

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 7 May 2025
8th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

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

Introduction

Petitioner Laura Jones on behalf of the Scottish Tenants Organisation

Petition summary Calling 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.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2147>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 24 February 2025.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition can collect signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 693 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received a submission from the Scottish Government, which is set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.
7. Members will be aware that Part 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Bill relates to homelessness prevention, and includes a provision to require social landlords to have a policy setting out how they will support tenants who are at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse. The Social Justice and Social Security is lead committee considering amendments to this section of the Bill.
8. While not directly related to the ask of this petition, Members may also wish to note that [the Social Justice and Social Security Committee are looking into the financial implications that women face when leaving an abusive relationship](#).

Action

9. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerks to the Committee
May 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

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

Petitioner

Laura Jones on behalf of the Scottish Tenants Organisation

Date Lodged

24 February 2025

Petition summary

Calling 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.

Background information

Increasing numbers of women are placed in unsuitable hotel/bed and breakfast accommodation, where there is a ratio of 14 men to 1 woman.

There is a clear lack of safeguarding in emergency temporary accommodation in general, but very little attention has been paid to the specific challenges faced by women who are stuck in the homeless system. [Women are particularly at risk in mixed-sex emergency accommodation, and the hotels are notorious, with increased reports of rapes and sexual assaults.](#)

We need secure women-only halfway accommodation that meets the specific needs of women with the objective of rapidly placing them in permanent social housing.

As part of the Glasgow Times “End the Homeless Hotel Shame” campaign, and with official figures suggesting that the number of families living in homeless hotels and B&Bs quadrupled in 2024, we support calls for more emphasis to be placed on the affordable housing supply budget.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on petition PE2147



Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petitioner is concerned that women accessing temporary accommodation when they are homeless are at an increased risk of sexual assault and exploitation. The petition calls for more women-only homeless accommodation to be provided in Scotland to ensure the safety of women who find themselves in need of housing support.

Background information

Homelessness legislation (largely contained in the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#) as amended) provides the legislative framework for homelessness.

Local authorities have a duty to assess anyone applying as homeless in their area. They must provide temporary accommodation to homeless households in certain circumstances.

The [Scottish Government has a policy to reduce the use of temporary accommodation](#) and is supporting local authorities to implement a rapid rehousing approach for homelessness people meaning that reliance on temporary accommodation is reduced.

[Scottish Government homelessness statistics](#) show that there is a continued increase in homelessness applications in Scotland. There were 20,823 homelessness applications recorded in the period April to September 2024, compared to 20,528 in the same period in 2023. This was a 1% increase. The average time spent in temporary accommodation increased from 222 days in 2023 to 234 days in 2024.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the statistics also show that, in the period April to September 2024, 40% of temporary homelessness accommodation was in local authority housing. Only 8% was in hostels. The 'Other' category includes 'newer' types of temporary accommodation such as rapid access accommodation, community housing and shared tenancies, which can be deemed suitable.

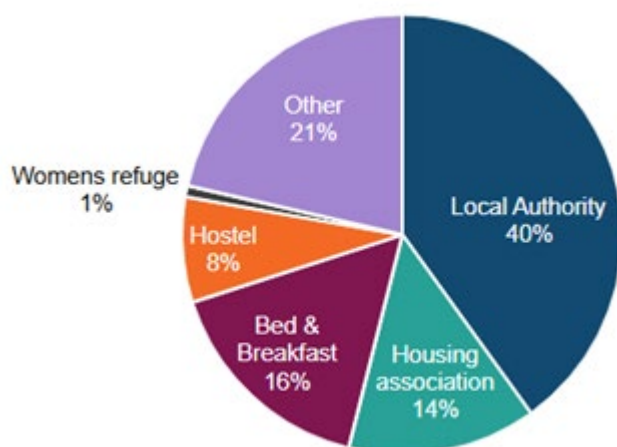


Figure 1 Scottish Government [Homelessness in Scotland: update to 30 September 2024](#)

Legislation does not make any provision for any maximum length of time that households should spend in temporary accommodation, although, in line with the rapid rehousing approach, the expectation is that households should spend as little time there as possible.

For some local authorities, there may be difficulties in moving households living in temporary accommodation to permanent accommodation due to the availability of suitable accommodation.

Local authorities have discretion to organise their own accommodation and how they do this varies. Legislation ([the Homeless Persons \(Unsuitable Accommodation\) \(Scotland\) Order 2014](#)) provides that no one should be placed in 'unsuitable accommodation'. [Effectively this should prevent the use of bed and breakfast type accommodation](#), except in an emergency situation. If households are placed in such accommodation this should not be for more than seven days.

In addition, the Scottish Government has a list of advisory standards that should be considered for temporary accommodation. The standards cover four main areas that should be considered by local authorities: physical, location, service and management. More detail of what is contained under each area is available at [Annex A in the Code of Guidance on Homelessness](#).

Joint report: Gender and the Housing Emergency

In October 2024, [Shelter Scotland and Engender jointly published Gender and the Housing Emergency](#), a report which aimed to "shine a light on the disproportionate impact of the housing emergency on women, and the additional barriers they face in accessing safe, secure, affordable, housing."

One of the key recommendations of the report was that action to address the housing emergency should include:

“Adopting a gendered approach to the allocation and supply of temporary accommodation (TA), taking particular account of women’s needs with regards to gender-based violence and childcare responsibilities.”

The report states that:

“There is very little appropriate TA available for women in Scotland... Women who have children and/or have experienced domestic abuse are particularly unwilling to be accommodated in hostels, hotels and B&Bs due to concerns about their safety in these types of accommodation. Such concerns around safety in these types of TA are not unfounded - through our services Shelter Scotland has heard very worrying allegations concerning sexual assault in hostels.”

It concludes that:

“The Scottish Government must recognise the urgent need for gendered TA in Scotland, in particular for women with children, and work with local authorities to ensure that availability of this type of TA is increased.”

Parliamentary question

The petition links to [Parliamentary Question S6O-03608 on the topic of hostel safety](#) which was asked by Ash Regan MSP on 20 June 2024. She stated that:

“We urgently need to provide safe and secure same-sex emergency housing to stop more women dying. That would be a simple first step in ensuring that these vulnerable women in crisis are not put at further risk of rape, sexual assault and trauma.”

The PQ was answered by the Minister for Equalities, Kaukab Stewart MSP, who said that:

“The Scottish Government is committed to dignity and respect for all. The Equality Act 2010 provides protection for women. The Scottish Government strongly supports the separate and single-sex exceptions that are in the 2010 act, which allow for women to have single-sex spaces...

The Scottish Government’s delivering equally safe fund is providing more than £7 million this year to local women’s aid groups for support for services for women and children.

We have introduced provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Bill that, if passed, will put a duty on social landlords to develop and implement a domestic abuse policy that outlines how they will support their tenants who are at risk of homelessness, including protecting the right of women to stay safely in their own homes. We will continue to work closely with the housing and violence against women and girls sectors to develop statutory guidance to accompany that duty.”

Laura Haley
Researcher
31/03/25

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C: Written submission

Scottish Government written submission, 8 April 2025

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

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