

Politics:- Edinburgh charity demands action

✘ CEO of Edinburgh based charity, Cyrenians, Des Ryan, has written to the leaders of all main political parties represented in The Scottish Parliamentary Election 2011 to ask them for help. This is the text of his letter

I am writing to the leaders of all the main political parties to ask about your continued commitment to maintaining and indeed improving the excellent progress we have seen over the lifetime of the Scottish parliaments since 1999 in tackling [the causes and consequences of homelessness](#).

Scotland can be very proud of achievements to date. I have been visited by groups from Europe, Japan and North America due to the high reputation of our national strategies, our progress and ambitious targets to end homelessness. We can rightly claim to be a world leader in this. But the job is still far from done and there are strong signs of an upsurge in homelessness ahead and a deepening of the poverty that makes people vulnerable.

Establishing the [Homelessness Task Force](#) was one of the first actions of the newly established Parliament in 1999. Major improvements have been made through progressive legislation – with cross-party support – in 2001 and 2003, together with financial investment and strategic leadership from the Executive.

Of course there are many social problems to deal with, but how well a country protects its most vulnerable citizens from homelessness and supports them back into mainstream life is a significant measure of our effectiveness as a humane and successful society.

I acknowledge that homelessness is not a priority concern for

the mass of the electorate, but I would ask you as leader to signal your support for tackling homelessness during your election campaign and carry that commitment into the life of the next Parliament.