



the right to a safe home

Shelter

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introduction



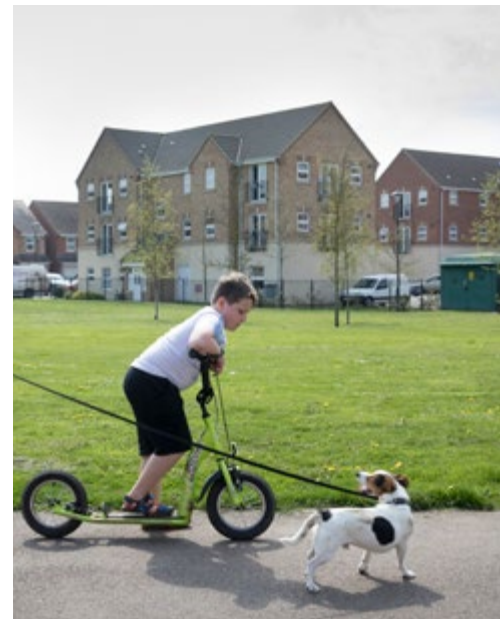
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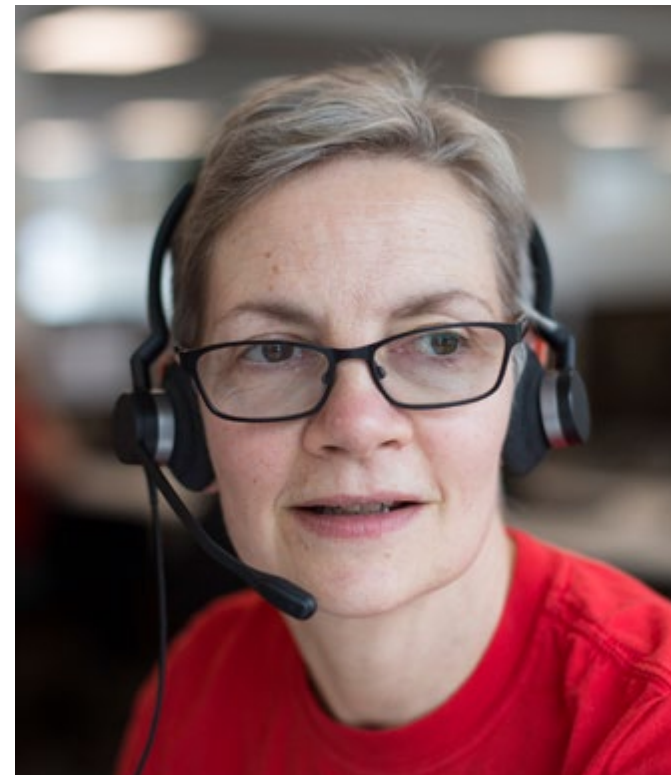


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INTRODUCTION



the housing crisis is now a national emergency.



Shelter was founded 52 years ago, not by the wealthy or powerful, but as a community organisation whose purpose was to change society. That means we're needed more now than at any time in our history: for millions of our fellow citizens the fundamental human need for a safe home is ignored.

Forget finding who's to blame for this. Shelter is here to do far more than just point out what's gone wrong. We are here to put it right, and that's why our aim is for this strategy to be nothing less than a turning point for both Shelter and our country.

Without a home, no one can achieve their full potential. With millions whose right to a home is under threat, neither can the country. We believe that because the need for a home is so all-consuming, a home is a basic moral right, and everything we will do from now will be done to defend that right.

We've all talked so much about the 'housing crisis' that we've stopped believing it can be solved. The phrase has become like wallpaper. But this is a national emergency, and one that demands fearless, ambitious action.

In developing this strategy, it's been vital to start with our own people: those who rely on our services, our volunteers, our

employees. We aim to rebuild a movement, stronger than ever, and a movement must start with a simple idea that unites everyone within Shelter, our best advocates. Change starts here, in our work with individuals, spreading through communities, and across society.

We identify in this strategy six million households whose right to a home is either denied or under threat at this very moment. Soaring rents that squeeze out food and clothing, being thrown out of your home through no fault of your own, simply being too poor to afford a home: the terror of homelessness is everywhere.

Many are living in grossly unfit and unsafe conditions, adults and children whose lives are blighted by fear and despair. Discrimination is rampant in private renting and we have lost sight of the simple fact that we need a home just as much as we need healthcare and education. We are building the fewest social homes in 70 years, at a time when more and more people desperately need them.

In Shelter's services, our people work tirelessly to alleviate the sheer destitution they see day in and day out. We will be a rock in the storm every day for those who need us. But our aim is bigger – to cut this suffering off at source – and we acknowledge

in this strategy that we can't do it overnight, neither can we do it alone.

For the first time, Shelter is committing in this strategy to ten-year goals as well as three-year goals so we can be confident of building to the necessary changes over the next decade. And at the same time we commit in this strategy to building the movement of people who will make this change possible.

We plan in the next three years to have 500,000 supporters join us in our mission to respond to this emergency, through campaigning, volunteering and donating. It is people that can power the change we seek.

This national emergency has been decades in the making. Now is the moment to act together with one purpose. In the community, our hubs and shops will be magnets for everyone with a role in ending the national emergency. Nationally, we will work with everyone who sees the desperate need for change: no one group or party is to blame for the emergency, and no one group or party can end it either.

Shelter: it's a fundamental need and a basic moral right. Please join us to defend it.

Polly Neate
Chief Executive

Helen Baker
Chair

OUR PURPOSE



Shelter exists to defend the right to a safe home.

We're Shelter.

The original campaigners against the housing crisis.

A crisis that today affects all of us.

How can a society flourish when millions of people are being left behind?

A safe home is a fundamental need.

A safe home opens the door to employment.

To health.

To education.

And without a safe home, it can be hard to survive, let alone thrive.

So shouldn't a safe home be a right?

This is why we exist.

To lead the way to a safe home.

To give those suffering a foundation on which to build a life for themselves.

To speak up for the voiceless.

To defend those things that are more important than bricks and mortar.

Like security.

Stability.

And self respect.

So we're going on the offensive.

We're going to rally the country to join us on our mission.

To rise up.

To speak with a united voice.

To pick up the pieces and fix the underlying problem.

Together we can overcome any barrier.

Together we can bring fundamental change.

Together we can defend everyone's right to a safe home.

And no matter how difficult,

Or how long it takes,

We will succeed.

Join us.

THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY !



the national emergency

A home is a fundamental human need, the foundation on which we can all build our lives and the basis for strong communities and a good society.

And yet our society is losing its way when so many are denied the right to a home or threatened with the loss of that right. Shelter exists for all those whose lives are blighted or will be blighted by this.

The right to a safe home isn't just the right to a roof over your head. A home means much more than that. It's the right to somewhere safe, secure and affordable. It is an indictment of years of failure that across England and Scotland as many as six million households are either denied this right or are threatened with losing it. That's one in four households who are affected by one or more of these fundamental issues:



Homelessness

At least 4,750 people sleep rough on any given night. And this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are over 90,000 households hidden away in temporary accommodation across England and Scotland, a rise of 38% in the last five years. More than half of homeless families are working, demonstrating that the basic deal between the individual and society – that if you have a job and an income you can expect at least to have a home – has broken down as the national emergency has worsened.

Inadequate housing

Millions of people are living in homes that don't provide for their basic needs. They include the people living with potentially lethal hazards, such as unsafe electrics, those who cannot keep their home warm or run a hot bath, and families struggling without enough space to live. In the worst of the private rented sector, the slum conditions that first led to the building of our social housing have returned.



Unaffordability

Many households struggle to meet their housing costs – particularly families with children. As a result, people are cutting back on basics like food or heating. This struggle to pay for the bare essentials can all too easily result in households falling behind with rent payments and finding their home at risk.

Lack of security

The rapid growth of private renting – fed by the decline of social housing – has transformed the number and types of households having to contend with one of the most deregulated and marketised rental systems in the developed world. There are greater protections in Scotland, but in England renters lack choice and control over how long they can stay in their home.

With the children of one in four families now growing up in a rented home, the consequences of this instability are being felt deeply by those who in the past would have had the security of ownership or a social home.

Together, these four rising threats foreshadow an even worse future emergency, and even greater homelessness, insecurity and hardship, unless they are addressed.

Shelter exists to support these 6 million households.

OUR IMPACT AND HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE CHANGE



how we will achieve change

A nationwide movement demanding social housing and defending rights

- In communities we harness the power of our services, shops, campaigners, donors, and partners to effect change
- Everyone who comes into contact with Shelter can contribute to ending the national emergency

We want a future without discrimination based on housing or benefits status

- We use the law to strengthen rights and fight discrimination
- All whose rights are denied or at risk can get the best digital advice

Every Shelter hub is a base for change in its community

- We understand what's needed in every area we work in and the individual, local and national impact of denying the right to a home
- We help others to tackle the housing emergency by providing professional training and support

People who struggle are supported to find the best solution for them and their children

- We empower people to challenge society's denial of rights and to believe change is possible
- We ensure support is available for children and their families who have been homeless or living in slum conditions
- Local partnerships help people overcome the problems that put them at risk of losing their home
- If you are homeless or your home is at risk you can get advice on the phone immediately

Rights for renters

Help for people who are struggling

Building social housing

By 2022

Renters have greater security and do not face discrimination

People who struggle to manage their housing have support

All political parties promise to build enough social housing

By 2029

People have housing rights and understand them

People get support to assert their rights and are not stigmatised or marginalised

All those in greatest need have access to social housing

Shelter exists to defend the right to a safe home

We strive for change with individuals, in communities, across society

rights for renters and an end to discrimination



- by 2029
people have housing rights
and understand them
- by 2022
renters have greater security
and do not face discrimination

A home is a fundamental need. It is as vital as the right to education or healthcare. In Britain today, this right is either denied or under threat for millions of people living in rented accommodation – particularly children and single parent households. This is a national emergency.

the emergency

In the last two decades, as home ownership and the number of social homes have fallen, there has been an explosion in the number of households renting privately. This has coincided with a dramatic change in the types of households renting so that 1.8 million families with children now rent privately. Despite our huge national focus on home ownership, one in four children is now growing up as a private renter. This dramatic change has left more and more families struggling with damaging levels of instability and high housing costs.

Since 2011, rents have risen by 16% across the country, while wages have gone up just 10%. In some areas, the disparity between rent rises and wage rises has been as great as 39%. Private renters now have the highest weekly housing costs – a problem compounded for many by recent benefits cuts. Every month, 17% of private renters are behind with or face a constant struggle to pay their rent.

The low-regulation private renting market creates flexibility, but to huge numbers of families flexibility simply means insecurity. Families renting privately struggle to save and often live under the constant threat of eviction as contracts and tenancies provide no long-term security. In fact, the ending of a

contract by a private landlord is now the leading cause of homelessness across the UK.

The balance of power between landlord and tenant creates an environment that can lead to abuse and exploitation. From revenge evictions to the scandal of 'sex for rent' to horrible and unsafe living conditions, those with the fewest choices suffer the most in the private rental market.

And discrimination is widespread and endemic. Six in ten landlords say they would prefer not to rent to someone on welfare. And almost one in three renters on benefits have been deprived a home due to notorious 'No DSS' policies which bar those receiving benefits from even being considered for a property.

Children bear the brunt. Single parent households are disproportionately affected by the national emergency, with one in 37 lone parents living in temporary accommodation in England. This destroys childhoods, and a damaged childhood so often means a damaged life and a cycle of destitution. A child in temporary accommodation will miss an average of 55 school days a year, and a child living in bad housing is more likely to develop respiratory problems like asthma.

our response

Private renters want to be able to put down roots and live in security and safety. They're growing increasingly angry and demanding change. Their political power is also rising. Private renters are voting more and pollsters identified them as a key swing group at the last election.

We believe change is possible

At Shelter, our job is to defend private renters from the worst excesses of the market and to help build the case for genuinely affordable rents, better rights and more protections. We are not against private renting, but the sector isn't currently fit to provide homes for all those – particularly families and children – who have no option but to rely on it.

We've won a lot in recent years – such as a ban on upfront letting fees; a bill going through parliament which includes a legal duty for homes to be fit for human habitation; stronger electrical safety checks; and greater security for private renters in Scotland. But there's still more to do. To achieve it, we'll need to inspire a new wave of grassroots supporters – a mass movement for change whose voice will be heard everywhere, from Westminster to local town halls.

We will campaign for improvements in conditions and consumer protection, and we'll press the government to establish a genuine right to stay for renters who want enough security to be able to put down roots, or for their child to be able to stay in one place to complete their schooling. The UK government's proposal for longer three-year tenancies in England is a welcome first step towards this right, but we cannot see any justification for England continuing to allow no-fault evictions when Scotland has already abolished them.

We want a future without discrimination based on housing or benefits status

Our ground-breaking campaign to end the practice of so-called 'No DSS' adverts will be at the heart

of our fight to end discrimination against those on benefits right across the housing system. This practice is unethical and unlawful. We recognise that it is widespread, encompassing not just letting agents and landlords but also lenders and insurers. We require a society-wide change in attitudes. This is just the first step.

We use the law to strengthen rights and fight discrimination

Shelter has unrivalled expertise in housing law, and our lawyers are fighting daily for the right to a home. Now we will develop our use of strategic litigation to focus this expertise on issues where winning one case can change thousands of lives. We are already bringing a series of cases to highlight the unlawful nature of 'No DSS' practices.

We also plan to challenge the way children are treated in the housing system. The Children Act 1989 should safeguard and protect the welfare of children if their parents become homeless. But in some cases social services have effectively denied help to homeless families under the act, by threatening to separate parents from their children through offering housing to the child and not the parents.

Authorities know many parents will understandably walk away and face homelessness without any support, rather than lose their children to the care system. Court decisions have appeared to condone this use of the act. Shelter believes this practice flies in the face of the spirit and intention of the Children Act and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and will be seeking to challenge authorities' interpretation of their duties through landmark legal cases.

All whose rights are denied or at risk can get the best digital advice

We are the leading source of housing advice in the country and we want to provide a service which gives the best advice to all who need it. But because of the increasing need, too often we cannot meet demand.

For that reason, we will enhance our digital advice to cater to everyone seeking help. This means putting the needs of the individual at the heart of what we do by designing our advice services around them. We will help people understand their rights, investing our time in meeting demand, not managing it.

We will help our advisors to resolve issues at the first time of asking whenever they can, by focusing on quality and adapting to changes in technology, so that we can continually reflect how users access information.

Our aim is that by 1 April 2022, people will:

- be able to predict how much their rent will cost throughout their tenancy
- never be evicted without legitimate reason
- be able to access advice from Shelter either online or on the phone

And families with children under 16 will:

- be supported to overcome the traumatic effects of homelessness and unsuitable housing
- never be threatened with losing their children to the care system because of homelessness



building more social housing

26

by 2029
all those in greatest need
have access to social housing

by 2022
all political parties promise
to build enough social housing

Three million renters are facing a monthly battle to keep a roof over their heads or are living in unfit and unsafe conditions. The lack of social housing is at the heart of this emergency. It is impossible to fix the housing crisis without social housing.



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the emergency

Levels of public housebuilding have plummeted, which has led to the sharp increase in families stuck in expensive, poor quality, insecure privately rented homes. Right now, 1.2 million people are on the waiting list for social housing, yet just over 5,000 new social homes were built last year. A tiny drop in an ocean of need.

It wasn't always like this. Between 1950 and 1980, Britain had a formidable record of building social housing under governments of both main parties, delivering over 100,000 desirable new social homes almost every year, in some years topping 200,000.

However, from the 1980s onwards, the scale of public housebuilding has drastically declined, and the proportion of households living in social housing has decreased year on year, while the private rented sector has doubled in size and home ownership has fallen.

The actions of government after government at a UK level have failed to reflect the magnitude of this problem. On no other issue do we see such a damaging impact on people's lives accompanied by such inertia in addressing it.

our response

The country needs urgent, long-term, large scale action to address this issue. It's wreaking havoc on millions of lives. We want everyone who needs social housing to get it. The only way we can fix the housing emergency is by building homes that are genuinely affordable for people on lower incomes to rent.

We must also end the stigma of social housing. This year, Shelter launched our Big Conversation on the future of social housing, led by a commission including figures ranging from Ed Miliband to Baroness Warsi and Lord O'Neill, and in partnership with the survivors and community at Grenfell Tower and with involvement from social housing communities around the country. The commission will report in January 2019. More than 32,000 people have participated in the Big Conversation to give their views and we hope it will play an important role in building a new consensus about the role of social housing in our society, our communities and our economy.

At Shelter, we will work with all those who want to see change, from big institutions with social purpose through to individuals pressing for new social homes in their community. It's vital that we turn the growing consensus around building more social housing into a groundswell of public opinion which challenges stigma, changes policy and forces action.

Our aim is that by 1 April 2022, people will:

- be more able to access social housing
- no longer be discriminated against, stigmatised or marginalised based on housing need



supporting people who are struggling

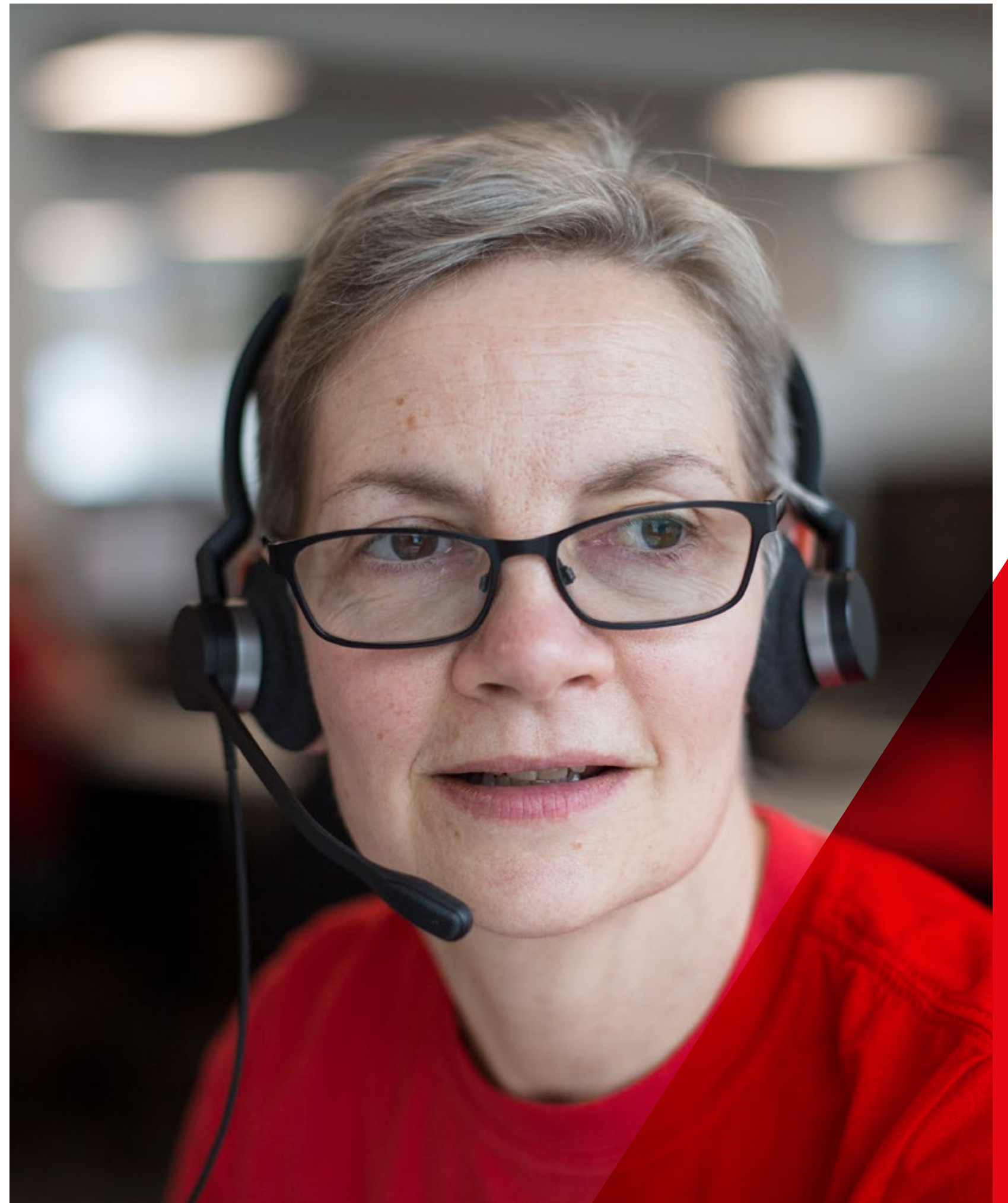
by 2029

people can assert their rights and are
not stigmatised or marginalised

by 2022

people who struggle to manage
their housing have support

Shelter works on the frontline to defend those whose right to a home is most at risk. Our services provide support that can be the difference between someone keeping or losing their home. As the housing emergency has worsened, our services are dealing with greater demand and more complex problems.



the emergency

Our services are under unprecedented pressure. Last year, we helped nearly 30,000 households at our face-to-face services, and there were six million visits to our online advice pages from people seeking help. Our helpline was able to take only one in every three calls, such was the demand.

Our frontline services are also seeing more people who are struggling with complex difficulties in their lives, such as a combination of homelessness and drug or alcohol misuse, mental illness, debt, or a history of offending. We can only ensure these people can find and keep a home, rather than being trapped in a revolving door of homelessness, if we are truly close to them. This requires working flexibly and in partnership with other local organisations whose expertise complements our own – always with the fundamental needs of the individual at the centre of our work.

The right to a safe home is everyone's. To ensure everyone can assert this right, organisations must work together.

our response

People who struggle are supported to find the best solution for them and their children

We have four local hubs in Scotland and 12 in England. We also deliver face-to-face services through Transforming Rehabilitation in 19 prisons in the north of England, offering advice and support to offenders in and out of custody around their housing, benefits and debt. We have three family support services in Scotland (in Paisley, Dumfries & Galloway and South Lanarkshire).

The future of Shelter at local level is as a catalyst for change. We want those who seek our help to be the ones who shape the way we help them. Our mantra will be 'same questions, different answers'. We will bring together our national expertise with the experience of those we help and our volunteers and professionals to form a local vision, pulling in expertise from partners as well as from within Shelter. We already have flagship projects in Manchester and Glasgow where services are shaped by the people who need them – where we have moved from 'service user involvement' to real co-production. Now it's time to replicate this everywhere we work.

This means that our local hubs will be designed with the community and for the community. They will be recognised for the assurance of Shelter's national expertise and reputation, but with the community genuinely at their heart. They will be spaces for collaboration and capacity-building, ensuring all of us offering help can be greater than the sum of our parts; and they will be the public space for the use of the community, showing in action what it looks like to end the marginalisation of those worst affected by the national emergency.

Local partnerships help people overcome the problems that put them at risk of losing their home

We want the people we help to be able to get all the support they need, addressing difficulties in their lives beyond their immediate housing crisis. Other



advice and support – ranging from family solicitors, immigration advice, recovery groups, to physical and mental health services and beyond – needs to be on hand, and for this to happen, partnerships will be critical.

And we will reach out from our hubs too. Shelter advisers will offer help and support in other local organisations, in our own shops and in our corporate and other partners' spaces. We will spread our knowledge and expertise as wide as we can, recognising that we can't be everywhere, and offering training and support to the other agencies that people turn to when they face homelessness and problems with housing, such as food banks, healthcare and family services.

If you are homeless or your home is at risk, you can get advice on the phone immediately

The housing emergency can impact people's lives suddenly and almost without warning. When this happens, the need is desperate, and wherever you are, you need help straightaway. That means bespoke and dedicated telephone advice, from someone who you know is an expert and will immediately understand your situation and what to do. Over the strategy period, our telephone helpline for emergencies will grow as long as the urgent need for help is growing.

We ensure support is available for children and their families who have been homeless or living in slum conditions

Children and families – particularly single parents – are disproportionately affected when they experience homelessness, squalid or unsafe living conditions, or the insecurity of emergency and temporary accommodation. Schoolwork suffers, children's development can be delayed, and often the reasons for homelessness in themselves have caused trauma that can only heal with care and support.

It's essential that children are given the help and the space they need to recover. If our childhood is blighted, we never get it back, and the effects last a lifetime – one of them being the risk of becoming homeless again. That's why, in every area where we work, we need to ensure this support is available, either by doing all we can to help the children we work with to get support from expert partners, or by providing it ourselves when needed.

Too often children are the invisible victims of our national emergency. We can't let this continue to be the case.

Our aim is that by 1 April 2022, people will:

- be empowered and supported to find and keep a decent home by Shelter and our partners
- be able to overcome their difficulties because they have somewhere safe and affordable to live
- be less likely to become homeless in the future

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES !



Shelter in the community

Our homes are the building blocks of our communities. We all instinctively know this, which is why communities care deeply when people see that the right to a home is denied to their neighbours, or that their area shuts local people out because prices are too high and social housing has been lost.

The aftermath of Grenfell showed us community in action more powerfully than any tragedy of recent years. Shelter was founded as a community movement 52 years ago and we believe our future lies in enabling and leading change at the community level as well as for individuals and nationally.



Every Shelter hub is a base for change in its community

Our vision for our hubs and shops is for them to be at the heart of their communities, bases for activism as well as for help and support. Our hubs will focus on developing relationships, building trust and helping to focus local energy, working with groups, organisations and individuals that want to bring about change at a local level, as well as contribute to national change.

Over the past year we have piloted the deployment of community organisers at local level, and this will expand under our new strategy. Through our community organisers, our hubs will identify and support Community Champions: volunteers who will work in places of faith, work and education to promote Shelter's values, campaigns and services within diverse communities. They will help achieve the change that – alongside the direct support and help we provide – will mean that individuals in that locality have the right to a safe home.

We empower people to challenge society's denial of rights and to believe change is possible

We know that in every area we work, many people are deeply concerned about the state of the housing emergency and its impact on their neighbours, and want to end it. Our role is to empower and inform those people so that together - as an organised force - we achieve more than any of us could do alone. Movements grow from the bottom up, not from the top down, and our work will reflect this, with Shelter's national functions responding to the experiences and injustice faced by those we serve.

We help others to tackle the housing emergency by providing professional training and support

The wide range of professionals from outside Shelter who also impact on the lives of the people we help, such as housing officers, advice workers and solicitors, are fundamental to Shelter's purpose. By providing them with expertise through high quality, innovative solutions and products, they can enhance their skills, knowledge and capability, and can better put policy into practice, promoting and supporting service development at local and national level. And that means that together we can have much greater impact, and better support those whose housing rights are denied or at risk.

In the long-term we plan to:

- influence positive outcomes for people who might seek our help through improving and developing the response they receive from other services.
- build capacity across sectors to get an improved response for those in housing need

We understand what's needed in every area we work in and the individual, local and national impact of denying the right to a home

To advance the understanding of homelessness, housing need and the circumstances that create them, we will develop for public access the country's first interactive map indexing the many different housing issues people face and building a detailed picture of where the right to a home is denied or threatened. This will transform the response to housing need at every level and will drive change, policy and understanding far beyond Shelter, as well as supporting our own services and campaigns. It will also focus our ambitions for growth, by showing where we are most needed and can make the most difference.



a movement for change

Our enemy is social injustice, and we cannot fight it alone. The national emergency cannot be stopped by anything less than a national movement.

We know our strategy can only succeed if thousands join together. We will work with individuals and organisations - those who care about or are affected by the national emergency, or who advocate or support those most impacted. At the heart of this we'll seek to recruit 500,000 supporters to defend the right to a safe home. We will harness the power for change of our services, shops, campaigners, donors and partners.

We will expand the number of community organisers working with local groups and partners, using our shops and hubs as their base, helping to build a social movement with the power and influence to defend the right to a safe home. We will facilitate connections between individuals and organisations across society, in order to build broad coalitions. And we'll help local groups campaign on issues directly affecting their area by sharing our expertise and resources, and in some instances by providing hands-on leadership and support. We will empower and amplify the voice of anyone who wants to work alongside us.



Everyone who comes into contact with Shelter can contribute to ending the national emergency

To grow the movement, Shelter will develop many ways for people to get involved – from concerned individuals to big organisations, from major donors to local committees. There are many ways people can make a difference, including volunteering to work with those who need support, campaigning online, joining a community group or donating goods to one of our shops. If you do any one of these things, you will have the chance, if you want to take it, to make a difference in the movement. We'll also help people see the impact they're having, so that they're compelled to take further actions.

Our purpose is a powerful call to action

Shelter's purpose is to defend the right to a safe home. We're a social justice organisation and we're always looking to form new alliances. In recent months, this has seen us work with Grenfell United on our commission looking at the future of social housing, with renters' unions on improving tenancies and with centre-right think-tanks on reform of land purchase so we can build social homes as cost effectively as they do in other countries. We can only achieve major and lasting change by working with others, and inspiring a diverse range of individuals and organisations to do whatever they can for the cause.

join our movement for change

The housing emergency affects all of us. Everyone should be able to do something about it. At Shelter, we want to make it as easy as possible for you to get involved – no matter who you are, where you live, or how much time you have to spare.

Find out about our
campaigning, volunteering
and fundraising opportunities,
and the different ways you
can partner with us,
at shelter.org.uk.

