



Let's Make History: A Manifesto for a Future Free From Homelessness



**MAKE
HISTORY**
A future free from
homelessness

Foreword



Throughout our history, there have been countless examples of changes that once seemed radical, but which created a new future. Like every child getting a chance to go to school, healthcare that is free at the point of use, or being paid a minimum wage. At one point, these changes felt impossible.

At Crisis, we have another idea that may seem radical, even impossible. But it isn't.

We know homelessness is solvable. But successive governments in England have failed to make the changes needed to do it.

We've seen glimpses of what's possible when national Government prioritises the lives of people who are homeless. The Labour Government's Rough Sleeping Unit in the 90s and the Conservative Government's 'Everyone In' scheme in response to the Covid-19 pandemic both successfully supported thousands of people off the streets. Both of these were critical interventions, that gave urgent help to people in some of the most marginalised situations.

But this progress has not been sustained. Ending homelessness isn't just about helping people off the streets. It means making sure people don't return to the streets because they don't have a place to truly call home. It also means ending the nightmare for the many thousands of people who are living in cramped, mould-ridden B&Bs without facilities to cook or wash their own clothes. It means no one having to spend night after night sleeping on the sofa of their friends, family or even a stranger because their only other option is a night on the streets. It means families being supported if they are faced with hard times and fall behind on their rent. It means no one having to stay in an abusive relationship because they have no safe option elsewhere.

Through our own services, Crisis has supported people through these very situations into a home of their own, with access to the right help to keep that home, often in the face of barriers that stop so many more people from being able to move on from homelessness. Such as a lack of genuinely affordable housing, inadequate support services, and a legal system that too often turns away the people who most need help.

With the right political will and changes to break down those barriers, we know we can make homelessness a thing of the past.

We know what the next Westminster Government can do to end homelessness for good in England. The policies of the next government can ensure that people don't lose their homes except in very rare circumstances. If people do lose their homes, the government must ensure people can rapidly move into a safe and stable home, without the continued threat of homelessness.

An end to homelessness is achievable in the next ten years, but only if the next government chooses to do so.

We can shape a future free from homelessness. It's time to make history.

Here's how.

Matt Downie, CEO, Crisis



Executive Summary

"In a better future, there would be no hostels, hotels and B&Bs. There would be proper, stable homes for anyone threatened with homelessness."

Mark, Crisis Expert by Experience



Homelessness is something that we should have consigned to history by now. We know a future free from homelessness is achievable, and we know how to build it.

Crisis is calling for the next Westminster Government to commit to a national mission to end all forms of homelessness in the next 10 years.

Right now, hundreds of thousands of families and individuals are homeless, living without secure housing or any form of housing at all, and struggling to access the help they need to move on from this situation. As the cost of living crisis continues and people struggle to meet the cost of housing, food and energy, these numbers are set to rise.

The next Westminster Government has the opportunity to deliver the transformational change needed to reverse this worrying and unacceptable trend.

"I've seen certain friends that aren't alive anymore because of the poor options they had."

Jordan, Crisis Expert by Experience

This will require bold leadership and a commitment to act from the heart of government. Crisis is urging the next Westminster Government to demonstrate this by establishing an Office for Ending Homelessness in the Cabinet Office.

This new Office would work across all Departments to lead on delivering an ambitious housing and homelessness strategy to end all forms of homelessness in England, with three key pillars of change:

1. Ending homelessness with homes:

Creating a secure foundation for a life without homelessness by increasing the supply of truly affordable, decent homes.

2. Urgent action to support people experiencing, or at risk of, the worst forms of homelessness:

Ensuring the right support is available now for people who would otherwise be forced to sleep rough or in squats, cars and other forms of temporary shelter or dangerous accommodation.

3. Fixing the system for the long-term:

Re-designing the welfare, health and homelessness systems so that in the future, people facing homelessness get the help they need when they need it, instead of being forced to cycle in and out of homelessness.

In a series of reports, we will outline the detail of the policy changes needed for the next government to deliver these three pillars, and to revolutionise the way the Westminster Government approaches homelessness – so that we end it, instead of spending significant amounts to manage it.

This mission is bold, but it's also achievable. Now is the time to consign homelessness to the history books, and we need the next Westminster Government to take up the challenge.

Why the next Westminster Government cannot afford to ignore homelessness



Homelessness has very real human and societal costs. We all need the stable foundation home provides. But right now, more than 100,000 households are living in temporary accommodation in England – the highest level in 18 years – with the number of children in B&Bs more than doubling in a single year.¹ Homelessness also has a huge economic cost. The cost to the Westminster Government of temporary accommodation alone is £1.6 billion a year – a huge amount of money that ultimately manages homelessness rather than ends it.

People are having to spend months, and even years in temporary accommodation, making it impossible to put down roots or plan for the future. What's more, the longer an individual or family stays homeless, the more likely it is they will develop additional support needs such as mental health needs. This in turn costs more as more people need to access services to help them with support needs.

It also costs more to the individuals themselves who bear the stress and trauma of living in limbo. The uncertainty of living in temporary accommodation is itself stressful, and too often the standard of this accommodation is poor. Close to two million households on low incomes in England are being forced to live in unacceptable conditions, often lacking basic facilities for things like cooking, washing and heating, and contending with mould damp, cold, overcrowding and rodents.²

Thousands of people are also forced to live with no accommodation at all, exposed to severe weather and the high risk of violence and abuse.³ Since 2010, rough sleeping in England has risen by 74% despite a decline during COVID-19.⁴ The positive steps taken by current Government to tackle rough sleeping during the pandemic have been reversed, and as a result the number of people experiencing street homelessness have risen again.

The cost of living crisis is making this worse, pushing more people into a position where they cannot afford their rent. Across the UK, millions are facing the pressure of expensive

housing as more than two in five working age households struggle to manage housing-related costs.⁵

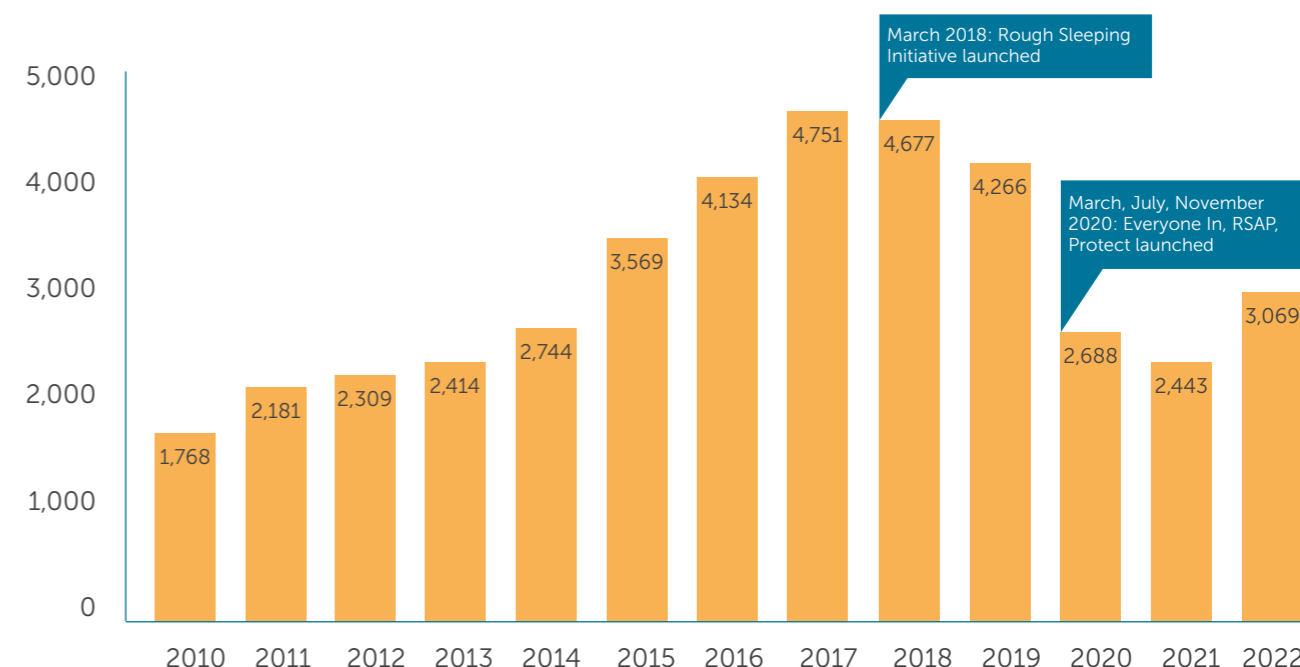


Figure 1. Estimated number of people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn in England since 2010.

1 The number of households with dependent children housed in such accommodation has more than doubled, with a rise of 129% in a year. [Statutory homelessness data covering October-December 2022](#).

2 1.8 million households - Home is where the start is: The case for ending homelessness with homes https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/249236/home-is-where-the-start-is_crisis_april_2023.pdf

3 People sleeping on the street are almost 17 times more likely to have been victims of violence and 15 times more likely to have suffered verbal abuse in the past year compared to the general public. Sanders, B. & Albanese, F. (2016) "It's no life at all": Rough sleepers' experiences of violence and abuse on the streets of England and Wales. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/its-no-life-at-all-2016/>

4 The Government's annual rough sleeping statistics for England found an estimated 3,069 people to be sleeping rough on any given night in Autumn 2022, up by a quarter (26%) on the previous year.

5 The share of UK working age (18-65) households who are behind on or struggling with their housing costs has risen by almost 70 per cent compared to the peak of the pandemic, from 26 per cent in January 2021 to 44 per cent in November 2022. [Resolution Foundation poll](#).



“The Government should understand that homelessness makes the country poorer and that beating homelessness and having no one on the street makes the country richer – makes society richer.”

Mark, Crisis Expert by Experience

To avoid homelessness, people might prioritise paying their rent even when it means they can't afford to heat their home or buy food.⁶ For some, the numbers simply don't add up and people are evicted and pushed into homelessness when the pressure of making ends meet becomes too much. The most recent set of eviction statistics shows the highest numbers of eviction claims from the private rented sector since 2016.⁷ Eviction claims from the private rented sector in England are now 41% higher than the pre-pandemic levels.

This pressure in the private rented sector is made worse by the chronic shortage of social housing in England. For decades, successive governments have failed to address a mounting crisis in the supply of social housing, leaving people trapped in unaffordable and too often poor quality homes without any alternatives. Too many people are stuck between a rock and a hard place, with the only options being to stay in unsafe housing, or to experience homelessness.

The worry and stress associated with housing insecurity and homelessness takes its toll on people's mental and physical health. Most of us find it stressful to move house, but for the people with the least housing security, there is the stress of frequent moves, and waiting for evictions. In temporary accommodation, hostels and other forms of homelessness, the stress builds even higher, and the health impacts are severe.

An economy where over 125,000 children go to sleep every night without a permanent home and 300,000 households could face the worst forms of homelessness this year is not one that is working properly.⁸ It is an economy that is holding us back from reaching our full potential.

A safe and secure home is a foundation for a good and healthy life. When people can access a decent home that they can afford and can expect to live in for a long time, they are better able to build their life, take care of their health and family.

Having a home makes it easier to sleep properly, charge a phone, do laundry and commute to work. It means that children are better able to get a good night's sleep in a bed of their own and can arrive at a school nearby well-rested. Every member of the family is in a better position to learn, work, care and thrive when they have a secure home.

Taking action to end homelessness, including by tackling the crisis in the supply of social housing, would put the British economy on a secure footing and deliver the security that too many people are currently missing. Achieving this would lay a foundation for a stronger economy and society where everyone can succeed.

6 "Reflecting previous research on this subject people often prioritised rent before utilities and food to avoid losing their home. In the survey, 29% said that they would likely need to skip meals to keep up with their housing costs over the coming winter, a proportion that rises to 43% among families."
Allard, M. (2022) "I don't know what the winter's going to bring:" experiences of homelessness during a cost of living crisis. London: Crisis <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/experiences-of-homelessness-during-a-cost-of-living-crisis>

7 Private landlord evictions and accelerated procedure combined. Comparing Q1 of 2023 (January-March) to Q1 of 2020 and Q2 of 2016. [Mortgage and Landlord Possession Statistics](#).

8 Watts, B., Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., McMordie, L., Pawson, H., and Young, G. (2022) [The Homelessness Monitor: Great Britain 2022](#). London: Crisis



How the next Westminster Government can fulfil a national mission to end all forms of homelessness

"We need lived experience at the heart of government.

We need people with experience of homelessness to be

at the heart of designing services and policy. Often,

people responsible for feeding into policy have good

intentions but with no experience of the services they're

trying to design. Lived experience is the way forward."

Anthony, Crisis Expert by Experience

We know it is possible to prevent and end homelessness. This means a country in which people rarely lose their home, and if they do, there's a quick solution.

Homelessness is not random. Some people are at higher risk of being pushed into homelessness. Knowing this means that we know where to target support to prevent homelessness before it happens. Circumstances such as high housing costs and low incomes contribute to housing insecurity. Certain experiences and circumstances also make homelessness more likely, like leaving prison or children's social care, or experiencing domestic abuse. This can inform how policies target support towards people at particular risk of homelessness. By tackling those causes directly, we can ensure that housing and support services offer a stable solution to homelessness.

The policies that can end homelessness are already known and well-evidenced.⁹

Political ambition and commitment is needed to bring together proven policies to achieve a national mission to end all forms of homelessness. With the right vision and commitment, two terms of government can deliver the transformational change needed to put an end to rough sleeping and sofa-surfing. It is enough time to end the use of unsuitable B&Bs and hostels, and ensure that families

"They [the Government] just have to act. The solutions to homelessness are out there."

Dalina, Crisis Expert by Experience

are not left in limbo, in long-term stays in temporary accommodation. This future is achievable when cross-government efforts are co-ordinated. Key policies sit across numerous Government departments so central oversight would be needed to align work across departments.

Establishing a new Office for Ending Homelessness within the Cabinet Office would enable cross-government co-ordination to deliver an end to homelessness. An Office for Ending Homelessness would be able to set strategy, oversee delivery and monitor progress. Being based at the heart of government, this Office would be able to organise across local government, health, welfare, justice and immigration policies, maximising the impact of individual policy measures by aligning them. This Office should establish a UK-wide working group with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Governments to enable learning on homelessness to be shared across the nations.

Both the Scottish and Welsh Governments have published action plans to achieve the ambition of ending homelessness. Lessons can be learned from those current plans, and action taken in the past on homelessness. Policy could be co-ordinated with devolved Governments where there are reserved areas of policy, such as welfare and immigration. The Office should also bring in insight from experts across the sector and experts with lived experience of homelessness should be at the heart of the work of the Office to inform and shape a future homelessness and housing strategy.

⁹ [Crisis' Plan to End Homelessness.](#)

A strategy to make history: ending all forms of homelessness in the next ten years

A homelessness and housing strategy to end homelessness needs to meet the scale of the challenge and will take ten years to deliver in full but includes opportunities for immediate action and early successes in a first term of a new Westminster Government. Overseen by the Office for Ending Homelessness, a homelessness and housing strategy should be comprised of the following key pillars:

Pillar one: Ending homelessness with homes

Homelessness is fundamentally the absence of home, and home is much more than a roof over one's head or a temporary solution. We can provide support to people, but we cannot end homelessness without homes.

Rather than spending long stretches in temporary accommodation, people should have rapid access to a safe place to call home, which they can afford to stay in for the long term.

When you have that home, even the biggest of challenges can be more easily managed. From ill health to stress, bereavement to job loss, relationship breakdown to trauma, it is easier to weather most of life's storms from a safe haven. Everyone should have that safety, and that means we need enough homes for people to live in. Delivering enough truly affordable, decent homes must be at the heart of any plan to end homelessness.

The high cost of housing is pushing people into poverty and over time towards homelessness, as well as making it harder for people to find a new home when they are homeless. This affordability crisis can only be resolved with a long-term strategy to deliver new homes for social rent to meet current and future need. Homelessness is the inevitable result for people who are essentially squeezed out of housing options, but successive governments have been reluctant to deliver housebuilding at scale, especially the types and tenures of homes that are most needed.

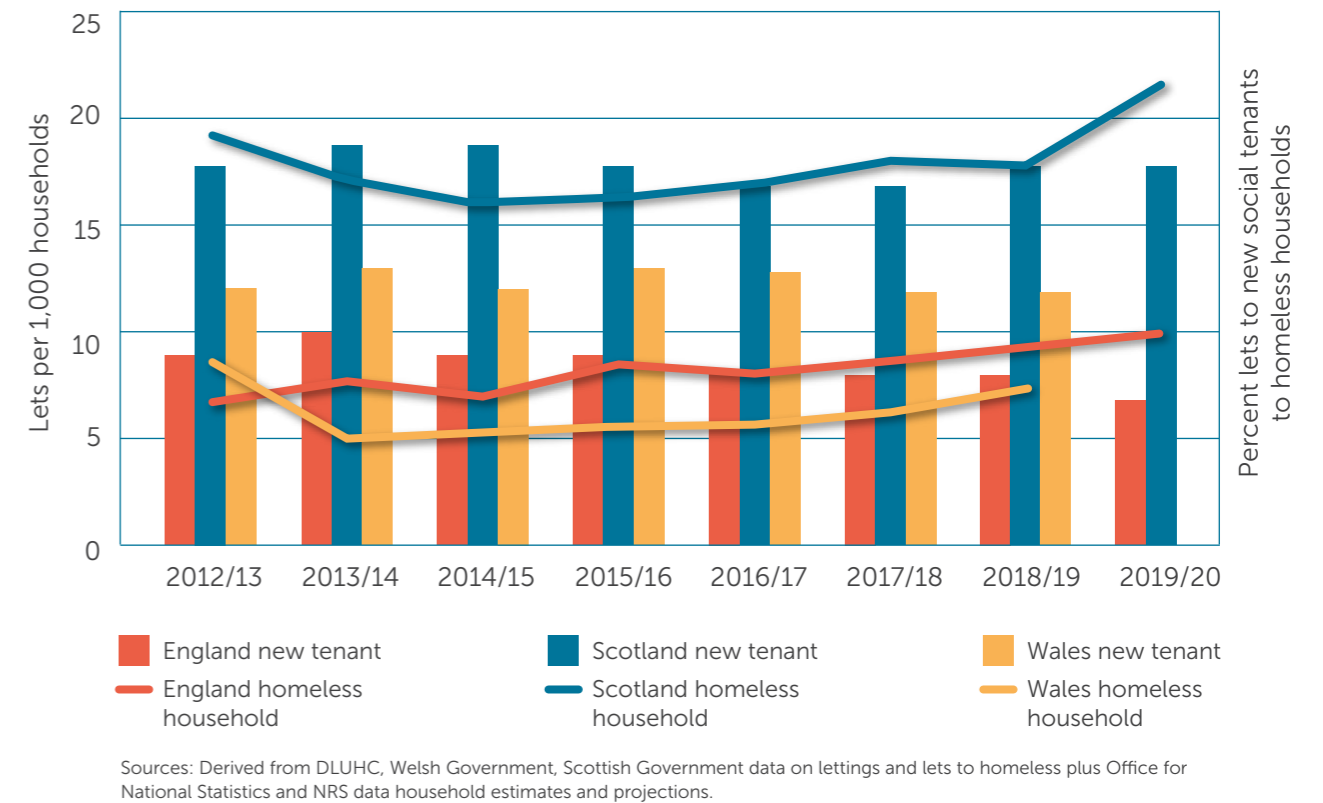


Figure 2. Lettings to household new to social housing and homeless households across Great Britain, 2012-20.



“I wonder whether there is some degree of not really wanting to end homelessness, from Government and people [...] If we can turn that mindset on its head, it would be really good.”

Mark, Crisis Expert by Experience

With housing a growing political priority for many voters,¹⁰ the availability of affordable, decent homes can no longer be ignored. **To end homelessness with homes, we need a long-term plan to deliver new homes for social rent to meet current and future need.** Research commissioned by Crisis and the National Housing Federation shows that we need an additional 90,000 social rented homes per year for the next 15 years to end homelessness.

Scaling up social house building to achieve this will take time, and **the next Westminster Government should lay out a clear plan to achieve a significant increase in supply of social rented homes in the long-term. This should also include short-term measures to rebalance investment in housing and prioritise spending on homes for social rent** – the only type of affordable housing that is genuinely affordable to people on the lowest incomes – to deliver more homes to end and prevent homelessness in the short term. **In parallel with rebalancing spending, the next government should also take steps to ensure that a higher proportion of social homes are allocated to people experiencing homelessness.** Currently just 25% of new social lettings in England go to people who are homeless, falling significantly below the comparable rate in Scotland at 45%, meaning that even where social housing is available, people who are in the most need are too often unable to access it.

In addition, there are opportunities for rapid delivery of much-needed truly affordable homes. **Taking action to unlock existing housing will help end homelessness: acquiring housing from the open market for social rent, tackling empty homes and converting unused commercial space into high quality, settled homes.** While more than 100,000 households are currently stuck in temporary accommodation,¹¹ more than a quarter of a million homes in England have been sitting empty for six months or more. There is also scope to make better use of empty commercial buildings by converting them to create genuinely affordable housing. Bringing empty homes and commercial buildings into use in this way can jumpstart the delivery of good quality, safe homes for everyone as well as creating potential to retrofit homes to improve energy efficiency and contribute to wider net zero targets. This should include accessible and adapted housing to meet the diverse health and mobility needs of our population.

“A future where everyone is entitled to a home of the right sort and of an acceptable standard. So, with both enforceable and enforced standards.”


Nicholas, Crisis Expert by Experience

As house prices stagnate and with the possibility of declining property values in some areas, there will be also opportunities to acquire homes for use as social housing more cost effectively.¹² **A targeted housing conversion programme would enable councils and social housing providers to acquire existing private rented homes to convert them to more secure and affordable social housing and would also allow the acquisition of new build market properties on stalled sites.**

¹⁰ “7 in 10 Britons think there is a national housing crisis, 49% that there is a local one [...] National crisis felt as strongly among owner-occupiers as renters [...] 51% think political parties do not pay a lot of attention to housing problems” Ipsos (1 June 2022) Seven in ten of Britons think there is a national housing crisis, while opposition to local home-building has cooled <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/seven-ten-britons-think-there-national-housing-crisis-while-opposition-local-home-building-has>

¹¹ 101,300 households were in temporary accommodation in the most recent quarter of data available: [October-December 2022.](https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/house-prices)

¹² <https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/house-prices>



“Government should look at practical actions that can help to prevent homelessness, like cutting the cost of living for people at risk, to relieve them of certain pressures that can tip them over into homelessness.”

Jordan, Crisis Expert by Experience

This can contribute meaningfully to the overall need for social rented homes. The Affordable Housing Commission estimate that a £1.3 billion National Housing Conversion Fund could deliver 42,500 new social and affordable homes, the majority of which would be at social rents.¹³ This investment can garner strong value for money in weaker housing markets and grants can be made contingent on improving housing conditions and supporting local economies, with a benefit to economic activity worth £1.4 billion in 30 years.

“[The next Government] should try to give stability to people who are struggling with the cost of living.”

Mark, Crisis Expert by Experience

In addition to measures to bring social housing into supply, we also can't continue to ignore the thousands of private renters who are on the lowest incomes who are getting squeezed the hardest by the cost of living crisis and record rent increases. This mounting pressure is leaving more and more people facing homelessness, and targeted support is needed to prevent that.

To stimulate the supply of private rented homes to people on the lowest incomes, the next Westminster Government must restore Local Housing Allowance to cover at least the bottom third of local rents.

Local Housing Allowance rates set the amount of money people on low incomes receive to help pay their private rent, but this amount has been frozen since 2020 despite rising rents. Unfreezing the rates would help to prevent homelessness in all parts of the United Kingdom, and modelling shows that it is one of the most effective actions the government could take to reduce the numbers of people facing homelessness.¹⁴

Investment in Local Housing Allowance can be done early by a new government, with an immediate positive impact on levels of homelessness. Local Housing Allowance represents good value for money, preventing the rent arrears that can lead to homelessness, with Sam Ray-Chaudhuri of the IFS commenting to the Telegraph, “This isn't an expensive policy.”¹⁵

Support with housing costs can also help people out of homelessness who would otherwise be unable to afford a tenancy. During the pandemic, investment in Local Housing Allowance had an immediate impact, helping people across the country access private rented tenancies and move out of temporary accommodation, which too often is unsuitable and unhealthy, leaving people living in cramped, mouldy and unacceptable conditions. Local Housing Allowance can be a lifeline in this situation, and quickly offer a future free from homelessness for the many families and individuals who desperately need this vital support.

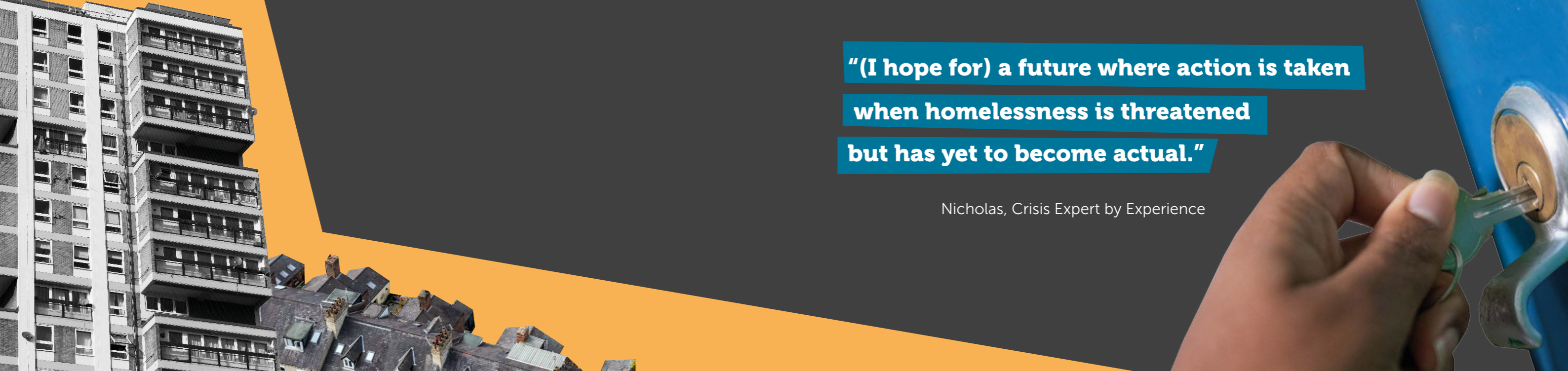
Combined, these measures can reap early rewards from the first few years of a government, as well as the long-term housing supply that is needed. It is vital to ensure that as new homes are brought back into use that they are being made available to people in housing need as long-term, settled homes.

By expanding the supply of social homes, we can live in a society where the system response to someone who is homeless, or at risk, is the offer of a long-term home of their own as quickly as possible. This should be prioritised over temporary and insecure solutions.

¹³ Affordable Housing Commission (23rd September 2020) Report: A National Housing Conversion Fund: buying properties to boost affordable housing supply <https://www.affordablehousingcommission.org/news/2020/9/23/report-a-national-housing-conversion-fund-buying-properties-to-boost-affordable-housing-supply>

¹⁴ “In England, taking the longer (20 year view) the largest policy impact [of the options modelled] would come from raising the LHA sufficiently to remove gaps between market and LHA-subsidised private rents. This policy is only ranked 5th in Scotland and 2nd in Wales” [Homelessness Monitor Great Britain 2022](https://www.homelessnessmonitor.org.uk/great-britain-2022).

¹⁵ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/03/13/budget-fix-could-save-landlords-looming-crisis/>



“(I hope for) a future where action is taken when homelessness is threatened but has yet to become actual.”

Nicholas, Crisis Expert by Experience

Pillar two: Urgent action to support people experiencing, or at risk of, the worst forms of homelessness

For people who already facing the worst forms of homelessness, or who are on the brink, the Westminster Government can act quickly and in a targeted way so that people are not left in limbo in insecure, unsafe housing or dangerous forms of shelter.

Homelessness is a devastating experience, and by intervening to prevent homelessness in those circumstances, people can avoid the damaging impact that homelessness would have on their lives, and prevent people being pushed into cycles of homelessness like sofa-surfing and rough sleeping.

“Government should do more about prevention. It’s the key to numbers not rising. Then they can do more about people who do actually become homeless.”

Dalina, Crisis Expert by Experience

It’s vital that the next Westminster Government ensures no one is forced to sleep rough or in other forms of unsuitable shelter for prolonged or repeated periods of time. Access to safe accommodation is a crucial first step to helping someone successfully move on from, or prevent, rough sleeping and homelessness, but currently this basic right is not available to everyone in England. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in Government taking rapid action on rough sleeping, with the landmark Everyone In initiative supporting thousands of people into a safe place to stay, which offered respite from the trauma of the streets.

Since this ended alongside the funding that made it possible, local authorities are no longer required to provide temporary accommodation based on need alone, leaving many unable to access help they need at a critical time. This leaves too many people with no option but to sleep on the streets.

The next Westminster Government can repeat this success and put it on a sustainable footing, so we don’t see people return to the streets. **Alongside measures to rapidly increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing, there should be a new ‘Somewhere Safe to Stay’ duty for local authorities to provide emergency accommodation to people who are sleeping rough or in other temporary forms of shelter, and those at risk. This new duty should be fully funded.** Introducing this duty alongside the funding needed will prevent people from having

to sleep on the streets or move between different temporary arrangements like sleeping in cars or on public transport, not knowing where they will be able to stay each night. Meeting the immediate need for safety helps to protect people from that in the interim, while long-term solutions are found. It would help strengthen the feeling of safety in communities and show what’s possible with the right policy change.

“The [current] Government proved they can do it straight away, and no one should have to sleep on the streets whilst all the other stuff is being discussed and worked out.”

Anthony, Crisis Expert by Experience



“If nobody was sleeping rough, it would make the public feel much more comfortable. It would serve to help widen perspective. It would be evidence that policy was working.”

Nicholas, Crisis Expert by Experience

As well as urgently supporting people experiencing the worst forms of homelessness, the next Westminster Government can make strides in reducing homelessness for people at highest risk of becoming homeless by providing timely interventions of housing and support. Experiences of homelessness are varied and diverse but certain circumstances and situations are particularly likely to lead to homelessness, such as:

Domestic abuse

Survivors of domestic abuse are more likely to face homelessness while fleeing a dangerous home. Economic abuse can leave people with fewer resources to access a home, while the psychological toll of abuse can make it harder to manage alone. This leaves survivors particularly exposed to the risk of homelessness. Women sleeping rough often face different risks to men, and so are often less visible to services. Women need gender-informed support that meets their needs for safety.

Age, gender identity, sexuality and ethnicity all need to be considered in the needs that need to be met.

Leaving care

Young people leaving local authority care are more likely to face challenges adapting to managing finances, a tenancy and other responsibilities without the support that other young people receive from their families in early adulthood. This leaves young people leaving care at greater risk of homelessness.

Prison release

People leaving prison have often lost jobs, homes and relationships during their sentence, making it hard to get back on their feet. This can make homelessness a very likely prospect.

Immigration status

For people leaving asylum accommodation, without much knowledge of how to access benefits, find a job or secure a tenancy, homelessness is frequently the result. Some types of immigration statuses can even contribute to the risk of homelessness as people are directly excluded from support from welfare and homelessness services. This can leave people exposed to higher risk of modern slavery and exploitation.

LGBTQ+ groups

Experiences of discrimination from landlords and services can alienate people from support. LGBTQ+ people can face exclusion from their families and communities, which contributes to homelessness.

People from ethnic minority backgrounds

Meanwhile, people with experience of racist discrimination by landlords are more likely to experience homelessness. Minoritised communities can often find that mainstream homelessness services don't meet their needs, and may even experience discrimination at their hands.

Health conditions

People with health conditions that prevent them from working can struggle to afford a tenancy, while certain conditions, such as acquired brain injury can make it harder to manage alone. Mental health conditions can likewise inhibit people's ability to manage to live independently. Leaving hospital is challenging for anyone, especially after a prolonged stay, but this is even more

challenging when you have no home to go to. Without a home, it is hard to recover physical and mental health. Trauma, which can arise from any of the circumstances outlined above and more, can compound the challenges involved in people's homelessness.

Experiencing any one of the above circumstances makes homelessness more likely, but for people with multiple and complex needs, the challenges are compounded. Inadequate solutions can exacerbate the problems. For example, unsafe accommodation can push people back into homelessness.

However, by targeting the circumstances where homelessness is most likely, we can intervene with tailored support to end homelessness for those most at risk.



To support people, the next Government should offer a Prevention Programme that funds evidence-based housing and support models, which respond to the needs of people at highest risk of homelessness at different points in their journey.

This could be made possible by devolving funding for these programmes to Mayoral/ Combined Authority regions and designing a national framework for these programmes, so they are structured around local need and offer the best evidence-based interventions, including:

Critical Time Intervention

Through a Critical Time Intervention model, services can support people who are vulnerable to homelessness during periods of transition. Transition periods can be extremely challenging for anyone, especially when there is a risk of homelessness, and yet, transition

periods can be a significant chance to secure a permanent housing solution for someone and help them build foundations for lasting support in the community.

The Critical Time Intervention model can be effective in a range of transitions, such as when people leave prison, hospital or Home Office accommodation. The approach works by providing access to permanent housing and intensive, time-limited and focused support to help people settle into their home and access mainstream support services.

“I want government to think about people who are at risk of falling into homelessness [...] The link of ‘I’m at risk of homelessness – I am on the edge of homelessness – I am homeless’ must be broken...”

Jordan, Crisis Expert by Experience

It is a well-evidenced approach in the US, where randomised control trials have found it beneficial for military veterans and people with a history of mental illness while being discharged from mental health institutions. Critical Time Interventions have been variously found to have a positive effect on housing stability, health, wellbeing and relationships the US and the Netherlands.¹⁶ Crisis is piloting this intervention in relation to people leaving prison in Liverpool and Swansea.

Pathway model to prevent hospital discharge into homelessness

People who are homeless are much more likely to experience physical and mental health issues, including tuberculosis, heart disease and stroke. People who are homeless attend A&E six times as often and are admitted to hospital four times as often as the general population.¹⁷ Health issues are often also a cause of homelessness.

However, the healthcare system at present often fails to prevent homelessness and must be redesigned to work for people at risk of and experiencing homelessness. The most obvious sign of failure is that significant numbers of people are discharged from hospital onto the streets or into inappropriate temporary accommodation, often after receiving intensive treatment, only for them to accumulate further health problems which then requires even more intensive healthcare. With people sleeping rough more likely to be victims of violence and abuse, the street is no place to recover.

“[We need] a future without discrimination or bias about those becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness.”

Nicholas, Crisis Expert by Experience

¹⁶ Manuel, J.I., Nizza, M., Herman, D.B. et al. Supporting Vulnerable People During Challenging Transitions: A Systematic Review of Critical Time Intervention. *Adm Policy Ment Health* 50, 100–113 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-022-01224-z>

¹⁷ <https://www.pathway.org.uk/>



Pathway, a homeless health charity, has created a model of support that brings together multi-disciplinary services to avoid discharges onto the street. It is an effective approach to supporting people who are homeless, helping to prevent them being discharged to the streets, and connecting them with local services, such as a GP, to ensure that their health needs are supported.¹⁸ The next Westminster Government can end all cases of people being discharged from hospital to the street in England, ensuring health and housing services work together to end this scandal.

Housing First

For people with multiple and complex support needs, Housing First has been proven to provide the best support to end their homelessness. Housing First is an approach that prioritises access to a home for people who face complex challenges such as serious mental health issues, a history of trauma or substance issues. This focuses on ensuring

that people are given support in a stable home, without being forced through a hostel system to prove that they are 'tenancy-ready'. Housing First has been successfully piloted by the current government in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Merseyside since 2017 with high-quality provision. As the most successful model for tackling entrenched rough sleeping, Housing First requires steady, long-term funding. Currently, Housing First is being delivered for an estimated 2,000 people across England, out of an estimated 16,450 people who would benefit from the programme.¹⁹ Delivered correctly, the costs of the programme more than offset the savings per year delivered through reduced use of

"[We need] a future where every cause of homelessness is dealt with, not just some causes."

Nicholas, Crisis Expert by Experience

other services, including emergency health services, criminal justice and homelessness services.²⁰

Pillar three: Fixing the system for the long term

As well as supplying the truly affordable, decent homes needing and urgent action to support people facing the worst forms of homelessness, a mission to end homelessness must go further to ensure we can have a future free from homelessness – for good. To achieve this, we need to fix the system for the long term. That means redesigning the welfare, homelessness and healthcare systems so that they are robust enough to work for everyone.

Right now, homelessness legislation is designed to restrict who has a right to support from the local authority when experiencing homelessness. This particularly impacts

people who do not have dependent children living with them and are not considered 'vulnerable' enough to meet the threshold for support to access a settled home. In practice, this results in people with serious health problems and other complex needs being turned away from the help they need.

There have already been important changes to the system, by broadening definitions of 'priority need' to include people fleeing domestic abuse. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act was also a landmark achievement in moving towards a more preventative approach to homelessness policy.

"No one should have to sleep on the streets to access services or hit rock bottom before they can actually get some help."

Anthony, Crisis Expert by Experience

18 Centre for Homelessness Impact (January 2022) What Works Evidence Notes: Institutional Discharge https://assets-global.website-files.com/59f07e67422cdf0001904c14/61e83e2695ffbaa0ae3ab5c2_CHI.WWC.Evidence.Notes.Discharge.pdf

19 Crisis (September 2021) Home for All: The case for scaling up housing first in England https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/245740/home-for-all_the-case-for-scaling-up-housing-first-in-england_report_sept2021.pdf

20 Nicholas Pleace and Joanne Bretherton (March 2019) The cost effectiveness of Housing First in England. Homeless Link https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/The_cost_effectiveness_of_Housing_First_in_England_2019.pdf



“We have to get out of the whole revolving door situation, with people in and out of the homeless system. There needs to be the whole, holistic wrap-around package of support – health, legal, benefits, mental health, functional and practical skills – all of which helps people sustain their homes.”

Mark, Crisis Expert by Experience

But Crisis research finds that despite changes, the homelessness legislation still results in people who need it the most being excluded from support.²¹

The proposed ‘Somewhere Safe to Stay’ duty for local authorities to provide emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough and at risk would be a first step in designing homelessness legislation that works based on need alone. But more is needed to if we are to have homelessness legislation that truly supports an end to homelessness.

To end all forms of homelessness, an expert review of homelessness legislation in England is needed to ensure that everyone facing, or at risk of, homelessness gets the support they need to move into a safe and settled home. This should examine the legal barriers to accessing long-term, settled housing consider how legislation and guidance can promote early homelessness prevention as well as tackling all forms

of homelessness. In Scotland and Wales, progress has already been made towards reviewing these legislative barriers, such as priority need, intentionality and local connection,²² and similar steps are needed in England to ensure everyone can access the support they need to move out of homelessness.

A review should also consider what further steps can be taken to embed homelessness prevention across all parts of government. This should include reviewing access to quality health and social care in relation to homelessness, so that illness is never a reason to become or stay homeless. The right care and support should be available to people who are experiencing homelessness, and our immigration policies should not force people into destitution as they do currently. No one should be going without essentials in this country, but all too often, people are experiencing the damaging effects of homelessness because they simply cannot

afford a home. The combined effect of high housing costs and low-paid, insecure work mean that more and more people are experiencing homelessness despite being in work. Support provided through the welfare system must be sufficient to cover people’s essential living costs. Crucially, this must include housing costs, so that people can afford a home in periods of ill-health or other challenges. **The next Government should ensure that the welfare system protects everyone from homelessness.** Welfare levels need to be connected to the real costs of essentials, including housing, and the welfare system needs to be a source of practical support.

People coming into contact with the DWP are more likely to be experiencing changes of circumstance such as illness or job loss, which could contribute to insecure housing situations. Contact with the welfare system presents a valuable opportunity to intervene and prevent homelessness before it occurs.

Getting this right will prevent many thousands of people from experiencing homelessness, making it easier for them to access and sustain work, manage their health and housing costs.

But people’s lives are complicated, and people can struggle when they’re left on their own without support. We need to build a system where no one faces homelessness alone, because they can’t access support. Previously, funding for support services to do just this, including supporting people to access help with mental health and addiction, was ringfenced. In recent years, the removal of this ringfencing, alongside cuts to funding and increasing pressure on local authority services has meant there has been a lack of support services that people who are homeless or at risk can access. We need to rebalance this so help is available for people to rapidly get back on their feet if they face homelessness. **The next Government should commit to restoring ring-fenced funding for support services to help those who need it keep their homes.**

21 Sutton-Hamilton, C., Allard, M., Stroud, R., and Albanese, F. (2022) “I hoped there’d be more options:” Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act, 2018–2021. London: Crisis. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/services-and-interventions/i-hoped-there-d-be-more-options-experiences-of-the-homelessness-reduction-act-2018-2021/>

22 ‘Priority need’ refers to a list of characteristics that entitle someone to homelessness relief duties, including being pregnant, having dependent children, previous military service, age or experience of domestic abuse. ‘Intentionality’ refers to a test of whether someone is blamed for the cause of their homelessness, in which case a homelessness duty may not apply. For example, if someone has lost a tenancy due to antisocial behaviour or rent arrears, or if a private tenant moves out following an eviction notice, instead of contesting it. ‘Local connection’ is a test of whether the local authority owes a duty to a person on the basis of their relationship to the area, based on length of residence, employment or family association. If someone does not have local connection, the local authority can refer them to a different local authority.

Make history by creating a future free from homelessness

We need the next Westminster Government to embark on a national mission to end all forms of homelessness. Taken together, the measures in this report can end homelessness within two terms of government. Pillar one will help make the goal of delivering more truly affordable, decent homes to end homelessness a reality. Pillar two will support urgent and targeted action to prevent and alleviate homelessness for people at highest risk of rough sleeping and other forms of temporary shelter. Pillar three will set us on a path to redesigning the systems needed so we can realise a future free from homelessness.

It's a bold and ambitious mission but offers us the opportunity of a society where homelessness is a thing of the past. That means our future children growing up with a safe and settled home. It means our future communities having better wellbeing and relationships. Home is a foundation for a healthier future, a stronger, more productive society for all of us.

Crisis' panel of experts have all experienced homelessness in the past but want the next Westminster Government to build a future without homelessness.

This is their statement:

"Those outside should be inside: everyone should have a home. That means suitable, stable homes so that people can feel like they matter again. That means preventing homelessness before it occurs and making sure that people receive support.

By ending homelessness altogether, we can treat everyone with dignity and unlock hope for a richer, more joyful future. It's time for action."

It's time to make history. It's time for a future free from homelessness.



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