



CIH England policy lines summary

The right homes need to be built in the right places which people can afford

- We need at least **135,000 new affordable homes per year**, with a minimum of 90,000 for social rent and the remainder for low-cost homeownership or intermediate renting. Building 90,000 social homes would add £51.2 billion to the economy, with £32.6 billion of this [generated within a year](#).
- We need long-term government support for **modern methods of construction** to increase the scale and pace of delivery of homes - something that can also [improve](#) design and build quality, reduce energy bills and boost job creation.
- To achieve this output, government should increase investment in affordable housing to at least £8 billion annually. Much of this can be achieved by radically **altering the mix of Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) capital expenditure**, half of which is currently directed to support for the private market.
- The **Right to Buy** should be suspended so replacement can catch up with losses. Local authorities (LA) should be able to keep 100 per cent of receipts and have far more flexibility over how they can be used to provide additional homes. As a minimum, Right to Buy discounts should be sharply reduced.
- A **revised debt settlement** should be undertaken with LAs so that their Housing Revenue Accounts are sustainable and can produce new investment (the original, 2012 debt settlement has been severely undermined by subsequent rent restrictions and cost increases).
- **Shared ownership (SO)** has the potential to become the fourth tenure but needs greater fairness in application. The government's new SO model addresses some of this (e.g. the first 10 years repairs to be covered by provider) but raises concerns over encouraging people into home ownership that cannot manage or afford it with the 10 per cent initial stake. It also raises concerns that running two systems (new and original models of SO) will add to the confusion around what SO is and who it will work for. There remain issues over the affordability of the product and resale of SO properties, particularly with uncapped service charges.
- **First Homes** reduce the number of homes provided for SO, social rent and affordable rent, and it inflates prices and undermines LAs' ability to meet local housing needs. Government should pause roll out of this scheme or allow LAs to apply discretion.
- The **quality of new homes and neighbourhoods** is as important as quantity and has a vital part to play in supporting healthy, independent living. CIH is a founding member of the [Housing Made for Everyone](#) (HoME) coalition, calling for higher basic accessibility standards in all new homes. We are also signatory to TCPA's [Healthy Homes Act](#), seeking to require basic principles of healthy homes and neighbourhoods in the planning and supply of new homes.
- New supply is important but so too is the quality, safety and energy efficiency of our existing homes, particularly in the north. **Housing and resident-led regeneration** offers a way to improve neighbourhoods and increase supply of affordable homes, where this is needed. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act has failed to generate the resources and focus needed to achieve this.
- Developer contributions to affordable housing, via **Section 106**, should be retained and strengthened, and not replaced by the Infrastructure Levy. Retaining and improving the existing system would be more effective and the best way to deliver infrastructure and high-quality affordable housing in mixed communities.
- In addition to overhauling [compulsory purchase procedures](#), government should ensure more land becomes available for development at fair prices by safeguarding that 'hope value' does not inflate them.
- We're concerned by recent and potential future expansions of **Permitted Development Rights** for conversions to residential use which will not, in the main, ensure good quality homes in the right places and will sidestep affordable housing contributions.
- Government should invest in existing and new **supported housing** to meet a range of needs and provide a national, ringfenced funding stream for housing-related support to ensure the sustainability of this valuable form of housing (£1.6 billion to sustain existing and increase new supply, supporting the goal for Homes England to invest up to 10 per cent of their programme into supported housing).
- We call for an **overhaul of taxation of the value of houses and land**, to release resources to provide more affordable housing. We need a more effective way of capturing the profits made on development land.



People on low incomes should be able to access and maintain a decent home

- Government should review the overall impact of **social security policy** on its housing and other policy objectives.

Specific social security measures

- **Maintain local housing allowance (LHA)** rates at **the (minimum) 30th percentile** - this should become a **statutory requirement** as part of the annual uprating. It's far more expensive to support someone made homeless because of housing costs than to help them with their rent in the first place. In periods when the LHA is frozen, rents become increasingly unaffordable for many on low incomes. This fuels debt and evictions and drives homelessness, in turn putting financial pressure on councils through temporary accommodation. Restoring LHA to the lowest 30 per cent of housing is the minimum required. The rate to determine the **subsidy for temporary accommodation** claims should also be uprated (the maximum subsidy remains capped at 90 per cent of the January 2011 rates).
- **Remove the shared accommodation rate** of LHA. The current system puts young people at greater risk of homelessness as the [shared accommodation rate \(SAR\) does not cover the cost of renting](#). There are also many areas (often rural) with little or no shared housing.
- **Remove the benefit cap**. The average loss for capped households is £52 each week which puts in jeopardy tenants' ability to sustain their tenancy (and worsens their employment prospects). In the worst cases, households who have their housing costs award reduced to nil (or 50p per week for housing benefit) have no viable housing options at all. In practice they are likely to be completely dependent on discretionary housing payments (which have been cut) to avoid homelessness. Furthermore, the benefit cap disproportionately affects women, with no easement for domestic violence survivors/victims. The Oxford University based [larger families' study](#) found that the cap had little or no effect in encouraging households back into work. It did however find a noticeable effect of claimants switching to long-term disability benefits (which exempted them from the cap) due a decline in their mental health which appeared to be closely linked the stress caused by the cap itself.
- **Remove the two-child limit**. According to [Child Poverty Action Group](#), there were **4.2 million UK children living** in poverty in 2021-22, with children in **larger families** particularly affected (42 per cent). Removing the two-child limit is the most cost-effective way to reduce child poverty and would lift 250,000 children out of poverty.
- **Remove the social sector size criteria** ('bedroom tax'). Most claimants affected by this live in the devolved nations, the north of England and the English midlands where overall housing demand is low or modest, but exists alongside a shortage of one or two bed dwellings which affected tenants can move into. Our engagement with members suggests the policy is not working as intended and is pushing many households into hardship and rent arrears. (See [Investing in the Future - Reforming the UK's Welfare System](#)).
- Make sure the basic rate of benefits **cover life's essentials**, and support is never pulled below that level - the [Essentials Guarantee](#).

Affordability

- Develop proposals for a **new rent settlement** that balance affordability and transparency for tenants and support social landlords to develop and maintain sustainable business plans.
- **Restore Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) as an eligible housing cost in universal credit and pension credit**. SMI is now a loan, with take up having fallen by 95 per cent since it was a grant. Government should consider restoring its previous format, at least during the current period of higher interest rates which impact both mortgage holders and private renters.



Everyone should have access to a decent, safe place to call home. Renters should receive a fair, good quality service from their landlord

- Government should increase support to enable social housing providers to carry out works **to make buildings safe**, including remediation and the costs of complying with the new building safety requirements for medium to high-risk buildings.
- We need more investment in housing to **improve energy efficiency and achieve net zero carbon**. We welcome government funding, especially through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, but this has not been enough to make sufficient progress towards our carbon and fuel poverty targets. Investment should be targeted at low-income and fuel poor households to ensure the decarbonisation of domestic heating can be fair and affordable for all, underpinned by ambitious regulation and a concerted drive to expand green skills.
- We need more coordinated action to **tackle fuel poverty**. As well as investing in energy efficiency and decarbonisation, we support the introduction of an energy [social tariff](#) to ensure everyone can afford to access the energy they need to stay warm and safe at home. We also support the introduction of a [Help to Repay](#) scheme to support people in energy debt and the government's policy packages to **make clean energy affordable**.
- Government must accelerate its programme to **make clean energy affordable for all**. This should include completing the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements, fairly rebalancing gas and electricity levies, and increasing clean energy generation. It should take steps to make heat networks affordable by growing government heat network efficiency schemes and developing a Heat Network Guarantee to protect heat network customers from poor performance.
- We welcome the government's intention to review the **Decent Homes Standard** and to apply it to the private rented sector. As well as reflecting the needs of current and future tenants and residents, a new standard should also encompass the drivers to tackle climate change, increase affordable warmth, and incorporate communal and neighbourhood issues that matter to tenants.
- We welcome the renewal of **proactive consumer regulation** following the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#). It is also important that the Regulator of Social Housing has the resources and tools it needs to fulfil the new requirements and that providers have time to implement the changes.
- We welcome the government's commitment to repeal Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 to **end 'no-fault' evictions** but there should be a clear timetable for its introduction. Local authorities must have the resources they need to **enforce adequate property conditions and management standards** in the private rented sector.
- We call for an end to the so-called '**right to rent**' in England which is discriminatory against minority ethnic groups, and which can be used by criminals involved in trafficking to intimidate their victims. We call for an end to the rules about '**no recourse to public funds**' (NRPF) and similar restrictions applying to large numbers of people who have to come to the UK to work or for other reasons, and which deny access to housing and benefits if those affected lose their jobs or otherwise need help.
- Government should develop and resource a **cross departmental strategy to end homelessness** in all forms - 'Everyone In' demonstrated what can be done with sufficient resources, collaboration and will. Sustained investment is essential, including good quality temporary accommodation, floating support, and specialist services based on high fidelity Housing First principals. [Criminalising](#) homeless people is not the answer. To end homelessness, we must have a homelessness support system which works for everyone. This includes providing bespoke pathways, support and services for people often not well served by generic service offers, including for example women, care-experienced young people, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- People's experiences of **temporary accommodation** should be short and safe. New legally enforceable minimum standards and services should be introduced, and local authorities required (and resourced accordingly) to inspect it before it is offered to ensure it is suitable and of a decent standard.
- We support the [Whole Housing Approach](#) (WHA) to improve access to safe and stable housing across all housing tenure types, consider the need for move on from refuge services and other types of temporary or emergency accommodation into more settled housing, and ensure access to a range of tailored housing options and initiatives giving choice for people experiencing **domestic abuse** to relocate or remain in their existing accommodation.
- We welcome the reform of **exempt accommodation** that the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act has introduced and are keen to work with government and the sector to shape its implementation to ensure the growth of quality exempt accommodation.