

# Shelter Scotland Children's Service

Improving the lives of homeless and  
badly housed children



Photo: Anita Steinstad

Tens of thousands of children in Scotland currently live in overcrowded, temporary, run-down or dangerous housing, their families sometimes waiting years for a decent home. This can have a devastating impact on their lives.

**Shelter Scotland Children's Service** is a three-year programme to tackle homelessness and bad housing among Scotland's children.

**Shelter** Keys to the Future

# The need for our service

Homeless and badly housed children tend to miss out on their schooling as well as friendship networks. They are denied their right to a safe and secure home with uninterrupted access to an education and the opportunity to play – something most other children can take for granted.

Many will suffer financial hardship, and some have to cope with family breakdown and instances of domestic abuse or violence where they are living. These children often develop severe anxiety, depression or behavioural problems and may experience bullying, social isolation and feel insecure.

*'I have had help with school transport for children, advice about finances, and emotional support for both myself and the children.'*

Families Project service user

## What we do

**We provide practical and emotional support to homeless children, to minimise the disruption to their education.**

Our **Keys to the Future** support service works closely with homeless children and young people, aged 5–16 years. We tailor our support to suit the needs of individual children so that they can learn and achieve.

We have four **Education Liaison Workers** who:

- help children get the transport they need to attend school, if they have moved out of their local area
- help children with homework and study skills
- organise trained volunteers to give extra support at home and with homework
- advocate on behalf of children to ensure they receive appropriate support from school
- liaise with parents, schools and other services, such as housing and social work, to ensure a holistic approach is taken to meet children's needs.

Photo: Nick David



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*'The Families Project was able to offer support to both parent and child, and were very responsive to times of crisis.'*

Local authority social worker



This innovative service builds on the intensive practical and emotional support provided by **Shelter's Families Projects** to homeless families and those at risk of homelessness in Dumfries and Galloway, Edinburgh, Glasgow and South Lanarkshire. These projects address the complex needs of families, to help them cope with uncertainty and upheaval, and to help them settle in both temporary and permanent housing.

Our **Child Support Workers** (qualified in art, drama or play therapy) work with children and young people, listening to their views and helping them to address their needs and concerns.

### **We campaign for lasting change in policy and practice.**

Every child deserves a good start in life. We are working hard to influence central and local government, to secure appropriate support for all badly housed and homeless children.

Our **Policy and Practice Co-ordinator** is aiming to:

- raise the profile of housing and homelessness problems for children and young people in Scotland
- identify and disseminate relevant good practice guidance, to support statutory and voluntary agencies to meet their responsibilities towards homeless and badly housed children
- lobby for child-centred policies that will protect children from homelessness and reduce its devastating impacts.



# What we want to see

At the end of the three years, we want to have contributed to:

- fewer children and young people becoming homeless
- better support for children experiencing housing problems
- better multi-agency working and information sharing between housing providers and children's services
- a greater understanding among decision-makers of the complex issues related to children experiencing homelessness.



# Working with us

Do you or your organisation want to improve services for children and families experiencing homelessness? Do you want to help campaign for decent housing for all children? Please get in touch if you are interested in working with us.

## Shelter Scotland Children's Service

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Supported by



**Shelter, the housing and homelessness charity**