



LABOUR'S PLAN FOR HOUSING

LABOUR'S PLAN FOR HOUSING



CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Labour's plan for housing	7
Council and social homes	8
Fire safety after Grenfell Tower	10
Private renting	11
Home-ownership	13
Housing and land	15
The climate emergency	17
Homelessness	18

INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows someone affected by the housing crisis: younger people unable to buy a first home, renters trapped in damp flats, families stuck on a council waiting list for years, leasehold home-owners hit by unfair fees, people who are homeless living and dying on our streets. The gap between the housing haves and have-nots is at the heart of the injustice in our country today.

Since 2010, the Conservatives have slashed funding for new homes, refused to regulate for higher standards and given a free hand to commercial property developers. The number of Government-funded homes for social rent has fallen by over 90%, the number of households stuck renting from a private landlord has risen by over a million, the number of young people owning a home has fallen by almost 900,000 and the number of people sleeping on our streets has more than doubled.

It's time for real change, which means overcoming the failures of the last 10 years and the shortcomings of the last 50 years.

Under the Conservatives, Government has stepped back. With Labour, Government will step up – to build, fund and drive the changes on housing that millions of people need. We will act on every front to bring down the cost of housing and drive up standards so that everyone has a decent, affordable place to call home.

Labour's plan for council and social homes will mean at least 150,000 new council and housing association homes a year within five years, with 100,000 new council homes a year for social rent at the heart of our programme – the biggest such programme since the 1960s.

Labour's plan to make homes safe after the Grenfell Tower fire will mean a new £1bn fire safety fund and enforcing the replacement of dangerous Grenfell-style cladding on all high-rise and high-risk homes.

Labour's plan for private renting will mean year-one legislation for new rights for renters, including new indefinite tenancies, rent controls and strong enforcement of decent property standards.

Labour's plan for home-ownership will mean a new programme of homes for first-time buyers discounted with prices linked to local incomes, 'first dibs' for local people on new homes built in their area, action to stabilise house price inflation and an end to the leasehold scandal.

Labour's plan for land will mean opening up the country's opaque land market, stopping the fire-sale of public land and legislating for a new English Sovereign Land Trust to work with local authorities to buy land more cheaply.

Labour's plan for housing to play its part in tackling the climate emergency will mean a bold retrofit programme to upgrade millions of homes, and a new zero carbon homes standard, introduced within three years.

Labour's plan for homelessness will mean an end to rough sleeping within five years and wider action to tackle the causes of homelessness, with new modern hostel places, more homes for the homeless, additional funding for vital local authority services and ensuring local housing allowance covers the cost of renting.

Labour's programme on housing is the most ambitious in modern times, matching the scale of the housing crisis so many people face. This manifesto sets out our plan to deliver it.



John Healey, 
Labour's Shadow Housing Secretary



LABOUR'S PLAN FOR HOUSING

Day 1

Start the changes within Government to set up a new Department for Housing, bringing together the powers to plan and build new homes, and regenerate existing housing across the country.

Confirm a clear target for over a million genuinely affordable council and social homes over the next decade, and to be building at least 150,000 of these homes a year within five years.

Start work to save lives this winter with new emergency cold weather shelters and support for rough sleepers in every area.

First 100 days

Establish a new Prime Minister-led taskforce to end rough sleeping within five years, and start by setting out plans to make available 8,000 homes for people with a history of rough sleeping.

Publish a new funding prospectus for Labour's council and social housing programme, including new discount homes for first-time buyers.

Set up a new English Sovereign Land Trust to buy, assemble and co-ordinate the delivery of new homes.

Confirm a new £1bn Fire Safety Fund, to help finance the retrofitting of sprinklers in high-rise council and social housing blocks, and the emergency legislation

needed to enforce the removal of dangerous cladding.

Year 1

Publish new legislation setting out the legal changes needed for our programme, including new rights for private renters, leasehold enfranchisement, and action to take the profiteering out of the land market.

Revise planning rules and guidance to support the delivery of more genuinely affordable homes through the planning system.

Publish plans to make the country's homes greener and warmer with a new zero carbon homes standard and housing retrofit programme.

COUNCIL AND SOCIAL HOMES

More than a million households are stuck on council waiting lists, so Labour will invest to build over a million genuinely affordable council and housing association homes over the next decade. Within five years, we will be building at least 150,000 of these homes a year, with 100,000 council homes a year for social rent at the heart of our new build programme.

Since 2010, the Conservatives have slashed funding for new low-cost homes. Housing was one of the first and deepest cuts made by then Chancellor George Osborne after the 2010 election, when he cut Labour's big housing investment programme to the bone.

The result was that under the Tories investment in low-cost homes fell to record-low levels and the number of new social rented homes fell to the lowest level since the Second World War. Instead of building more genuinely affordable homes, the Conservatives tried to obscure their cuts by labelling more homes 'affordable', even when priced for sale at up to £450,000 or to rent at up to 80% of the market rate.

At the same time, Conservative Ministers have stripped back the national regulations protecting tenants, and abolished the Tenant Services Authority and National Tenant Voice.

Labour will take a different approach. We will stop the haemorrhage of low-cost homes, which blunts the incentive to build and means local communities are losing thousands of homes each year, by ending the Tories' right to buy as well as their forced conversion of social rented homes to so-called 'affordable rent'.

We will scrap the Conservatives' bogus definition of 'affordable', and introduce a new Labour definition, linked to local incomes, not the market. As we set out in our 'Housing for the Many' green paper last year, this will include homes for social rent and living rent, as well as low-cost ownership such as Labour's discount homes to buy, with prices linked to local incomes.

We will transform the building of new genuinely affordable homes with the biggest programme of new council and housing association homes since the 1960s under Harold Wilson's Labour Government, backed by record investment over the five years of the next Parliament of £75bn from Labour's Social Transformation Fund.

To get our council housing programme off to a flying start, we will introduce a council buy-back scheme, with additional loan funding for councils to purchase properties from the private rented sector, with a focus on those properties sold through the right to buy, but now in the hands of private landlords. We will provide funding for the purchase of at least 5,000 properties a year throughout the next Parliament.

Labour's new council and social homes will not just be more affordable than market housing, but built to a higher standard to, with leading-edge design, energy efficiency, safety and smart tech standards. We will build new council housing schemes like the architectural award-winning Goldsmith Street development in Labour-led Norwich in every part of the country. We want our new council and housing association homes to be people's best choice, not their last resort.

We will ensure residents have more of a say on the management of their homes, appointing a new tenants' representative to give tenants a strong voice in national policy debates and development, strengthening the regulatory regime to improve consumer standards and the involvement of tenants, and requiring housing associations to have tenant representatives on their boards.

We will also make sure regeneration works for residents rather than leaving them behind. We will ensure major regeneration only goes ahead with the consent of residents and that residents are offered an equivalent home on the same terms in the new development.

We will scrap the punitive bedroom tax and fund a new 'Decent Homes 2' programme, to bring all council and housing association homes up to scratch with new kitchens and bathrooms and refurbished common areas, with a new emphasis on fire safety so residents can feel safe in their homes.

FIRE SAFETY AFTER GRENFELL TOWER

After the horror of the fire at Grenfell Tower, system-wide change is now needed in housing, so we will put in place a £1bn Fire Safety Fund to retrofit sprinklers in all high-rise council and housing association tower blocks, and enforce the replacement of dangerous Grenfell-style cladding on all high-rise and high-risk homes.

The fire at Grenfell Tower exposed a broken system of fire safety checks and controls. It should have marked a turning point for fire safety in this country. However, the Conservatives have been off the pace on every front in response to Grenfell: too slow to provide support and rehouse residents who lost their homes that night, too slow to ban flammable materials from going on new buildings, too slow in testing other at-risk buildings, and too slow in getting deadly cladding removed and replaced where it has been found.

It would be unthinkable to Conservative Ministers for their own homes to be left wrapped in dangerous, Grenfell-style cladding for years after it was found to be unsafe, but that is the situation for thousands of high-rise residents across the country, two and a half years after the Grenfell Tower fire.

The Government's own data reveals the extent of their failure. More than two and half years after Grenfell, almost eight

in ten residential blocks identified with Grenfell-style cladding have still not had it removed and replaced. For private sector blocks, this rises to more than nine in ten, of which almost 70 blocks haven't even got a plan in place for removal. As a result, the Conservatives are set to miss their own targets on replacement of Grenfell-style cladding by over a decade.

At the same time, Ministers have failed to act on the risk from other types of unsafe cladding, which is now affecting hundreds of thousands of people across the country, often leaving them unable to re-mortgage, sell their property, and worrying if their home is safe.

Enough is enough. Labour will make it a priority to deal with unsafe cladding, and make all homes safe. We will fund the retrofit of sprinklers into all high-rise council and housing association homes, drawing on our fire safety fund, and building on Labour legislation in 2007 which required sprinklers in new high-rise properties.

To deal with the scandal of unsafe cladding remaining on people's homes, we will name and shame block-owners, and set a deadline for them to prove they have a plan in place to get works done.

We will pass emergency legislation to make clear that block owners are responsible for doing and paying for this work, and update the powers available to councils to enable them to impose substantial fines followed by the

takeover of blocks which don't have a plan to remove dangerous cladding, in order to get these vital works done.

We will immediately direct officials to widen the Government-sponsored testing regime to comprehensively test other types of cladding beyond the type found on Grenfell Tower, as Labour first urged Ministers to do in the summer of 2017, but the Conservatives have still not done.

We have listened to representations from fire safety campaigners including Grenfell United and we will set up a new national taskforce, with the involvement of residents, to inspect buildings and prioritise fire safety work, with additional funding made available through our fire safety fund to help pay for this work.

PRIVATE RENTING

People who rent from a private landlord are at the sharp end of the housing crisis, and the number has risen rapidly since 2010 to more than 11 million today. Labour will introduce year-one legislation with new rights across the board for private renters: rent controls, open-ended tenancies, and binding legal minimum standards.

Since 2010 rents have risen faster than incomes for too many, while the insecurity of private renting means eviction has become one of the most common ways of people becoming homeless. Too often renters are paying too much for poorly maintained housing, with no confidence to plan their or their family's lives given they could be kicked out at short notice, with no justification.

When one in four families with children in England now rent their home from a private landlord, when average rents have risen by £1900 a year, when one in four private rented home is classed as 'non decent', and when tenants are collectively paying more than £10bn in rent every year to landlords letting sub-standard homes, then things must change.

The Conservatives have refused to make common sense changes to give renters the basic consumer rights we would expect in other markets: to control costs, increase security and drive up standards for renters. They scrapped Labour's plan

for a register of landlords, and watered down powers for councils to license landlords. Despite rising rental costs they have refused to take any steps to make private renting more affordable, and despite the insecurity of renting they have refused to legislate for an end to 'no fault' evictions.

Labour will legislate for a new charter of renters' rights in the first Labour Queen's Speech following the general election, with a Bill published within our first year in Government.

We will introduce a cap on rent rises linked to inflation to stop runaway rental costs and to give tenants the security that they won't be forced out by landlords hiking the rent.

For those areas where the pressure of high rents is most acute, we will invite submissions from local leaders for additional controls to make renting more affordable. The Labour Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has already set out his blueprint for rent control in London and we would encourage proposals from other urban areas to make renting more affordable.

We will give renters the security they need to make their rented housing a home, with new open-ended tenancies to stop unfair, 'no fault' evictions. These will be indefinite tenancies, with the tenant able to leave the property at any time as long as appropriate notice has been given, but with the grounds for eviction tightly specified to issues

such as non-payment of rent and mistreatment of the property.

While most landlords are good landlords, and most tenants are satisfied with their homes, the level of sub-standard properties in the private rented sector remains far too high, with one in four failing the decent homes standard – the highest proportion of any housing tenure.

We will enforce new minimum standards so that every property is brought up to scratch, with a new national property 'MOT' which will require every landlord to register and prove their property is in an acceptable condition. As well as ensuring high standards, this will provide a means of bringing together existing checks in areas such as gas and electrical safety, and energy efficiency. We will make this as light touch as possible, and consult before introduction to ensure the scheme works for tenants, landlords and councils as the local enforcement authorities.

We will increase sanctions for the minority of rogue landlords who do not take their responsibilities seriously, up to £100,000 for the very worst offenders, and increase the use of rent repayment orders to compensate tenants if they are found to be living in sub-standard properties.

In some areas of the country, there is a problem with properties let on a short-term basis, through companies such as Airbnb. This can mean increasing

pressure on local housing markets as properties which would otherwise be let or sold to local people are no longer available. Short-term lets can also entirely change the nature of a block or area, to the detriment of local communities. We will give councils new powers to regulate short-term lets, with discretionary powers to limit the use of these properties where there is a negative impact on local housing markets.

HOME-OWNERSHIP

The number of younger home-owning households has fallen by almost 900,000 since 2010. Average house prices across England are now eight times average full-time income, putting home-ownership out of reach for those on ordinary incomes. At the same time, the scandal of leasehold is exposing the problems for existing home-owners who have bought their homes but find they don't really own them. Labour will back first-time buyers to buy that special first home and end the leasehold scandal.

Helping working people on ordinary incomes buy a home of their own is in Labour's DNA, but under the Tories home-ownership risks become a preserve of the rich, with English Housing Survey reporting the average first-time buyer now has to pay a deposit of nearly £45,000.

The number of new affordable homes to buy has fallen under the Conservatives, so we will build thousands more low-cost homes reserved for first-time buyers, including new discount homes at prices linked to local incomes.

We will get at least 50,000 discount homes for first-time buyers built over the course of the next Parliament, via the planning system, with prices linked to local incomes and discounted at up to half the market price. The bigger the gap

between earnings and house prices, the bigger the discount will be.

The revolutionary new type of housing will be for first-time buyers who live locally, who work in blue collar private and public sector jobs that are the cornerstone of local communities – from tradespeople to nurses. The homes would be sold on with the discount preserved, retaining the benefit for future first-time buyers.

The Tories' Help to Buy was built on Labour's pioneering HomeBuy Direct scheme, but has gone to too many buyers who didn't need this help: over 10,000 households on incomes over £100,000 have benefited from the current scheme. It has also inflated house prices. Labour will re-focus Help to Buy on first-time buyers on ordinary incomes, to stamp out the abuse of this programme under the Tories. We will extend this refocused scheme to support those first-time buyers who need it.

To rebalance the market in favour of first-time buyers, we will bring in a new levy on overseas companies investing in property, as well as on those with second homes used as holiday homes, while giving local people 'first dibs' on new homes built in their area. We will give councils new powers to bring empty homes back into use by raising council tax on properties that have been empty for more than a year.

For too many people, the home buying process is too slow and too expensive,

while too many new build home buyers are faced with poor quality new homes. We will speed up the home moving process, and aim to reduce the number of transactions that fall through, causing cost and delay to both buyers and sellers. We will help home-buyers who feel let down by poor quality new build housing and have no effective way of getting their problems resolved, with a new national body charged with overseeing housing standards and ensuring developers deal with complaints.

Leasehold is a symbol of our broken housing system, with millions of England's homeowners feeling like they've bought their home but still don't own it. Leasehold reform is unfinished business for Labour. We legislated in 1967 to allow leaseholders to buy their homes and in 2002 to establish commonhold as an alternative to leasehold. The next Labour Government will finish the job.

The scale of the problems faced by leaseholders, from rip-off ground rents to punitive fees to onerous contract conditions stating what they can and can't do to their own homes, demands wholesale change, so earlier this year Labour set out a new deal for leaseholders in our report 'Ending the Scandal'.

Following consultation, Labour will implement the main conclusions of that report. We will take steps to end the sale of new leasehold houses and

flats, abolish unfair fees and conditions, establish commonhold as an alternative to leasehold for flat-owners, and give leaseholders a new right to buy the freehold to their home more cheaply with the price set and capped by a simple formula.

This will mean a ban on the sale of new private leasehold houses and flats, and leaseholders able to buy the full, freehold ownership of their home capped at 1% of the property value for longer leases. It will also mean an end to ground rents for new leasehold homes, a cap on ground rents for existing leaseholders at 0.1% of the property value, up to a maximum of £250 a year, and a crack down on unfair fees and contract terms.

We will end the similar scandal of freehold home-owners on estates where common areas are privately owned facing high fees and unaccountable managing agents, with a new presumption that common areas are adopted by the local authority, and a right to challenge unfair fees and poor service.

HOUSING AND LAND

The broken land market is at the heart of our housing crisis and recent research suggests half of England is owned by less than 1% of the population. Land ownership is often opaque, public land is being sold off for a short-term profit, and current planning rules and legislation give windfall gains to land-owners and traders at the expense of local communities. Labour will put the public interest back at the heart of our system of land and development planning.

The Conservatives' approach to land has failed. They threatened to privatise the Land Registry, which has recorded the ownership of property in the UK since 1862, only relenting after campaigning from Labour and trade unions.

Ownership and interests in the land market remain opaque and our planning system creates windfall gains for land-owners and speculators.

The release of surplus public land has the potential to boost the supply of council and social housing. However, the Conservatives' approach to public land is to sell it to the highest bidder to generate short-term revenues for the Exchequer, rather than looking to the long-term public benefit this land could have. According to research by the New Economics Foundation, as little as 6% of new homes built on public land are likely to be for social rent. Rather than using surplus Ministry of Defence land for

ex-servicemen or NHS land for hospital staff, public land is all too often sold for unaffordable properties.

Labour will set up a new English Sovereign Land Trust which will be at the heart of our efforts to tackle the housing crisis. We will legislate to give the Trust powers to buy land more cheaply for more low-cost housing, by reforming out-dated compensation rules.

We will provide additional funding for the English Sovereign Land Trust to acquire and assemble land for development in co-ordination with local authorities, with a focus on strategic developments in areas where housing pressures are most acute. This will include a role in planning for new large developments such as new towns and urban extensions, and will ensure we are able to protect the green belt.

Labour will end the fire-sale of publicly-owned land, ensuring public land is used for public benefit. We will transfer surplus public land to the English Sovereign Land Trust to help drive our council and social house building programme. This will lay the foundations for a new public land bank focused on the development of new council and social housing. The English Sovereign Land Trust will be able to use this land to work with councils and others to build Labour's new genuinely affordable homes, as well as increasing the scope for directly commissioning new homes.

We will keep the Land Registry in public hands, and shine a spotlight on the opaque land market, opening up information on who owns land, and who has a financial interest in it.

To strengthen building standards and ensure appropriate development, we will scrap 'permitted development' rights for the conversion of office blocks into new housing. This scheme currently allows developers to sidestep the planning process, dodge their obligations to provide affordable housing and is resulting in new twenty-first century slum housing being built in our towns and cities. Labour will end this practice.

THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Labour will ensure greener homes help tackle the climate crisis by introducing a tough, new zero carbon homes standard for all new build homes, and upgrading tens of millions of existing homes to make them more energy efficient – reducing emissions and cutting energy bills.

Energy use in homes accounts for 20% of UK greenhouse gas emissions, so we can't tackle the climate emergency without a major improvement in housing, both in new build and existing homes.

It's clear the Conservatives won't do what's needed. The Government's own climate watchdog, the Committee on Climate Change says that Government policy on housing standards is failing. They say: "current policies are not driving the required changes" and that "policies to support low-carbon measures have been weakened or withdrawn".

In 2006, the last Labour Government set out new standards which would have required all new homes to be 'zero carbon' by 2016. This was reaffirmed with a concrete implementation plan in 2009, developed with the industry. In July 2015, after nine years of industry preparation, the Conservatives scrapped the policy six months before it was due to come into force.

As a result, hundreds of thousands of new homes are emitting more than they should: just 1% of new homes received the highest 'A' energy rating last year. Home-owners are paying the price, with less energy efficient homes meaning higher bills. Up to a third of a million new build homes are paying over £200 per year more on their energy bills as a result of the Conservatives' decision to scrap the zero carbon homes standard.

Within three years, Labour in Government will introduce a new standard requiring developers to achieve zero net emissions of carbon dioxide for every new home. This zero carbon standard will mean that the day-to-day running of the home won't add additional carbon to the atmosphere, and will be achieved through better energy efficiency standards – such as insulation and high-spec windows – and low and renewable energy sources – such as solar panels and heat pumps.

More inaction from the Conservatives on new build standards will simply mean higher costs later, given that the Committee on Climate Change tell us the cost of retrofitting new homes can be five times greater than building to high standards in the first place.

Some developers will wish to go even further, with world-leading energy standards, and we will encourage this as part of our new council and social housing programme. We will reflect the importance of green standards in our funding prospectus for new social

housing, including encouraging new build homes to achieve Passivhaus and similar standards.

To meet our climate targets, we will also need to urgently act to improve energy standards in existing homes, so Labour will fund the upgrading of tens of millions of homes to the highest energy-efficiency standards by 2030, reducing the average household energy bill by £417 per household per year and eliminating fuel poverty. As part of our plans to decarbonise energy used for heating homes, we will take steps to encourage new technologies like heat pumps, solar hot water and hydrogen, as well as district heat networks using waste heat.

To achieve these ambitious upgrade plans, Labour will provide new grant funding to low-income households and zero interest loans to for those households that are able to pay, with the loans repaid through savings on bills so that households do not face any upfront costs. For the social housing sector, we will co-ordinate this work with Labour's new decent homes programme to drive cost efficiencies and minimise disruption to residents.

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is not inevitable in a country as decent and well off as ours. However, since 2010 the number of people sleeping rough in shop doorways and on park benches has more than doubled. This shames us all, and the Conservatives most of all. It must end.

The big rise in homelessness since 2010 is a direct result of decisions made by Conservative Ministers. The number of people dying homeless has risen by 50% in the last five years to 726 people last year, the number of children that will be homeless in temporary accommodation this Christmas has risen by almost 70% since 2010 to more than 126,000.

Since 2010, the Conservatives have made deep cuts in areas which are most important for tackling homelessness. Funding for homelessness services and other supported housing has been slashed by £1bn a year meaning almost 9,000 fewer hostel beds, and investment in new low-cost homes has been cut back so the number of Government-funded homes for social rent has fallen by 90%. Ministers have refused to give renters the rights they deserve and slashed local housing allowance levels so that they no longer cover the cost of private rents.

Labour will end rough sleeping within the next Parliament, with a national plan driven by a new Prime Minister-

led taskforce. The taskforce will bring together the Departments and Ministers needed to make this a reality, including the new Department for Housing, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the Department for Social Security, alongside local councils and specialist charities.

We will save lives this winter with a new duty for councils to deliver shelter and support to ensure it is in place in all areas, building on the emergency cold weather support that some councils already offer.

We will invest in new modern hostels with 5,000 new bed spaces, and upgrade existing hostels so they are places where people can turn their lives around. A new Modern Hostels Fund will provide capital funding to fund the construction, conversion, or acquisition of new state-of-the-art hostel accommodation. A new Hostels Transformation Fund will enable major improvement works to existing homeless hostels to turn them into places of change.

To provide the low-cost homes that people who have been homeless need to rebuild their lives we will make available at least 8,000 additional homes for people with a history of rough sleeping. Half of these will be for 'housing first' accommodation, targeted at those rough sleepers with the most complex problems or who have been cycling between hostels and the streets for some time, and for whom support in

a traditional hostel setting is unlikely to be successful.

We have listened to the homelessness campaigners and charities who have told us what else needs to be done to tackle the wider causes of homelessness, so we will re-link local housing allowance to the 30th percentile of local rents, to ensure that it covers the cost of renting in every area. We will also earmark an additional £1bn a year for councils to commission high-quality homelessness services and other supported housing, reversing the cuts to this funding stream since 2010.

13218_19 Reproduced from electronic media, promoted by Jennie Formby, General Secretary, the Labour Party, on behalf of the Labour Party, both at, Southside, 105 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QT.



**FOR THE MANY
NOT THE FEW**