



Homeless Action Scotland

Section 3:
Consultation on housing costs
for short-term
supported
accommodation

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2018 Consultation: Funding for Supported Housing

Consultation on housing costs for short-term supported accommodation from April 2020










Homeless Action Scotland

Homeless Action Scotland is the national membership body for organisations and individuals tackling homelessness in Scotland. We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the future funding of Supported Housing / Accommodation. We have restricted our comments, considering we are responding in relation to Scotland, and how Scotland will interact with the other areas of the UK on this subject matter. As a result, our response is partly taken from the questions provided, but in the main covering the topic areas being discussed in Scotland in relation to the changes.

In our research and gathering of views, we have also had discussions with our equivalent, Homeless Link. We should also highlight that we sat on the UK Short-Term Accommodation Task and Finish Group, where Scotland was represented by ourselves, SFHA and Scottish Women's Aid.


Homeless Action Scotland has a long-standing interest in the welfare system and Homelessness and in recent years have worked closely with the DWP to ensure homelessness and the needs of people who are homeless is taken into consideration when deciding on changes, and rolling these out. In the case of Supported Housing and its interaction with moving to Universal Credit we see merit in removing the funds from welfare, but hope this can take place with our following recommendations, and taking account of our areas of concern.

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Executive Summary


Definition

 We suggest the definition changes to:


24/7 accommodation with support:


- The accommodation is accessed following a point of crisis, emergency or as part of a transition to living independently.
- The accommodation is not long-term or permanent.
- Support should be sourced and / or provided by the accommodation provider to best meet the person's needs.


 The above would allow for the accommodation types we have currently have in place across the UK to be included, but would also allow for positive changes in the future, not a stagnation of service types and provisions.

 We would *not* add a list of bullet points suggesting the accommodation types it includes, as by default, this can exclude those not listed and provide a fictional hierarchy with what provisions are most important.


Sizing of the Pot


 The size of the fund cannot be determined by simply replicating the exact figure of costs in 2018 or 2019. This assumes all costs will remain the same and doesn't take any inflation into account. We recommend a percentage is added to reflect the costs for 2020/21.






 Replicating the current pot works on the assumption that both the models and costings we are currently working to are correct and providing the service at levels that suit the needs, which is not the case (this is in reference to all of the UK, not just Scotland).

 Emergency and Crisis accommodation should be calculated on a daily basis, rather than weekly or monthly; the additional costs of providing this type of accommodation (within other accommodation or as its own entity) should also be taken into account.








Administering and Maintaining the Fund

 The vast majority of our Members wish the grant to be held and administered by the Local Authorities, with guidance and monitoring provided by the Scottish Government.

 The clear majority of our Members would like this to be a fund that is attached to the accommodation rather than the person.

-  We recommend the funding is ring-fenced, with the option for it to be topped up from other sources if required / possible.
-  We recommend The Scottish Government implements robust monitoring and recording procedures for the fund.
-  In the event of the funding being connected to the accommodation and payments bypassing the tenant, people living in Supported Accommodation should be made aware of the fact that money is paid to cover the cost of their stay, ensuring they are empowered about and by their financial position.
-  In relation to the point above, we would like to see the revival and update of 'The Consultation on Regulations under Section 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to provide tenants with a Tenancy /Occupancy Agreement improved rights.'¹
-  We also recommend that the Scottish 'Homelessness Code of Guidance' 2005² is updated to include guidance about the administering, monitoring and recording of the grant in question, alongside other changes.

Other Priorities & Considerations

-  The transition from Supported Housing to and from other types of accommodation should be given as much consideration as the new procedures, ensuring a positive move does not become negative through poor systems.
-  Despite a few reports suggesting the contrary, the reality is that the current system makes living in Supported Accommodation and retaining or taking up employment financially unviable. This should be looked at in some detail to remove this barrier.
-  These changes should take into account the SHORE (Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone) standards³, looking to improve the access to housing on release from prison; eradicating the current failings where people are homeless at the point of liberation.
-  The changes should be person centred, and involve and include people who have been affected by the current system both positively and negatively in any pilots.
-  We note that this fund is not for the support element, but to enable this to result in a system that is fit for purpose, the funding, systems and access to support should be looked at concurrently.
-  All sectors must be a part of the changes and have a voice in the changes; there is a concern it may become Local Authority weighted.
-  The Scottish Government should use a number of channels to keep all relevant sectors up to date with the changes as they are known

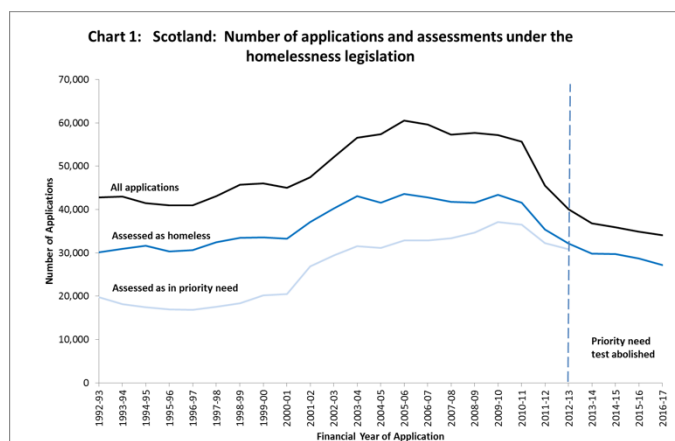
¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/35596/0023521.pdf>

² <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2005/05/31133334/33544>

³ [file:///C:/Users/Conference/Downloads/SHORE%20STANDARDS\(20%2011%2017\)5364_2487.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Conference/Downloads/SHORE%20STANDARDS(20%2011%2017)5364_2487.pdf)

Current Landscape of Homelessness in Scotland

With regards to statistics and good practice in homelessness in Scotland, we are achieving some very successful outcomes. As can be seen in the graph below, from the Scottish Government⁴, our current number of representations continues to reduce year on year, and have done for the past 5 years, with 34,100 households approaching their Local Authority in the period of 2016 / 17, see the Scottish Government chart below.



However, we are aware that current welfare changes are having detrimental effects to some of those in receipt of benefit⁵, and expect to see this having further negative impact on homelessness in the future; in the main this is in relation to areas building through the delay in receiving benefits. We are regularly working with DWP to see where improvements can be made and about to take on a project to investigate where elements of the process regarding Landlords and

paperwork can speed up. We are also working together with some Local Authorities to see where this could be prevented, or at least minimised, but we should request that any changes to the Supported Housing fund does not result in similar outcomes; it is not just the changes to the fund that should be worked on, but the transitions to and from the fund is just as important.

We are also aware that the figures for people rough sleeping are rising, in particular in Edinburgh; partly this is connected to the point made above. Again, this is something to take into account when looking at the changes and the work of HARSAG should be considered. We need to ensure that at any point where someone wants to engage with support that it can be possible immediately. It is not easy to ask for support and being turned away, might mean we lose the connection with that person altogether.

Finally, Scotland starts from a different place than the rest of the UK, with the majority of our Support Services being regulated and inspected by the Care Inspectorate, with National Standards to adhere to. In addition to this we have the Scottish Housing Regulator working with Landlords and Local Authorities to ensure the legislation is adhered to, including a Scottish Social Housing Charter⁶; as required by section 31 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, Scottish Ministers, in this Scottish Social Housing Charter, set the standards. Most our Members see benefit in including these regulations and standards into future guidance or frameworks relating to Supported Housing.

and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities.

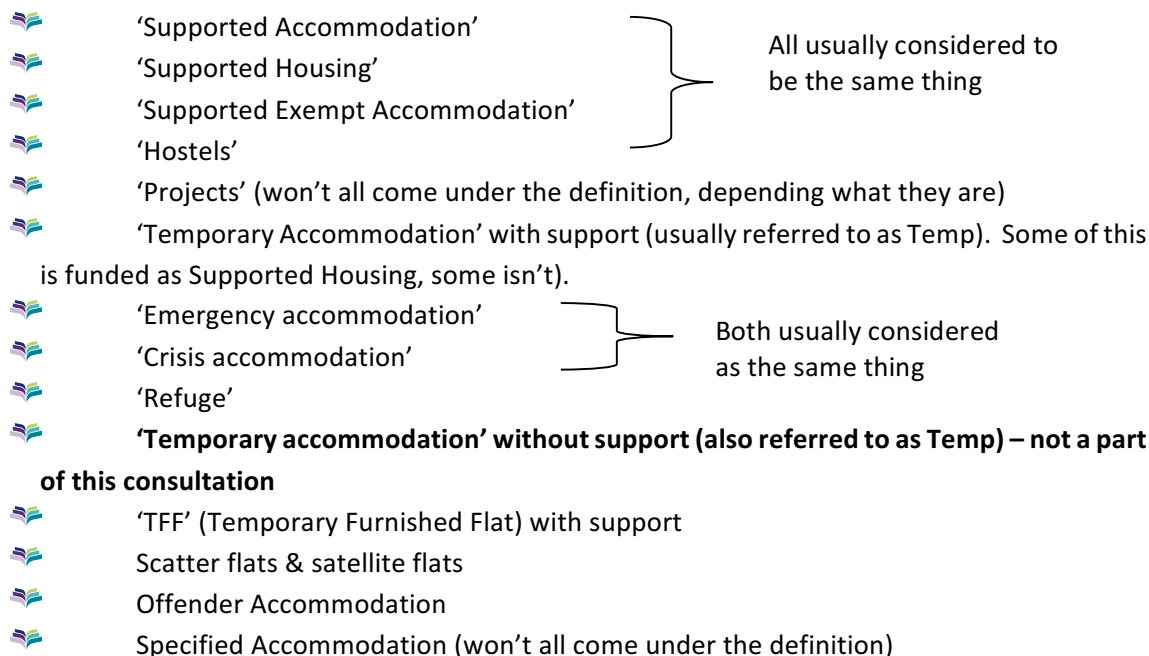
⁴ Homelessness in Scotland 2016-17 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521186.pdf>

⁵ Glasgow & West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations <https://gwsf.org.uk/wp.../Universal-Credit-GWSF-evidence-to-WPC-March-2017.docx>

⁶ <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/>

Short Term Accommodation in Scotland

'Short Term Accommodation' is not terminology we currently use in Scotland. Our vocabulary relating to accommodation where there is a support element that is not permanent includes:



We also have Bed & Breakfasts, and in very few, some support is provided; though none of this, as far as we know is classed as Supported Housing. We do not think Bed & Breakfast accommodation providing support should be included in the definition, as this is not seen (despite this being better than having no support) as good practice. However, bed and breakfasts tend to not be available to the person living there 24 hours a day, hence our addition of '24/7' to the definition.

Alongside the new funding being introduced the UK (not just Scotland) should be working to not using Bed and Breakfasts as part of a good practice framework for accommodation provision of this type.

The boxes below outline *a few* of the differences between some of the most common accommodation types (though this list is not exhaustive).




Our Emergency and Crisis accommodation is often provided as part of a contract with a support and / or accommodation provider to act where and when this is available and needed. For example, a provider may have a hostel style project with 15 bed spaces, and within this they have agreed (as part of their contract with the Local Authority) to provide up to 2 Emergency / Crisis bed spaces when needed, wherever possible. This does not mean that these bed spaces would be held back when needed out with emergency / crisis circumstances. But if someone is referred to the service in these emergency circumstances and a bed space is available, it is provided. Equally, if there is additional space available and staffing and risk assessments allow, an additional place may be provided; this is also done on an adhoc basis.


So, as can be seen by the previous page and above, our current system is muddled and has many crossovers between what is often the same thing, or confused to be thought of as the same thing. It is used in many ways, with different calculations, but in the main 2 different funding streams (1. Temporary Accommodation and 2. Supported Housing). Therefore, this in itself requires some work to delineate between the types (and where the funding is currently from) to find out what our starting point in Scotland really looks like.


Homeless Action and HSEU request that we take this opportunity for every Local Authority to make a list of past and present (in particular present) accommodation of all types, streamlining it in line with the new definition(s) clearly stating what each accommodation in their area is, what the bed space numbers are, how it is funded, and how it relates to this and other relevant elements. For example, does it fit into the 'Hostel Criteria' as stated for the SAR Exemption (hence the list needs to include the past too).

Another point to be considered when looking at differences across the UK is that our stock of Temporary and Supported Accommodation is different to that of other parts, with the majority of Temporary and Supported Accommodation being owned by Local Authorities and Housing Associations.

Finally, some elements for this section that should be considered for future changes:

 Our use of housing support provided within the community rather than is on the increase. It has been recognised that the scatter flat and temporary furnished flat with support is a very good option for many. These need to be considered under the umbrella of the changes, as we don't want to need to take a step back due to funding streams.

 There are plans for the Housing first model to be rolled out far and wide across the country; something we welcome. A key point to the model is the permanent tenancy, so it doesn't come under this definition or fund, but we need to consider how the systems fit with one another.

 We are aware that going by anecdotal evidence as well as what we are seeing by the way of rough sleeping, that in some parts of Scotland (though not everywhere) that this is on the increase. This and the work of HARSAG must be considered when looking at how people access accommodation and the funding of it.


Our suggestion would be for additional funding be provided to each service in line with what they are providing.


Question 1. Do you agree with the proposed definition?


We have considered the definition from a Scottish perspective. For Scotland, we see the definition to have two halves. The first is in relation to the sizing of the pot, and the second in relation to the working practice once the funds have been devolved. We shall respond to the question taking account of this. We suggest the definition changes to:

24/7 accommodation with support:


- The accommodation is accessed following a point of crisis, emergency or as part of a transition to living independently.
- The accommodation is not long-term or permanent.
- Support should be sourced and / or provided by the accommodation provider to best meet the person's needs.

 This would allow for the accommodation types we have currently have in place across the UK, but would also allow for positive changes in the future. We do not have all the correct models in place at the moment, and shouldn't be implementing something that relies on stagnation.

 The reason we have inserted 24/7 is to put an end to accommodation where people have to leave during the day. This is an issue with our Bed & Breakfast accommodation, some of this now comes with support. This should not be a part of a positive future, and the definition should take account of this.

 Overall we don't see the inclusion of a timeframe being part of a definition of what supported accommodation is, as useful. This can result in the opposite effect, where as a result of there being a number, for example '2 years' in place, that becomes the time someone spends in that accommodation place almost as an expectation than limit. Therefore, we see no gain from a number being added to this.










It should be noted that the 'two years' element was *not* agreed by the Task & Finish group. Having been a part of the task and finish group, we would like to highlight that no final timeframe was agreed in the group. In fact, the group could come to no agreement on this matter at all.

 We would *not* add a list of bullet points suggesting the accommodation types it includes, as by default, this can exclude those not listed and provide a fictional hierarchy with what provisions are most important.

An additional request would be for a separate definition for Emergency & Crisis Accommodation once the fund has been devolved. This should be decided upon and implemented in Scotland to reflect the services provided and how they are used. More details on this can be found further on in the paper.

Sizing of the pot

Homeless Action Scotland is pleased to hear that this change of funding is not to result in a reduction of funding, but we would like to highlight the points below:

-  The size of the fund cannot be determined by simply replicating the exact figure of costs in 2018 or 2019. This assumes all costs will remain the same and doesn't take any inflation into account. We recommend a percentage is added to reflect the 2020-21 costs.
-  Administering funding is costly both to apply for, as well as be applied. It has been stated that the first funding allocations are for 2020-21, we would request that funding is provided in 3 year blocks (minimising these costs) with the first one being April 2020 to end of March 2023. To allow for procurement & commissioners, as well as accommodation and support providers to be able to plan further, we would request that the next block (April 2023 to March 2026) is out by March 2022, and the same timeframes are used from then onwards.⁷
-  If the fund is to be based on figures from 2018 (or any time prior to the roll out) with no additional percentage added in line with inflation, the pot will be reducing in size. Therefore, we would request the baseline to have a percentage increase to retain a figure that reflects 2020, and not that of 2018.
-  New funding allocation, systems and processes should not prevent future scoping and improvements, but should encourage new and improving models of accommodation to be piloted and implemented. Even were we to be at an optimum way of working with the exact bed spaces reflecting the exact needs of people across the country, this would not allow for change. Therefore we would request that there is a formula implemented that gives some additional monies to allow for growth, pilots, and changes. Good practice should save money long term.
-  Emergency and Crisis accommodation should be calculated on a daily basis, rather than weekly or monthly, and the additional costs of providing this type of accommodation (within other accommodation or as its own entity) should be taken into account.
-  We would seek an element of flexibility within the funding to cover security for exceptional cases, for example, where someone in supported housing becomes ineligible to be in receipt of public funds. People in these circumstances are extremely vulnerable, and the provision of supported housing could not only provide the best outcomes for the person or household, but would negate (often more costly) resources coming from other less relevant funding streams.
-  There should also be consideration taken of arrears that are currently building, in areas now with Full UC live service. There should be discussions both from a strategic as well as practical level at how this could be prevented with the implementation of a new system.
-  Most of our Members would like this to be a fund that is attached to the accommodation rather than the person.
-  The sizing of the pot should also look at void costs.

⁷ This would be one year from all stated dates if roll out dates are changed in line with our recommendations.

After the fund is devolved

We are aware that the definition may not remain the same after the money has been devolved; however, we recommend it does remain the same – unless there is a change to integration for the funding to connect with health, which may require an alteration to engage differently between services. We would welcome scoping for possibilities of a Health & Social Care Integration budget for Short Term Housing, and would suggest the Data Linkage work being finalised by Andrew Waugh, Scottish Government may provide a starting point for the scoping of benefits for this.

We have previously recommended that the definition includes a connection to being registered with Care Inspectorate. We would still happily back this idea, as long as no innovative projects didn't fall out with the definition and become unviable as a result.

A concern we have with the proposed changes is in relation to people accessing very short stays (1 to 5 nights) in emergency / crisis accommodation (of all types). It is important that the costs for these don't fall through the cracks, and is not paid for through any part of the new system. We would hope there is a process (connected to the accommodation) implemented to cover this sort of circumstance and that it is one that causes no worry to either the claimant or the accommodation provider. Therefore, in addition to the definition we have proposed for 'Short Term Accommodation' we suggest there is a separate definition and administrative system for Emergency and Crisis Accommodation. This may also be appropriate for very short stay refuge places; though we are not suggesting this for refuges without confirmation from the experts in the field.

We think the definition for Emergency & Crisis Accommodation should be:


Accommodation provided in an emergency / crisis situation where, due to circumstances, short term accommodation cannot be accessed at that point. In general, this accommodation will be provided for a period of up to 5 nights, but this is not an absolute, as a result of public holidays, or other unavoidable circumstances.


We would suggest the funding is split with 2 different calculation periods and processes: a) the majority for short term accommodation, and b) to allow for a separate calculation and process for emergency and crisis accommodation. It may be that this is provided as a top up to the accommodation that provides this on more of a sporadic basis.


In general, whatever the outcomes, to all of the above, all sectors must be a part of the changes and have a voice in the changes, and the Scottish Government should use a number of channels to keep all relevant sectors up to date with the changes as they are known.


Q2. Who should Administer the devolved fund, and how?


The clear majority of our Members (and by no means, just Local Authorities) have stated their preferred option for the administration of the fund to be undertaken by Local Authorities. This would be alongside the request for National Guidelines to be provided by the Scottish Government to allow for consistency across the country, and with a monitoring and recording element to this; allowing an understanding of the use of the fund, any concerns with the fund, but also giving some indicators for any future planning and changes required around the fund.


 It has been highlighted that the ability to have a person / department that can be contacted to ask questions, check details and to rectify any mistakes, is a crucial element to not only the roll out of the upcoming changes, but needed for the administration and delivery of the fund generally. This is part of the decision in the request for the fund to be administered by Local Authorities and not to take a route that would be something on a larger scale or National basis.


 It was highlighted that there were already people in similar roles within Local Authorities which would hopefully help with expertise, as well as avoid unnecessary redundancies if it was to be Administered from these departments.


 The Scottish 'Homelessness Code of Guidance' 2005 is very out of date, but is still used as a reference tool by many on a daily basis. We would suggest we take this as the opportunity to update it, including guidance about the Administering, Monitoring and Recording of the grant in question, alongside the many changes that have taken place over the past 13 years.

 The fund must be ring-fenced, and should work in accordance with Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, which brought in the housing support duty.⁸

 Homeless Action Scotland would request the fund allocation and use is monitored alongside other housing and homelessness statistics.

 According to the consultation, in England, Local Authorities will be asked to produce a Supported Housing Strategic Plan, which will set out their vision for supported housing. In Scotland Local Authorities used to be required to have a Homeless Strategy, but this changed to having a housing strategy that includes homelessness. Homeless Action Scotland would like to see this return to a specific Homeless Strategy, within which there should be a Short Term / Supported Housing Strategy, sitting alongside Temporary Accommodation and other relating points.


 It would be a very good opportunity for Housing Options Hubs to work on elements of the strategies together, allowing further good practice and consistency across areas.


 We note that this fund is not for the support element, but to enable this to result in a system that is fit for purpose, the funding, systems and access to support should be looked at concurrently.


⁸ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2010/17/section/158>


Additional Priorities

Timings


 We welcomed the date for rollout changing from April 2019 to 2020. However, because of the election pushing the dates further, timeframes are demonstrating they may not allow for this to be a positive change. To provide time for suitable pilots and planning to take place, we would strongly recommend the consideration for the timescales be postponed to April 2021. This would allow further time to rectify issues arising from UC and in general prior to this would also allow for a smoother process when changes are implemented.


 We would back the idea of several pilots for the new system, *if* there were a significant number of objectives that could be looked at through these. But in light of our previous paragraph, the ability to provide as much notice of upcoming changes is very important factor, and so we would not wish it to impact negatively on the time for planning for these changes. Thus, we would see pilots as useful tools where there was significant learning to be taken from them and timings were not limited too far as a result.


 Homeless Action would request that an external evaluation of services is taken during the period prior to the changes, and then this is re-evaluated at planned intervals when the funding has changed.

 Timing plans should incorporate the need for training to be implemented ahead of rollouts. This affects the timetable, as well as funding; these costs should not be expected to be met outwith the fund, and should be included in the monies provided.


Guidance

 Homeless Action Scotland would recommend that guidance for Scotland includes collaborative working across Housing Option Hub areas, allowing people to have a broader range of provisions available to them across several Local Authorities.

 When thinking about the new system we need to also consider appeals and complaints processes and who should Administer these.



 Scotland may wish to consider support levels within guidance, and whether a minimum is required.

Employment







 Currently we have systems working against one another, one in particular, is where someone is residing in supported housing and is in employment, or attempting to gain

employment. Despite recent reports suggesting the contrary, the current system makes it close to impossible to remain in paid employment and live in supported accommodation, due to the costs needed to pay for the rent whilst there, often leaving the resident in debt or with not enough money to get by. Any new system should work to enable and encourage someone in a supported accommodation to be able to either remain in employment or take on new employment whilst residing there. This should also be an easy system to work with, not adding cumbersome processes with unworkable timeframes imposed.


Transitions

-  The transition from Supported Housing to and from other types of accommodation should be given as much consideration as the new procedures, ensuring a positive move does not become negative through poor systems.
-  These changes should take into account the SHORE (Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone) standards⁹, looking to improve the access to housing on release from prison; eradicating the current failings where people are homeless at the point of liberation.

Young People

-  Any discussions about changes should be in discussions with people who are using the current systems, this should include a representative number of young people.
-  New systems should also enable young people to access apprenticeships.
-  When looking at new definitions and the housing, there must be considerations made to incorporate the different needs of young people.
-  Within this, the considerations must include Care Leavers, and take into account that many young people who become homeless and under 25 who aren't care Leavers, but may still have many (if not all) of the same support needs.
-  Transition points for young people should be considered, with for example, more overlap for tenancy set ups.
-  We would suggest this is the opportunity to look at services in general, in particular, providing greater capacity to commission and deliver 'wrap around' support for young people in Scotland.

Person Centred & Empowerment

-  In the event of the fund being connected to the accommodation and payments bypassing the tenant, people living in Supported Accommodation should be made aware of the fact that money is paid to cover the cost of their stay, ensuring they are empowered about and by their financial position. To aid this implementation and improve the rights of people

⁹ [file:///C:/Users/Conference/Downloads/SHORE%20STANDARDS\(20%2011%2017\)5364_2487.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Conference/Downloads/SHORE%20STANDARDS(20%2011%2017)5364_2487.pdf)

provided with Tenancy / Occupancy Agreements in general, we would like to see the revival and update of 'The Consultation on Regulations under Section 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to provide tenants with a Tenancy /Occupancy Agreement improved rights



The changes should be person centred, and involve and include people who have been affected by the current system both positively and negatively.



Finally, we would ask for there to be an element of the processes that allows the person in whichever type of accommodation to know that however the money is paid, that there is rent being paid for them to be residing there. Too often people in receipt of housing benefit for supported housing state "I don't pay rent' which can be very disempowering. It is important that people feel they are paying for the accommodation and that rent is exchanging hands on their behalf, and notably, with their agreement. This ties in with the working and ethos of Self Directed Support.

Homeless Action Scotland gives full permission for this submission to be published.

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