

IMPACT REPORT

2023/24





**OUR FIGHT HAS NEVER
BEEN MORE IMPORTANT.
TOGETHER WE CAN HELP
TO CHANGE THE HOUSING
SYSTEM, SO THAT
EVERYONE HAS
ACCESS TO A
DECENT, SAFE
AND AFFORDABLE
HOME.**





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INTRODUCTION

FROM HELEN BAKER AND POLLY NEATE CBE

Housing is taking a more prominent place in the public and political debate than at any time since Shelter launched our current strategy in 2019.

It is undeniable that the housing emergency is more severe than it has been for decades, and Shelter must continue to lean into its purpose: to defend the right to a safe home. We are far from ending rough sleeping. We haven't built enough social homes, and private rents and evictions are at record levels. Daily, we see families pushed into grim and unsafe hostels, B&Bs and worse, miles away from their support networks, schools and health care. Children are sharing beds and have nowhere to play, eat or do homework. But we know the solution to the housing emergency. Together with our supporters we can fight for people's housing rights on the ground, and secure the delivery of 90,000 social homes a year for ten years in England. The government needs to take action.

Shelter will continue to work locally and nationally to tackle the root causes of unfit housing and homelessness. Our frontline services are now firmly focused on lasting change for individuals, families and communities and are working in new and innovative ways. Our national helpline and online advice are still dedicated to meeting the urgent needs of people facing the trauma of homelessness. We have so much to be proud of. Last year we directly supported 34,084 people across our emergency helpline and webchat, as well as our 11 community hubs in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Blackburn, Norwich, Bournemouth, Plymouth, Newcastle, Bristol, Birmingham and Sheffield.

STANDING WITH COMMUNITIES

We have continued to fight housing injustice in communities, joining forces with other grassroots organisations and people with lived experience of homelessness. Through our community model we empower people individually to improve their housing situation, and we also partner with other local organisations to develop the skills and knowledge to recognise and support people with housing problems. This means we've more easily been able to reach those most acutely affected by the housing emergency, who are often harder to access.

Through this approach, more individuals and families at the sharp end of the housing emergency have had their rights upheld, helping them find security and hope for the future. On page 9 you will read the story of Kathy and Steve, who are involved in a partnership between our Bournemouth Hub and a local community centre ensuring that people receive early advice, before they reach crisis point

FIGHTING ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

In the last year, we have worked with supporters directly affected by the housing emergency, and a coalition of partners and communities to call for reform of the private and social rented sectors.

Nearly
1.3 MILLION
HOUSEHOLDS
are on social housing
waiting lists

Over
112,000
HOUSEHOLDS
are homeless in temporary
accommodation.
- the highest number ever

We've successfully campaigned alongside Grenfell United for big changes to the way social housing is managed and maintained. Parliament has now passed the long-awaited Social Housing Regulation Bill into legislation, improving safety and living conditions for millions. On page 12 you can read more about our contribution to bringing this legislation to fruition.

The root cause of this emergency remains the same: the lack of political will to invest in truly affordable social homes. That's why we have used the general election to provide a sharp focus for our campaigning work. Last year we produced an election manifesto – and we are incredibly proud that it was genuinely co-produced with people with lived experience of the very worst of the housing emergency.

OUR IMPACT IS YOUR IMPACT

We are not just here to pick up the pieces. We are here to help people change the way they are treated, both locally and nationally, for good. The reality however, is that there's no way we can do this on our own. Shelter is a community that wants to make a difference, and we stand side by side with our supporters to make this happen. Without your funding for our work and your voice amplifying our calls for change, we would not be moving towards a housing system that works for everyone. Over the next several pages you'll read about the strides we have taken on that journey in the past year. We still have a long way to go, and we are deeply grateful to you for being on this journey with us.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Baker".

HELEN BAKER
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Polly Neate".

POLLY NEATE CBE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE

ACROSS OUR SERVICES IN ENGLAND IN 2023/24

15,975

households received advice
from our emergency helpline

12,203

households came to our local hubs
in England for advice and support

Our legal advice services
worked with

4,673

HOUSEHOLDS

Our professional advice
services responded to

16,293

QUERIES

from other organisations
needing our housing expertise

Our justice services
assisted

3,971

CASES

with people in custody
and in the community

7.1 MILLION

visits to our Shelter England online
advice and services pages

15,577

conversations were had on our webchat service

TOP 10 ONLINE ADVICE PAGES

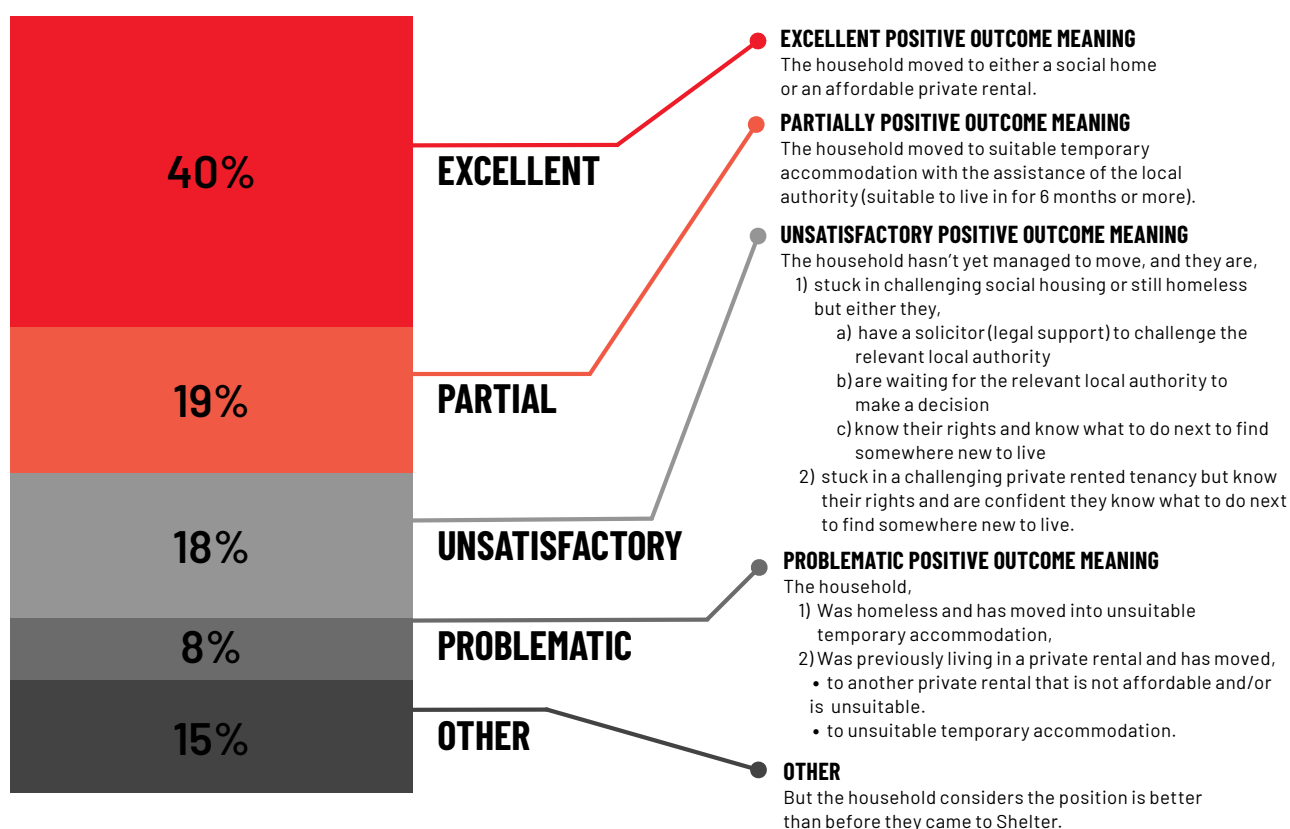
- 1 Private renting
- 2 Homelessness
- 3 Eviction
- 4 Repairs
- 5 Benefits
- 6 Council housing association
- 7 Tenancy deposits
- 8 Repossessions
- 9 Downloads and tools
- 10 Home ownership

WITH SUPPORT FROM OUR
HUBS OR EMERGENCY HELPLINE:

12,900

households (48%) saw a positive change in their housing situation

Our ambition for everyone is that they have a safe, settled and affordable home. We wanted to know how many households experiencing a positive change had achieved this standard, to better understand what advice can do for people in the midst of the housing emergency.



These results demonstrate that as important as our advisory support is to people at the sharp end of the housing emergency there are limits to the impact our services alone can deliver in any one year. This is why it is so important that we continue to work for change: with individuals, in communities and across society and why your support to improve renters' rights and to pressure the government to build social housing at scale is so crucial in the fight to end the housing emergency for good.

*We asked households who reported a positive outcome in their housing due to our involvement and had either moved, decided they had to move but hadn't yet done so or were homeless when coming to Shelter. This represented a smaller section of the 717 households reporting a positive change in their housing situation because of Shelter (530) and did not include those that, as part of their positive change involved staying where they were.

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Shelter is embedded in the communities we work with. In our Bournemouth Hub, we have 3 Housing Rights Workers who provide advice and support on housing and homelessness issues. They deliver casework face to face at the hub, via telephone and in the community. Our team supports people to find safe and affordable homes, keep and improve conditions in their current homes, and coordinate additional support from other specialist agencies.

We also use our expertise to upskill workers at other organisations working in the local community. We work locally to deliver advice and rights awareness workshops to grassroots community groups, helping to build capacity within communities to address their issues in a way that works for them.

West Howe in Bournemouth is among the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. West Howe Community Enterprises is a volunteer-run community group who work with local people to improve their lives and the area, making it a nicer place to live. They are a testament to the area's community spirit.

Kathy is part of the volunteer team at Community Enterprises. Having lived in the area for 53 years, she now runs a community food security project and a drop-in advice session every Wednesday. Anyone can attend the drop-ins to get support with issues like cost of-living concerns, food vouchers, and support with household bills.

Steve, a Housing Rights Worker at Shelter Bournemouth, says: *"When we opened the door at 9.30, there was a queue of people lining up for support, and we just worked our way through each case until the end of the day."*





We did about 13 weeks of drop-in sessions with Community Enterprises, to understand what the housing need was like in the local community. Once we understood this, in September 2023, alongside the local authority and Citizens' Advice Bureau we delivered a day's worth of workshops, with introductory advice for the volunteers around security of tenure, benefits and debt and the council's statutory homeless duties

STEVE, SHELTER HOUSING RIGHTS WORKER

268

housing rights awareness
workshops were delivered

1,876

attendees were
members of the public

1,578

were from other
organisations

552

were from
statutory organisations



Speaking about the workshops, Kathy says: *"I learned a lot about the Section 21 'no fault' evictions. I was making so many notes, and I still refer back to the workshop notes today when I'm working with people."* Steve continues: *"West Howe Community Enterprises then decided they wanted to have a go at doing their own drop-in service, which was absolutely amazing and not an outcome we expected was going to happen when we started working here. Every week Kathy delivers the drop-in, and I come as often as I can. I come down to support Kathy if any cases are complex and need to be referred, or need more urgent work."*

Kathy values Steve's support, saying: *"He's always at the end of an email or a phone call. Even though we have contact details for other organisations, they take a bit longer to get back, where Steven is always straight back in touch."*

Communities are at the centre of our work to make lasting changes to the housing system. Ending the housing emergency must happen at every level from the ground up, home by home, street by street, locally and nationally.

CAMPAIGNING

WITH FAMILIES ON LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) determines how much housing benefit private renters can receive each month to help them pay rent. With the urgent shortage of social homes across the country, there are extremely long waiting lists for people who are entitled to social housing. This means that many households have no choice but to rent privately. **1.8 million private renting households (roughly 4 in 10) now rely on housing benefit to afford a home.** For many, LHA is a vital lifeline standing between them and homelessness.

Since 2020 the LHA rate has been frozen by the government despite rental prices and the cost-of-living skyrocketing. Since January 2020, the average UK rent has increased by 23%. Research conducted by Shelter in 2024 showed that a third (34%) of private renters spend at least half their monthly household income on rent. With support clearly failing to meet people's needs, more and more households have fallen into homelessness.

For those who are able to keep their home, the freeze to LHA forces many to live in substandard properties. Often these properties are barely affordable but still in terrible states of disrepair and in areas with the least access to job opportunities. Poor housing can significantly damage people's physical and mental health, with issues such as mould, harassment, and the threat of "no-fault" eviction notices being served at any time.





In response to this, in July 2023 Shelter launched a campaign calling out the government for its failure to unfreeze housing benefit despite record levels of homelessness. We worked with Vicky, who was previously living in Temporary Accommodation with her children when she first came to Shelter for support. Vicky wrote an open letter to then Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt, telling him about the experiences of thousands of families like hers who were struggling with their housing. The letter gained over 31,000 supporter signatures, all demanding an end to the freeze. At the same time our campaigns team mobilised 10,000 people to write to their MP's outlining the urgency of the freeze and why it needed to end.

Shelter's Merseyside team also ran a project highlighting the impact of the LHA freeze in their local area. They gathered case studies showing how local people had been affected. These stories were then presented to local MP's and civil servants at the Department for Work and Pensions, who were building the case within government for an end to the freeze.

We also ran the #TryToRent social media challenge, encouraging people to search for "affordable" LHA homes in their local area and post screenshots of the results online. The results showed a shocking 0 affordable LHA properties, highlighting how unrealistically low the LHA rates are for anyone looking for a home.

We knew that presenting as a united front was important in changing ministers' minds, so we partnered with other organisations under the "Cover the Cost" campaign. Alongside organisations like Crisis, St Mungo's, Save the Children and the Local Government Association, we worked jointly to promote and share information about the freeze and ultimately to bring about its end.

After months of dedicated campaigning, last November it was announced that the freeze will finally be lifted. We are thrilled that Government has finally listened to real people and decided to end the freeze to LHA rates. With the freeze now at an end, more households will be able to afford to a safe and secure home, rather than being pushed into financial hardship or homelessness.

Ending the LHA freeze is just the beginning however. The Government must pass into law the Renters Reform Bill, which will give private renters the security and rights they deserve, and more importantly build a new generation of social homes.



LOOKING AHEAD

We are proud of our impact in 2023/24, which would not have been possible without our partners and supporters. But there is still work to be done. In the next year we will be strategically planning for the next four years alongside people with lived experience of the housing emergency, to guide us towards achieving the goals set out in our current 10 year strategy.



This year there will be a golden opportunity to make an impact with our campaigning. The UK have elected a new government and the first 100 days they are in power are crucial.

We are asking for:

- 1** Secure **concrete actions in the first 100 days** that will show that the government is prioritising solving the housing emergency, including (but not limited to) legislation, consultations and white papers.
- 2** Engage **key parliamentarians and decision-makers** in our policy and funding solutions to the housing emergency.
- 3** **Grow the movement** by recruiting and mobilising **diverse supporters**.
- 4** Engage **our existing supporters and lived experience campaigners** in **new actions** to pressure the government for commitments.
- 5** **Raise awareness** on the additional **challenges and barriers that Black and communities of colour face** in the housing emergency.



We will continue to fight for the building of more social homes, as we know that this is the solution to the housing emergency and we'll underpin this with robust evidence. We have already shown that building 90,000 social rent homes a year for the next 10 years could add £51.2 billion to the economy through our research project with the National Housing Federation.

IKEA has funded Shelter to deliver an ambitious two-year longitudinal research project looking at the impact of moving into a social home. We will reach out to social landlords and bring together evidence from social tenants who have recently moved into a social home.

Through our national and local services we'll continue to support people who need our help, whilst also enacting systemic change to secure rights and improve the system for the future. We'll find insight into the issues that people need help with, through the support of our partners such as HSBC UK, who are funding financial resilience support to help people impacted by the cost of living crisis.

And through our local services we'll go out into the community, alongside other organisations and groups to better understand and support people with their needs.

By working together with colleagues across the charity sector we can achieve greater impacts for homeless people. Funding from Oak Foundation for our Birmingham Homeless Families Project has allowed us to build knowledge and capacity across underrepresented communities, and build pressure for much-needed changes to the system that is putting so many families at further risk of poor housing and homelessness.

We will work further to find partners who share our vision to end the housing emergency. We are looking forward to working with new partners such as the People's Postcode Lottery, whose funding will help us to achieve our long-term strategic aims.

At the end of last year we broke yet another appalling record in the housing emergency. Government data showed us that 145,800 children were homeless in temporary accommodation with their families. This is a 15% increase in just one year. Temporary accommodation was never intended to exist outside of emergencies, but now it is ever-present, with families being kept in poor conditions for periods exceeding the agreed legal limits. Families like Lily's: Lily is a qualified nurse and together with her two children was made homeless when their landlord decided to sell the flat they were renting. They moved into temporary accommodation at the end of 2022, five miles from where six year old Isiah went to school and one year old Koby's child minder lived. This was a difficult time for the family but Shelter supported them through it. They were living in one room and her eldest would often fall asleep at school, as her youngest would keep him up during the night.

However, last July the family were able to move into a social home in their old area. Lily told us this:

"Being in our home is lovely. The best feeling is the security, knowing that we can always go back to the same place. at least not as quickly as it did. You guys had a massive impact of managing the process of being homeless, the financial and emotional support and also just know the legalities of everything. I have a quote that my friend gave to me when I was homeless that says "after the storm always comes the rainbow" and my house is my rainbow. We're by school, we've got all the things we need. As I'm speaking Isiah is riding his bike round the garden and that wouldn't have happened a year ago."

Together with supporters and partners we will fight the devastating impact the housing emergency is having on families like Lily's.



METHODOLOGY 23/24

This report is informed by the following:

- 1** Government official statistics on homelessness; rents, lettings and tenancies.
- 2** Research conducted by the Office for National Statistics and the Institute for Fiscal Studies.
- 3** Published research conducted, commissioned or jointly commissioned by Shelter.
- 4** Shelter analysis of government figures on the private rented sector and housing benefit.
- 5** Shelter Advice and Support Outcomes Survey for England 2023/24: The Outcomes Survey is a quantitative telephone and online survey that was carried out with approximately 2,000 clients from England by research agency BMG Research.
- 6** Shelter internal management records provides the figures on how many people we help each year through our emergency helpline, digital, face-to-face and legal services and engagement figures for campaigns.
- 7** Shelter project data was also gathered from a number of projects that collect routine information on outcomes and outputs throughout their delivery.
- 8** The Methodology and Appendices report contains more detailed information and can be accessed via england.shelter.org.uk/what-we-do/our-impact

CONTACT US

To discuss supporting Shelter or to hear more about the projects and services in this report, please get in touch via the following:

For corporate partners:
corporate@shelter.org.uk

For philanthropic partners:
philanthropy@shelter.org.uk

For trusts and foundations:
trusts@shelter.org.uk

For information on leaving a gift in your will:
legacies@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.

shelter.org.uk

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