

Scottish Government submission of 19 September 2023

PE1946/G: To call on the Scottish Government to pay all charges for homeless temporary accommodation

Thank you for your letter of 4 May following the Committee's consideration of the petition PE1946 at its meeting on 3 May 2023, which requests the Scottish Government's planned work in response to the Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group's report, in particular, recommendations 14 and 15.

The Scottish Government published its [response](#) to the Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group's report on 19 July 2023. It committed the Scottish Government to prioritising action in response to the recommendations that will have the greatest impact in reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2026. The key actions for immediate progression are:

- invest at least £60 million through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme in 2023-24 to support a national acquisition plan
- maintain momentum in delivering our Affordable Housing Supply Programme
- work with social landlords to deliver a new programme of stock management
- implement targeted partnership plans with the local authorities facing greatest pressure

Although our immediate focus will be on working with partners to deliver on the actions above, our response did address all 15 recommendations made by the Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group. As some of the recommendations were not considered to have an immediate impact on reducing the numbers in temporary accommodation, our response set out how we will address these over the longer-term. These include recommendations 14 and 15 on temporary accommodation financing.

Recommendation 14: COSLA should undertake a benchmarking process on TA and there should be greater transparency on charges of TA by individual local authorities.

As this recommendation was directed at COSLA, the Scottish Government's response did not directly address this. However, as per the Verity House Agreement, Scottish Government officials will engage with COSLA as necessary in relation to progressing this recommendation.

Recommendation 15: The Scottish Government should review the guidance to local authorities on setting charges for TA by clearly defining the terms “reasonable charge” and “affordable”.

Established in May 2022, the Housing Affordability Working Group, made up of stakeholders and experts from across the housing sector, has been tasked with developing a shared understanding of housing affordability for Scotland. The group will critically review the main working definitions and the different uses of affordability in policy and practice, which will inform recommendations to Scottish Ministers. This could potentially help to clarify guidance on 'reasonable charges' and 'affordable'. Please note that the group's work will not result in a legal definition of housing affordability but rather a working definition that has attracted consensus support.

I hope this response is helpful to the Committee.

Homelessness Unit