

**SOCIAL
BITE**

OUR POLICY PRIORITIES



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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL BITE'S WORK

Social Bite's vision is a society where no one should have to be homeless.

We're a charity and social business, providing food, homes, jobs and support to empower people to transform their own lives.

How does that show up in our work?

- **Ending homelessness:** Social Bite heads a movement to end homelessness. We work together with supporters and partners towards eradicating homelessness by generating funds, awareness, and action across society.
- **Charity and social business:** as well as providing direct support, Social Bite's commercial operations help fund our mission, promote understanding of the issues of homelessness, and create job opportunities.
- **Providing essential support:** our Social Bite Villages, Jobs First supported employment programme, free food services, and other support mechanisms offer a pathway to a more stable and fulfilling future.
- **Empowerment:** enabling people affected by homelessness to transform their own lives is at the core of our work.



Social Bite's free food service offers community and opens the door to wider engagement for people who are affected by homelessness

THE BACKGROUND TO OUR POLICY PRIORITIES

Social Bite's core pillars of work are food, homes, and jobs.

Our approach is designed to provide immediate support whilst building relationships, long-term independence and purpose for individuals. At the same time, we strive for systemic change to create lasting solutions for people experiencing homelessness across the UK.

- **Food:** we provide free meals which offer vital nourishment and build trust towards further engagement.
- **Homes:** we offer dignified temporary accommodation through our Social Bite Villages. Our proven, scalable model gives residents a safe home of their own in a supported, community-focused environment, balancing independence and relationship building before residents move into permanent housing.
- **Jobs:** our Jobs First programme provides people facing homelessness with real job opportunities: developing skills, building confidence and leading to financial independence. Uniquely, support is offered both to employees and employers.

The only way to have lasting impact on the homelessness landscape in the UK is to influence policy, national guidance, and best practice. By providing input in these areas at a national level, we can drive systemic change and achieve our mission to end homelessness.

This document outlines our policy priorities, with ambitions influenced by our core pillars. We'll use these to further focus our efforts on areas that have the highest potential for change. We'll work with the people we support to ensure our goals align with their knowledge and experience; both leading and supporting others to make change happen.

Together, we can end homelessness.

POLICY CONTEXT

In parallel with [The Lisbon Declaration \(2021\)](#)ⁱ, in which EU Member States agreed to work toward ending homelessness by 2030, we're aiming for a future where no one has to be homeless. However, we believe that the UK's ambitions should be greater: with housing emergencies increasing by the day and several systems causing poverty, rather than reducing, removing, or avoiding it, we must be bold in our ambitions for change. Until the importance of eradicating poverty and having a safe home is evidenced across all policy areas, people will be at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

Where homelessness occurs, the time spent experiencing it should be short and support should be offered. Housing options should fit individual needs, such as where a person or household moves on to, and the types of short- and long-term support they receive, where needed. To quote many reports, including the English [National Plan to End Homelessness](#)ⁱⁱ, homelessness should be 'rare, brief, and non-recurring.'

WHAT POLICY AREAS ARE WE LOOKING AT?

Scotland – housing and homelessness

Scotland has some of the most advanced homelessness and housing legislation in the world. Yet the number of people experiencing homelessness is increasing, with people stuck in temporary accommodation an average of 237 days. Consequently, caseloads are increasing too.

We need to continue to drive positive change that considers Scotland today and into the future. With the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025^{iv}](#) recently given royal assent, the shape of legislation has already begun to take shape, but it's not yet complete. Many of the Act's provisions require secondary legislation and statutory guidance, with phased implementation over the coming years. The act is in tandem with a national strategy, '[The Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan^v](#)', and the [Housing Emergency Action Plan^{vi}](#), which means there are many opportunities for Social Bite to help shape the future.

Scotland's relevant political and governmental focus areas are:

- to prevent homelessness as far upstream as possible,
- to find quick and suitable housing and support solutions for (in particular) families who are currently experiencing homelessness,
- to reduce and improve temporary accommodation,
- to reduce child poverty,
- to build houses,
- to improve rights and best practice to enable women to flee domestic abuse.

Homelessness can only be truly eradicated if we focus on poverty. However, poverty isn't a specific political focus area. Instead, it's threaded through several portfolios.

Scotland – employment and welfare

Westminster retains exclusive legislative authority over nearly all aspects of employment and industrial relations. However, some employment policy sits with Scotland.

There are also mixed powers in terms of welfare. The Scottish Parliament has full control over disability, carer, and low-income family assistance, administered by Social Security Scotland. The major working-age benefits (like Universal Credit and State Pension) are reserved to the UK Government and remain with the Department of Work and Pensions.

Key pieces of work taking place include:

- the [No-one Left Behind^{vii}](#) strategy, which places people at the centre of the design and delivery of employability services. Through six workstreams, the strategy commits to working with partners and users of services, to deliver a move from national to more locally tailored place-based design and delivery. It also commits to an increasing shift towards user engagement, collaborative service design, partnership working, shared measurement and a common approach to inclusive communications,
- [Fair Work First^{viii}](#),
- child poverty reduction.

England – housing and homelessness

With its [National Plan to End Homelessness^{ix}](#), England has recently made significant progress towards positive actions with an aim to prevent homelessness.

In parallel with Scotland, the relevant strategic priorities and actions are:

- preventing homelessness,
- halving the number of people sleeping rough (no date has been specified),
- building more homes,
- improving data/AI and workforce development,
- involving people with lived experience.

England – employment

Employment legislation remains reserved. This means our work in terms of employment for both Scotland and England sits with the UK Government. Major overhauls like the UK's Employment Rights Bill apply to both regions.

The Government's employment strategy in England is anchored by the 'Get Britain Working' initiative. With no specified timeframe, it aims to reach an 80% employment rate, with a focus on sustainable career-building.

Key strategic priorities and actions include:

- the National Jobs and Careers Service. This will transform traditional Jobcentres by integrating them with the National Careers Service to shift the focus from benefit monitoring to building actual skills and long-term career planning,
- the Youth Guarantee scheme, which provides a guarantee for young people aged 18–21 (expanding to 18–24) to ensure they have a meaningful offer of an apprenticeship, traineeship, or work experience,
- addressing economic inactivity.



PRIORITY: TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION THAT IS FIT FOR PURPOSE

Social Bite knows that temporary accommodation is a great resource (when used as intended—temporarily).

Temporary accommodation provides a very different option to permanent housing and can be an important first step towards permanent accommodation for people affected by long-term rough sleeping. When delivered well and maintained effectively, temporary accommodation provides an option for people who would otherwise be at risk of becoming trapped in a revolving door of homelessness. The Social Bite Village Model is testament to how effective temporary accommodation can be when it's dignified, supported and part of a community.

We recognise that some people need additional support and a permanent home might not be the right option for everyone at every stage of their lives. Therefore, we must provide a range of solutions rather than pushing everyone down the route of a permanent home, when that may not be what they want or feel able to cope with. Instead, we should cater for differing circumstances and preferences, exploring how temporary accommodation can provide a home until a permanent option is right for the individual or household.

AMBITION: A VARIED RANGE OF HIGH-QUALITY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

7. Social Bite joins other third sector organisations and charities to call for **ending the use of hotels and B&Bs as a part of the temporary accommodation offer**. Instead, there must be a range of options (furnished and unfurnished, with and without varying support) that can be accessed quickly when and where required.
8. Social Bite will lead the way to **produce and deliver high standard temporary accommodation communities** that meet people's needs. The Social Bite Village Model provides a replicable homes model, using brownfield, derelict or vacant land. The model replaces the long wait for housebuilding with beautiful, high-specification, quick-to-build homes that put an emphasis on people and community.
9. We need the UK and Scottish Local Governments to **retain and seek new housing stock that offers temporary solutions** which meet the needs of the person or household, rather than offering temporary accommodation because it's the only option. We recognise there's a need and purpose for temporary accommodation (that differs from permanent accommodation) within every local authority's housing stock. Variety and choice to meet a range of needs is key to making temporary accommodation fit for purpose. This isn't about increasing temporary accommodation but ensuring what's available is suitable.
10. **A commitment to improve temporary accommodation.** Every accommodation option should provide residents with their own bathroom, cooking facilities, clothes washing facilities, a TV, and free WiFi. Upon arrival, the household should be provided with food provisions that will last 48 hours, as well as an up-to-date information pack that meets language and accessibility needs. The information should explain where to get cheap and free food nearby, bus routes, etc. Full details of our asks around this can be found in our recent response to the Temporary Accommodation Consultation.

WHY?

Temporary accommodation is a useful option. Some people need additional support or are unable to look for a permanent house at some stage in their life. Not everyone is looking to have their own place continuously. For some, this might be after a period in hospital, a mental health institution, prison, care, leaving an abusive relationship, or a variety of other individual reasons. Closing your front door with no access to support, or without knowing the community or area around you, can be daunting. It can lead to deterioration in someone's health and wellbeing and put pressure on sustaining a tenancy.

The introduction of good legislation means very short tenancies are no longer available. There needs to be an alternative in terms of accommodation options, both with and without support, with and without furnishings, so that when people move into a home that has more permanency, they're able and ready to do so.



Houses at Social Bite Villages are delivered to an exceptional standard in order to provide a beautiful, dignified and high quality home for residents



The use of natural wood and quality furnishings has a positive impact on residents' health and wellbeing, as well as creating a safe and comfortable living environment

AMBITION: TO HAVE A WELFARE SYSTEM THAT WORKS WITH TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

11. With other third sector agencies across the UK, Social Bite pushes for change to make sure **the welfare system and temporary accommodation work together as a functioning system, not against each other.** We will work to find systemic solutions that ensure everyone in temporary accommodation can afford to live there, whether they're accessing benefits, employed full-time or part-time, and with no penalties for doing so. We'll lobby for change to avoid the current situation, in which people choose between a job or a roof over their head.
12. In line with our ask of LHA rates, we are asking for **Shared Accommodation Rates (SAR) to be reviewed in their entirety.** We require SAR to be affordable and have a payment system that works alongside people in and out of work. This should be considered alongside our requests relating to LHA. Neither system is currently fit for purpose. Until this is rectified there'll be problems not only for people living in temporary accommodation but also landlords and prospective landlords.

WHY?

As it stands, people find themselves leaving a job or choosing to sofa surf because they can't retain or access employment and live in temporary accommodation. This is a result of poorly executed welfare systems. We need a system review of overall costs and where SAR (and LHA) rates sit within affordability. We also need to review access to properties, so that staying in temporary accommodation of all varieties is possible for people in work, accessing work, and not in employment.

With the links between LHA and SAR, a similar outcome applies to both. The uncertainty caused by frozen rates makes retaining landlords or attracting new landlords for temporary accommodation very difficult.

PRIORITY: HARNESSING EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS BUILDING POTENTIAL

Like our third sector colleagues, at Social Bite we've evidenced that employment and skills building are routes out of poverty and often homelessness.

If we are to prevent homelessness, we must prevent poverty. Neither can be achieved without a focus on employment.

AMBITION: OPPORTUNITIES TO START AND TO RETAIN EMPLOYMENT

13. **Tackling poverty by creating more opportunities for meaningful employment and skills building.** There needs to be a cross-portfolio focus that includes aspiration and inspiration, as well as routes into employment.
14. **Employers and education should be supported to contribute to reducing poverty.** To achieve this, we must focus on enabling people to access fair work opportunities with the conditions and support required for building skills and sustaining employment. Both starting and retaining a job after any period of change isn't easy. We want to see improvements in how people can access jobs, as well as support offered to retain positions.
15. Social Bite will work with Local and National Governments to **end all aspects of in-work poverty**. There must be a legal requirement for all employers to be supported to:
 - provide a contract that accurately reflects the hours worked, and clearly states wages, pension contributions, annual leave and benefits, alongside a campaign to ensure changes are highlighted and understood,
 - put an end to all zero-hour and other precarious hour contracts. As this becomes law, there needs to be a plan to ensure people aren't put at financial risk because of the change.

WHY?

We can't break the cycle of homelessness, poverty and unemployment without looking at how people access and retain fair and financially viable employment. Accessing and retaining employment can prevent homelessness, but only when it's safe, fair, and supported.

We must stop allowing employers to treat people badly in terms of finances and rights. Until we do, in-work poverty will persist.



Jobs First employee Yusuf with Social Bite Development and Support Worker Tessa



The Jobs First programme works with major employers across a variety of industries to match people with a background of homelessness to supported vacancies

AMBITION: SUPPORT WITH THE BASICS

16. Employment, skills building and the financial aspects of work aren't possible without certain forms of identification. When someone is assessed as experiencing or at risk of homelessness, there should be a discussion to understand what basic and photographic ID they may be lacking. We want to see **a process that adds checking someone's ID needs to the homeless pathway.**

It's unclear at this stage whether the work should be carried out by the Local Authority or through a referral to a third sector provider or similar. This would be better decided through discussions with COSLA and a possible consultation or task and finish group for this purpose. A pilot would help the new system to work as well as possible.

17. Under the Payment Accounts Regulations 2015, everyone classed as a legal resident of the UK has the right to open a basic bank account, regardless of their nationality, place of residence, or financial history. Yet people still find accessing an account difficult, particularly when experiencing or moving on from homelessness. In addition to the identification noted above, we would recommend that **people are provided with support to open a bank account at the point of a homeless assessment**, or within a month of being assessed.

WHY?

A lack of ID and access to a bank account are two hurdles that become immovable barriers to leaving homelessness behind. However, they could be overcome with the correct systems in place. The legislation is there, but the systems make access to both difficult, unless you have know-how or connections, placing people in an unnecessary hierarchical system.

AMBITION: REACH THE ORIGINAL PLAN OF A 'REAL TIME' WELFARE SYSTEM

18. The idea behind Universal Credit (UC) was to mirror work and wages, with a 'real time' system to prevent people from falling into difficulty when moving jobs or being made redundant. Instead, it fails people, putting them into five-week arrears, followed by unnecessary system-driven debt. Alongside many other campaigners and homelessness organisations, we want to see the UC five week in arrears payments scrapped, moving to an upfront payment.

We recognise that for some, this might cause a gap at the other end, when they leave UC payments and enter a job. There should also be funds to aid this transition.

WHY?

An upfront payment would prevent people getting into financial difficulty, which is what's currently happening. An end-of payment discussion would create an opportunity to offer support at the point of moving into employment, whilst assessing whether further funds are required.



For every £1 invested in Jobs First, the programme generates around £3 in social benefit for the UK

PRIORITY: PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AT ITS EARLIEST

To realise our vision of a society where no one should have to be homeless, we need to have welfare systems that work together and don't create or compound poverty.

Where homelessness and/or poverty occur, there should be a range of move-on housing options and support that matches individual needs, as well as the homes and resources to support these options.

AMBITION: HOUSEBUILDING

1. The UK Government has agreed to increase social housing supply by **building 90,000 homes across England per year** (as per ['Brick by Brick'](#), Shelter), within a bigger plan to build 300,000 homes per year. We join our third sector partners to put pressure on this work to happen in reality, not solely on paper.
2. Similarly, we'll place pressure upon the Scottish Government to increase affordable housing supply. Alongside other third sector organisations, through direct engagement and relevant forums, we're pushing to have **a minimum of 15,693 homes built per year** (as per [recent findings](#)^{xi}). Then, importantly, we must continue to build to target year-on-year.
3. We will **place urgency on the need for building both 1- and 2-bed** social housing and private sector homes across the UK, as well as the addition of a small number of large family homes in line with local population needs. The size of houses being built should suit individual/household requirements, lifestyle and affordability, not the goals of housebuilders. Building houses that are unaffordable to buy, live in or maintain will only increase homelessness and poverty.



Founder Josh Littlejohn with former residents John and Jayne at the launch of the new location of the Social Bite Village, Edinburgh

WHY?

We have a UK-wide shortage of homes across all tenures, particularly within social housing. We can't eradicate homelessness without a focus on housebuilding, and these homes must be affordable. This isn't just about finding agreement on figures, it's about maintaining pressure so the work is carried out.

We must remember that the size of a home impacts more than rent or mortgage costs. Energy, maintenance and council tax are some of the ongoing costs that affect everyone's spending every month. For people receiving benefits, there are limits to the size of a home that benefit payments will cover or pay towards.

Therefore, it's extremely important that we're building homes which meet the size requirements of the people who'll live in them. This will mostly be 1- and 2-bedroomed properties. Without this focus, there's a risk of building homes that people can't afford to live in, and where people in receipt of welfare for their housing (or a part of it) become ineligible for necessary benefits.

AMBITION: BROWNFIELD, DERELICT AND VACANT LAND REVIEWS

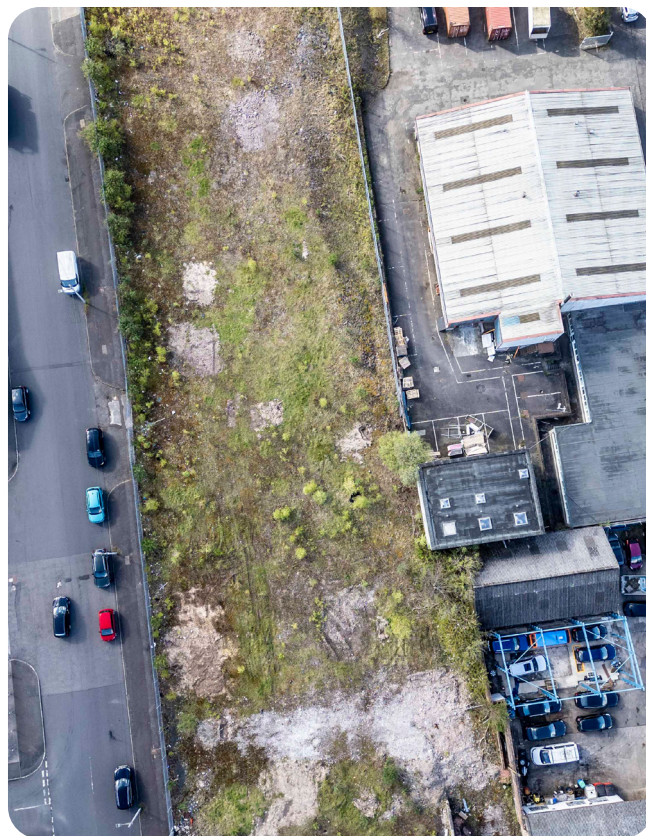
4. We will continue to push both **Local and National Governments to explore and review opportunities for their brownfield, derelict and vacant land**, whilst also considering access to transport, amenities, health, education, employment opportunities, and support needs. Social Bite believes many currently unused areas provide an opportunity to build high standard, fast-construction modular homes as part of a plan to improve temporary accommodation solutions. Currently England has almost 30,000 hectares of brownfield land^{xii} (enough to build 1.4 million homes) and Scotland has almost 9,000 hectares of vacant and derelict land, with over a quarter of the Scottish population living within 500m of a derelict site.

When building more homes, we need to make better use of available land. We want every Local Authority to review their brownfield, derelict and vacant sites with a view to rapidly identifying opportunities for high specification, community-based solutions that meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their area. As part of this push, we will provide the Social Bite Village Model blueprint to demonstrate how this approach can be applied to suit the specific needs of an area.

WHY?

According to the [Letwin report^{xiv}](#), the process of building a new housing scheme, from inception to final build, can take 15.5 years for a site of 1,500 homes. With a month-on-month increase in homelessness applications across the UK, this timeframe doesn't meet the needs of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness today. We do not have the luxury of time.

The Social Bite Village Model demonstrates a different approach, both in terms of land use and ways to build. The model turns the negatives of temporary accommodation into a positive, without compromise. We're not asking for more temporary accommodation, but we are insisting on better temporary accommodation, and for it to become available quickly by repurposing otherwise unused spaces.



The derelict land in Rutherglen, South Lanarkshire prior to construction of the Social Bite Village



The completed Social Bite Village, opened in April 2026 and now providing supported temporary accommodation for up to 15 people affected by homelessness

AMBITION: LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE AND PREVENTING POVERTY THROUGH SYSTEM CHANGE

5. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) should make accessing private homes easier for people receiving welfare. However, recent [research](#)^{xv} confirms that only 2.7% of homes in Great Britain would be eligible for LHA, indicating the system is no longer fit for purpose. We're urging the UK Government to **unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance rates** and keep them in line with rental rates, with the base of (at least) the **30th percentile, updated on an annual basis**.

If this were done, the range of homes available to people receiving LHA would increase tenfold. Importantly, it would also broaden the geographical scope available to people and households by improving access to homes in a larger range of communities. Without this change, we're pushing people into a choice between waiting for a home that will rarely become available, or taking a home that's unaffordable, whilst widening the financial gap across communities.

WHY?

Local Housing Allowance was designed to make it easier for tenants and landlords to know in advance how much rent would be covered by benefits, creating more certainty. The intention was to provide a national formula which eliminated postcode bias regarding how much was covered in private sector rents.

There have been significant changes since the inception of LHA. These include a reduction from the 50th to 30th percentile, the removal of a £15 per week quota difference, and several freezes on the rates the percentile is applied to. Today, the formula closes more doors than it opens and no longer provides opportunities for people or households to access the private rented sector whilst receiving benefits.

It has also become a scheme laden with uncertainty (the freezes have been unpredictable), so it's difficult to consider it a viable option. Although no single report has shown what effects the changes have had, overall it's expected to have caused over one million households to move because they can no longer afford their tenancy—creating the exact opposite result to the initial design. Until we rectify this, the private rented sector becomes unreachable, putting even further pressure on the need for social housing, as well as limiting the areas people can live in.

The change should result in more access to private rented sector tenancies for people eligible for LHA, whilst also attracting landlords to accept tenants in receipt of LHA (these tenants are often deemed too unstable). In turn, it also reduces the chances of people being at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, because of changes to their budget.



Former Social Bite Village resident Michael, who has successfully sustained his permanent tenancy following the support he received as a village resident

AMBITION: HOUSING ADVICE

6. Social Bite recognises the importance of **housing advice** and has heard from people accessing our services about the difference timely, appropriate advice would have made. This **should be a readily available service**, approached in the same way as a pharmacy provides health advice, or a bank provides financial advice.

Across the country, we must normalise seeking housing advice. We must create and improve routes for people to access advice if we are to prevent homelessness at the earliest stages. Having well-resourced housing advice facilities across the UK would reduce stigma or confusion around housing and homelessness, as well as related financial information.

This should become part of the national plans in both England and Scotland. Steps should be taken to explore the best way to provide such advice, with input from people with lived experience of homelessness.

Digital options should also be explored within the offer, with advice on routes through WhatsApp and similar.

WHY?

Currently, there is no straightforward way to get housing advice, or find out:

- if a person or household is receiving everything they're eligible for,
- what to do when there's a problem with a tenancy,
- how or where to apply for financial assistance to help retain a tenancy or mortgage,
- about income maximisation that relates to a home and payments,
- about housing rights.

These are just some of the topics that people seek advice on in different places, but there's currently no national go-to providing answers.

Citizens Advice, Local Authorities, and a small number of third-sector projects, each provide some sort of advice in line with this ambition. However, these are rarely accessed at the earliest opportunity. Instead, people visit them much later, when problems relating to their home or housing may have already escalated. We must push to normalise accessing housing support continuously or as needed.

An estimated seven million households in the UK are missing out on £24 billion of total financial support, which includes council tax support and housing benefits.

Mortgage rate rises have recently pushed 320,000 people into poverty.

These two figures demonstrate the need for somewhere to go to discuss housing and the options, finances and eligibilities connected to it. Providing this resource could not only help prevent people from becoming homeless but could increase the wellbeing of many people and households who aren't accessing all the funds they're eligible for.



Social Bite Development and Support Worker Paul, who supports individuals experiencing homelessness to navigate the often complex systems and procedures required to gain housing support

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