

Add your name to the list:

Name	Organisation/Position	Address	Phone/Email

Return to: Austin Mitchell MP, House of Commons London SW1A 0AA  
or Defend Council Housing PO Box 33519 London E2 9WW  
or email [mitchellav@parliament.uk](mailto:mitchellav@parliament.uk) or [info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk) to add your name to the statement  
Or sign and circulate at [www.ipetitions.com/petition/housingemergency-timeforanalternative/](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/housingemergency-timeforanalternative/)

HOUSING EMERGENCY brings together organisations and individuals to oppose attacks on Housing Benefit, rents and secure tenancies, and for investment in new and improved council and affordable secure rented homes  
Supported by Defend Council Housing, House of Commons Council Housing Group, Islington, Barking & Dagenham Council; Leeds, Southwark and Tower Hamlets Tenants Federations; London Coalition Against Poverty; Muslim Council of Britain; Housing Justice; South East Region TUC and trade unions Unite, GMB, PCS, Unison and UCATT; Right to Work Campaign; Labour Representation Committee; Disabled People Against Cuts; tenants from housing associations and private tenant groups, and members of National Tenants Council

Contact Defend Council Housing – [info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk); 0207 987 9989  
Or Housing Emergency – [mitchellav@parliament.uk](mailto:mitchellav@parliament.uk) 020 7219 4559

# HOUSING EMERGENCY

# TIME FOR AN ALTERNATIVE

Government policies are fuelling a housing emergency, with an all-out attack on tenants and council housing.

With house building collapsing, mortgages unaffordable, and private rents rising, Government is forcing up rents, attacking secure tenancies, and drastically cutting housing benefit.

1.3 million private tenants facing homelessness or debt (Chartered Institute of Housing), and 7 million reported using credit to pay for their home last year (Shelter). Homeless applications and rough sleeping are already rising; there are 4.5 million people on housing waiting lists.

Government’s housing measures do not have an electoral mandate. They will create more evictions, homelessness and fear, but will not curb high rents. They do nothing to create secure, affordable homes for rent desperately needed for all those who are priced out by the housing market. They will create exclusion zones driving out the low-paid, the sick and the poor, and their families.

We call on Councillors, MPs, tenant and trade union organisations, housing, disability and poverty campaigners and all who want

sustainable, mixed communities across the UK to join in a campaign around these Action points:

- 1. Resist and campaign against cuts in housing benefit: we call on Councillors and other landlords not to evict tenants who fall behind with their rent as a result of the new cuts in housing benefit.
- 2. Reject huge council rent rises driven by government debt and inflation formula.
- 3. Oppose the use of so-called “Affordable Rent”, in fact unaffordable and insecure, with near-market rents and time-limited tenancies.
- 4. No scapegoating: The shortage of housing is a result of underinvestment and failure to build. It is not caused by existing or would-be tenants, in work or not, and of whatever race or religion.
- 5. Defend security of tenure for existing and future tenants.
- 6. Regulation to control private sector rents.
- 7. A programme of investment in new and improved council and other house building at genuinely-affordable rents.

It’s time to stand together, in a united, determined campaign to stop these attacks and demand investment in the homes we need: secure, accountable and genuinely affordable.

Signatories so far include: **Ken Loach** film director, *Cathy Come Home*; **Ken Livingstone** former Mayor of London; **Austin Mitchell MP**; continued...

continued...

**John McDonnell MP**  
**Jeremy Corbyn MP**  
**Caroline Lucas MP**  
**Eileen Short** chair Defend Council Housing  
**Disabled People Against Cuts**  
**National Private Tenants Organisation**  
**Dr Stephen Battersby** retiring-President Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

**Len McCluskey** General Secretary Unite union  
**Steve Murphy** General Secretary UCATT  
**Paul Kenny** General Secretary GMB  
**Mark Serwotka** General Secretary PCS  
**Housing Justice** – Christian Action On Housing  
**Liz Davies** barrister  
**Labour Representation Committee**  
**Right to Work Campaign**

Jimmy Devlin Chair North West Tenants & Residents Assembly  
• David Wright, Secretary Blackpool Residents federation (Blackpool Private Tenants Forum)  
• Ian Jones, Chair of Panel Plus, member of East Regional forum Family Mosaic  
• Kirklees Tenants Federation  
• Leeds Tenants Federation  
• Rotherfed – Rotherham Tenants Federation  
• Tower Hamlets Tenants Federation  
• Ipswich & District TUC

• Southampton and South West Hampshire TUC  
• Brent TUC  
• Andover Trades Union Council  
• Linda Burnip, co-founder DPAC (pc)  
• George Binette Camden Local Government Unison branch secretary pc  
• Cathy Watson Chair, Welwyn Hatfield Labour Party  
• David Lascelles GMB branch secretary Scunthorpe  
• Duncan Bowie University of Westminster  
• Dr Robert Hunt, Sheffield Hallam University

• Sharon King, City Lit London  
• Kit Withnail Birkbeck College  
• Dr Anna Livingstone Limehouse Practice London E14 8HQ  
• Cllr Elise Benjamin Lord Mayor, Oxford City Council  
• Cllr Duncan Kerr (Green Party) Bolsover District Council  
• Cllr Tom Harris Stafford BC  
• Councillor Mike Roberts Rushmoor  
• Councillor Sarah Finch Reigate and Banstead BC  
• Councillor Phil Waker Barking & Dagenham

• Councillor Samir Jeraj Norwich City Council  
• Cllr Ash Haynes and Sam Coates, co-chairs Young Greens  
• Jon Rogers UNISON NEC member in a personal capacity  
• UNITE South East London Medical Branch 0024M  
• Marsha Jane Thompson Haverling Unison Branch Secretary elect pc  
• Linda Etherden CAB worker South Hams  
• Stella Hargreaves (Peabody tenant)  
• Duncan

Gallon PCS  
• Rachel Shewen, DVLA CPU PCS Midlands  
• Y Benserghin University College London  
• Tom Rubens St.John's Court Tenants and Residents Association, London N4 and Hackney Alliance to Defend Public Services  
• Lambeth Save our Services  
• Brent Fightback  
• Ani Brown Wells House London NW3  
• Matt Wells PCS Efra London Branch Organiser (pc)  
• Joern Janssen/Holloway Ward

Labour Party Islington  
• Anya-Nicola Darr DPAC, private sector tenant  
• Zena Maddison, Camberwell ME Support Group and Calais Gate and Coligny Court TRA  
• Eileen Tottman tenant, Community Nursery Nurse  
• Dorothy Mace, Southwark tenant  
• Glyn Tudor Southampton  
• Ian Tulloch private tenant, Wrexham  
**■ Sign the statement – see over**

# QUESTIONS TO LOCAL ELECTION CANDIDATES 3rd May

## DO YOU AGREE?

### Secure tenancies

Tenants have a right to full, genuine consultation on changes to secure or assured tenancies for the future (including a ballot of tenants if requested) before our landlord decides whether or not to replace these with fixed term tenancies

YES	
NO	

### Right to rent

We need more secure and genuinely-affordable homes for rent to create and maintain mixed and sustainable communities, and that up to 80% market rents and fixed term tenancies will not serve this end

YES	
NO	

### Benefit cuts

Tenants should not be evicted as a result of new caps and cuts in housing benefit

YES	
NO	

### Regulate high rents

To reduce high rents we need regulation and increased security for private tenants, and more council and other decent, secure, genuinely affordable housing for rent

YES	
NO	

### Contact all main candidates and publish all the responses

**Michael Hall, Coordinator, and Linda McNeil, Chair, Leeds Tenants Federation:** We oppose the high levels of rent increases and attacks on our security of tenure. We condemn cuts in housing benefits and the unaffordable rents that are promoted as social rents.

The line in the sand has been crossed-it's time we said enough is enough. The homeless figures will rise, evictions will rise and for whose benefit? Certainly not the tenant – many have no wish to buy even if they could afford to.

Imposing private sector policies on social housing tenants has not worked and will never work. The alternative is direct investment in social housing. It's the cheapest and most practical solution to the country's housing crisis.

**Len McCluskey, General Secretary, Unite the union:** The coalition government's heartless attack on tenants in receipt of housing benefits echoes the bad old days of 'Cathy Come Home'. The private rented sector is unconstrained and government

policies will push families into cheaper crowded accommodation, which we know will impact on children's health and educational attainment.

Britain desperately needs a boost for the construction sector and people need affordable, decent homes to rent – a lasting solution to the UK's housing crisis.

**Ken Loach:** Homelessness and bad housing are like unemployment, a permanent feature of this de-regulated,

market-driven economy. Only a planned economy will provide homes and jobs – it's time we woke up to that reality

**Mark Serwotka, General Secretary, PCS union** The government is making the poorest pay for this crisis. While giving tax breaks to business, it is cutting welfare for the most vulnerable. Now, instead of capping rents it is capping benefits – protecting landlords and impoverishing or evicting tenants. Building council housing would not only address the

# FACTS AND MYTHS

Homelessness and housing need is growing by all measures, including waiting lists, applications to councils, overcrowding and rough sleeping. But new build is at lowest pace time levels since 1920s.

### Who is exploiting Housing Benefit?

Housing benefit (HB) subsidises landlords and is often paid to them directly. High HB does not benefit tenants. It is means tested. Of private tenants on housing benefit 25% are in work, 20% are unemployed, 38% are disabled, pensioners or carers.

*'Housing benefit will underpin market rents – we have made that absolutely clear... If people cannot afford to pay that market rent, housing benefit will take the strain.'* ● Sir George Young, then housing minister, 30 January 1991, to parliament on tackling unaffordable rents.

### Bring down rents

Cuts to housing benefit are not bringing down rents: rents are still rising fast. Rent regulation is needed to control soaring private sector rents, as up to 1980.

### Tenants not subsidised or second class

Council tenants are not 'subsidised': in fact Government siphoned off £2 billion from council rents in 2011/12. Tenants pay more than enough for the management and repair of our homes.

Private rents are usually much higher than council and housing association rents because private landlords can charge as much as possible, to make profits.

### More security not less

Stable mixed communities, and our children's education and health, depend on having long-term security in our homes. Short term (fixed or 'flexible') tenancies mean a churn of people with no

acute housing shortage, but provide desperately needed jobs and economic stimulus.

### Eileen Short, chair, Defend Council Housing:

Tenants face service cuts and huge rent rises. With nearly five million on council waiting lists, Government attacks the fundamental principles of publicly owned, decent, secure and genuinely-affordable council housing for all who want or need it.

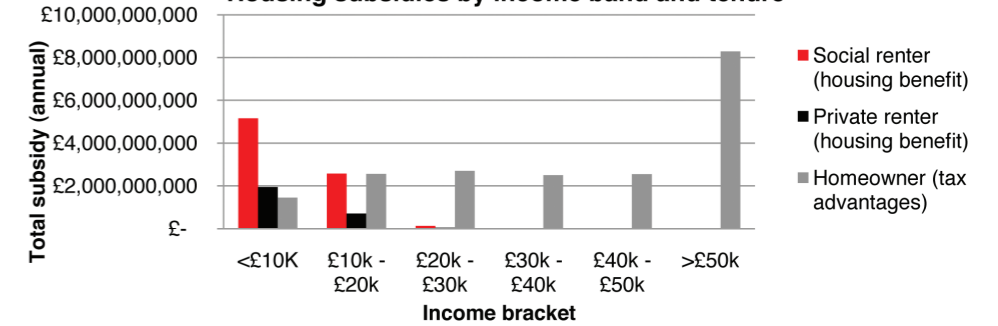
Join this united and determined campaign of tenants, trade unions,

politicians and campaigners to defend tenants' rights and demand investment in council and other homes for rent now.

### Steve Murphy, General Secretary, UCATT union:

The lack of decent affordable council housing is ruining the life chances of thousands of families. A massive public house building programme would both slash homelessness as well as help to kickstart the construction industry and reduce unemployment levels. The most obvious of win, win policies.

### Housing subsidies by income band and tenure



From: [http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/418338/Shelter\\_Policy\\_Briefing\\_-\\_Held\\_Back\\_Households\\_-\\_February\\_2012.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/418338/Shelter_Policy_Briefing_-_Held_Back_Households_-_February_2012.pdf)

settled community. Fixed term tenancies will not create more homes, but more insecurity. We need more security for all, including private tenants.

### Build the homes we need

A mass building programme to improve and build first class homes is vital to create the homes needed by five million

people on housing waiting lists, the hidden homeless and all those living in overcrowded and unfit conditions. The housing market cannot and will not provide the homes we need.

Built secure, genuinely-affordable, publicly owned and accountable homes for rent to the highest energy standards, create a public asset, and jobs too.

### Paul Kenny General Secretary, GMB union:

It is a shameful indictment of this government that in today's Britain we have millions of homeless people. Homelessness is a blight on families, so often leading to lawlessness and broken childhoods. Low rent council housing is the only realistic option and this government needs to show it can come out of its mansions and do something for the homeless.

### Pete Firmin, joint secretary, Labour Representation Committee:

The government's attack on tenancies, rents and benefits is yet another example of them trying to force the working class to pay for a crisis not of its making. We need a concerted, united campaign to resist this. We also need Labour Councils to refuse to pass on these attacks and stand with their tenants.