

The Scottish Women's Convention's
response to the Scottish
Government's consultation on:

Temporary Accommodation



June 2022

Premise

Temporary accommodation should be of good quality, safe, warm, affordable and there should be a consistency of standards across all local authority areas. The Scottish Government's consultation in August 2019 proposed changes to three main areas:

- The Unsuitable Accommodation Order
- Advisory standards for temporary accommodation
- The development of a temporary accommodation standards framework

The Unsuitable Accommodation Order was extended to all homeless households from May 2020; and new advisory standards for temporary accommodation were created and published in November 2019 in the interim Homelessness Code of Guidance. In October 2021, a Working Group (WG) was established to help produce a new framework.

In advance of the draft temporary accommodation standards being agreed later this year, the WG are seeking stakeholder input on the content of the attached standards.

They have asked for comments on the temporary accommodation standards to ensure that the quality of temporary accommodation is of good standard and meets the needs of the whole household.



The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)

The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. This submission presents the views of a range of women, reflecting their opinions, ideas and lived experience. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

Our Response

The SWC welcomes the introduction of the Temporary Accommodation Standards Framework. Women are more likely to be homeless as a result of domestic violence, and they make up the majority of homeless single-parent families. Therefore safe, secure, and good quality temporary accommodation is essential to support women through difficult times. The standards cover key areas which are important to women in Scotland:

Physical Standards

- Whilst the accommodation is only temporary, it can be for a significant period of time, making high physical standards vital.
- The SWC especially welcome the addition of digital inclusion:
 - It enables access to welfare rights services and permanent housing options.
 - It plays a crucial role in family life for college or school work.
 - It helps to prevent social isolation and can facilitate contact with key support networks.

Location Standards

- Access to key essential services is vital, but access to the various support networks that women rely on is equally necessary (e.g., community groups, schools and childcare).
- Whilst the SWC welcomes the requirement to assess the safety of the household and protect those who are victims of domestic violence, a risk remains when providing temporary accommodation to perpetrators. Housing providers need the ability to risk assess the impact of providing temporary accommodation to perpetrators, especially if no formal legal restrictions are in place.

Service Standards

- The SWC welcomes a key focus on effective housing support for women in temporary accommodation, particularly in relation to domestic abuse training and access to single sex accommodation.
- The SWC also welcomes the access to wider support services, especially for women with complex needs.

Management Standards

- Homelessness can be a challenging and stressful time for women; therefore, an understanding of their rights is essential.
- However, it is vital that these standards are clear and understandable, and that women have access to advocacy support where they feel their rights have not been respected.

Conclusion

Having listened to women, our three key recommendations on this topic are:

- Housing providers need the ability to risk assess the impact of providing temporary accommodation to both perpetrators and survivors of domestic abuse.
- Women need more accessible support and advocacy to ensure their rights are respected throughout their time in temporary accommodation.
- The commitment to digital inclusion in temporary accommodation needs to be fulfilled in order to tackle social isolation for vulnerable women.

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on Temporary Accommodation. As an organisation, we will continue to work with women from across Scotland to gather voices and experiences relating to this topic and its effects on women's equality.

For further information or to share your views, please contact:

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