

IMPACT REPORT

2025/26





A YEAR OF FIGHTING THE HOUSING EMERGENCY IN ENGLAND. **TOGETHER** WE CAN END IT.



Front cover: Belinda contacted a Shelter hub after sustaining an injury in dangerous temporary accommodation. After working with Shelter, Belinda and her son were able to move into a suitable social home.



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INTRODUCTION

FROM SARAH ELLIOTT

This year we have seen significant progress in the fight for home. Across the country, there is growing recognition that ending the housing emergency requires bold, long-term action. Yet the scale and urgency of the housing emergency continue to increase. We must stand together to meet the challenges ahead. Now is the time to turn momentum into lasting change, so that everyone has access to a safe and secure home.

Every three minutes, a household becomes homeless. Every twelve minutes, a family becomes homeless. Today, more than 135,000 households are living in temporary accommodation, including over 177,000 children, which is the highest number since records began.

Behind these numbers are real families. Families forced to live for months or even years in cramped rooms without basic amenities, children growing up without stability, and communities feeling the strain of a housing system that is no longer fit for purpose.

At the same time, more than 1.3 million households are waiting for a social home. Despite new homes being built, too many continue to be lost through sales, demolitions and tenure changes, highlighting a housing system that is failing to replace affordable homes at the scale needed. That is why we continue to campaign for long-term, sustainable solutions.

There is a growing public and political consensus that the housing emergency cannot continue unchecked. Voices from communities across the country are calling for meaningful change to the housing system. This moment presents a critical opportunity to reshape housing in England for good. Turning progress into lasting change requires us to work together, with a shared determination and vision to build a housing system that works for everyone.

A LANDMARK WIN FOR RENTERS

This year marked a major milestone in the fight for home as the Renters' Rights Act became a reality. This landmark achievement follows years of determined campaigning by renters, people with lived experience of the housing emergency, supporters and partners who refused to accept a system that too often left people vulnerable to unfair eviction and insecure housing. It is a powerful reminder that meaningful change happens when people come together and demand better.

The Renters' Rights Act represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebalance the system. It promises stronger protections, greater security and a fairer deal for millions of renters. This progress did not happen by accident. It happened because people refused to accept the status quo.

THE CASE FOR SOCIAL HOMES

That is why we must fight for a new generation of social homes. Our Build Social Housing campaign continues to make the case that social homes are not simply housing policy, they are essential national infrastructure. Social housing boosts the economy, and provides stability, opportunity and security. It helps children to thrive, supports good health and strengthens communities.

We welcomed the Government's £39 billion commitment to social and affordable housing as an important step forward. However, much more is needed. England needs at least 90,000 social rent homes built a year, for 10 years. We will continue to push for the delivery of these social homes across the country, ensuring that commitments become homes, and promises become real progress.

CHANGING LIVES, CHANGING THE SYSTEM

While we continue to fight for lasting change, it is essential that we continue to provide life-changing support for people facing some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

This year, tens of thousands of households from across England accessed vital support through our emergency helpline, webchat, local hubs, and legal services.

At the centre of every one of these cases is a person or family living at the sharp end of the housing emergency. We stand alongside people affected by the housing emergency to ensure their voices are heard.

From taking action in local communities, to challenging politicians in Westminster, this report shows the difference that can be achieved when people come together to fight for home. Creating meaningful and lasting change requires us to transform the systems that create housing insecurity in the first place.

As we look ahead, our focus is clear. We will continue to fight for the social homes which England urgently needs. We will work to ensure that hard-won housing rights are properly enforced and implemented, so that everyone can benefit from the protections they deserve.

The progress we have made this year belongs to all of us. To our supporters, campaigners, partners, volunteers and colleagues: thank you. Your commitment powers this movement and brings us closer to a future where everyone has a safe home.

We have much more work to do, but together we can end the housing emergency.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Elliott', written in a fluid, cursive style.

SARAH ELLIOTT
CEO

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE

ACROSS OUR SERVICES IN ENGLAND IN 2025/26

12,672

households received advice
from our emergency helpline

11,373

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

Shelter England's **legal
advice services** helped

4,346

HOUSEHOLDS

Our **professional advice
services** responded to

17,201

QUERIES

from other organisations
needing our housing expertise

Our **justice services**
assisted

7,309

CASES

with people in custody
and in the community

6.2 MILLION

visits to our Shelter England online
advice and services pages

24,647

conversations were had
on our webchat England service

After receiving support from Shelter...

28%

of people reported that
their **physical health**
had improved, and

41%

reported that their
mental wellbeing had
improved.

These figures are based on a representative
survey of 1,576 Shelter clients in England,
conducted by independent research
agency **M-E-L Research**

TOP 10 ONLINE ADVICE PAGES

- 1 Renters Rights Act Changes for Private Renters
- 2 Emergency Grants, Loans and Money Help
- 3 Section 21 Eviction
- 4 Emergency Housing from the Council
- 5 Check If Your Home is Overcrowded by Law
- 6 Section 21 Eviction - How to Check a Section 21 Notice is Valid
- 7 Homelessness - Get Help from the Council
- 8 Private Renting - Rent Increases
- 9 Section 21 Eviction - How Long a Section 21 Eviction Takes
- 10 Benefits - Moving from ESA to Universal Credit

11,500

households – representing 48% of those who received advice from the hubs or emergency helpline– saw a positive change in their housing situation and directly attributed this to the support they received.

UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT THE POSITIVE CHANGE

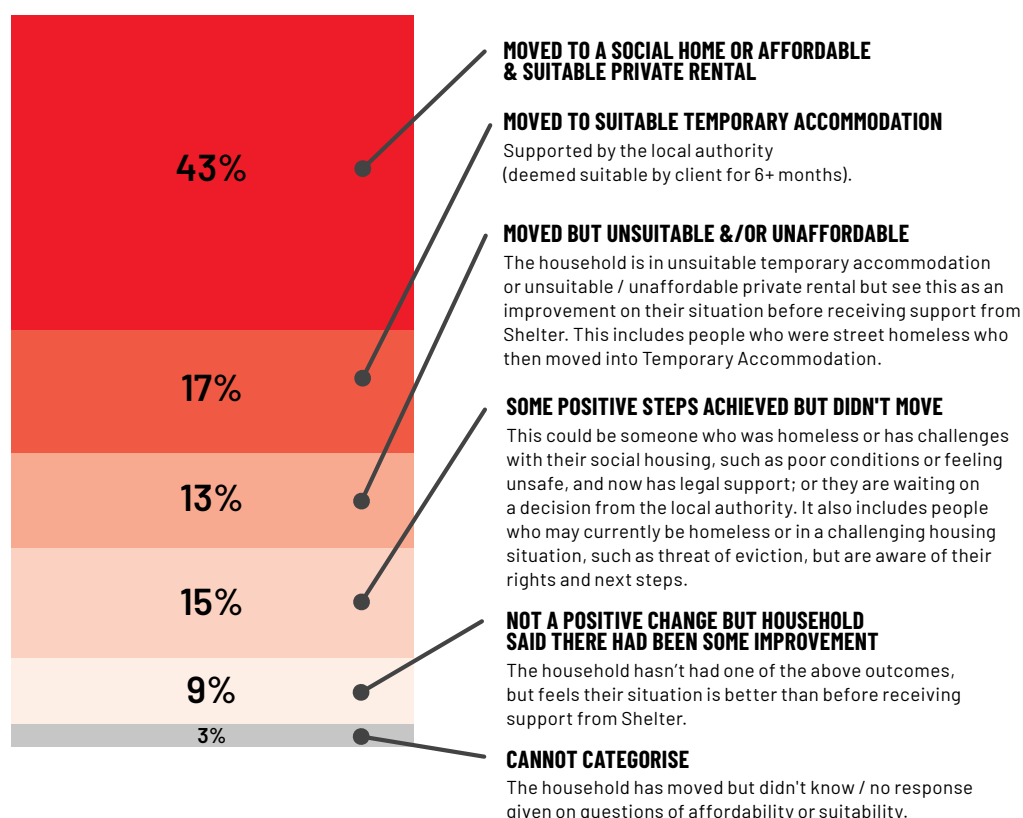
Our ambition for everyone is that they have a safe, settled and affordable home.

We wanted to know how many households who experienced a positive change in their housing situation had achieved this. Understanding this helps us assess the impact of our advice and what further action is needed to improve the system for people navigating the housing emergency.

We asked those who had seen an improvement in their housing situation to share more details about their experience. Their responses allowed us to assess the extent of their progress and categorise their positive outcomes using specific ranking levels.

Out of the 48% who had a positive outcome due to Shelter, the segment we asked achieved the following*.

This was an unweighted base of 398 (valid responses). Outcomes Survey 2025-26



Due to systemic challenges such as the critical shortage of social housing, our results show that while advisory, support and legal services are vital for those 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 strive for systemic change. Your continued support to improve and enforce the rights of renters and ensure the Government builds enough social homes is crucial in the fight to end the housing emergency for good.

Full data set can be found in the Methodology and Appendices report, which can be accessed using this link https://england.shelter.org.uk/what_we_do/our_impact. *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 546 households reporting a positive change in their housing situation because of Shelter (398) and did not include those that, as part of their positive change involved staying where they were.

IONA'S STORY

“When I first met the family, they were exhausted and overwhelmed. They were surviving on very little sleep and found it difficult to leave the flat,” - Hannah, a Support Worker in Shelter’s Bristol Family Service.

When Iona’s parents first approached Shelter’s Bristol Family Service, they were at breaking point. Following a period of homelessness, the family were given a final offer of accommodation from the council. However, despite a formal needs assessment being carried out, Iona’s needs had seemingly been completely forgotten about. The property was unsafe and unsuitable.

Iona, aged nine, is Autistic and non-verbal. When dysregulated, she becomes extremely distressed and requires constant supervision to stay safe.

Due to her autism, Iona is less aware of danger and required close supervision to keep her safe in the flat. Therefore, the fact that her family were placed into a first floor flat with a balcony and steep stairs leading directly onto a busy main road, presented serious and immediate safety concerns.

Whilst Iona’s father worked, her mother was alone caring for her and a baby under one. The layout of the flat made it impossible to safely leave with both children, leaving the family isolated indoors for days at a time.



Shelter Helpline Advisor



With no safe access to outside space or routine, the family's distress and sense of hopelessness only increased. That's when they approached Shelter's Bristol Family Service.

Iona's needs extend beyond housing. She is unable to attend mainstream school and requires Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision. At the time, Iona had been out of education for a year due to delays in her Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process, leaving her without the specialist support she needed.

"Her [Iona's] parents were very motivated to secure educational provision, but delays in the EHCP process meant this took significantly longer than it should have" Hannah explained.

The family's isolation deepened. The environment within the property was now becoming increasingly hostile. Neighbours were banging on the walls and shouting at the family to control Iona's behaviour. These confrontations left Iona's mother feeling frightened and unsafe, and Iona even more distressed.

Iona's parents worked closely with Hannah to evidence the risks within the property and advocate for their needs to be properly recognised. Shelter's legal team used this evidence to challenge the suitability of the flat, exposing serious failings in the council's assessment.



A turning point came when the family were offered a suitable three-bedroom home. With Shelter's support, they were able to move into the property and Shelter's DIY Skills Advisor helped to make the garden secure so Iona could play and regulate safely. The home gave them space, accessibility, and security.

The Family Service also helped the family access the financial support they were entitled to, easing financial pressure and enabling them to meet Iona's needs.

Shelter supported Iona back into education, fast-tracking her EHCP assessment. She is now attending a specialist SEND school where she is thriving. Her younger brother has now started nursery and has settled well.

"Since Iona has started at a specialist school, there has been a marked improvement in her mood," says Hannah. "She is now sleeping much better,

which has had a positive impact on the whole family as they are no longer sleep deprived."

With the new house, appropriate education and the right support in place, the family finally has a safe and stable environment where they can thrive.

"Suitable accommodation is not a luxury for families, it is essential, particularly for those with Special Educational Needs. A home is far more than just a physical structure. It plays a critical role in a child's development, wellbeing, and ability to thrive."

"When accommodation is unsuitable, the impact is not limited to one individual, it affects the entire family."

"Ultimately, a home should enable children to reach their full potential. When it does not, we are not simply failing to meet a housing need, we are limiting life chances."

CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE: RACISM IN HOUSING

"Growing up I experienced the instability of bouncing from place to place as my mother struggled to get housing. It was the same story for my Jamaican grandparents, who were labelled aggressive because they didn't speak the Queen's English and could barely cover their housing costs.... The blatant discrimination that my grandparents faced still exists today, it's often just in a different form." - Vanessa, Peer Researcher

Across the UK, too many people are still facing the sharp end of the housing emergency. With a household in England becoming homeless every three minutes, and homelessness now being almost twice as high as it was just ten years ago, we must address the housing emergency head on. An uncomfortable reality which is not talked about enough, is that the housing emergency does not impact everyone equally. People of Colour, particularly Black communities, are disproportionately affected by the housing emergency.

This year we made significant steps forward in achieving Shelter's strategic goals of embedding anti-racism and centring those most affected by the housing emergency in our work.

Special thanks to our Peer Researchers Ahmed, Andrea, Dani, Jamila, Joy, Simon, Tracy, Uche, Vanessa and Victoria.

THE RESEARCH...

In July 2025 we published ground-breaking research into the impacts of racism on people trying to access a social home: [‘My colour speaks before me’: How racism and discrimination affect Black and Black Mixed heritage people's access to social homes in England.](#)



Footnote: Peer Researchers use their lived experience and understanding of a social or geographical community to help generate information about their peers for research purposes. They may be involved in assisting with research design, developing research tools, collecting and analysing data, or writing up and disseminating findings.



This research was driven by an extraordinary group of 16 Peer Researchers who interviewed 46 people with similar lived experience. Their insights, creativity and leadership were central to every stage of the research, from design to delivery, and policy recommendations.

My Colour Speaks Before Me shines a light on the injustices and additional barriers Black and Black Mixed heritage people face when seeking a social home, historically and currently. Crucially, it also sets out practical solutions for removing those barriers. These policy solutions were produced by a Stakeholder Advisory Group of sector experts, academics, grassroots groups and charities, alongside Peer Researchers with Lived Experience and Shelter colleagues.

The Peer Researchers report documents people's experiences of racism within the housing sector,

and explores direct racism by housing officers, discriminatory policies and wider systems that embed and reproduce racism within the housing sector. Even after securing a home, discrimination often continues, particularly when residents raise concerns about their property being unsafe or unsuitable.

The report sets out ten recommendations for government, local authorities, housing providers and regulators. It provides clear and actionable steps that decision makers can take, from policy to practice to implementation. Together they form a roadmap for tackling racism in our housing system, from increasing access to social homes and improving transparency, to strengthening accountability and embedding anti-racist practice across the sector.

This work is critical, offering solutions and exposing the unequal burden of the housing emergency, and the role racism plays in deepening it. Black-led households face the highest rates of homelessness, and are almost [13 times more likely to be stuck in temporary accommodation](#) than White-led households. Across both private and social renting, a third (32%) of Black people with experience of homelessness [reported discrimination](#) from their landlord in a 2023 survey. Systemic and interpersonal racism continues to shape who has access to safe, secure and decent housing.

‘Everyone needs a place to call their own. Home, where you're safe, surrounded by supportive friends and/or family. - Uche, Peer Researcher

THE CAMPAIGN SO FAR...

Since launching the campaign, people have stood together to demand a fairer and more equitable social housing system with anti-racism put at the heart of social housing management.

Our campaign calls for [anti-racism to be a key feature of the new Competence and Conduct Standard](#) for social housing. This is a vital first step in making sure everyone is treated professionally and equitably when trying to access a social home.

We held a parliamentary launch event where Peer Researchers spoke passionately about their experiences and research, published analysis and generated media coverage showing that Black-led households are much more likely to spend extremely long periods in temporary accommodation than White-led households.

We handed in an open letter, penned by our Peer Researchers and signed by over 10,000 people, to the Government, calling for them to direct the Regulator to embed anti-racism as a key feature of the new standard. And when the Regulator recently [consulted on how it would implement the new requirements](#), over 700 Shelter supporters sent in consultation responses.

Our [billboard campaign helped to raise awareness of racism in the housing system](#), and over 100 people [shared their own experiences](#) or reasons for supporting our campaign, with hundreds amplifying our message online by sharing our videos and social media posts.

"I got involved in this project because I was sick and tired of Black and Black Mixed heritage people being overlooked by the social housing system and slipping through the net. It's leaving children without homes; this is never acceptable in my eyes." - Vanessa, Peer Researcher

By October 2025, the government directed the Regulator of Social Housing on the new Competence and Conduct Standard. They confirmed that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), alongside awareness of a range of needs and vulnerabilities (such as disabilities), will be included in the qualification's course content.

However, **while this is a welcome step forward, EDI training alone is not enough.** Our campaign for specific attention on anti-racism continues.

‘We need to get to the root of racism and to the root of what is causing us to be actively discriminated against. It can be quite difficult. But what you then find is when you do pull it out, things are able to grow better.’ - Joy, Peer Researcher

While this campaign marks an important step forward, our work is far from finished. The experiences shared by peer researchers make clear that racism continues to shape housing outcomes. Together with people with lived experience, supporters, and campaigners, we will continue pushing for the changes needed to create a housing system that is fair, equitable and with anti-racism at its core.



To read the report, visit – [My Colour Speaks Before Me](#)

You can also listen to the peer researchers via three short films:

[Simon's video](#), talking about his experience and participation in the research.

[Uche's video](#), talking about her experience and what needs to change

[Uche and Victoria discussing their experience](#) with campaigner Kwajo Tweneboa

We urge everyone to read the report, especially if you work within our social housing system.

LOOKING AHEAD

Providing direct support to people most impacted by the housing emergency will always be at the heart of our work. We are committed to continuing this critical work to help those who need it most.

However, the scale of demand and wider systemic issues mean that we simply cannot provide direct support to everyone who needs it. The only way we can reach everyone is by securing real change in the housing system. Not just in policymaking, but also on the frontline to ensure that policy is enforced and rights are upheld. Over the past year, we have helped thousands of households facing homelessness with our frontline services, seen landmark progress on renters' rights,

strengthened the case for investment in social housing and continued to amplify the voices of people with lived experience.

These are huge achievements, but they exist within the context of a housing emergency that continues to affect millions of people across England.

The scale of the challenge demands targeted and sustained action. That is why, as we enter the next year of our strategy, we are focused on clear, actionable goals.



We will continue the fight to deliver the social homes we need.

The housing emergency cannot be solved without a significant increase in genuinely affordable social housing. We will continue mobilising supporters, building public support, influencing decision-makers and working alongside our partners to turn political commitments into tangible outcomes. Through our national campaigns and local action, we will keep pushing for the social homes that communities urgently need.

We will protect and enforce housing rights. Legislative change, like the Renters' Rights Act and Awaab's Law, is only the beginning. The true test of any reform is whether it improves people's lives in practice. We will work to ensure that the law is upheld and people's housing rights are properly defended and enforced. Across all our work, our commitment to lived experience, anti-racism and equity remains unwavering.

We will continue campaigning for housing justice, holding decision-makers to account and helping people understand and exercise their rights. We know that housing injustice does not affect everyone equally, and are committed to exposing and confronting the systemic racism and discrimination at the heart of the housing emergency. We will hold to account those who violate people's rights and exploit power imbalances, and challenge public sector bodies who fail to meet their legal duties. Ending the housing emergency will require action from individuals, government, local authorities, housing providers, businesses, communities, and campaigners.

With legal support from Shelter, Georgia was successfully able to move into a permanent social home.



We will continue to build the broad coalition needed to secure long-term change, with lived experience and anti-racism at its heart. Whether involved with direct action, supporting our campaigns, donating time or money, this coalition will help us deliver our goals and ensure they are sustainable. It will take persistence, partnership and collective action.

THANK YOU

The progress highlighted throughout this report would not have been possible without the extraordinary support of people who believe in Shelter's mission.

To everyone who donated, left a legacy gift in their will, campaigned, volunteered, partnered with us or stood alongside us this year: thank you. Your solidarity helps us to fight for housing rights, campaign for a new generation of social homes and create a more equitable society, where families can make memories, put down roots and feel safe. Together, we are making a lasting impact and giving people real change.

Your support has helped people facing homelessness find safety. It has helped renters challenge unfair treatment. It has helped place housing firmly on the national agenda. And it has strengthened the movement working to realise a future where everyone has a safe, secure and affordable home.

The challenges ahead are significant. But so is the momentum we are building.

Together, we have shown that change is possible.

Together, we will continue fighting for a housing system that works for everyone.

And together, we can build a future where home is not a privilege, but a reality for everyone.



METHODOLOGY 25/26

This report is informed by the following:

- 1** Government official statistics on homelessness; housing supply; rents, lettings and tenancies and government press releases/ reports.
- 2** Published research conducted, commissioned or jointly commissioned by Shelter.
- 3** Published evidence briefings and policy reports on housing issues produced by Shelter.
- 4** Published academic research by Heriot-Watt University.
- 5** Shelter analysis of government figures on temporary accommodation.
- 6** Shelter Advice and Support Outcomes Survey for England 2025/26: The Outcomes Survey is a quantitative telephone and online survey that was carried out with approximately 1,500 clients from England by research agency M·E·L Research.
- 7** Shelter internal management records which provides figures on how many people we help each year through our emergency helpline, Helpline Plus, digital, face-to-face, legal and professional advice services, as well as engagement figures for campaigns.
- 8** Shelter project data was also gathered from a number of projects that collect routine information on outcomes and outputs throughout their delivery

The Methodology and Appendices report contains more detailed information and can be accessed via this link:
https://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

Andy and Dora contacted Shelter's Emergency Helpline after being illegally locked out of their home. Working together, Shelter, Andy and Dora were able to move into safe, secure accommodation.

"Shelter didn't let me down. Without them, I don't know where my family would be."

- Andy





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

Shelter, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9HU

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Photography by Michael Hani and Alexandra Smart. Where images feature people, model shots have been used to protect the privacy of people we support.