



THE SOCIAL BITE MANIFESTO

HOMES, WORK, DIGNITY: THIS IS HOW SCOTLAND ENDS HOMELESSNESS





THE PROBLEM

Scotland has let this happen. Not through ignorance – we know what works. Not through lack of resource – we’ve proven the solutions are affordable. But year on year, the number of people without a safe place to call home keeps rising.

18,000 people are currently stuck in temporary accommodation. People said they need to accept whatever they’re given. People who tell us that temporary accommodation lacks the basics like the space to cook a meal, meaningful support, and a real route out. A roof over your head should never feel like a trap. In Scotland today, for too many people, it does.

Why? Because there isn’t enough suitable housing, and we’re not building it fast enough. Because a benefits system that should be a lifeline is pushing people deeper into poverty, making it nearly impossible to get into, or keep, work. And so, the revolving door of homelessness keeps spinning.

THE STATISTICS ARE STARK:



18,000 people are stuck in temporary accommodation



People are waiting over three years for suitable housing,



Once in temporary accommodation, they’re stuck there for an average of 237 days.

That number isn’t falling. It’s rising. And it will keep rising until we act. This manifesto sets out how.

The time to act is now.

THREE STEPS TOWARDS ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN SCOTLAND

The next Scottish Government must show ambition in housing and homelessness policy, acting on these three steps:

1. High standard homes.

Ensuring Scotland’s housing stock is of a high standard and fit for purpose across all tenures, including high quality temporary supported accommodation.

2. Work as a way out.

Focusing on getting people experiencing homelessness into work, with employment support and welfare systems matching individuals’ needs to retain roles and afford living.

3. Build now, build faster.

Recognising that we need homes and we need them quickly.

ABOUT SOCIAL BITE

Social Bite is a leading homelessness charity and social enterprise driving change across Scotland and the UK. We bring together an amazing network of volunteers, donors, fundraisers, and partner organisations, united by our goal of ending homelessness.

Social Bite was co-founded by Josh Littlejohn MBE and Alice Thompson in 2012, beginning life as a small coffee shop in Edinburgh. From the start, all profits went to good causes. Everything that's happened since has been driven by the same belief: that homelessness is not inevitable, and that bold, practical action can end it.

We distribute more than 140,000 free meals a year to people who are homeless or vulnerable across the UK. We have helped almost 130 people into meaningful, lasting employment through Jobs First. And over 1,000 people have been housed through our accommodation projects, from launching Housing First to pioneering the Social Bite Village model.

We're not afraid to shout about the problem. We've spent over a decade proving it can be solved. And we're not afraid to challenge the status quo – this manifesto sets out what we're asking government to do next.



THREE SOLUTIONS TOWARDS CREATING A SOCIETY WHERE NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO BE HOMELESS



SOLUTION 1 – HIGH STANDARD HOMES



Ensuring Scotland's housing stock is of a high standard and fit for purpose across all tenures, including high quality temporary supported accommodation.

We call for:

- A commitment to having a variety of housing stock to meet the needs of the population
- A commitment to end the use of B&Bs and hotels as temporary accommodation
- A commitment to raise the standards of the temporary accommodation across Scotland
- A commitment to work with Social Bite to build a Social Bite Village in any town and city that needs one

The new **Scottish Government must recognise the need for a variety of housing** types and tenure that meet the requirements of households across Scotland. As well as permanent housing stock, Scotland needs to commit to providing a variety of high-quality temporary housing solutions that suit people who need support before getting into permanent housing. Temporary accommodation, often with support provisions, should only be offered for people who want it (for example, when moving on from prison release or hospital discharge), or for where there has been an emergency such as flood, fire, etc. Both furnished and unfurnished solutions should be available. Temporary accommodation shouldn't be offered because it's the only housing option available.

We need a commitment to end the use of hotels and B&Bs for temporary accommodation. With a lack of basic amenities, these have never been and remain unfit for purpose. Instead, **there must be a**

range of high-quality, well-maintained, supported, and unsupported temporary accommodation options that meet the needs of the people who live there. **The Social Bite Village model should be adopted as part of the suite of solutions** that address a variety of needs.

What differences will these commitments make?

- Fewer people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- People affected by homelessness will feel happier and healthier.
- We will see an end to revolving-door homelessness, with fewer people falling back into homelessness once they've left it behind. Tenancy sustainment rates will increase.

SOLUTION 2 – WORK AS A WAY OUT



Focusing on getting people experiencing homelessness into work, with employment support and welfare systems matching individuals' needs to retain roles.

We call for:

- A commitment to provide a range of supported employment options to people experiencing homelessness, so they can access employment, build skills, and create a sustainable future, with the support needed to do so.
- A commitment from Scottish Government to work with the UK Government, Department of Work & Pensions, and third sector to improve welfare in terms of homelessness and employment; removing current barriers such as unaffordable rents that make working fulltime whilst experiencing homelessness impossible.
- A reinvigorated return of the Homelessness Ministerial Working group that has a focus area of employment opportunities and skills building. Homelessness affects multiple portfolios.

Unemployment is disproportionately higher for people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness, with just six in every 100 in a job, compared to 70 in every 100 for the general population. We need a national spotlight on employment options and homelessness to explore how this can change, then we need to implement a strategy that increases the opportunities and breaks down barriers for people looking to access or return to work whilst experiencing homelessness. **Our Jobs First supported employment programme provides a solution and has demonstrated that for every £1 spent, at least £3 is gained in return;** doing it well is both beneficial for individuals and the economy.

The current welfare system creates a disincentive to work for people who are living in temporary accommodation. In most cases the costs outweigh the income, or significant rent increases create a risk of in-work poverty. **System change is needed so people do not have to choose between a roof over their head and employment.**

However, the welfare versus work conflict goes beyond employment. We're also calling for an end to the five weeks' wait for Universal Credit. Instead, providing an upfront payment, with a grant to aid the transition at the point of accessing employment, would reduce the burden of stress

placed on people starting work. A grant would also lessen the administration caused by the number of solutions required to help people pay for day-to-day costs and plug the gap caused by a broken system. These matters require a focus from the new Scottish Government to ensure changes take place rapidly. Without this commitment, people will continue to be trapped by incongruous systems.

What difference will these commitments make?

- People will no longer have to choose between a job or a home.
- More people will avoid poverty or be able to lift themselves out of poverty.
- A significant number of people in a situation of homelessness could access supported employment and have the confidence to retain jobs, which would boost the economy.
- Employers will retain workers who have better wellbeing because of the support they receive through challenging times.

SOLUTION 3 – BUILD NOW, BUILD FASTER



Recognising we need homes and we need them quickly

We call for:

- A national plan that requires all local authorities to review use of their derelict, brownfield, vacant, or unused land, with a view to these providing solutions to homelessness.
- A commitment to place priority on fast building solutions, for example modular homes, like those used in the Social Bite Village model.

Scotland should be leading the way in preventing homelessness. This is not about new ideas – it is about increasing momentum on delivering current solutions already on the table, including creating high quality homes. The Social Bite Village model provides a blueprint for building beautiful homes as part of a supported community on derelict and/or unused land. Assessing the suitability of derelict land for building temporary communities should be pursued, where sites have suitable access to transport, health and support services, and general amenities; in line with the 20-minute communities model from the National Planning Framework and Housing to 2040 .

The Social Bite Village model illustrates alternative ways to consider land use and demonstrates that building fast doesn't mean building low-quality.

We would urge consideration for a broader range of home-building solutions with a view to rapidly offering high-quality temporary accommodation whilst more social homes are built. Modular homes could provide an attractive answer for many types of households and tenures.



What difference will these commitments make?

- The numbers of people at risk of and experiencing homelessness will reduce.
- Fewer areas of derelict and/or unused land left as blots on the Scottish landscape.
- Improving the housing stock, without the time constraints of standard builds.



THE FUTURE

Scotland can end homelessness. **We've spent over a decade proving this can be done. What we need now is the commitment and actions to make it happen. The solutions are there. They don't require new thinking – they require political will.** If we increase housing stock with a high standard across tenures, remove the barriers that keep people out of work, and build the right homes in the right places, we can make sure no one is left without a safe place to live.

The actions we are calling for are practical, cost-effective, and achievable.

Most importantly, they will change lives. We're asking every party, every leader, every MSP: stop managing homelessness. End it.





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Organisation with charity number SC045232