



Defend secure tenancies No means tests or benefit cuts Invest in Council Housing

Tenants, trade unionists, councillors and campaigners are coming to London on Tuesday 15th February to organise a mass campaign against attacks on tenants' rights and the future of council housing.

Tenants are angry. Ministers treat us as second class citizens, rob our rents and attack our rights. They call us scroungers as cover to destroy the security of council housing.

How dare they! Our rights are hard-won, and together we have paid many times over for our homes. The Prime Minister and his Party promised before the election to respect tenants' present and future security and rights.

Instead in the Localism Bill launched on 13 December. Ministers aim to take away lifetime tenancies from Council and housing association tenants, and restrict access to council housing.

"...this Council wishes to express its complete opposition to any change in the tenure of council tenants. Requiring tenants to move out of their council-owned homes would be a big disincentive to getting a better paid job or otherwise taking opportunities to improve their financial situation. It would rapidly create sink estates...It further notes that such suggestions are not in the Coalition Agreement and would work against many of the stated aims of that Agreement."

Cambridge City Council unanimous resolution, 21 October 2010

fundamental principles of decent, secure and affordable public housing.

Council housing is worth defending, and tenants will fight these attacks as we have defeated others. We've fought governments' bullying and blackmail to privatise our homes. Our security and affordable rents are hard-won by generations determined to get out of the slums and insecurity of private renting.

Council housing is an essential pillar of the social settlement fought for and won by the post-war generation, to guarantee hous-



ing alongside health and education for all. Now we need to take on this fight to defend our secure tenancies, lower rents and the right to elect our landlord.

The Government's proposals will not build one new council home. With five million on housing waiting lists, evictions and repossessions rising, the private market fails more and more people. We need a mass programme of new council housing now more than ever.

We're fighting for more investment to improve existing and build new decent, affordable, secure and accountable council homes for all who need them.

Council housing doesn't just belong to us, but to future generations as well. For the sake of our communities, our children and grandchildren, and because we know how valuable a secure tenancy is, we must fight these proposals.

Come to London on 15th Feb. Build the campaign along with present and future tenants, unions, politicians and campaigners. Together we can stop these attacks and win a future for council housing.

<<< Feb 15th checklist >>>

- Write to tenants organisations, trade unions and councillors to join a delegation from your area (leaflets and posters available)
- Publicise the event in local media (press statement and letters)
- Ask your Council to assist 'tenants participation' by informing tenants and facilitating attendance (because this is a non party event there are no legal obstacles)
- Contact local trade unions for help with transport
- Write to your MPs and ask them to join you at the rally (Methodist Central Hall Westminster 12 – 4pm) and to meet your delegation (ideally after 3.30pm)
- Bring banners and make placards saying which area/estate you come from to decorate the hall

Government proposals attack secure tenancies, rents and mixed communities

Respond by 17 Jan 2011 to the Government consultation 'Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing', (issued 22 Nov 2010). The proposals are included in the Localism Bill which is due to go through Parliament this session. See <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism.html> and <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/socialhousingreform>

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Main Points of the Proposals

1) The government proposes to change the law to give councils the right to issue fixed-term as well as secure tenancies. The minimum fixed-term would be two years, though councils could offer longer fixed-term periods.

- Existing tenants' secure tenancies will not be changed and councils will have to reissue secure tenancies when existing tenants move home. Councils will be expected (but not obliged) to offer tenancies longer than two years to the elderly, long-term disabled, and to families to prevent children's education being disrupted.

- The new fixed-term tenancies will be time limited and have less rights. There will be no right to improve homes; and no right to pass on the tenancy to a child.

- Councils will be expected to use these fixed-term tenancies to force future tenants to downsize when their children leave home.

2) The government proposes to change the law to give councils the right to change their allocation policies:

- They will encourage councils to deny access to the waiting list to all except those who are in most need, so no-one can apply to be on the list knowing that as time goes by they may become eligible. They do not say what will happen to people currently on the list who may have many years of points built up.

- Existing tenants in need of a different home will no longer be able to apply for transfer unless they meet the statutory 'reasonable

preference' criteria such as being overcrowded; so those who need to move for work or family reasons will only have mutual exchange as a way of moving.

3) Councils will be able to choose whether to implement these new rights (1 and 2) or not. They will have to develop a policy 'collaboratively and transparently', consulting tenants, on what kind of tenancies they will give in what circumstances, and on their allocation policy. Councils can reject the use of fixed term tenancies and maintain secure tenancies.

4) Homeless people applying for housing will no longer have the right to refuse to be placed in a shorthold assured tenancy in the private sector. Even though they could end up homeless again after a few months, they will no longer have the right to choose to stay in a hostel until a council house becomes available.

5) The government also proposes to change regulation to allow Registered Social Landlords to create two new types of tenancies as well as their current assured tenancies. One type is the same fixed-term tenancies as they propose for councils. The other is to be called an "Affordable Rent" tenancy, will be fixed-term, and will have rents set at up to 80% of market rents.



Some Key Issues

The bedrock principle of council housing, that it is available to all, will be destroyed. In recent years council homes have often in practice, been rationed to those most in need due to scarcity, and this has led to a concentration of problems on estates. But the combination of fixed-term tenancies and changes to allocation policies are intended to enshrine this as a principle: a council block would become a hostel. Council housing was intended to provide for general need, housing for those who want or need it, in mixed communities. Thirty years ago council housing was as mixed as society generally; and, given enough new supply, it could be so once again. Government says mixed communities are a good thing – now it sets out to destroy them.

Most applicants for housing will be forced into inappropriate private sector housing which is insecure, unaffordable, and often poor quality.

Everyone in housing need who does manage to get a council tenancy will be subject to a revolving-door policy which will act as a disincentive to find work. Once a council or housing association has issued its six-month notice to quit, its only obligation will be to give the tenant ‘advice’ on finding a private sector home to rent or buy. If the tenant fails to do so, they will end up on the streets.

The current trend is for more and more work to be part-time and short-term; even people in permanent jobs are increasingly likely to be made redundant or see their hours or wages cut. Someone

told they can now afford the private sector may not be in such favourable circumstances for long.

The most vulnerable will suffer. People with mental illness or complex needs will be penalised by a fixed-term tenancy. Either it will not help them because it does not offer security, or, if they are assessed as their health having improved, they will no longer be in ‘housing need’ and will end up back on the streets!

For existing tenants, our estates and communities will become less sustainable. Over time, estates will become transit camps, with people who have no prospect of staying. A climate of insecurity will develop in the places where we live as well as in our work.

Housing managers will have to find the time to interview tenants regularly and assess their circumstances. Relationships with tenants will be put under strain due to this invasive ‘policing’ role.

These proposals do nothing to increase the supply of decent, secure, affordable housing. For every household who is given a new (temporary) council home, another household will have been thrown to the wolves of the private market.

They represent a disgraceful break with the pre-election promise by David Cameron and the Conservative party. Before the election David Cameron said...: “‘We support social housing, we will protect it, and we respect social tenants’ rights.’ A spokesperson for the Conservatives added that the party had ‘no policy to change the current or future security of tenure of tenants in social housing’.” (*Inside Housing*, 30 April 2010)

Five reasons to lobby on Feb 15th

1 **Protect security of tenure and affordable rents against market forces: private landlords and the banks.**

2 **Investment in council housing makes sense for all those in temporary accommodation, facing chronic overcrowding, sleeping on sofas, stuck in mortgage misery or trapped in high private sector rents. Council housing is cheaper to build, manage and maintain than the alternatives.**

3 **Demand improvements: 2 million council tenants and their families need direct investment in council housing to improve homes and estates – Government propose to abandon the 10% of council homes that do not meet a basic decent standard.**

4 **Defend local democracy and ensure local councils can and do get on with providing decent, affordable, secure and accountable council housing.**

5 **Defend in-house services and oppose privatisation: for public services provided by public service workers.**

Organise locally

Councils will decide whether to give secure tenancies to new tenants, under the Government's Localism Bill. Some Councils have already said they will not use insecure fixed-term tenancies.

We need to organise to ensure every tenant and would-be tenant knows about this threat, and make tenants' anger heard. As well as lobbying MPs to vote against the proposals we need to lobby our councils not to implement them.

The threats to council housing are part of the government's wider programme to destroy public services and punish the most vulnerable. So get together with local community organisations who care about homelessness / housing issues or are campaigning against cuts and privatisation.

Organise a public meeting, contact councillors and take a deputation to your council.

Order material Affiliate and donate Organise in your area

Annual affiliation fees:

Tenants/Community Organisations:

Local £10 District/Regional £25 National £50

Trade Union Organisations:

Local £50 District/Regional £100 National £250

Order Material to distribute in your area



National 8-page broadsheet newspaper
£20 per 100; £120 per 1000

Case for Council Housing pamphlet £10
(or £2.50 for individual tenants / bulk orders)

**House of Commons
Council Housing group
report 'Council Housing:**

Time to invest' £10 (or £5 for orders of more than 10 copies)

**Annual subscription to Campaign Mailings
& Briefings** £15



Name

Address

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Organisation

Position

Tel No(s)

Email

National newspaper Amount £

MPs reportsAmount £

Affiliation feeAmount £

Mailing SubscriptionAmount £

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Total Amount £.....

Please make cheques payable to 'Defend Council Housing'