**Freedom To Crawl campaign**

**Template MP letter**

**Never underestimate the power of writing an influential letter to a decision maker! This template letter can be used to send to your MPs calling on them to publicly support the Roof Coalition’s campaign to end the use of the new refugee and asylum seekers Mother and Baby Unit Mears that has opened in Glasgow – find out more** [**here.**](http://www.freedomtocrawl.org)

**If you wish, you can add in why you are personally calling on your MP to support this campaign by editing the section highlighted in red. If you would prefer to just send the template text, simply delete the highlighted section then copy and paste the rest of the text into an email or print to send as a letter. We have also left space for you to add your address at the end of the letter – also highlighted in red. It’s important to include your address so MPs know that you are one of their constituents.**

**Unsure of who your MP is? Simply visit** [**https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP**](https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP) **to find your MP and their contact details.**

Dear XXXXX

As one of your constituents, I would like to ask you to support the Roof Coalition’s campaign [Freedom To Crawl](https://www.freedomtocrawl.org/) to end the use of the new asylum seekers Mother and Baby Unit. It was opened on January 12th this year by the private company Mears, who is contracted by the Home Office to provide housing for Asylum Seekers in Glasgow. There are currently around 20 women, who are either pregnant or have babies or toddlers who have been moved into the unit. Some have even been moved from self-contained flats in the community into the unit. The unit is to be used until the babies are two years old.

To put it simply, the new Mother and Baby Unit is not fit for purpose. Each unit consists of a cramped room which has to be used for sleeping, playing, cooking, eating, feeding and washing. Although there are communal areas, the pandemic has meant there are restrictions on using them. Some of the consequences of mothers and children being confined to such small spaces are:

* No protection from the unit’s cooker, which makes it hazardous for young children to play and move around.
* Most rooms have just one chest of drawers for both mother and baby possessions and apparel. This means mothers are forced to stack their belongings along the perimeter of the room, which creates a safety hazard for curious toddlers.
* There are no baths, and nothing to hold onto in the shower, meaning some mothers who are feeling weak following birth (especially post C-section) are avoiding washing altogether for a couple of weeks. There is nowhere to conveniently bathe a baby, as the showers are too small to fit a baby bath
* The entire community shares three washing machines, one of which is usually broken. Mothers of young babies , whose clothes require frequent washing, often need to wait several days until the laundry facilities are free.
* Restrictions placed on visitation to the unit can have a negative impact on the family unit. Fathers are only permitted to visit for a couple of hours at a time, which affects their ability to offer support to mothers and bond with their children. This is not only a violation of Article 8 of the Human Rights Act, but importantly, not in the best interest of the child.
* The small enclosed spaces are impacting on the mental health of the mothers. Many have reported feeling claustrophobic or imprisoned
* There is nowhere other than a cot to safely leave babies unattended, even for a moment. There are simply too many safety hazards in the room.

One mother has described the cramped conditions in the unit: *“If I put my feet down from the bed, I’m stepping into the kitchen—this is how small it is. The baby cannot play, the baby cannot crawl.”*

There has now been a positive covid case in the unit, with the cramped conditions meaning there is risk of an outbreak. The unsuitable conditions of the unit, and the positive covid case was highlighted in a [recent debate](https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/9a29cd89-5c5b-425b-9287-e4736370e5de) in Westminster on the effectiveness of asylum accommodation and the dispersal system by Anne McLaughlin MP.

[Scottish legislation](https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-homeless-persons-unsuitable-accommodation-scotland-order/pages/4) deems that accommodation that would be used for more than seven days is not suitable if it is; unsuitable for accommodation by children, lacks adequate bedrooms for the exclusive use for the household or lacks adequate cooking facilities and use of a living room. I believe this should be the standard offered to everyone who lives in Scotland.

**Over the past year, the right to a safe, secure place to call home that suits our needs has never been more important. No one in Glasgow should be denied that right, and no one should have to worry about the safety and wellbeing of their children because of their housing situation. <this campaign is important to me because….>**

The Roof coalition are calling on Mears to:

1. immediately commit in writing to implementing vulnerability assessments conducted by an independent, family support specialist agency and Childrens Rights impact assessments
2. Commit to not moving any more women, or anyone in the wider asylum network into the accommodation.
3. Commit to moving all women and children into self-contained accommodation, and be given adequate support in the transition.
4. Conduct an Equality and Impact Assessment on the policy decision to open and keep the unit.

**If you agree with this campaign, you can help by writing to the Home Office, asking them to put pressure on Mears to make these changes.**

You can also publicly support the campaign by Tweeting:

**.@mearsgroup refugee and asylum-seeking women and children have the right to safe, adequate housing. I support the #FreedomToCrawl campaign to end the use of the Mother and Baby Unit in Glasgow.**

My address is **pop in your address here.** I hope I can count on you in any way we can. Together, we can fight for a more equal asylum housing system.

Best wishes,