

**Joint letter to Kate Forbes, Cabinet
Secretary for Finance**

26 January 2021



Dear Cabinet Secretary,

We are an alliance of Scotland's leading advocacy, support and housing organisations. Working with tenants and communities across the country we understand many of the economic and social challenges facing Scotland have been exacerbated by the public health emergency, but they are not new. Scotland's housing need was not being met before COVID-19 and the pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of having a safe, secure and affordable home.

We are collectively calling on the Scottish Government to reduce affordable housing need by committing to a new and ambitious social and affordable housebuilding programme. Evidence from independent academics show this will require minimum of 53,000 affordable homes, including at least 37,100 for social rent between 2021-2026.

The quality of homes and communities impact directly on our health, happiness and wellbeing. Investing in the social and affordable homes Scotland needs has been shown to reduce child poverty by keeping housing costs low; improve our mental and physical wellbeing by providing people secure, quality homes from which to build their lives; and help meet ambitious climate change targets by ensuring these new homes meet the highest standards for efficiency.

We agree with the First Minister that investment in housing is also an investment in our economy, in jobs and in our communities. This is a pivotal time to invest in housing and Scotland's future.

The Scottish Government has shown leadership having committed to build a record number of social homes over the current parliament but the need for affordable and social housing continues to rise. Homelessness and a lack of housing is not inevitable, building more social and affordable housing will help to meet the demand for housing, from those that need it most. We welcome the new standards on carbon emissions, digital infrastructure, and access to outdoor space and room for home working. However, further leadership and long-term commitment will be required to ensure there is the funding available inclusive of appropriate levels of grant funding to ensure no additional financial burden falls to social tenants to make these aspirations a reality and to reduce housing need and reduce homelessness.

We urge you to use the Scottish Budget as the opportunity to commit to reducing housing need by making social and affordable homes the cornerstone of Scotland's recovery – rebuilding Scotland's economy, invigorating our communities, creating more jobs, helping meet climate and child poverty targets and building a brighter future.

Yours sincerely

Signed,

Alison Watson, Director, Shelter Scotland

Callum Chomczuk, National Director (Scotland), Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland

Sally Thomas, Chief Executive, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

Alasdair Bennett, Chief Executive, Bethany Christian Trust

Dr Marsha Scott, Chief Executive, Scottish Women's Aid

Derek Logie, Chief Executive, Rural Housing Scotland

Professor Ian Welsh OBE, Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Lesley Baird, CEO, TPAS Scotland

Ewan Aitken, CEO, Cyrenians

Frazer Scott, Chief Executive, Energy Action Scotland

Andy Milne, Chief Executive, SURF – Scotland's Regeneration Forum

Phil Wray, Head of Projects, Glasgow City Mission

Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive, Crisis

John Dickie, Director of Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland

Gavin Yates, Chief Executive, Homeless Action Scotland

Maggie Brunjes, Chief Executive, Homeless Network Scotland

Tony Cain, Policy Manager, Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers

Tony Teasdale, Chief Executive, Shettleston Housing Association

Teresa Bray, Chief Executive, Changeworks

Andrea Finkel-Gates, Chief Executive Officer, Scotland's Housing Network

Robina Qureshi, Director, Positive Action in Housing

Derek Mitchell, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Scotland

Kate Polson, Chief Executive, Rock Trust

Ellinore Folkesson, National Chair, Living Rent

Etienne d'Aboville, Chief Executive, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living

Lesley Baird, Chief Executive, Tenant Participation Advisory Service

Mary Glasgow, Chief Executive, Children 1st

Cllr Robin Currie, Leader, Argyll and Bute Council

Janice Lyon, Chair, Castlehill Housing Association

Craig Stirrat, Chief Operating Officer, Grampian Housing Association

Maureen Smith, Housing Solicitor, Castlemilk Law Centre

Audrey Simpson, Chief Executive, Ardenglen Housing Association