

**THE PEOPLE'S
MANIFESTO
FOR**

F  **IR**

**HOUSING
IN BIRMINGHAM**

**BIRMINGHAM
FAIR HOUSING
CAMPAIGN**

THE PEOPLES MANIFESTO FOR FAIR HOUSING

BACKGROUND

Official statistics show the extent of the housing crisis that besieges our city. The testimonies of our people bears witness to the devastating impact it is having on their lives. **There is no hiding this truth – we are facing a housing crisis in our city.** Each year the situation worsens, and more people fall victim to a housing system that is simply not working for our people.

Thousands of our fellow Brummies are: homeless – stuck in limbo in emergency and temporary accommodation; trapped waiting for a social rent home because there simply aren’t enough; plagued by unsafe housing riddled with mould and damp in both private and socially rented housing; squeezed into poverty by spiralling rents and unaffordable house-prices; discriminated against because of their identity or income levels; exploited instead of supported, by those who seek to profit from housing the most marginalised within our communities.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Birmingham Fair Housing Campaign has carved out a ‘People’s Manifesto for Fair Housing’. Our campaign brings together people directly affected by the housing crisis as well as our allies. This is our vision for change and our call to action.

**Power concedes
nothing without
a demand.**

– FREDRICK DOUGLAS, SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNER, ABOLITIONIST

OUR VISION

FOR EVERYONE IN OUR CITY TO HAVE AN AFFORDABLE, SAFE AND SECURE HOME AND FOR THIS TO BE A HUMAN RIGHT.

We demand:

- 1. Our political leaders and decision-makers declare a housing emergency in our city.**

WE WANT SOCIAL HOUSING

We want good quality social rent housing, which is eco-friendly, fit for purpose, instils pride, meets the needs of those most affected by the housing crisis, and enables Brummies to thrive. We believe this is the leading solution to the housing emergency in our city.

For this reason, we demand:

- 2. All our political leaders and decision makers:**
 - Take responsibility and urgently respond to the housing crisis by using their powers and influence to increase the supply of social rent housing in Birmingham.
- 3. Our MPs use their power and influence to lobby central government to:**
 - Ensure that the planning system serves the interest of people before the interest of private developers.
 - Provide the funding needed to build a new generation of social rent housing in our city.
- 4. Our West Midlands Mayor:**
 - Wins investment for our city for the delivery of social rent housing.
 - Ensures private developers deliver social rent housing.
 - Prioritises public land for social rent housing.
- 5. Birmingham City Council:**
 - Ensures our planning system places people’s interests before those of private developers by prioritising the delivery of social rent homes and closing all planning-loopholes.
 - Establishes an ‘independent community scrutiny panel’ to scrutinise the financial viability of delivering affordable housing for all planning applications.
 - Increases and meets the target set by Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust for building social rent housing.
 - Ensures all estate regeneration schemes return the same amount or more social rent housing.
 - Prioritises public land for social rent housing.
 - Steps up action on empty properties and brings them into use for social rent housing.

6. Property developers in our city:

- Recognise that people in our city desperately need social rent housing and meet section 106 planning obligations.

WE WANT RIGHTS FOR PEOPLE IN EMERGENCY AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

We want a ‘Charter of Rights’ for people in emergency and temporary accommodation which outlines a set of standards that can be expected from Birmingham City Council and accommodation providers.

To this end, we demand:

- 7. Birmingham City Council introduces and promotes a ‘Charter of Rights’ which includes the right for residents to:**
 - In the case of families, only be placed in emergency accommodation for a maximum of six weeks.
 - Only be offered emergency or temporary accommodation which meets the needs of the household and all legal standards (and which councillors, council officers, landlords and letting agents themselves would be willing to live in).
 - Prior to moving in, receive an inspection certificate which confirms that the property meets the required legal standards and has adequate and fully functioning cooking facilities and washing machines.
 - Have a clear commitment to maximum waiting times for ‘urgent’ and ‘non-urgent’ repairs in emergency and temporary accommodation. For ‘urgent repairs’ to be defined ‘as those which impact on the health, safety, and security of the residents’ and for repairs to be undertaken swiftly and thoroughly.
 - Have spot checks undertaken on all accommodation providers to ensure compliance with standards.
 - Receive an effective ‘personal housing plan’ and where necessary, receive housing-related support.
 - Be kept informed and given regular updates on their move from emergency to temporary housing or their application for social rent housing.
 - Have access to a comprehensive local authority complaints procedure to make complaints about emergency and temporary accommodation providers.
 - Have the ‘Charter of Rights’ readily available in community languages.

WE WANT RIGHTS FOR RENTERS

We want a ‘Charter of Rights for Renters’ which ensures all rented properties meet legal standards for renting and all repairs are undertaken swiftly and thoroughly. We want a national landlord register, and we want to end the insecurity faced by our renters due to spiralling rents and the use of Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions.

For this reason, we demand:

8. All social, registered social and private landlords, as well as letting agents:

- a. Ensure all properties meet legal standards (which councillors, council officers, landlords and letting agents themselves would be willing to live in).
- b. Ensure all repairs are undertaken swiftly and thoroughly.

9. All our political leaders lobby national government to:

- a. Support a Renters’ Reform Bill which:
 - i. Protects renters and scraps Section 21 “no fault” evictions.
 - ii. Introduces a national landlord register.
 - iii. Creates a body to regulate letting agents.
 - iv. Provides additional powers and financial resources for local authorities to enforce decent standards and good conditions in the private rented sector.
- b. Develop long-term solutions to make private rents more affordable and give Birmingham City Council more powers to ensure landlords charge fair rents for a good service.
- c. Raise housing benefit so that local people can afford average rents in Birmingham and aren’t squeezed out.
- d. Scrap the unfair shared accommodation rate for under 35s.
- e. Support those struggling to pay their rent, for example by increasing funding for Discretionary Housing Payments (and make them more consistent and reliable).
- f. Define reasonable timescales for ‘urgent’ and ‘non-urgent’ repairs.

10. Our West Midlands Mayor:

- a. Establishes a ‘Housing Standards Commissioner’ to help drive up conditions in the rented sector (both social and private rented homes).

11. Birmingham City Council:

- a. Introduces and promotes a ‘Charter of Rights for Social and Private Renters’ which should include information on:
 - i. The standards which renters can expect in rented properties.
 - ii. How to make complaints to private landlords about bad standards and disrepair.
 - iii. How to challenge unlawful discrimination, including ‘No DSS’ in private renting.
 - iv. How to challenge unfair rents.
 - v. Deposit schemes and disputes.
 - vi. The role of Private Rented Services Team and the level of service which can be expected.
 - vii. The role of the Housing Ombudsman and how to make complaints to them.
- b. Lobby central government for additional funding for the Private Rented Services Team for it to adequately respond to the problems faced by private renters in our city.
- c. Proactively uses existing powers to enforce conditions and repairs in the private rented sector and deal with rogue landlords.
- d. Lobby central government for a national landlord register and introduce a local landlord licensing scheme which requires all private landlords (including landlords of all houses in multiple occupation) to apply every two years and meet the legal requirements for renting for them to receive a license to enable them to rent. This will help improve standards for renters and prevent the over concentration of HMOs in neighbourhoods.

WE WANT AN END TO DISCRIMINATION

We want Birmingham to be an inclusive city where everyone is treated equally, fairly and with respect. We want tougher action to be taken against landlords and letting agents who unlawfully discriminate against people based on their identity or because they claim benefits.

For this reason, we demand:

12. All our political leaders and decision-makers:

- a. Work towards ending all forms of discrimination in the housing sector, including discrimination towards people on benefits through ‘No DSS’ practices.

13. Our MPs lobby central government to oppose:

- a. The ‘Right to Rent’ checks which is leading to discrimination against migrants.
- b. The ‘Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill’ which will criminalise nomadic communities and violate their human rights.

14. Birmingham City Council:

- a. Promotes a ‘Charter of Rights’ for private renters which makes it clear that all forms of discrimination in the private rented sector, including ‘No DSS’, is unlawful and how this can be challenged.
- b. Ensures that it does not promote or contract any landlord that advertises ‘No DSS’.
- c. Establishes a process for private tenants to report discriminatory landlords and letting agents.
- d. Monitors and publishes the allocation of Discretionary Housing Payments to ensure fairness and equality.
- e. Locates policies relating to Traveller sites in ‘Housing Policy’ rather than under ‘Anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes’.
- f. Builds a permanent site for Traveller communities by applying for funding available through the government’s ‘Affordable Homes Programme’.
- g. Provides smaller, well-managed transit sites with adequate facilities.
- h. Introduces a policy of ‘negotiated stopping’ for all road-side encampments.
- i. Employs a Traveller Liaison Officer.

WE WANT HOUSING WITH COMPASSION

We want people living in supported accommodation to be decently housed and have adequate support. We want providers of exempt supported housing and asylum housing who are failing to provide decent housing and adequate support to residents in our city to be held to account.

For this reason, we demand:

15. Exempt and asylum housing providers:

- a. Ensure all properties meet legal standards for occupancy.
- b. Ensure all repairs are undertaken swiftly and thoroughly.
- c. Ensure residents receive adequate support that is ‘more than minimal’.

16. Our MPs and West Midlands Mayor lobby central government to:

- a. Provide Birmingham City Council and the Regulator for Social Housing with the resources and powers of enforcement over rogue exempt supported housing providers.
- b. Ensure all support workers in exempt supported housing are DBS checked.
- c. Ensure that the DWP defines the minimum level of support which should be available in exempt supported housing, for providers to be exempt from LHA rates.

- d. Provide funding and support for local authorities who are asylum dispersal areas so that inspections of asylum accommodation can be properly carried out.
- e. House people seeking asylum with dignity in communities and not in reception centres.

17. Birmingham City Council:

- a. Proactively uses its enforcement powers and where necessary takes action for non-compliance, to ensure that providers of supported exempt housing and asylum housing meet legal standards.
- b. Ensures that Birmingham Children’s Trust provides an additional 28 days’ notice and housing support for children and families who become entitled to homelessness assistance, to allow them time to find suitable accommodation and prevent them from becoming homeless.
- c. Lobbies for greater powers to regulate exempt supported housing providers.

WE WANT AN END TO HOMELESSNESS

We want early intervention and support for our fellow Brummies, to prevent them from becoming homeless.

For this reason, we demand:

18. Our political leaders lobby central government to:

- a. Provide funding for Birmingham City Council to fund early intervention work, independent advocacy, and provide adequate support services for people most at risk.

19. Birmingham City Council:

- a. Prioritise work which addresses the underlying root causes of why some of our fellow Brummies are becoming homeless, to prevent it.

JOIN US!

We believe by working together and building on some of the positive work already taking place in our city – we can make our vision a reality.

For this reason, we call on our politicians and decision makers to work in partnership and pledge to take action in support of the ‘People’s Manifesto for Fair Housing’ in Birmingham.

We call upon our faith, union and civic society leaders to endorse our manifesto and stand in solidarity with us.

And we invite our fellow Brummies to join our campaign and support our manifesto – so that together we can win fair housing for Birmingham!

SUPPORT, SIGN, SHARE OUR
MANIFESTO HERE:

[SHELTER.ORG.UK/BFHC](https://shelter.org.uk/bfhc)

JOIN HERE:

BFHC@SHELTER.ORG.UK

FOLLOW US HERE:

 [@BHAMFHC](https://twitter.com/BHAMFHC)



THE PEOPLES MANIFESTO FOR FAIR HOUSING IS ENDORSED BY:



To see a full list of supporters, visit: [SHELTER.ORG.UK/BFHC](https://shelter.org.uk/bfhc)

