

PE2147/A: Create more women-only homeless accommodation that protects and meets the specific needs of women

Scottish Government written submission, 8 April 2025

The petition calls on: *the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform homeless services in Scotland and ensure services protect women from sexual assault and exploitation by increasing funding and supporting the creation of more women-only homeless accommodation.*

We recognise women's experiences of homelessness are very different to the experiences of men. Therefore, the response to their housing needs should also be different. It is vital that the use of emergency accommodation for women experiencing homelessness does not exacerbate any of the issues that may have led to them presenting as homelessness, for example, domestic abuse, mental health issues, substance use or a disability/impairment.

As you may be aware, the legal duty for homelessness services sits with local authorities, this includes the commissioning of emergency and temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation is an important safety net, and care must be taken when providing support services to ensure the safety of everyone accommodated.

In April 2023, [the Temporary Accommodation Standards Framework](#) was published, which local authorities and registered social landlords are expected to work towards meeting before the framework becomes legally enforceable, which will require consultation.

The aim of the standards framework is to help to ensure that any time spent in temporary accommodation causes minimal harm by making sure that temporary accommodation is of good quality, safe, warm, affordable and there is a consistency of standards across all Scottish local authority areas.

The framework covers four main areas of standard levels that should be achieved by all social landlords: physical, location, service, and management. Service standards relevant to this petition are:

- support to access different types of accommodation allocated on the basis of gender, especially where households are experiencing domestic abuse and the accommodation is mixed gender and/or is only staffed by a single gender
- ensure staff in homeless and support services receive domestic abuse training
- provide single-gender accommodation for households experiencing domestic abuse

[Scottish Women's Aid and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities \(COSLA\), developed guidance to support good practice in the commissioning of services for women and children affected by domestic abuse.](#) The guidance includes good

practice in commissioning in the context of housing responses which talks about gendered approaches and single sex spaces.

We expect all relevant organisations to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is the body responsible for enforcing the 2010 Act. It has produced specific guidance to support organisations in their compliance, such as Statutory Codes of Practice and guides, including for service providers who are looking to establish and operate a separate or single-sex service. More information on this guidance can be found using the following link: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/news/guidance-published-providers-single-sex-services>

The underlying issue is Violence Against Women and Girls. Violence against women is totally abhorrent and unacceptable and has no place in our vision for Scotland. That is why we are implementing our Equally Safe strategy. It sets out a vision to prevent violence from occurring in the first place, to build the capability and capacity of support services, and to strengthen the justice response to victims and perpetrators. The work is underpinned by the Delivering Equally Safe fund which supports front line service provision as well as prevention activity.

We have recently announced **a £2.4m uplift** to the Delivering Equally Safe Fund for 2025/26, to allow all fund recipients to continue the vital work they undertake to prevent violence and support survivors. This increase will bring the total Scottish Government investment in Delivering Equally Safe up to **£21.6m for the year ahead**.

Better Homes Division