

It is a national scandal that one million children are growing up in bad housing.

Do you want to live in a country where over one million children suffer in bad housing?

If you think it is a scandal to abandon over one million children in this way, you need to take a stand.

Become a Shelter campaigner and fight with us to build a better future for our children:

Register today at www.shelter.org.uk or ring **0845 458 4590** or complete and detach the freepost card below.

'All I want is somewhere a bit better. The kids want what they see on the TV. I just want them not to be ashamed any more.'

Mother of two, South London

Please cut along dotted line

Register your details here and you will receive regular emails letting you know what you can do and other information about Shelter's work and how to support us.

Title	<input type="text"/>	* Please tick here if you are under 18	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full Name	<input type="text"/>		*
House Number/Name	<input type="text"/>		*
Street	<input type="text"/>		*
Town/City	<input type="text"/>		*
Postcode	<input type="text"/>		*
Telephone	<input type="text"/>		
Email	<input type="text"/>		*

* Denotes mandatory field - please complete these fields in full.

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We will never release your personal details to any organisation outside Shelter for mailing or marketing purposes. Please only give your phone number or e-mail address if you're happy for us to contact you in this way. If you give us your mobile telephone number we may also contact you by SMS text message.

Registered charity number 263710

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Bad housing wrecks lives

We are the fourth richest country in the world, and yet millions of people in Britain wake up every day in housing that is run-down, overcrowded or dangerous. Many others have lost their home altogether. Bad housing robs us of security, health, and a fair chance in life.

Shelter believes everyone should have a home.

We help 100,000 people a year fight for their rights, get back on their feet, and find and keep a home. We also tackle the root causes of Britain's housing crisis by campaigning for new laws, policies and solutions.

We can only do this with your help.

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Shelter



Toying with their future

The hidden cost of the
housing crisis

Shelter





'We give shape to our buildings,
and they in turn shape us'

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister, 1943

Toying with their future

This report reveals that over one million children in Britain wake up every morning in bad housing.

Housing is fundamental to every part of a child's development. It is something most of us take for granted. Children need a home to feel safe, keep warm and stay healthy. Bad housing wrecks their lives, makes them sick, unhappy and under-achieve at school.

Britain is being pulled in two directions. While many people benefit from soaring house prices, the dark side of the boom spreads unnoticed. Large numbers of people are forced to languish in terrible housing with little hope of change. Their children are suffering the consequences.

It doesn't have to be this way. But until society addresses this problem, one million children will continue to suffer.

It's time to put an end to this scandal.

Join Shelter's campaign.
www.shelter.org.uk



'The kids have got used to it because they've grown up here but if they go to somebody else's house they come back and say why is our flat all black down the walls and theirs isn't? At the end of the day they shouldn't have to live like this.'

Mother of three

A nation divided

Britain today is an increasingly polarised society. At one end of the spectrum there are those who have benefited from the property boom. At the other are those who are left far behind with little prospect of a decent home.

This report reveals, for the first time, that over a million children in Britain are living in housing that damages their health, their education and their future.

These children are living in damp, cold, infested housing or on estates that are shamefully neglected and ridden with fear and filth. Living at the whim of bad landlords who threaten and neglect. Living under the cloud of eviction and debt. Or they are literally homeless – not on the streets but in emergency housing waiting for somewhere permanent to live.

These children are living in every town and every area, right across the country, right now.

In a country increasingly obsessed with house prices and home improvement, this report tells the untold story of the million children who can only dream of the home so many take for granted.

It is a national scandal that this situation is tolerated in the fourth richest economy in the world. It is not an insurmountable problem. It is not the fault of the children. And it's not the fault of their parents. It is the fault of a woefully inadequate housing system incapable of providing the housing or the help families need.

That is why we want the public, government, councils and businesses to back a major campaign to ensure the next generation of children don't suffer.

You can play your part by joining Shelter's million children campaign.

Because bad housing wrecks lives.

- Over one million children in Britain live in bad housing – enough to fill the cities of Edinburgh, Bath and Manchester.
- Homelessness among families has increased by 17 per cent since 1997.
- People who live on deprived estates are twice as likely to be victims of crime than those from other estates.
- Over a million houses in Britain are unfit to live in.
- More than half a million families in Britain live in officially overcrowded housing.

'My doctor says this property is not suitable for children. So he wrote a letter, three times. The health visitor wrote a letter. But they never responded. Nothing at all. Nothing at all.'

Mother of three, Milton Keynes



Toying with their health

- One in 12 children in Britain are more likely to develop diseases such as bronchitis, TB or asthma because of bad housing.
- Homeless children living in bed and breakfast hotels are twice as likely to be admitted to A&E with burns and scalding.
- People with asthma are twice as likely to live in damp homes.
- 11 per cent of childhood accidents are a result of badly designed housing and dangerous fittings.

'The connections between the health of the nation and the dwellings of the population is one of the most important that exists.'

Florence Nightingale

The link between housing and health that was so obvious to Florence Nightingale, has been lost in the 21st Century.

Bad housing makes children sick. Children living in cramped, often emergency accommodation experience disturbed sleep, poor diet, hyperactivity, bedwetting and soiling, aggression and higher rates of accidents and infectious disease. And the effects are long lasting. Evidence suggests that children in poor housing are directly and adversely affected in later life, even if their housing conditions subsequently improve.

Decent homes are central to improving Britain's public health. We should be investing in housing to stop future generations suffering.

'Multiple housing deprivation appears to pose a health risk that is of the same magnitude as smoking and, on average, greater than that posed by excessive alcohol consumption.'

British Medical Association, 2003

'My 10 year old's asthma is getting worse because of the damp. Mould is growing on the carpets and I have to spend loads on heating instead of proper food for my kids.'

Mother, Flintshire.

Read before use.
End Up
through your



Toying with their education

- The number of children who could be losing out on a proper education because they live in bad housing would fill 33,000 classrooms.
- Homeless children miss out on a quarter of their schooling.
- One local authority estimated that 400 children were not going to school because of their housing problems.


Children who live in bad housing miss out on their education. Shelter's research shows that homeless children in emergency housing are often forced to move school frequently, losing out on valuable class time and stable influences. They can wait weeks, or months, for their education authority to find them a new school place.

Children in poor housing conditions do not have space or privacy to do their homework. Parents struggling to keep a roof over the family's head and food on the table simply cannot provide children with the attention and support they need to do their schoolwork.

The insecurity and stigma of living in bad housing can lead to behavioural problems which in turn lead to these young people being labelled as 'problem children'. They are bullied by their peers, leading to absenteeism. Teachers and education welfare officers are often not trained to recognise the signs or understand the needs of children in these circumstances.

'Every day I see children's education suffer because of their housing. Absenteeism, behavioural problems – caused by housing. And these children are pigeonholed from an early age – when it's not their fault.'

Headteacher, Holy Name Primary School, Manchester



'I've had letters from school telling me the kids smelt really bad. The teachers thought the kids had wet themselves but it was just their clothes that stank from being in the flat. I'd washed them and everything, but it doesn't help, everything stinks.'

Mother of three, Hatfield

Toying with their happiness

Shelter's research shows that the lives of many children in Britain are characterised by upheaval and ruined by constant, lurking insecurity. Instead of having a place to call home, they find themselves shoved from pillar to post, month after month. Without firm foundations, they grow up uncertain of their place in the world.

We work with many children living in bad housing who exhibit behavioural problems such as mood swings, hyperactivity, depression, reluctance to eat, disturbed sleep and bed-wetting.

The long-term cost to them, to their parents and to society is profound.

Housing is a major cause of adult poverty. If children do not have a decent home, they spend the rest of their lives running to catch up, lagging behind their peers. Parents go without to make sure their children fit in with everyone else at school – but they still go home to second-rate homes in second-rate neighbourhoods. They deserve better.

One in a million

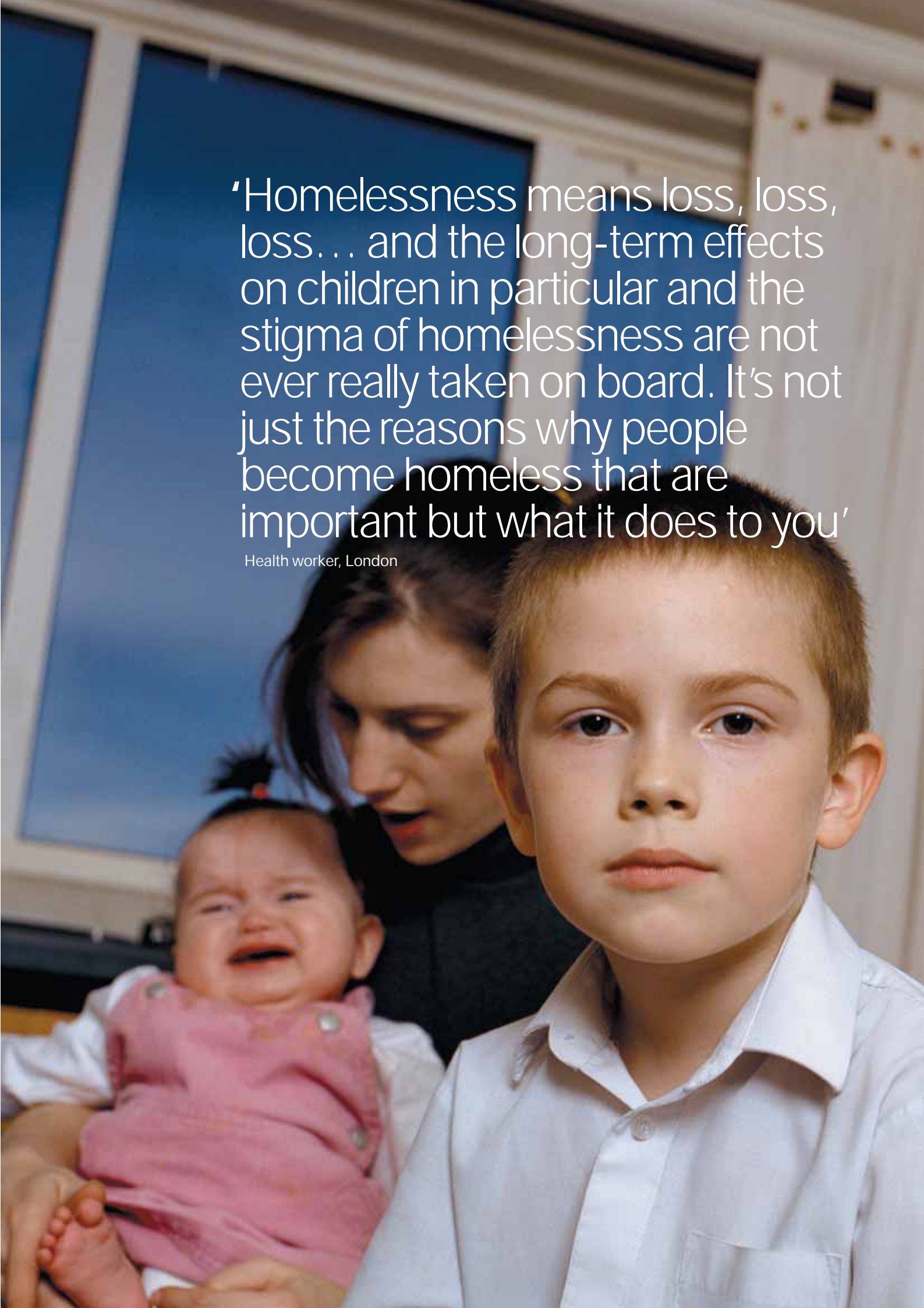
Sarah and her six year old fled domestic abuse and had to live in emergency housing for a year. Sarah is sick with worry about her daughter's future:

'It's been the worst for my six year old. She had to move school when we moved. I just had her first school report and she didn't do as well as I expected.'

'When we were living in the refuge she cut her hand on razor blades. Suddenly we were living with twelve other families and there were drug addicts there. Another child made sexual remarks to her and when I complained I was just told he had some disorder. He was nine. It was terrible there. We were three in a bed. I couldn't cook for them. In the end we had to leave because of that boy. She often talks about it.'

'She's six years old and she's depressed. She seems to be crying all the time. She's insecure. She can't be classed as normal at school. She takes it out on me.'

'She's always asking: Why can't we have a house? Why haven't we got one? I'm hoping she'll come out of it the other end but you just don't know.'

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a black turtleneck, holding a baby in a pink outfit who is crying. In the foreground, a young boy with short brown hair, wearing a white collared shirt, looks directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background shows a window with a blue sky.

'Homelessness means loss, loss, loss... and the long-term effects on children in particular and the stigma of homelessness are not ever really taken on board. It's not just the reasons why people become homeless that are important but what it does to you'

Health worker, London

Why has it come to this?

Why has it come to this?

We live in a society starkly divided – between those reaping the benefits of the property boom and those unable to find or afford a place to call home.

Rocketing house prices are not good news for everyone

Since 1960, the price of a loaf of bread has risen six-fold, but the average house is over 60 times more expensive to buy.

Rocketing house prices and lack of affordable housing have, in many areas, made it impossible for families to buy or rent a home. This is felt hardest by those at the bottom of the pile compounding homelessness and overcrowding.

We are not building enough homes

House prices are high partly because fewer homes are being built today than at any other time since the Second World War.

Over two million council houses have been sold off in the last 20 years and investment in social housing is around half the level of a decade ago. The lack of social housing means the number of people living in emergency housing is at a record high.

And the wrong houses are in the wrong places

Excessive demand for housing in urban property hotspots and rural areas has priced ordinary families out of areas where jobs and services are readily available. In other areas, the bottom has fallen out of the market, leaving estates where no-one can sell their homes and where no-one wants to live.

Over 855,720 homes in Britain stand empty. Many are in terrible condition, in areas of high unemployment, high crime and no amenities. No-one wants to live in these abandoned areas.

Landlords exploit tenants

Many people still suffer at the hands of unscrupulous landlords.

Half the housing provided by private landlords doesn't meet official standards. Tenants find it difficult to complain about their conditions because their landlords can easily evict them. One in five tenants living in private rented housing have their tenancy deposits wrongfully withheld by their landlord.

The system has broken down

When things change or an emergency happens, families often need help to find accommodation or to stop them losing their home. Without this support, they can end up passed from pillar to post and excluded from their home and community.

Services to help families are at crisis point. Nearly every council in Britain is desperately short of social work staff – and not enough trainees are being recruited to the profession. Housing benefit often takes weeks to sort out and often doesn't cover the cost of rent. Families even face eviction just because their benefits are not paid. Advice available to people with housing problems is patchy at best, and non-existent at worst. Services are failing some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

'It seemed that the whole system was working against us. One bit of the council would refer us to another. We couldn't get housing benefit for weeks. I couldn't get a school place for my two. The council put us in a hostel and then a house – but the house had no furniture and no-one could help us.'

Mother of two, North East



Toying with their futures

A decent, warm, safe home should be the right of every child in this country. Over a million children do not have that right and are suffering because of it.

That is why Shelter is launching the million children campaign.

Change will only happen if the public demand action.

The UK Government, Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly must commit to ending bad housing for the next generation of children.

Year by year, the drive to provide decent, affordable homes has slipped down successive governments' agendas. We cannot afford for this to continue.

It is time for us to re-evaluate priorities. Solving the housing crisis will need significant investment and this will affect us all. But this crisis is already taking an enormous toll on our society:

- Children in bad housing are growing up without the health and education that they need to realise their potential and contribute to our economy in the future.
- Whole areas of our towns and cities are blighted by the long-term effects of neglected housing estates, suffering from chronic levels of high unemployment, addiction, poverty and lack of aspiration.
- We are wasting millions of pounds on unnecessary NHS spending.

Five point plan to solving the housing crisis:

More investment for new homes

Shelter's research shows that we need to dramatically increase investment in building new homes for people who need them.

More investment to improve homes in disrepair

Poor conditions must be addressed and local councils need the resources to be able to do this.

Better regulation of landlords

More effective regulation of private landlords would ensure rented homes are safe, in decent condition and secure. We need to create a private rented market that provides stable homes for people on lower incomes.

More support services to prevent homelessness

Services that help prevent people becoming homeless in the first place, such as advice and ongoing support, need to be made more widely available and better targeted.

Neighbourhoods that secure children's health and well-being

Children need to feel safe in their neighbourhoods and have the space they need to grow and play. We need to invest to ensure all neighbourhoods give children the best start in life.

'I felt I had to write. The children are suffering quite severely. It cannot be healthy for a family living in these housing conditions. I really feel they have suffered enough.'

Headteacher, London school in letter to local MP, 2003









'I'm 13 and I've stayed in ten houses, about six or seven bed and breakfasts, about five temporary houses. That's 21 times all together that I've moved.'

13-year-old, Glasgow