#). We have signposted websites where you can find your nearest shelter and food kitchens, as well as organisations where you can access housing advice and more specialist legal advice. If located in Edinburgh, you can also get in touch with our [Skylight centre](#).

If you can, you could offer to return with a printout of the page so the person you are helping has access to this information without a device.

## 3. Offer food and drink

One of the easiest ways to help is by offering someone food and drink. Before you assume what someone might need, we'd suggest asking them what they would want. They might have already had a sandwich, so would prefer a snack or they might have allergies to take into account. That's why it's always helpful to speak to them first.

A really easy way to offer food and drink is to buy a voucher for a local supermarket or a local shop of the person's choice. This way, they can buy what they need, when they need it.

## 4. Offer people the items they need

It's always a good idea to ask someone what they need first, as everyone is different. Give whatever you feel comfortable giving, but don't let stereotypes influence your judgement of an individual.

## Here is a list of supplies that could help make a difference to someone who is experiencing homelessness:

- Warm winter coat
- Jumpers
- Shoes
- Thick socks
- Scarf
- Woolly hat
- Sunhat
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Shower gel
- Shampoo
- Hairbrush
- Period products
- Money for mobile phone top ups and travel to appointments



## Some important safety information:

- Please only approach someone if you feel safe to do so.
- If the person is in immediate danger, call 999.
- It is not recommended to try and physically wake up someone who is deeply asleep, as you don't know how long they've been asleep or how they will react to the shock of being woken up.
- It's important to note that if you think the person you are concerned about appears to be under 18, in danger or at risk of harm, call the appropriate emergency service, such as the police or ambulance service on 999 if it's an emergency, or 101 for a non-emergency.

## Supporting people experiencing other types of homelessness

While rough sleeping is one of the most visible forms of homelessness, most people and families affected will experience different types of homelessness that are less visible. For example, they may be sofa surfing or trapped in temporary accommodation.

One of the most useful ways you could support someone in this position is to help connect them with services. In Scotland, you can [search for your local council's contact details](#) or share our [Get Help page](#), which signposts other services that would help them.



# Use your voice

## A new story about homelessness

When using our voices to campaign for change, we should think carefully about **what** we want to say. Because the way we talk about homelessness **really matters**.

To end homelessness for good, we need to change the way we think and talk about it. We need to challenge unhelpful assumptions and stereotypes and replace them with stories that focus on people's dignity, humanity and the real causes of homelessness.

Working together, we can tell a **powerful new story** about homelessness in Scotland. One that builds understanding, empathy and support for change. One that drives political will for action. And one that turns that action into a reality where homelessness no longer exists.

We're up against certain assumptions that make it harder for people to understand what needs to change.

### That includes mental shortcuts like:

- Self-makingness: homelessness happens because individuals make bad choices
- Othering: homelessness doesn't affect people like me
- Homelessness = rough sleeping: the most visible form of homelessness is the only form of homelessness
- Prevention is missing: homelessness can't be prevented
- Fatalism: *the system is rigged, governments are failing and change isn't possible*

Together, these mental shortcuts lead people to blame individuals for their circumstances and to deny the possibility to wider, systemic change to end homelessness.

We can instead replace these ideas with a new narrative about homelessness that challenges those assumptions. This is especially relevant when discussing homelessness with your friends, family and wider networks.

We can make simple changes in our language to avoid 'othering' which is when we view or treat people as different from or alien to ourselves. We can also use language in a way that doesn't define people by their homelessness and instead acknowledges that it's an experience we might have in life that we can move on from.

## **Avoid**

- The homeless / homeless people
- Rough sleepers
- Them
- The vulnerable

## **Embrace**

- People facing / experiencing homelessness
- People rough sleeping
- People
- People more exposed to / at higher risk of

# Ready to use your voice? Take action today!

## Send a message to your MSP

MSPs have the power to end homelessness in Scotland.

**They need to hear from you.** [Send your MSPs an email today](#) to show them the scale of homelessness in your local area and demand change.



## Key questions to ask your candidates

Another way to use your voice is by **asking** politicians to prioritise ending homelessness in Scotland by 2040. Over the coming weeks, you may have local candidates knocking on your door to try to win your vote. You can take your campaigning to the next level by asking them some of the key questions below:

1.

"I'm really concerned about rising homelessness in my area. What are you doing to end it?"

2.

"I believe everyone should have a safe, stable and affordable home. What are you going to do to ensure that happens?"

3.

"How would your party ensure better access to mental health, addiction and other public services support, so that people aren't forced into homelessness?"

4.

"What specific funding commitments will you make over the next parliamentary term to end homelessness in Scotland by 2040?"

5.

"What will you do to reduce the time people spend in temporary accommodation, especially for families and children?"

**Reminder! This election we're asking the government for:**

Long-term funding linked to clear outcomes – this will be key to ending homelessness in Scotland by 2040. Any new government must prioritise investing in affordable housing and in homelessness prevention.

6.

"When do you think homelessness in Scotland can and should be ended by?" *Hint: 2040!*

# Voting system in Scotland explained

At the ballot box in May, you'll vote on what matters most to you. This election, we're voting to end all forms of homelessness in Scotland by 2040. That requires our MSPs to deliver on the solutions to ending homelessness covered in this toolkit.

## What does the Scottish Parliament do?

The Scottish Parliament has power over a wide range of devolved matters. This means that it can make decisions on specific local policies that impact levels of homelessness in Scotland. This includes, health and social services, justice, education and housing.

Some issues remain the responsibility of the UK Parliament alone. These are known as reserved powers and include defence and national security, nationality and citizenship and trade and industry.



## How do the elections work in Scotland?

There are 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament – 73 constituency MSPs and 56 regional MSPs. Elections to elect MSPs to the Scottish Parliament are held every 5 years.

The system used for Scottish Parliament elections is known as the Additional Member System. This means that you have two votes: one for your constituency MSP, who is elected using the first past the post system and another for a party or independent candidate. Each region elects 7 regional MSPs and when casting their regional vote, voters choose between political parties rather than named individuals (except where individuals are standing as independent candidates on the regional list).

Each of these MSPs has the power to make sure that everyone in Scotland has a safe and stable home.

**This election is our chance to tell political parties that they need to commit to end homelessness in Scotland by 2040 – because getting our vote will depend on it.**



# Tools and resources

Below are some tools and resources to help you campaign to end homelessness in Scotland. Included is a window poster for you to display your support for ending homelessness in Scotland and a one-page printable question sheet to help you if asking your candidate's questions.

## Window poster



## Questions to ask your candidates

