1. Introduction to this Paper

1.1 In anticipation of continuing economic contraction and the compounding impact on homelessness, GHN developed a programme of work that prioritised core issues for homelessness in Glasgow that are (i) blocking progress (where we need collaborative solutions); and/or (ii) lacking agreement (where we need to build consensus). The issues are evidence based and compiled through a contemporary research review, current policy analysis, frontline & service user perspective and through a series of community based workshops.

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1.3 Building from this range of evidence and information, GHN is working in partnership with a group of 27 voluntary organisations, national and local, who have endorsed a Homelessness 2012\textsuperscript{1} Mandate:

- Scottish Council for Single Homeless
- Scottish Churches Housing Action
- Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
- Scottish Refugee Council
- Shelter Scotland
- SAY Women
- Southside Housing Association
- Glasgow Simon Community
- Crossreach
- Penumbra
- Glasgow City Mission
- Marie Trust
- Gowrie Care
- Impact Arts
- Unity Enterprise
- Harmony Employment
- Lodging House Mission
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector
- Glasgow Women's Aid
- Govan Law Centre
- Glasgow Rent Deposit and Support Scheme
- Scottish Veterans Housing Association
- Glasgow's Third Sector Executive Committee
- Social Care Ideas Factory
- Provanhall Housing Association
- Turning Point Scotland
- Glasgow & West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations

1.4 The Mandate sets out a four-point set of conditions that we believe can serve to protect the investment made in homelessness in Glasgow, and support the next phase to be progressive and evidence informed. These issues cover the broad themes of reflecting; consenting; predicting and participating.

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\textsuperscript{1} Scottish Government target giving all unintentionally homeless households the right to settled accommodation
1.5 The steering group overseeing the work to meet the terms of the Homelessness Mandate are pleased to offer this submission to the parliamentary inquiry.

2. General Comments

2.1 The Homelessness Mandate Steering Group in Glasgow is fully supportive of the national 2012 homelessness target and believes it will achieve positive outcomes for large numbers of people affected by homelessness. The progress made in addressing homelessness in Glasgow since the implementation of the 2001 and 2003 Acts has been significant and the level of service provision in the city has drastically improved.

2.3 However, much work remains to be done and we have identified a number of key issues that require to be addressed as we work towards, and beyond, the 2012 target in Glasgow.

3. Key Issues

Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options

3.1 The meeting of the 2012 target was always going to be predicated on the prioritisation of a robust approach to homelessness prevention. It is acknowledged that the closure of the large scale male hostels in Glasgow has had a positive impact on people’s lives and has led to a significant reduction in repeat homelessness, but questions remain about the numbers of people newly presenting to the City Council for assistance.

3.2 The overall homelessness presentation rate in the city has remained relatively static in the 6 years since 2004-05, with the local authority’s housing strategy in 2009 recognising that the number of people newly presenting as homeless each year was not decreasing. This has a significant impact on the housing stock in the city, both temporary and permanent, and continues to make clear the importance of homelessness prevention.

3.3 The development of Housing Options within the city is recognised by homelessness providers and the principles of the approach are endorsed. However, this is a longer term aspiration for the city and the strategic approach to how we prevent homelessness now remains unclear. While the homelessness presentation rate is not the only indicator of the success of prevention activity, it is not unreasonable to expect to see a reduction over a period of 5-6 years.

3.4 From the perspective of homelessness service providers, the approach to homelessness prevention remains patchy in the city with some areas of excellent practice and others where it is difficult to identify what practice exists and what services are available to people at risk of losing their homes. There is no consistent, city wide approach to preventing homelessness.

Access to Temporary Accommodation and Rough Sleeping

3.5 It is clear from the Official Reports of the evidence sessions to date, that committee members and inquiry participants alike recognise the impact on the need for the provision of temporary accommodation arising from the 2012 target. While the target is specifically about increasing the number of households entitled to settled accommodation, in reality this can, and does, place a greater strain on the availability of temporary accommodation while increased numbers of households await their offer of housing.

3.6 Without reparation of the accommodation pressures in Glasgow, it is perfectly possible that the removal of priority need distinction at the end of 2012 could create in its place an informal or arbitrary ‘priority need’ of people in temporary accommodation awaiting their offer of settled accommodation. This is clearly not what the taskforce or the legislation intended.
3.7 From a Glasgow perspective, the issue of people affected by homelessness not being able to access the temporary accommodation to which they are legally entitled has been consistently observed, evidenced and raised by service providers over a number of years, for example:

- In 2007 the issue was raised with the Homelessness Planning and Implementation Group through the quarterly Crisis Response Reports;
- In 2008 the issue was highlighted to the Scottish Housing Regulator as they prepared to inspect Glasgow City Council;
- In 2009 the issue was evidenced by the Scottish Housing Regulator in their Inspection Report;
- In 2010-2011 the issue continued to be evidenced through the statistical reporting from the city’s Winter Initiative and service user surveys.

3.8 The reasons for people being turned away without temporary accommodation are complex, but when considering other statistical information it can be seen that access to temporary accommodation for many people has been restricted at a time when increasing numbers of households have been assessed as being in priority need. And while increased permanent lets have been made to homeless households by Registered Social Landlords in the city, blockages in the temporary accommodation system have led to vulnerable people being turned away without accommodation and potentially sleeping rough or returning to unsafe accommodation.

3.9 It is worth noting at this point that, alongside the 2012 target of the abolition of priority need there was the 2003 target of no-one in Scotland needing to sleep rough. Evidence from that period highlights that Glasgow did not meet this target and, in the absence of the robust monitoring of rough sleeping recommended by the independent evaluation of the RSI in Glasgow, and the continued blockages in temporary accommodation, we are in a position where we are unable to definitively say that nobody in the city of Glasgow needs to sleep rough.

A Realistic role for the Private Rented Sector

3.10 There has been much debate in the city about making better use of the Private Rented Sector to prevent and alleviate homelessness, and it is clear from a review of Scottish Government policy and the discussions to date as part of the evidence sessions for this inquiry that this remains a priority particularly in the advent of housing options.

3.11 What is still required, however, is a genuine discussion about defining a realistic role for the Private Rented Sector, taking full account of how we ensure that people are accessing good quality housing, that the security of tenure attached affords the household genuine assurance and peace of mind and that the housing is genuinely appropriate to meet the needs of the household.

3.12 It is also important to consider the capacity of the sector in the city and just what role they can be expected to play. Representatives of private landlords in the city have recently described the market in the city as ‘buoyant’ as a result of more people who would otherwise have considered home ownership making use of the sector until mortgages become more readily available. Under such circumstances, we have to fully consider what benefit there is to the private rented sector in engaging more fully with the development of Housing Options.

3.13 It is not clear that significant progress has been made in forging strong and productive partnerships with the sector to ensure that it becomes a viable option for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It is important that the sector does not become the default option for people and is only offered when it is the most suitable option to meet their needs.

Assessing and Addressing Support Needs
3.14 The Homelessness Task Force clearly recognised the importance of identifying and responding to wider support needs experienced by vulnerable people, both in terms of the prevention of homelessness and improved tenancy sustainment rates. Glasgow responded both positively and innovatively to this in the initial period following the publication of the final report and recommendations by developing the Homelessness Integrated Assessment (HIA) to be used jointly by the local authority, the Health Board and third sector organisations.

3.16 The aim of the HIA was to provide a tool to assess the needs of individuals who present as homeless (within Glasgow City) in order to divert them away from homelessness or direct them through appropriate homeless services into mainstream housing and care.

3.17 Despite the laying of these positive foundations, progress has stalled in recent years and providers of both temporary accommodation and permanent housing consistently identify the problem of referrals being made to them in the absence of a robust assessment of need.

3.18 This has created ongoing concerns for people affected by homelessness as the absence of the needs assessment makes it more difficult to access the support that they may require to sustain their tenancies.

Welfare Reform Agenda

3.19 There is no doubt that the UK Government's welfare reform proposals will impact heavily on Glasgow's ability to meet the 2012 homelessness target. Changes in relation to Housing Benefit funding, restrictions and reforms to the Local Housing Allowance including the Shared Accommodation Rate, containment of HB/LHA within the Universal Credit, will interplay to create further poverty, inequality, vulnerability and homelessness in Glasgow.

4. Examples of Third Sector Innovation

Housing First

4.1 Developed for Glasgow by Turning Point Scotland, in partnership with registered social landlords, this is Scotland's first pilot of the Housing First approach; one which is endorsed by housing and homelessness experts across Europe and in the States. The approach provides mainstream tenancies and support to individuals with active substance misuse. The Housing First approach is different to the traditional staircase model whereby the housing comes at the end of a rehabilitation process. Housing First aims to provide holistic recovery within a permanent tenancy and support is made available in a flexible and proactive way. Tenure does not depend upon engagement with support.

Total Home

4.2 This is a self-starting pilot project which seeks to address the problem of vulnerable people moving into tenancies with no furniture or other basic items for their house. The purpose of the pilot was to bring together and co-ordinate the range of services offering support and practical assistance in this area to offer a joined up service that ensured that people were able to furnish and decorate their new home, with the ultimate aim of improving tenancy sustainment and reducing repeat homelessness. It is being led in Glasgow by Impact Arts, and supported by the City Council’s Development & Regeneration Services, Glasgow Furniture Initiative and GHN.

Community Directions

4.3 Community Directions is a supported accommodation service provided in Glasgow by the Scottish Association for Mental Health. It operates twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and provides supported accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and are likely to continue to misuse alcohol; who are often excluded from other services. The service works on the principle that even if
someone is not willing to follow an abstinence programme, that doesn’t mean that they don’t need, or won’t benefit from, lifestyle support. Uniquely, the service is provided to people in their own permanent social tenancies.

South West Prevention of Homelessness Partnership

4.4 The Prevention of Homelessness Partnership, led and coordinated by Govan Law Centre, brings together a range of agencies including Money Matters Money Advice Centre, the local Community Heath Partnership. The partnership aims to prevent people becoming homeless through eviction or repossession by supporting tenants or owner-occupiers to access quality legal representation and money advice.