



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Cllr Mhairi Hunter
Glasgow City Council

Copy to Cllr Susan Aitken, Leader Glasgow City
Council; Susanne Millar; Glasgow Health and Social
Care Partnership

9 May 2019

Dear Mhairi,

At a time when there is a strong, concerted national effort to end homelessness – agreed as a priority by local and national government alike - I was concerned to learn that the Glasgow Integration Joint Board has agreed to deliver a £2.6m cut to contracted Homelessness services in the City.

In the context of our shared ambitions on homelessness I want us to continue to work in partnership in the best interests of people facing homelessness in Glasgow. As such I want to understand how this change in funding will work in conjunction with the GCC Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, which our officials have been discussing.

In particular, I want to understand how those in need will continue to be supported and how you expect to fund the transition to new types of provision, such as Housing First, in the context of this cut to the budget. I am also very interested in whether you are satisfied that partnership working with the crucial partners in the third sector and Housing Associations has been sufficient, and whether this will continue during this transition.

You are aware that the Scottish Government has made £50m available over 5 years to support the transformation and transition required to deliver the joint Ending Homelessness Together action plan. £23.5m has already been allocated from this fund and from health budgets to support the transition to rapid rehousing and Housing First. Scottish Government and COSLA are in discussion about how this funding will be allocated in support of delivering rapid rehousing transition plans, and Glasgow's role in the Housing First pathfinder also means that money is being made available to support the transition within your local system.

Moving to a system of rapid rehousing by default, including Housing First for those who need it, is the right thing to do but this must be done in a way that continues to fully support those in need through the transition period. This was set out clearly by both the Local Government and Communities Committee and by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group.

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The funding we are making available – in addition to what Councils receive through the local government settlement – is an indication of our commitment to support the transition required. It would be a concern if the decision made by the IJB this week doesn't meet with the spirit of those recommendations.

I expect you will proceed with appropriate regard to the statutory and moral duties to meet housing and support needs for people in vulnerable positions. I trust you will make best use of the advice and guidance provided through your ongoing engagement with the Scottish Housing Regulator in ensuring you meet the duties to provide temporary and emergency accommodation.

I look forward to your reply.

*Yours aye,
Kevin*

KEVIN STEWART

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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



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Councillor Mhairi Hunter
City Convener for Health and Social Care Integration
Scottish National Party

Phone **0141 287 5372**
E-mail mhairi.hunter@glasgow.gov.uk

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By email: MinisterLGHP@gov.scot

Kevin Stewart MSP
Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning

Dear Kevin

Thank you for your letter of 9 May.

Glasgow is leading from the front when it comes to the implementation of Housing First, and Rapid Rehousing. The scale of the challenge in the city means that we must drive innovation in our service reform, while ensuring that we deliver the local priorities and the best possible service to people in the city.

The savings unanimously agreed by the Integration Joint Board at its meeting on 8 May are part of the modernisation of our homelessness services and represent a disinvestment in outdated forms of support and accommodation.

This was a difficult decision to make and clearly all board members discussed and scrutinised the proposals very carefully before agreeing to unanimously approve them. It was approved because, while a difficult decision, it is the right one for the service and the vulnerable people that we support day to day.

Glasgow needs to decrease the amount of emergency/supported accommodation in the city. If we do not do that our transition to Rapid Rehousing and Housing First will not be as effective as it needs to be.

To place this decision in context, the reduction of 68 beds out of 974 Total Interim accommodation in the city represents a reduction of 7 per cent of total capacity. The total level of temporary accommodation in the city is outlined in our RRTP.

Those in need will continue to be supported through the provision of tenancies with housing support, in other supported accommodation or transitioned into their own permanent accommodation without support if they have no ongoing needs.

We know from the desktop exercise we have undertaken on the clients in these services that there are a range of needs and we are confident we have the range of responses and supports able to better meet their needs. The desktop exercise will now be augmented by in-depth assessments and engagement with our clients to explore these options. We have set up a team to undertake these assessments and track progress, reporting to senior management on a fortnightly basis.

Glasgow City Council is investing £7million in revenue and capital to support the Housing First approach that we are pioneering in the city. This is more than double the value of the disinvestment in forms of support which do not align with the Rapid Rehousing approach.

You will further appreciate that, at a time of unprecedented financial constraints, this investment represents a real commitment to improve the lives of the most vulnerable homeless people in our city.

I am satisfied that working with partners in the third sector is sufficient - indeed, Glasgow is moving to a ground-breaking new Alliancing model in partnership with the third sector. The Alliance partners will come together to plan, deliver and transform services and support for those at risk of homelessness and will be in place from autumn of this year.

I fully recognise the negative impact on those third sector providers who will lose funding and regret this. We will do everything we can to support them. However it is inevitable that some services will close as our homelessness system is transformed. The provider sector in Homelessness have been aware of the scale of the budget withdrawal in purchased services for over a year now, and the only new information is those specific services that will be affected.

While I am aware that the Scottish Government has made £50m available over 5 years, to date none of this money has been allocated to local authority's outwith a share to produce RRTPs. There is no clarity on what money will be made available to Glasgow either this financial year, or in the years to come.

There is also no clarity yet on the commitment made to the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council to provide funding within the 18/19 budget for Housing First and I am aware that our finance officers continue to discuss this with Scottish Government officials so that this money can be paid to the city.

In the interim, as I have said, Glasgow has committed £7million of our own money to support the Housing First approach and we have already made very significant progress. Over 70 individuals with complex needs have already been housed in their own homes. This includes people who were formerly housed in supported accommodation at Clyde Place. Our staff have therefore already gained valuable experience in successfully moving individuals from supported accommodation to their own homes.

I hope it is clear from this that Glasgow is not only fully committed to moving to a system of Rapid Rehousing and Housing First but is already well on the way to doing so.

There remain a number of issues of concern to me, including the financial consequences of moving to individual tenancies from emergency accommodation with the consequent loss of income from Housing Benefit. Officers in the Council continue to share information in relation to our modelling of this with the Scottish Government.

I am also concerned that the £21million referred to is massively oversubscribed and may not be able to support the scale of Glasgow's need. As you are aware, Glasgow has a higher than average population of people at risk of homelessness and with multiple and complex needs. You are also aware that the method used to allocate funding through the local government settlement does not reflect this.

I would therefore welcome a discussion of what further support the Scottish Government can provide which matches the scale of our ambition - and investment - to end homelessness in this city.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Mhairi Hunter
City Convener for Health and Social Care Integration

c.c. Cllr Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council
Susanne Millar, Chief Officer Strategy and Operations/CSWO