

Shelter Scotland briefing

Early end to unsuitable temporary accommodation for homeless people

Shelter Scotland has today welcomed Scottish Government plans to ensure that homeless people and rough sleepers do not return to the streets or can be placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation at any point during or after the coronavirus crisis. The revised order was due to come into force next year, limiting the time all homeless people could be placed in unsuitable accommodation – e.g. hostels and B&Bs, to seven days. It already applies for children and pregnant women.

Scottish Ministers have published a draft statutory instrument which will accelerate plans that were due to come in next year to make sure no-one has to live in unsuitable temporary accommodation. While we have welcomed this move we are calling for the change to be matched with resources and to provide real choice and control for homeless people.

The revised law provides for the continued use of hotels and self-catering properties during the pandemic period, but only if it is possible for people to self-isolate to stay safe.

Post pandemic the proposal will limit the use of properties with shared bathrooms and kitchens except in exceptional circumstances. **We are calling for those exemptions to only be available where it can be proven to be in the interest of the individual to be placed in shared accommodation.**

The coronavirus emergency has highlighted the dangers of unsuitable temporary accommodation to the lives and health of people trapped in Scotland's homelessness system. Scottish Ministers, some local authorities and the third sector have acted quickly to protect people during the pandemic. Today's measures must set the template for a future that puts control and choice in the hands of the individual. **It will also require service providers to be properly funded to provide high quality, safe services that can meet the aim of ending the cycle of homelessness.**

Shelter Scotland have been campaigning for many years for an end to the practice of forcing homeless people to share bathrooms, kitchens or live in cramped unsuitable conditions. With experts predicting that the Covid-19 may surge again later in the year, homeless people need protection now.

Shared accommodation should only be allowed where it is chosen by the individual as part of a support and recovery programme. Service providers should be required to demonstrate the consent of the individual and regulators should regularly inspect records to protect against any slip back to the past.

This is an opportunity to move forward quickly and protect people who have become homeless and ensure that they have access to high quality temporary accommodation and support services, but the resources must be there to make this intention a reality.