

SHELTER

Briefing: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Oral Parliamentary Questions

Michael Gove MP will face his first parliamentary questions on Monday 25th October as the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This is an important opportunity for the new Secretary of State to set out his plans and priorities for housing, and Shelter is asking MPs to submit questions on social housebuilding, on his plans to end rough sleeping for good, and on introducing an ambitious Renters' Reform Bill.

Build more social housing

Suggested question: To ask the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of social house building levels.

Background:

- In 2019/20, the number of social homes completed in England was 6,644. But the number of social homes that were sold (24,120) or demolished (4,676) was 28,796.
- This means there was a **net loss of 22,152 social homes last year alone**.
- We are losing far more social homes than we are building every year. **Since 2000, we have suffered a net loss of nearly half a million social homes.**
- At the same time, there are **more than 1.1 million households on waiting lists for a social home in England**.
- Very little of the Affordable Homes Programme funding goes towards building social housing, which is instead predominantly allocated to homes that cannot reasonably be described as affordable. For example, [Shelter analysis](#) found that only the richest 28% of private renters earn enough to access a [First Home](#) – the government's preferred discounted market tenure.
- While the government has made the welcome [announcement](#) that the new Affordable Homes Programme will deliver 32,000 new social homes, this will not go far enough to fill the growing shortfall.
- Shelter is calling on the government to increase investment in social housing, and **build at least 90,000 social homes a year** to end the housing emergency for good.

Supplementary questions:

- If we are to level up the country, we must start building good quality homes that families on low incomes can afford to live in. Does the Minister agree with me that building affordable housing must be at the heart of the levelling up agenda?
- Currently, most of the Affordable Homes Programme funding goes on homes that are out of reach to families on average and low incomes. At the same time, local people are being priced out of communities they've lived in their whole life. Does the Minister agree that building social homes is a crucial part of fixing the housing crisis?
- The Future Homes Standard will be in place by 2025, meaning all new homes will have to be compliant with net zero. This is a hugely important step in fighting the climate emergency. Will the Minister agree to speak to Shelter about investing in a pilot of carbon neutral, climate resilient social homes to prepare an innovation catapult for SMEs to deliver the Future Homes Standard across the country?



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Renters' Reform Bill

Suggested question: To ask the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his ambitions are for the Renters' Reform Bill.

Background:

- In the 2019 Queen's Speech the government announced a Renters' Reform Bill, intended to create a 'fairer and more effective rental market'. The government re-announced this in the 2021 Queen's Speech, committing to a 'Better Deal for Renters'. A White Paper was promised this autumn.
- The government first promised to scrap Section 21 'no fault' evictions back in 2019 and are currently consulting on how best to achieve this. **In removing Section 21, it is crucial that the government does not simply create new avenues to evict tenants** where landlords do not have to prove a legitimate reason for doing so. Loss of a private tenancy (often likely through Section 21) has been a leading cause of homelessness for the past 10 years.
- **Current legislation affecting the private rented sector is out of date and no longer adequate** – this is the government's chance to be ambitious and level the playing field, delivering for 11 million renters who feel left-behind and powerless in overpriced, substandard homes, unable to challenge bad landlord or agents due to fear of eviction.
- **To improve standards in rented accommodation, a national register must be introduced for landlords and agents.** England is the only country in the UK which does not have a register. This would improve accountability in the sector and facilitate effective enforcement against rogue operators.

Supplementary questions:

- The private rented sector has doubled in size since the last comprehensive piece of legislation was introduced for the sector back in the 80s. It can no longer be claimed that renting is a choice, or a short-term option. When will the Secretary of State bring forward the promised Renters' Reform Bill to update the sector and improve standards for those that live in it?
- Recent research from Shelter showed that 45% of private renters have been victim to illegal acts committed by their landlord or agent. England is the one nation in the UK which does not currently have a register for landlords and letting agents. A register could be used to improve accountability and standards across the sector, highlighting good landlords and identifying the bad. Will the Secretary of State commit to developing a national register for landlords and agents to ensure those bad operators can be held to account?
- Section 21 'no fault' evictions undermine renters' sense of security in the place they call home. Government have rightly promised to scrap these 'no fault' evictions in the upcoming Renters' Reform Bill. Can the Secretary of State assure England's 11 million renters that we will not only deliver on our promise to scrap Section 21, but we will ensure no other route is created for renters to be evicted without good reason?
- The Regulation of Property Agents working group reported in 2019 with recommendations to improve practice. Will the Secretary of State commit to introducing these recommendations for the lettings industry in the upcoming Renters' Reform Bill, as greater accountability for landlords must surely be matched by greater accountability for letting agents?



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Protect street homeless people

Suggested question: To ask the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to protect street homeless people.

Background:

- The 2019 Conservative Party manifesto pledged to end rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament.
- Government state that **37,000 people have been helped under 'Everyone In'**, with 26,000 helped into longer-term accommodation.
- But [recent research by Shelter](#) found that **fewer than 1 in 4 (23%) people had moved into settled accommodation** of at least six months.
- To protect lives, both during the ongoing pandemic and beyond, the government must have a strategy that learns lessons from 'Everyone In', including a thorough review of outcomes for those helped, and set out a roadmap to end rough sleeping.

Supplementary questions:

- How does the Secretary of State plan to build on the success of Everyone In to make sure that every one of the 37,000 people it helped has access to settled accommodation and do not return to rough sleeping?
- Will the Secretary of State set out a roadmap that will protect those still at risk of rough sleeping, tackle rent arrears accumulated during lockdowns, and invest in a new generation of social housing aimed at preventing homelessness?

