



Steve Robbins

Regional Head of Operations

Mears Group Plc

Via email: [steve.robbins@mearshousing.co.uk](mailto:steve.robbins@mearshousing.co.uk)

5 May 2021

Dear Mr Robbins

I am writing in relation to the mother and baby unit at 100 Pollockshaws Road Glasgow G41 1PZ (the former James Shields Project).

The general function of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland is to promote and safeguard children's human rights. The office was created by Act of the Scottish Parliament in 2003<sup>1</sup> in accordance with the UN's Paris Principles and the terms of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No2. For the purpose of discharging my statutory functions I have a range of formal powers at my disposal including powers of investigation and the ability to strategically intervene in litigation.

My office has been made aware of a number of concerns that the current accommodation is unsuitable for children as living there is not in their best interests and is potentially discriminatory. We have been told that:

- It lacks sufficient space and facilities for the children to exercise their rights to leisure, play, association, and to explore their environment safely; with the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/17/contents>

obvious likelihood of negatively impacting their development, as well as their physical and mental health

- The placement of children's beds in close proximity to cooking facilities affects their rights to be kept safe from harm
- The provision of only a single bed limits the ability of the mother to discharge her parental responsibilities to safeguard and promote the child's health, development and wellbeing by choosing appropriate sleeping arrangements including co-sleeping
- Restrictions on space, visiting arrangements, freedom of association and movement means that the children have very limited opportunities to have contact with other members of their family, negatively impacting their rights to private and family life
- The communal nature of the accommodation creates an enhanced risk factor at a time of a national public health crisis. This carries risks to the mothers and the children, particularly where there are no alternative supports such as extended family.

In light of these concerns, I would strongly encourage you to urgently review the suitability of this accommodation for children, and to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that they are provided with a safe and supportive environment in which their human rights and dignity are respected.

In the meantime, you may be aware that we have been invited to meet with the women and children concerned, and to see for ourselves the standard and suitability of the accommodation. In line with my statutory functions to *"keep under review the law, policy and practice relating to the rights of children and young people with a view to assessing the adequacy and effectiveness of such law, policy and practice"*;

and to “*promote best practice by service providers*” I have instructed my Advice and Investigations Team to set up that meeting for me, subject to undertaking a Covid-19 risk assessment. I am sure you will wish to support this visit and empower the mothers and children to express their concerns and tell their stories.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adamson', with a large, stylized initial 'A' or 'B' above it.

**Bruce Adamson**  
**Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland**

Cc Carola Donald, Head of Safeguarding  
CC Julian Unwin CBE, Non-Executive Board Member