



Stage 3 of the Housing (Scotland) Bill

Parliamentary briefing from Crisis

Part 5 of the Housing Bill contains vital provisions that will require public services to work together to prevent people losing their homes.

We urge you to support this important legislation at Stage 3 to protect thousands of people from the misery, trauma and indignity of homelessness.

- Last week's official homelessness statistics showed ongoing increases in the numbers and length of stays of households in temporary accommodation, breaches of legal duties and a shocking 28% increase in rough sleeping in the last year.
- Part 5 of the Housing Bill contains homelessness prevention measures which will **help end homelessness in Scotland**.
- The best way to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The measures in Part 5 of the Housing Bill will make a **significant impact on the ability to prevent homelessness in Scotland**, stemming the flow of people into the system and thereby reducing pressure on homelessness services. Most importantly it will **prevent the trauma, indignity and stigma of homelessness** for individuals.
- Part 5 is the result of many years of work and consultation by independent expert groups and was strongly supported by respondents to the Government / COSLA consultation in 2021. It **intersects with approaches to tackling poverty, reducing pressure on acute NHS services, and assistance for individuals with complex support needs**.
- Crisis is pleased that important changes were made to the Bill at Stage 2. These will provide even stronger legal protections and support for people under threat of homelessness.
- **We strongly urge all MSPs to show support for the prevention principles of the Housing (Scotland) Bill at the Stage 3 and show that there is cross party support for the homeless prevention measures contained within it.**

"It would be a good idea I think if, when things started to go wrong, like when you're starting to get behind... if that could then trigger some sort of help, some sort of support to become involved"

Person with lived experience of homelessness

Context: Expert development and consultation on preventing homelessness

Stable, secure housing is one of the most fundamental of human needs. The Housing Bill contains vital measures to prevent homelessness and stabilise people's housing situations (Part 5). These measures are the result of many years of work and consultation through a number of independent expert working groups, going back to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group in 2017-2018, and the Homeless Prevention Review Group between 2019-2021. This included detailed stakeholder engagement with over 100 organisations, and support from a group of people with lived and frontline experience of homelessness, to develop the proposals for homelessness prevention duties.

Scottish Government and COSLA [consulted on these proposals](#) in 2021, and they received widespread support for the package of proposals, which were described as comprehensive, transformational and welcome.

Currently the legal homelessness framework focuses on acting when a homelessness crisis takes place. There is an imbalance between the statutory homelessness support and the *non-statutory* homelessness *prevention* approaches, which sometimes disincentivises an early intervention approach¹. [Other research](#) demonstrates how statutory homelessness services often "carry the can" for failures to intervene by other services, particularly for people experiencing severe and multiple disadvantages.

Work over the past seven years demonstrates that stronger duties on local authorities and other public bodies to prevent homelessness are needed to clarify the law, incentivise an earlier intervention approach and ensure bodies co-operate so that people don't reach crisis point in their housing.

If implemented effectively, we believe these provisions will reduce the number of households who become homeless, as well as the associated costs of trauma and indignity to individuals affected. The measures will also help tackle poverty, reduce housing-related health problems, demand for acute NHS support, and reoffending rates, and they will allow for more effective holistic support for people with multiple needs and victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

We urge MSPs to support the Bill at this stage to protect people across Scotland from homelessness.

For further information please contact Liam Kirkaldy, Senior Communications and Public Affairs Officer, Crisis liam.kirkaldy@crisis.org.uk

Crisis is the national charity for people facing homelessness. We draw on over 50 years of supporting people experiencing homelessness across Scotland and Great Britain including via our Skylight service operating in Edinburgh and the Lothians, to campaign for the policy and practice changes we need to build a future free from homelessness.

¹ This was highlighted in Scottish Housing Regulator (2014) [Housing Options in Scotland: a thematic review](#), where prevention activity can sometimes be perceived as 'gatekeeping' access to the full rehousing duty.