



Consultation on Housing Support for Homeless Households

April 2012

Introduction

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy.

This is achieved in a number of different ways - through roadshow, round table, conference and celebratory events. Following each event a report is compiled and issued to women who attend and relevant policy and decision makers.

The SWC uses the views of women to respond to Scottish and UK Government consultation papers.

SWC Evidence Source

The Scottish Women's Convention engages with women using numerous communication channels including Roadshow events throughout Scotland, Thematic Conferences and regional contact groups. During these events concerns have been raised regarding a number of issues relevant to housing. This submission paper provides the views of women throughout Scotland and reflects their opinions and experiences in a number of key areas relevant to this consultation document.

Purpose of the Consultation

In January 2012 the Scottish Government released their Consultation on Housing Support for Homeless Households. The Scottish Government have committed to challenging the target that by the end of 2012, all unintentionally homeless households will be entitled to settled accommodation.

The new duty established under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 will ensure that local authorities carry out an assessment of support needs for those who are currently assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need and therefore entitled to settled accommodation.

Under this duty Scottish Ministers can make regulations regarding the content and scope of the assessment of housing support needs and to the content and scope of housing support provision.

Regulations must meet the needs of both service providers and service users and will ultimately assist in achieving sustainable outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The consultation seeks views and proposals on making regulations on the requirement for local authorities to carry out an assessment for housing support for certain homeless applicants, or those who are threatened with homelessness, and to provide any necessary housing report.

9. Please provide any comments you have on the (a) equalities impact of your proposals and (b) the draft Equalities Impact Assessment.

The SWC welcomes the need to make regulations on the assessment and provision of housing support.

The current economic climate, in which women are being made redundant on a daily basis, coupled with changes to housing and council tax benefits and working and child tax credits, is having a disproportionate impact on women. There is genuine concern that as a result of cuts and Welfare Reform, more women will fall into financial difficulty, be unable to meet rent and mortgage payments and ultimately be made homeless.

“There is so much anxiety in families concerned about the support they require, at a practical and financial level, just evaporating at the stroke of a pen.”

There are a number of issues around housing for women in Scotland. A severe lack of local authority housing, poor conditions and high cost of private lets make obtaining and remaining in a house very difficult. There is a strong possibility that as a result of financial conditions, women's mental and physical health will be affected. Should women and their families be made unintentionally homeless, provision which ensures they are housed and any additional support needs are assessed are welcomed.

Women exiting abusive relationships will also benefit from the proposed legislation. There are many women who at present do not leave the family home for fear of having nowhere to go and no settled accommodation for their children. Knowing that they will be not only guaranteed accommodation but also provided with prescribed housing support services could encourage more women to leave abusive situations.

It is vital that any support provision provided is fit for purpose. It is also important that any support – such as housing management skills, mental health issues, drug/alcohol dependency or medical conditions - is provided for an appropriate length of time that will allow the household to maintain a tenancy.