

Good morning. I'm delighted that Shelter has been able to host this seminar on regulations setting out minimum rights for hostel dwellers. I must stress that this is not an official launch of a consultation on the regulations, though we have been promised this by the end of the year. However, today gives us the opportunity to hear, for the first time, the Scottish Executive's views on what the regulations could look like. So many thanks to Anna Donald for agreeing to speak; I appreciate that she has pushed the work forward in order to be able to present an outline of the regulations to you today.

There's no denying that the regulations have been a long time in the making. Earlier in the year we held a seminar for practitioners that set out our views on what the regulations should include, and I feel today is about building on that; progressing the debate about what should be included in a minimum package of rights for hostel dwellers.

I want to stress two key words here; MINIMUM RIGHTS.

Firstly, the regulations must genuinely be about strengthening the rights of the thousands of people who live in hostels in Scotland. Many of these people have lived in the same hostel for years, even decades, and yet, despite thinking of a hostel room as their home, they don't have anything like the security of tenure many of us take for granted. A key part of those rights is the right to quiet enjoyment of their property. But equally those rights must be balanced with ensuring the safety of other occupants and staff in hostels; I hope that this ethos will be central to the regulations.

However, it is critical that we remember that in essence the regulations are a minimum standard. They set out the basic terms of occupancy

between hostel dwellers and providers. Many of you here today will already provide some elements of the package of rights Anna will introduce to you. But many other hostels don't. The regulations should therefore be viewed as setting a standard by which we should work to improve upon. Rather than an approach that says; this is as much as we need to provide and nothing more.

I hope that these principles of a minimum package of rights for hostel dwellers will be the central focus of the consultation in the New Year. IN the meantime, I hope today will provide you with the opportunity not just to hear about the shape of the regulations to come, but also to discuss the key issues, like written agreements, notice periods and conduct of both occupiers and providers. I'm very pleased that we're finally here; paving the way for a new standard of service provision for hostel dwellers based on a new set of rights that takes into account the practicalities, and the risks, of providing a service to the most vulnerable people.