

## **Housing – Composite 6**

Conference notes that Labour has a longstanding record of positive policies based on respect for human rights, and housing policies aimed at ensuring that everyone can live in a home that is healthy, safe and affordable.

The Grenfell Tower fire and COVID pandemic have now highlighted a lack of investment in public housing, unsafe building practices, and weak legal protection for tenants and leaseholders alike. In addition, we know that the current housing crisis disproportionately affects women, ethnic minorities, young people, and people on lower incomes.

The Covid pandemic has aggravated the severe economic and health impacts of the housing crisis. In December 2020 the Health Foundation identified that prior to the pandemic a third of households in England had housing problems relating to overcrowding, affordability and poor-quality housing.

Prior to the pandemic, thousands of households were struggling with their housing costs in the unaffordable and insecure private rented sector. Due to Covid, many more households are struggling.

In Cornwall, the private rented sector is also dramatically shrinking due to second home ownership and as house-owners sell up to make the most of the Covid house price bubble or rent as AirBnB/to students.

The lifting of the temporary ban on evictions and ending of the Furlough scheme will make matters worse and lead to a rise in homelessness.

The Conservative government has done little to support those struggling to access decent, affordable and secure housing to rent.

Homelessness continues to rise and is expected to accelerate with 1 in 200 people now homeless, while there are more than 200,000 empty homes and over 1.15 million people on social housing waiting lists.

The UK's provision for the disabled was based on the needs of those who suffered their disabilities from injuries during the two World Wars. However, changes in the demography and needs of the disabled over the last 80 years, including those that become disabled in later life, have led to a significant gap in the provision of housing.

Factors affecting this include:

- A reduction in the proportion of council housing
- Our NHS enabling a greater number of disabled people to live long and valuable lives
- The design, standards, and density of modern houses

Houses are often compact, ill designed to accommodate wheelchairs, and two storeys. The adaption of such houses takes a very long time to be completed; typically, more than a year, and is costly. These adaptations are removed when the houses are no longer needed for the

disabled. Some councils do have houses specially adapted for families with disabled members but have no provision for single disabled or couples.

**Conference believes:**

- The UK housing market is broken.
- The Conservative government has done little to support those struggling to access decent, affordable and secure housing to rent.
- The UK has obligations under international law to ensure that everyone enjoys the human right to housing that is affordable, accessible, habitable, secure and culturally appropriate, without discrimination. Unfortunately, while the 1998 Human Rights Act protects rights such as free speech, it does not explicitly guarantee the right to adequate housing. Setting this right into legislation would help to eradicate homelessness, and could avert housing problems for people in all tenures.
- The very large number of second/holiday homes in Cornwall and similar areas, has greatly increased the level of housing insecurity and household impoverishment linked to housing unaffordability. Local economies suffer when so many local households are left with little disposable income after meeting their housing costs. Many families with young children are finding that reliance on insecure, expensive and often low quality private rentals, is a permanent condition rather than a transitional phase in their lives. The impact on housing availability of second/holiday homes is felt not only in areas popular with visitors but in places to which the residents of visitor orientated areas are forced to move.
- Local authorities should have powers to compulsorily purchase development land that is being 'land-banked' and not developed by the landowner.
- There is now a clear need for the building of houses designed specifically for the disabled and reserved solely for such people.
- People in this country should be able to live in a council property that is properly maintained, especially in circumstances where a council tenant has to also pay service charges and is not getting a quality service from that. From cutbacks to making the service about targets; we are not figures but human beings.
- Many experiencing homelessness are denied support because of 'priority need' rules or having 'No Recourse to Public Funds'

**Conference calls on the Labour Party to demand that the government takes action now to end the housing crisis by:**

- Fully funding councils to deliver the building of 150,000 social rent homes each year, including 100,000 council homes,
- Enshrine the right to adequate housing in domestic law, to ensure that future Governments respect, protect and fulfil the human right to adequate housing.
- Repeal the 2012 anti-squatting legislation, the Vagrancy Act and all legislation that criminalises being homeless. End the use of anti-social behaviour legislation against begging and rough sleeping.
- Scrapping the tax loophole on second homes and allowing councils to charge a levy on second homes to be used to provide local social housing.
- Giving local Councils additional planning powers in the form of change of use restrictions to restrict the number of second/holiday homes in areas where they are eroding the sustainability of local communities.

- End 'right to buy'.
- End homelessness by implementing a national 'Housing First' system with floating support, to house all those experiencing homelessness regardless of immigration status.
- Reviewing council housing debt to address underfunding of housing revenue accounts.
- Ending Section 21 (no fault) evictions.
- Commit to strengthening tenants' rights
- Commit to giving local authorities powers to compulsorily purchase development land that is being 'land-banked' and not developed by the landowner.
- Fund the retro-fitting of council housing to cut greenhouse gases, provide jobs and promote a shift from outsourcing to Direct Labour Organisations.
- Build disability housing and in the meantime encourage local councils to include houses specifically designed for single occupation or couples. This should, in the short term, include private developments.

**Conference also calls upon Labour to place these actions at the centre of its housing policies.**

**Moved: Labour Housing Group**

**Seconded: St Ives CLP**