

Government set to limit use of B&Bs for homeless

New legislation will reduce time spent in B&Bs and hostels.

Anyone facing homelessness will spend no longer than a week in unsuitable accommodation like bed and breakfasts under new legislation.

The seven day limit on unsuitable temporary accommodation which currently covers families with children and pregnant women will now be extended to protect everyone at risk of homelessness.

Announcing the changes, which will come into effect by May 2021, Housing Minister Kevin Stewart said: "We know that people living in these unsuitable environments can for too long often lack cooking or washing facilities, and some have reported that they cannot have visits from family or friends. These experiences have a detrimental effect on people's physical and mental wellbeing, preventing them from rebuilding their lives.

"While temporary accommodation can offer an important emergency safety net for anyone who finds themselves homeless, such as those fleeing domestic violence, it should be a purely temporary measure.

"In Scotland we are already world-leading in tackling homelessness, and now this new legislation, which is a UK first, will make sure that the time anyone spends in unsuitable temporary accommodation is as short as possible before moving to a more appropriate, permanent home.

“We recognise the importance of a settled home in supporting people to live their life with good health, wellbeing and a sense of community and belonging. “That’s why we’re investing £32.5 million, which includes more than half of our £50 million Ending Homelessness Together Fund, to support local authorities to prioritise settled accommodation for all.”

Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of homeless charity Crisis, said: “We strongly welcome the announcement that the Scottish Government will change the law so that people will no longer have to live in the most unsuitable forms of temporary accommodation for longer than seven days. This marks a major achievement for our Life in Limbo campaign, a three year project which has sought to put an end to lengthy and dehumanising stays in unsupported hostels, hotels and B&Bs.

“This decision is a recognition of the resolve of our clients to shine a light on the inhumane conditions they were experiencing and the determination to ensure no one else was subjected to these prolonged stays.

“Making sure that everyone has a home where they can begin to rebuild their lives benefits all of us. Once again Scotland has shown it is a world leader in tackling homelessness and this commitment is a major step forward towards it being the first nation in Great Britain to end homelessness for good.”