

HOMES FOR ALL

**Defend
Council
Housing**

Homes for All is a grassroots campaign alliance of council, housing association and private tenant groups, including Defend Council Housing, with trade unions, councillors and other labour movement organisations.

AUTUMN 2019

Council homes and rent controls win huge support

Housing is a central issue, now and in the coming general election. We are demanding action to end the housing crisis blighting the lives of millions. Homelessness has doubled since 2010. Right now, 210,000 children are registered as homeless, some of them living in containers. More of us are in temporary, insecure, unaffordable, sub-standard or unsuitable accommodation, destroying lives and costing £billions. Housing Benefit cost £21.9 billion in 2017-18 and the estimated cost to the NHS of poor housing is £1.4 billion a year.

It doesn't have to be this way. People around the country are fighting back. On the back of this leaflet is our Charter for Housing Action. Add your support, discuss it at your branch, affiliate to our campaign and join the action.

100,000 COUNCIL HOMES A YEAR

Within two weeks of Channel 4 broadcasting "George Clarke's Council House Scandal" 200,000-plus signed an on-line petition to demand building 100,000 new council homes a year, for 30 years. That's the scale of new and repurposed homes we need. To make it happen we have to create a united national campaign the government can't ignore.

Council housing is the non-market alternative that works. In 1980 one in

"An election...is entirely possible. But if the new Prime Minister doesn't show signs of tackling our acute housing crisis – and soon – it's an election he's likely to lose."

The Daily Telegraph 31.07.2019

three people in Britain lived in council housing, and millions of us have benefited from the truly affordable rent and lifetime tenancy a well-built, well-maintained council home brings.

Building support means rejecting the stigmatisation of council housing and the myth that it's "subsidised". Council housing pays for itself. It helps build and strengthen communities, jobs, family and support networks. A new generation of energy-efficient council homes isn't the only thing we need, but it is the key to ending the current market-driven misery.

Sign up to support the Charter for Housing Action – invite a speaker to your Party, union and community group. In the election, demand all candidates back George Clarke's call with long-term, direct, no-strings-attached investment in more and better council housing.

LABOUR CONFERENCE BRIGHTON

Listen to tenants – invest in council homes

at Community Base,
113 Queens Road,
Brighton BN1 3XG

with **Bellal Guenuni Grenfell United;**
Steve Turner Unite union assistant
General Sec; Shadow housing minister
(tbc); Brighton private renter; DCH

Tuesday
24
September
6pm

**DCH NATIONAL
MEETING –
Next steps**

**Sat 26 October 12-3pm
London (venue tbc)**

Contact info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk for details
ALL WELCOME

NEW COUNCIL HOUSING IS BACK – BEWARE OF FAKES

Councils are building more homes, despite the financial difficulties. Pressure on government has forced some concessions, including an October 2018 commitment to lift the borrowing cap. Government must be held to its word – but more important, we must restore direct grant funding to invest in existing and new homes.

In too many places, rents for new council-built homes are up to £40 a week more than existing council rents. Two-tier rents, some with time-limited tenancies, exploit desperation for new homes. But they are a wedge threatening all tenants.

Most councils have set up Local Housing Companies (LHCs) to build and manage new homes. LHCs could be a way to avoid Right to Buy, but they do not provide security, public accountability or transparency. Like housing associations, LHCs can become vehicles for privatisation, without a democratic say for tenants or local electors.

'It shows a callous disdain for residents'

"Manchester Life, a joint venture by the council and the Abu Dhabi United Group, has been criticised for serving tenants in Ancoats with section 21 eviction notices – now councillors plan to haul its boss into the town hall."

Manchester Evening News 28.08.2019

Councils should join MPs, trade unions and housing campaigners to fight for real council housing: high quality, truly affordable, secure, safe and democratically accountable. We're winning the argument. Now is not the time to be fobbed off with fake council housing.



Private renters, council and housing association tenants and trade unions link up to fight for homes and rights.



Private tenants are getting organised

Millions are forced into over-priced, under-regulated, often sub-standard private renting. Often paying half their income and more, renters have no security or rights. But some are getting organised and beginning to win

changes: on letting fees, and no-fault (section 21) evictions. They need support to make sure these happen. Councils, unions and tenant groups can help private renters organise locally.

Government consultation on ending s21 evictions closes on 12th October: see <https://landlords.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/government-launches-section-21-consultation>.

HA tenants fight sell-offs and rent rises

Housing Associations (officially called Private Registered Providers) were governments' alternative to council housing. But their private status has led to mergers, takeovers, aggressive private development and sharp landlord practises. Financial and market pressures and the bottom line dictate policy for all the biggest.

HA tenants have managed to beat sell-off of homes, demolition of estates, and rent rises. They are demanding regulation and accountability or an end to public subsidy for HAs that don't comply. HAs are increasingly part of the

problem – and it's time to get tough with them. They are not the alternative we need.

Stop and scrap UC

Since its launch in 2013, Universal Credit (UC) has pushed up rent arrears and evictions. It is a disaster for most people and needs to be scrapped, before more lives and money are wasted.

Councils can help, by agreeing not to evict tenants in arrears because of UC, and putting pressure on housing associations and other private landlords to do the same.

Councils and MPs can help resistance

Council housing budgets have been hit in the worst spending cuts from 2010.

Squeezed and starved of resources, all too often they appear to uncritically deliver failing services and cuts on behalf of government. Some are working on an active alternative strategy. On housing they can:

- Actively organise with other councils to demand funding – don't cover up the problem.
- Support active tenant organisation and representation: for example Cambridge has elected council tenant reps on housing scrutiny.
- Assert role as a strategic housing authority – use this to set expected

standards for landlords, and pressure housing associations against sell offs and evictions.

- Pledge no council evictions due to benefit cuts and bedroom tax – demand more discretionary funding, and campaign alongside tenants and unions on Benefits.
- Make bold planning policy on 50 per cent council housing as part of private developments – and stick to it.
- Councillors and MPs are political representatives: use the role and its power. Actively link up with local tenant groups and campaigns.
- Press for powers to take over unfit private rentals, and to re-form a Housing Revenue Account if necessary.

GRENFELL

When landlords don't listen...

After two years, there is still no justice for the 72 killed in Grenfell Tower, their families and community. The official inquiry is being dragged out, and no one has been held to account.

All around Britain the dangers of unsafe cladding and fire doors, and the failure of regulation, is still compounded by a refusal to listen to tenants.

The survivors and bereaved families group, Grenfell United, is calling for a

new, separate housing regulator to protect people living in social housing and for social housing tenants to live in safe buildings and to be listened to, treated with dignity, and their concerns addressed.

Listen to tenants: councils need to actively support tenant organisation in every block, and involve independent tenant reps in running housing. Tenants die when landlords don't listen.



A Charter for housing action in 2019

We welcome the Shelter commission report 'Building for our future – A vision for social housing' and endorse the recommendations for:

- A 20 year programme of investment to build 3.1 million social homes
- New, effective regulation of all landlords
- Tenant organisation or tenant unions
- Reforming private renting, including ending Section 21 evictions

This needs to include:

- A clear commitment to build 100,000 council homes a year, for rent at social rent, accessible for all, with secure tenancies

We call on all political parties to include a commitment to implement these recommendations, in their next election manifestos.

The Shelter report is a good starting point. Turning words into action will need a concerted campaign, which we believe can build widespread support.

But we need to go further. We will actively support a campaign to implement the Shelter recommendations, and push for more action – now and in the future – to ensure a society where everyone has a safe, secure home they can afford.

These are the key demands from the Homes for All national summit on 8th December 2018:

● Resist Estate Demolitions

1. The Right to Stay Put – no social or ethnic cleansing
2. Fair Ballots before estate redevelopment – stop the loopholes
3. Link up campaigns on different estates
4. End two-tier tenancies

● Housing Associations (HAs)

1. Democratic accountability to residents and government
2. Controls on rent and service charge rises

● Safety

1. No combustible or toxic cladding, internal or external, on homes of all heights, with guaranteed protection from cold while cladding and insulation are off
2. Sprinklers on all blocks above four storeys
3. Government to pay for all essential safety works, as promised
4. This must include action on safety of all Large Panel Construction system blocks

● Private Renters

1. End Section 21 evictions
2. Secure tenancies
3. Stop overcrowding
4. Rent controls

● Universal Credit (UC)

1. No evictions by councils due to rent arrears caused by UC or Bedroom Tax
2. Councils to call for same commitment from housing associations and other landlords
3. Build a national network of support for tenants opposing UC

● Invest in Council Housing

1. Government must adopt a national investment plan
2. Develop a national construction organisation and direct labour to build and maintain homes
3. Suspend right to buy – remove discount
4. Independent tenant organisations to represent residents

SUPPORT THE CHARTER

Add your name, and ask your organisation to sign up too.

We support the Charter for Action 2019

Name

Organisation (if any)

Address

Email

Return to Homes for All, PO Box 33519 London E2 9WW



HOMES FOR ALL

Facebook: [Axe the Housing Act – secure homes for all](#)

Email: info@axethehousingact.org.uk

Twitter: [@AxeHousingAct](#) Phone: 07432 098440

Web: www.axethehousingact.org.uk

Post: PO Box 33519, London E2 9WW