

How Labour Birmingham is fighting the Tory homelessness crisis

Birmingham's Labour-led Council is fighting back against a homelessness crisis made in Downing Street. Tory housing failures and welfare cuts have led to rocketing numbers of people in temporary accommodation and an unprecedented increase in rough sleeping. The consequences of the crisis for individuals, for families and communities are appalling.

The city's Labour Councillors – led by Cabinet Member Cllr Sharon Thompson and LHG EC member Cllr John Cotton, came together with local Labour MP Liam Byrne to develop the Birmingham Homelessness Manifesto. The Manifesto sets out the steps the Labour-run Council will take to tackle homelessness locally and also lays down a challenge to Tory West Midlands Mayor Andy Street to “start standing up for Birmingham, rather than defending his friends in Westminster” on housing policy.

The Manifesto includes some radical proposals, including putting a levy on commercial events taking place in the city centre to help pay for homeless prevention services.

It also commits the Council to ending the use of unsuitable, unsafe and insanitary properties for temporary accommodation, introducing a quality standard for all properties used for temporary accommodation, and phasing out the use of bed and breakfast as quickly as possible.

The Manifesto was launched at a special Labour Housing Group event held in Birmingham on 24 March, with the support of Shadow Housing Secretary John Healey MP and partners from across the housing sector in the region. Following Labour's hefty victory in the Birmingham City Council elections on 3 May, work to turn the plans into practice is already well underway!