



## Your details

Please complete the following details below. It is essential that we have a name and the name of any organisation if you are responding on their behalf. Contact details would be helpful if we need to follow up on any points.

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| Would you like us to keep your response confidential: | No   |

## Consultation questions

Below you will find response boxes for each of our consultation questions. If possible, please base your response on answers to these questions.

Some questions may be somewhat irrelevant to your interests, in which case please feel free to answer as many or as few as you like. And please feel free to offer other comments if you think they are relevant to our remit. There is space at the end for you to do so.

You can skip to the section(s) that you wish to respond to through the links below:

1. [Wellbeing](#)
2. [Housing and investment](#)
3. [Housing and the economy](#)
4. [Housing and welfare policy](#)
5. [Housing and the environment](#)
6. [Housing and health and education](#)
7. [Housing and community regeneration](#)

## Section 1: Our assessment of the importance of housing for wellbeing in Scotland

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the work of the Commission on Housing and Wellbeing. We believe that this work furthers the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 27 which states: *“Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing”*

We support the identification of the benefits of housing as a factor in wellbeing. In addition to the identified benefits, we would welcome the inclusion of an element of community cohesion / being part of a community. This is particularly important for young people to feel nurtured, safe, active and respected. These being some of the indicators of child wellbeing in Getting it Right for Every Child.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/well-being>

In addition we would draw to the Commission’s attention the work of Oxfam and the Humankind Index. In 2012, this research project gave weighting to 18 sub-domains for wellbeing and humankind. Relevant to your commission are the following sub-domains:

- An affordable, decent and safe home (11%)
- Living in a neighbourhood where you can enjoy going outside and having a clean and healthy environment (9%)
- Being part of a community (4%)
- Being able to access high quality services (3%)

Reference: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/oxfam-humankind-index->

## Section 2: Does Scotland invest enough in housing?

We would welcome that the investment in housing and in particular of social housing to be supported by investment to support successful tenancies: particularly for the most vulnerable young people, where family or other caring relationships have broken down causing homelessness. We would welcome policy actions which supports early intervention approach to preventing youth homelessness.

We would draw to the attention of the commission the work carried out by youth homelessness organisation [The Rock Trust](#). Their 2013 research in to homelessness should be considered in the development of your own recommendations.

“Those who engaged positively with support services indicated that they had subsequently rebuilt relationships (45%), saw an improvement in their wellbeing (85%), had more supportive people in their lives (74%), and were more able to support themselves (93%).”



# Commission on Housing & Wellbeing

Their report includes statistical data from an earlier 2010 report which found:

- 84% of local authorities and 80% of third sector organisation saw a link between promoting positive social networks and overcoming homelessness
- 68% of all organisations surveyed felt that supporting social networks offered best value in the delivery of housing services
- 62% of all organisations could evidence increased likelihood of tenancy sustainment resulting from receiving social networks based services
- Lack of housing stock was a key challenge (felt by approx 75% of the sample) in meeting the 2012 Homelessness Target
- The use of social networks based services remained low across the sample; mentoring 27%, befriending 35% and mediation 50%. Housing support (independent living skills) was the most common form of support available across 77% of the sample

## Section 3: Getting a better fit between housing and the economy

YouthLink Scotland supports the recommendations of the [Wood Commission](#) on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce.

We believe that investment in new housing would stimulate the employment market and provide young people with opportunities for high quality Modern Apprenticeships in the construction sector. We would welcome a policy option directly influencing opportunities for young people and strategies for youth employment in this sector. The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland have already acknowledged the need to address the gender imbalance that exists in the construction sector. Investment in new housing would bring with it the possibility to encourage more young women to seek Modern Apprenticeships in traditionally male dominated sectors. Ref. *Modern Apprenticeships – Audit Scotland 2014*

## Section 4: Getting a better fit between housing and welfare policy

YouthLink Scotland and some of our membership have recently submitted evidence to the Smith Commission, and have called for devolution of welfare benefits and taxation. Therefore we would support the devolution of Housing Benefit to the Scottish Parliament, and for this to be managed in the best interests of the Scottish people.

<https://www.smith-commission.scot/resources/>

In addition we welcome medium term option of abolition of the bedroom tax.

## Section 5: Getting a better fit between housing and the environment

YouthLink Scotland supports efforts which aim to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. Some of our member organisations seek to actively promote conservation, environmental issues and protection of wildlife. We would therefore support policy options that had a minimising impact on the environment for current and future generations.

## Section 6: Housing and Health and Education

6.1.1. We would welcome the addition of recognition of the most vulnerable young people and their families– in particular children and young people living in poverty, care leavers and those affected by youth homelessness – putting these young people at risk of poor standard housing and when and if they must move they lose access to doctors, dentists and other primary care services.

Our member organisation [YWCA Scotland](#) highlight that it is important to recognise that a significant percentage of youth homelessness is the result of domestic abuse. Women are statistically more likely to experience domestic abuse than men. Policy and practical responses to homelessness, therefore, need to reflect the gendered nature of the causes of homelessness. Violent relationship breakdown is particularly significant amongst younger parents with 21% of young parents (16 – 24 year olds) stating this as the reason for a homeless application in Scotland. Ref. *Quilgars, D., Johnsen, S. Pleace, N., (2008) Youth Homelessness in the UK: A Decade of Progress? Joseph Rowntree Foundation*

Housing policy needs to reflect gender differences in the composition of the homeless population. Analysis carried out by the Scottish Government shows that single females and female lone parents made up 47% of homeless households amongst those aged 16-24. (2013)

## Section 7: Housing and Community Regeneration

We agree with your assessment of the importance of involving communities in decisions affecting their areas. We would welcome specific mention of young people as contributors to such dialogue, and housing associations to continue to engage young people as decision-makers in addition to the tenancy holder.

The Commission should take cognisance of the development of the Community Empowerment Bill. This bill sets out powers for local community members to own and develop assets within the community. This will be of great significance for future regeneration work.

Programmes such as Townscape Heritage Initiatives and Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes should be supported, in particular where they provide investment to young people and youth work to explore the heritage of their community through participation and learning outcomes.



## **Do you have any further comments in relation to the Commission on Housing and Wellbeing's consultation paper?**

### **About YouthLink Scotland**

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. It is a membership organisation and is in the unique position of representing the interests and aspirations of the whole of the sector, both voluntary and statutory.

YouthLink Scotland champions the role and value of youth work, challenging government at national and local levels to invest in the development of the sector for the benefit of our young people.

Our vision is of a youth work sector for Scotland which offers sustainable, dynamic and accessible youth work opportunities that support young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, and responsible citizens.

This submission represents the consensus view of our membership, but does not claim to be the position of any one member organisation. Individual organisations may hold views which differ from the opinions presented here.

### **Other Comments – Rural Proofing**

We would request that for each of the medium and long term options identified by the Commission that consideration has been made for factors of rurality. Many of our members operate and serve rural communities, where we know that young people can find it harder to access services including public transport, have fewer options of affordable housing in their transition to adulthood, and to find meaningful employment to meet housing costs.