

# Housing Workers Manifesto



Unite Housing Workers LE 1111

May 2015

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 with the number of people sleeping rough in London for the first time increasing by 17% in the last year alone. Evictions are at their highest rate since records began.

No wonder three quarters of the population say there is a housing crisis. Unite LE1111, which represents housing workers nationally, wants 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 quantity 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.

**Build Council Homes**

**Control Private and Social Rents**

**Cap Rents Not Benefits**

**End Right to Buy**

**Protect Social Housing**

## We demand:

- **No more cuts! A massive injection of public investment into a council house building programme.** The ConDem government cut social housing grant by 60% in its first budget and local government spending fell by over 34% in the life of the last Parliament, with bigger cuts to areas such as housing welfare support and planning. An end to austerity is crucial to solving the housing crisis. We call on councillors to resist austerity, and Unite is committed to supporting Labour councillors who vote against cuts.
- **Build Council houses.** Local Authorities should 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. We need over 300,000 council homes per year, incorporating improved accessibility and environmental standards. There should be an end to the transfer of council stock to housing associations. Over the last decade 8,000 social housing units were lost through ‘estate regeneration’ schemes, and more transfers are planned.
- **End the blacklisting of construction workers.** Social housing construction and maintenance contracts should go only to contractors signed up to the JIB-NAECI Agreement. Contractors found guilty of blacklisting should be removed from the list of approved providers for social housing.
- **Rent controls** The Thatcher government ended rent control for new tenancies but the mechanism for rent tribunals still exists for older private tenancies. All private tenancies should be subject to rent control. Generation Rent calculates that private landlords benefit from subsidies worth the equivalent of £1,000 for every household in the country – totalling £32.7 billion.

e: [info@housingworkers.org.uk](mailto:info@housingworkers.org.uk) - w: [www.housingworkers.org.uk](http://www.housingworkers.org.uk) Tweet with us @unitehousing

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## How do we get these demands?

**We don't get anything unless we ask! And the asking can be done in lots of ways ...**

- Speaking out at public meetings and protests.
- Lobbying the boards of housing associations and umbrella bodies.
- Refusing to accept the race to the bottom in housing worker pay and conditions – taking industrial action if necessary.
- Lobbying local councillors, MPs, mayors, or MEPs. You can find them by popping your postcode into <https://www.writetothem.com/>. Send our manifesto or visit them and ask them to support it.

Whatever you do, we'd love to hear about it, and we're always happy to assist (contact [suz.muna.unite@gmail.com](mailto:suz.muna.unite@gmail.com)).

### Most Importantly ...

**If you're not in the union** join now using the 'Join The Union' link on [www.housingworkers.org.uk](http://www.housingworkers.org.uk).

**Those not in employment** can join Unite's Community branch [www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/communitymembership/](http://www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/communitymembership/).

## Unite LE111 Housing Workers Branch



### Supported by:



## We demand:

- **Establish a national register of private sector landlords.** There should be a national register and robust regulation to protect tenants. However, councils can act now using existing powers. Nearly one third of privately rented homes have flaws dangerous enough to present a severe threat to the health or safety of a tenant. Councils have the power to act against landlords of such properties.
- **Security of tenure for all those living in rented accommodation.** The Thatcher government ended secure tenancies in the private rented sector but families can't plan their lives with short term tenancies. We demand fully secure tenure for private tenants.
- **End unfair housing benefit caps** and other benefit cuts such as the Bedroom Tax.
- **Protect supported housing.** Stop cuts and bring back the ring fence for housing services which are vital for those 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 housing and social care workers.** Employers should agree sector standards with Unite to protect the pay and conditions of workers and decent services for users. Publicly funded organisations should not be allowed to exploit workers. In addition, all associations should 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 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%.