

Housing (Scotland) Bill

Submission by Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Director of Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE), Heriot-Watt University, 17 June 2024

I would like to see included in the Housing (Scotland) Bill greater flexibility in the rehousing options available to people experiencing homelessness, giving them more choice over the housing outcome that best suits their needs and preferences. The prevailing assumption that *all* people accepted as homeless should be allocated social housing (only tiny numbers are secured private sector lets in fulfilment of the main statutory duty) is problematic both because a) that doesn't necessarily meet people's needs, and b) because, as we all know, the current pressures on social housing supply are extreme in some areas. The Committee should bear in mind that a very large percentage (approaching half) of all households accepted as statutorily homeless are younger, single people under age 35. Permanent social housing isn't always the best outcome for these households – returning to the family home (with mediation support), supported lodgings type arrangements, shared forms of provision, or a private rented sector let in a city centre location may better meet their needs in some cases.