

# homelessness

**FAR FROM  
FIXED**

## OPEN LETTER

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017

**Dear Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities,**  
(CC: Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government and Housing)

The human tragedy of homelessness was recently brought into sharp focus by the sad and widely reported death of a young man who had been sleeping rough on the streets of Glasgow in recent days. This was not the first such story and it will not be the last. It is a badge of shame that homelessness still exists in our society.

We the undersigned are profoundly concerned by the current lack of political leadership and urgency in relation to tackling homelessness in Scotland today. We are calling for a new National Homelessness Strategy to tackle this complex problem head on.

Without decisive action, we are endangering the lives of a growing number of people forced to sleep rough on the streets of our towns and cities and condemning many more individuals and families to a life in limbo, by forcing them to stay for increasing lengths of time in so called temporary accommodation.

There is now a real danger of squandering the legacy of Scotland's world-leading 2012 commitment on homelessness - which gave everyone the right to a settled home. Indeed, Scotland is already at risk of slipping behind the progress and innovative action being taken in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to tackle homelessness.

We believe that a new national focus on homelessness is a necessity for achieving the Scottish Government's ambitions of a fairer Scotland. Key public policy priorities such as closing the education attainment gap, improving health outcomes, eradicating child poverty and reducing re-offending are being undermined by the failure to grasp the significance of preventing and tackling homelessness.

Our current challenges in this area are real and urgent. Now is the time for political leadership and action. A new National Homelessness Strategy, working across local and national government and other partners to tackle the root causes of homelessness, would allow the claim – that Scotland leads the world on homelessness – to be backed by evidence of real progress and real change.

We look forward to your response.

Yours

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Graeme Brown, Director of Shelter Scotland



The Church of Scotland

Russell Barr, Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland

Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive, Cyrenians



Tom Pickering, Interim Chief Executive, Streetwork



Peter Kelly, Director, The Poverty Alliance



Vonnie Sandlan, NUS Scotland President



Mary Taylor, Chief Executive, SFHA



Robina Qureshi, Director Positive Action in Housing



Peter Dunlop, Chief Executive Officer, Who Cares? Scotland



Lorraine McGrath, Chief Executive, Simon Community



Paul Brown, Chief Executive, Legal Services Agency



Martin Sime, Chief Executive, SCVO