

Housing Workers Manifesto

Unite Housing Workers LE 1111



Unite believes that housing is a human right. But ordinary people are being forced out of their communities by high prices and speculation. Social housing stock is declining. Over the life of this Parliament homelessness figures have accelerated - the number of people sleeping rough in London for the first time has increased by 17% in the last year alone. Evictions have also reached the highest rate since records began.

No wonder three quarters of the population say there is a housing crisis. Are politicians prepared to take the steps necessary to address this crisis? Unite LE1111 represents housing workers mainly across London but also in some cases nationally – we want politicians to stand for policies that could resolve the situation.

Unite recognises that the private sector cannot build affordable homes for working people in the number required. House prices have risen by 50% over the last five years and home ownership has moved out of reach for many. Instead of cuts we need public sector investment in new council house building on a massive scale as well as an upgrading of the existing housing stock. **We demand:**

No more cuts!

A massive injection of public investment into a council house building programme

The current government cut social housing grant by 60% in its first budget and local govt spending has fallen by over 34% in the life of the Parliament with bigger cuts to areas such as housing welfare support and planning. Ending austerity and cuts is crucial to solving the housing crisis. We call on councillors to resist austerity - Unite is committed to support Labour councillors who vote against cuts.

Build Council houses Local Authorities to be required to provide and maintain adequate levels of council housing at affordable rents. Decent social housing should be an option available to all workers – not just people in the most desperate need. There should be an end to the transfer of council stock to housing associations. Over the last decade 8,000 social homes have been lost through ‘estate regeneration’ schemes – and more are planned. Build & repair over 300,000 council homes per year, incorporating improved accessibility and environmental standards.

End the Blacklist Restrict the commissioning of social housing construction and maintenance services to providers who have signed up to the Joint Industry Board National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry. Act to remove from the list of approved providers any social housing or construction company found guilty of blacklisting.

An End to the 'Right to Buy' scheme which only serves to remove homes from the council stock. The speed at which social rented homes are being lost in England more than doubled in the year to April 2014 as right-to-buy sales and a move to more expensive rents took almost 44,000 properties from the sector.

An End to the commercialisation of housing associations

Social housing providers should be accountable to local communities not big business or property developers. We support local accountability and properly resourced regulation. We oppose plans to ‘privatise’ associations recently advocated in the recent Policy Exchange report.

www.housingworkers.org.uk

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Rent controls

The Margaret Thatcher government ended rent control for new tenancies although the mechanism of rent tribunals still exists for older private tenancies. The Thatcher legislation must go and all private tenancies should be subject to rent control. 'Generation Rent' calculate that private landlords benefit from subsidies worth the equivalent of £1,000 for every household in the country – totalling **£32.7 billion**.

Establish a National Register of private sector landlords

There should be a national register, with robust regulation, to protect tenants. However councils can act now using existing powers. Nearly one third of privately rented homes have major safety hazards – those dangerous enough to present a severe threat to the health or safety of a tenant.

Security of tenure for all those living in rented accommodation

The Thatcher government ended secure tenancies in the private rented sector. This legislation must also go and fully secure tenure brought back for private tenants; families can't plan their lives with short term tenancies.

End unfair housing benefit caps and other benefits cuts such as the Bedroom Tax.

Protect supported housing

Stop cuts and bring back the ring fence for these services which are vital for some of the most in need of specialist support. They also help reduce pressure on NHS services. Restore and increase the Independent Living Fund for disabled people.



Decent pay and conditions for workers in housing and social care

Employers should agree sector standards with Unite to protect pay and conditions and to ensure proper training – organisations getting public money should not be allowed to exploit their workers. Decent conditions for workers are essential for good services. Require all providers to pay a minimum of £10ph.

Nationalise the banks

Unite supports a nationalised banking sector to finance socially necessary projects such as decent housing; the madness of casino banking and deregulated finance has created the crisis. Banks have been bailed out and we have been made to pay the price. Corruption scandals continue to demonstrate the crying need for change. Taking over the banks on a permanent basis would enable investment to be planned in line with democratically decided priorities including housing that working people can afford. We must put a stop to the disaster of austerity and build secure homes for the 99%.

HOW DO WE GET THESE DEMANDS?

You know we don't get anything unless we ask. And as trade unionists the asking can be done in lots of ways: talks, public meetings, protests, board lobbies, and industrial action. With the general election looming, this is a great time to lobby your local councillor, MP or prospective MP. You can find them by popping your postcode into <https://www.writetothem.com/>

Post or email our manifesto and ask if they would support it? Maybe even arrange to meet and discuss it with them. We'd love to get feedback on this and happy to assist.

If you're not in the union, join up with us, or for those not working join Unite Community 0333 240 9798

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Branch Facebook group '[Unite Housing Workers LE 1111](#)'

National Unite website www.unitetheunion.org.uk