

Birmingham Labour Party

**A MANIFESTO FOR TACKLING
HOMELESSNESS**

An aerial, black and white photograph of Birmingham, UK, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings, streets, and green spaces. The image is partially obscured by a red graphic element in the bottom right corner.

**FOR THE MANY
NOT THE FEW**

FOREWORD

For the seventh year in a row, the number of people forced to sleep rough on our streets has increased. Since the Tories came to power, rough sleeping in our country has increased by a staggering 169%, whilst 121,360 children are now living in temporary accommodation – a rise of 70% since 2010.

It's clear that Birmingham is facing a homeless crisis made in Downing Street. Eight years of savage spending cuts, failed housing policies, wage freezes, soaring private rental costs and brutal welfare changes perpetrated by the Tory Government have plunged hundreds of our fellow citizens into crisis.

Labour will not stand idly by in the face of this crisis. Our Councillors in Birmingham will use all the resources and powers available locally to tackle the causes and symptoms of homelessness. The City's Labour MPs will fight for changes to Government policy and challenge the Tories' failures at Westminster. And we will also challenge Theresa May's West Midlands Mayor to start standing up for the needs of Birmingham and its neighbours, rather than defending the appalling policies of the Tory Government in London.



OUR PLAN TO TACKLE THE CRISIS

We pledge that a Labour-run Birmingham City Council will:

1. Ensure no one needs to sleep rough on the streets
 - We guarantee that there will continue to be sufficient bed spaces in shelters for everyone who needs one.
 - We will continue to support outreach services and work in partnership with health, police and voluntary services across the city.
2. Work with partners to prevent people falling into homelessness in the first place, or help get them back into safe and secure housing as quickly as possible.
3. End the use of unsuitable, unsafe and insanitary properties for temporary accommodation.
 - We will introduce a quality standard for all properties used for temporary accommodation.
 - We will phase out the use of bed and breakfast as quickly as possible
4. Introduce a Charter of Rights for every citizen facing problems with homelessness:
 - Every citizen will have a right to have their case handled swiftly and with respect by all public agencies.
 - We will drive out practices that discriminate against homeless people and rough sleepers and strive to ensure that no one is made homeless as a result of leaving social housing.
5. Increase practical and financial support for homelessness prevention services through Corporate Social Responsibility by
 - Applying a CSR levy on commercial events taking place in the city centre.

- Getting organisations signed up to Birmingham's Business Charter for Social Responsibility to include homelessness within their social responsibility objectives.
6. Ensure that victims of domestic violence are rapidly rehoused to a safe, decent and permanent home.

We pledge that Birmingham's Labour MPs will:

1. Campaign to end draconian benefit sanctions and delays to Universal Credit payments that are plunging people into poverty and crisis.
2. Insist that Birmingham gets the funding it needs to properly implement the Homeless Reduction Act and to become an exemplar city in preventing homelessness.
3. Demand the reintroduction of a fully-funded Social Fund to provide immediate support and help for people in crisis.
4. Work to remove the Government rules that stop the Council getting the money it needs to invest in building new homes (i.e.: lifting the borrowing cap on the HRA).
5. Get the Government to restore fair funding for Public Health, so vital services that tackle substance misuse and mental health are no longer put at risk.
6. Campaign against harmful policies which put vulnerable adults at risk of homelessness.

And we will press the Tory West Midlands Mayor to:

1. Start standing up for Birmingham by backing our Labour MPs demands that the Tory Government scraps draconian benefit sanctions and lifts the unfair rules that stop Councils building new homes.
2. Support our plan to prevent homelessness in the first place, by opposing Government cuts and welfare changes such as the Bedroom Tax and backing our call for an urgent review of the current Local Housing Allowance rates.

3. Back our call for a properly funded affordable, social rented and accessible housing solutions, including Housing First, so we can get everyone into a safe home that meets their needs.
4. Insist all WMCA portfolios prioritise homelessness reduction through policy and strategy.
5. Support our plans for modular build new housing, to provide us with the extra affordable homes our city desperately needs.