



## meet your MSP

**Organisation:** Scottish Churches Housing Action

**What they do:** Scottish Churches Housing Action brings together the main Christian bodies in Scotland, under the slogan *no room for homelessness!*

The organisation has three linked activities:

\*Developing and supporting local volunteer-based activity to tackle homelessness

\*Advising and enabling churches to turn unused or under-used property into affordable homes

\*Helping the churches to be aware of and learn more about the problems of homelessness in wealthy Scotland.

Scottish Churches Housing Action is the Scottish partner in organising Homeless Sunday (fourth Sunday in January each year), and works closely with church and secular bodies working for greater social justice.

### Issues that are of particular relevance today:

1. The official headline figure for homelessness has dropped, but only back to the level of 20 years ago.
2. Some local authorities fail to meet the basic legal duty of providing temporary accommodation to all who apply as homeless, while their case is assessed. Sleeping rough is growing, as is evidenced by ever-higher take-up of winter shelters.
3. Homelessness is particularly likely to affect people who are disadvantaged in other ways: *eg* through mental ill-health; domestic violence; growing up in care; leaving prison; living with addiction or chronic health problems. Services need to be integrated.
4. Cuts in local authority budgets affect homelessness directly. They also hit services which help prevent homelessness, such as mental health care, substance abuse and recovery services, educational welfare service &c. They have knock-on effects on voluntary organisations, such as Women's Aid, support services &c.

### Questions to ask your MSP:

1. What will you do to ensure that your constituency contributes to the Scottish Government's target of 50,000 new affordable homes over the lifetime of this Parliament?
2. In Parliament will you support measures, including land reform, aimed at reducing the cost of land as a component of the price of building new homes?
3. Will you be putting pressure on your local authority to make sure that they achieve the basic legal minimum of offering temporary accommodation to everyone who applies, while their circumstances are assessed?

4. The private rented sector is now bigger than either the council or the housing association sectors. Rents are higher and security of tenure is lower. Do you see a need for further regulation of the sector?
5. Too many people leave prison without anywhere to stay that first night: starting a period of freedom by being homeless makes it much more likely that someone will go back to prison soon. What should be done to avoid this?
6. What will you be doing to support small, locally-based charities and social enterprises in providing services, and avoid them being squeezed out by other bodies with bigger budgets for marketing and getting contracts?

**For further information:** [www.churches-housing.org](http://www.churches-housing.org) or [info@churches-housing.org](mailto:info@churches-housing.org)