

**THE WAY HOME:
A MANIFESTO TO
REBUILD
OUR BROKEN
HOUSING SYSTEM**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OUR HOUSING SYSTEM IS BROKEN

Home is our country's foundation. When we live in a safe, secure and affordable home, it supports our health, wellbeing and provides us with the solid base we need to thrive in life. That's why it's essential for everyone to be able to access and afford a decent home.

But currently one in three of us don't have a safe place to call home.

Successive governments have failed to build enough social homes. Over the last three decades, we have lost more social homes than we've built. Without access to safe and secure housing, 1.2 million households are currently stuck on social housing waiting lists, and the number of children living in temporary accommodation is the highest ever recorded. Thousands more people are forced to sleep on the street.

The chronic shortage of social homes has meant the size of the private rental sector has more than doubled in the last 20 years. And a lack of effective regulation means that private renters are navigating the highest recorded levels of rent, poor conditions and the threat of an unfair eviction. People are trapped in poor-quality homes that they can barely afford, unable to save and having to cut back on essentials to pay their bills.

Across the country, expensive, damp, crumbling homes are making people sick and holding them back. We cannot build a thriving society when people's homes are harming their health, nor create a sustainable economy when rising rents are trapping families in financial hardship.

This is the housing emergency – and this is what the next government is up against. No party can consider itself ready to lead the country unless it is willing to tackle the housing emergency head-on. This means taking bold action to rebuild our housing system on the generational principle it was designed on: to provide the homes our country needs.

WE HAVE LISTENED – AND NOW YOU MUST ACT

This manifesto has been created with 75 people from across the country, from rural and coastal towns to urban centres. People who are homeless and trapped in temporary accommodation waiting for a social home. People who are scared to complain to their landlord about damp and mould affecting their physical health because they're scared of being evicted. People who are being crushed by the weight of unfair rent increases.

People who represent the 17.5 million across the country trapped by the housing emergency.

We have listened to them and have heard their experiences of how our broken housing system is impacting communities across the country. This manifesto is the outcome of that work – a plan for ending the housing emergency, outlining what people across England are demanding from our country's next government.

People want a housing system that provides safe, secure, and genuinely affordable homes. A housing system that ensures people's good health and wellbeing, instead of damaging it. They want to see a new generation of social rent homes and strong rights for renters.

The next government are responsible for rebuilding our housing system. Political parties can only consider themselves ready to govern the country if they are willing to commit to tackling the housing emergency head-on. Our country's leaders must be held to account, they must listen, and they must act. This starts with our manifesto to end the housing emergency.

A MANIFESTO TO END THE HOUSING EMERGENCY

The next government must commit to taking bold action that rebuilds a fairer housing system, to provide the solid foundations that this country sorely needs. This means committing to a clear, long-term and sustainable vision for housing. The consensus on what needs to be done is clear. By committing to the below, our next government can end homelessness and ensure everybody has access to a safe, secure and genuinely affordable home both now and in the future.

1 Build a new generation of social rented homes

A new generation of social rented homes is the only sustainable solution to the housing emergency. Social rent is the only housing tenure that's truly affordable, because rents are tied to local incomes. To provide people across the country with the safe, secure and genuinely affordable homes they need, the next government must:

- commit funding to build a new generation of social rent homes - at least 90,000 a year over ten years
- remove barriers which stop social housing from getting built
- fix planning rules so that every local area plans to build the right type of homes in the right places

3 Raise the standard of rented homes

It is vital that everyone has a safe place to call home. Better management, tough regulation and enforcement of standards for rented homes will protect people's health, safety and wellbeing. To stop people's homes harming their health, the next government must:

- invest in existing social homes to bring them up to standard, to underpin the effective implementation of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act
- invest in, and give stronger powers to, local housing standards enforcement teams

If the next government does not act, they risk facing massive economic and political decline over the next half decade. Private rents are at their highest recorded levels and people continue to struggle with the cost of living. Housing waiting lists sit at 1.2 million and there are currently 131,000 children living in damaging temporary accommodation. This is not sustainable.

2 Make private renting affordable

In addition to passing the long-awaited Renters (Reform) Bill, to abolish unfair evictions, we need a plan to make private renting more affordable. To protect renters from being trapped in financial hardship or being pushed into homelessness, the next government must:

- regulate in-tenancy rent increases to protect tenants from being forced out by an unexpected rent hike
- unfreeze local housing allowance to cover at least the cheapest third of rents, so people can afford a home
- abolish the household benefit cap which limits the total amount of benefits that households can receive, to tackle homelessness

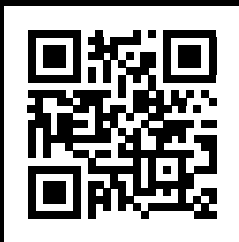
4 Improve housing rights and help to enforce them

Not everyone at risk of street homelessness has a legal right to emergency accommodation. Stronger and clearer housing rights are integral to tackling homelessness and people need access to advice, advocacy and support to enforce their rights. To make housing rights a reality, the next government must:

- introduce a legal right to suitable emergency accommodation and adequate support for everyone at risk of street homelessness
- restore legal aid for help with housing problems (such as disrepair)
- invest in accessible support services (such as Supporting People and Housing First) to prevent homelessness

**ACT NOW BUILD A BETTER FUTURE
AND END THE HOUSING EMERGENCY**

WE MUST **ACT NOW** TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE AND END THE HOUSING EMERGENCY.



Find out more and
join the fight for home

Please contact Shelter for more
information or queries at
public_affairs@shelter.org.uk



We exist to defend the right to a
safe home and fight the devastating
impact the housing emergency
has on people and society.

We believe that home is everything.

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