

3 May 2024

Dear Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer, Ed Davey,

An entire generation of children risk having their futures snatched away if the next Prime Minister does not act to end the housing crisis.

We are writing to you because we have seen first-hand the devastating impact that inadequate housing and rising homelessness are having on our children.

Millions of children across the country do not have anywhere safe and decent to call home. These children are living without space to study, play or even have a good night's sleep; while their parents struggle to afford essentials like food and clothes. Children with Black and Asian backgrounds are more likely to live in homes with overcrowding or damp and mould. Without a solid foundation from which to grow, these children are having their future potential and life opportunities stolen from them.

This crisis is one that can be solved. Our country's housing issues can be drastically improved over the next parliament, but it will require a bold new approach.

Crucially, your electorate wants you to take action and provide our children with the long-term stability and security they need to thrive.

According to YouGov, housing is now the fastest growing major issue Britain faces and a new YouGov poll shows that:

- Nearly 1 in 3 (31%) Brits say they have been negatively impacted by housing issues in the last 12 months – equivalent to 16 million people.
- More than 8 in 10 (85%) Brits support building homes in their local area (either social housing, homes for private rent, or homes for sale).
- The majority of GB voters (53%) across all political parties think the government should prioritise building social homes over housing for private rent or sale.
- Nearly 3 in 10 parents impacted by housing issues said this had negatively impacted their children's health, behaviour, confidence, education or relationships.

If urgent action is not taken, the cost will be grave. New NHF analysis shows that in England, by the end of the next parliament:

- 7 children in every school will be homeless -160,000 children.
- 85 children in every school will be overcrowded – 2.1 million children.

- 1 in 5 families – 4.8 million – will be unable to afford their rent or mortgage.

It hasn't always been like this, and it doesn't have to be in the future.

To solve the housing crisis once and for all, we must move away from short-term, piecemeal policy decisions on housing and commit to the long-term strategic approach required. Countries around the world, such as Ireland and Canada, are already tackling similar housing crises with long-term national strategies.

Building the homes this country needs would not only have a huge social impact, but would save the taxpayer money. Research from CEBR, commissioned by Shelter and the NHF, shows that the next government could add over £50bn to the economy, including £12bn net profit to the taxpayer, by building 90,000 desperately needed social homes. This would directly support nearly 140,000 jobs in the first year alone, provide a much-needed boost to the construction industry and directly benefit the Exchequer through increased tax receipts, long-term savings on benefits and homelessness services, saving to the NHS and others.

Our children are the future of this country. The next government will have no chance of driving productivity, improving living standards, and bringing down taxes if the country's future workforce hasn't had a stable and safe start to life.

We *can* put an end to the housing emergency and make sure our children have a secure future. Your voters want this, our children need this, and it makes fiscal sense.

To achieve this, we need the next Prime Minister to take the lead on a long-term plan for housing.

Yours sincerely,

1. Cllr Aydin Dikerdem, Chair, Association of Retained Council Housing
2. Pepe Di'lasio, General Secretary, the Association of School and College Leaders
3. Lynn Perry MBE, CEO, Barnardo's
4. Seyi Obakin, CEO, Centrepoint
5. Alison Garnham, CEO, Child Poverty Action Group
6. Gavin Smart, CEO, Chartered Institute of Housing
7. Anna Milner, Chair, Councils with ALMOs Group
8. Roger Mortlock, CEO, CPRE, the countryside Charity
9. Alexia Murphy, CEO, Depaul
10. Ben Twomey, CEO, Generation Rent
11. Sarah Lambert, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Gingerbread
12. Sir Michael Eavis, Glastonbury Festival Founder
13. Michael Chandler, CEO, Groundswell
14. David Bogle, Chair, Homes For Cathy
15. Bonnie Williams, CEO, Housing Justice

16. Anna Garrod, Interim CEO, Impact on Urban Health
17. Paul Whiteman, General Secretary, School Leaders' Union NAHT
18. Kate Henderson, CEO, National Housing Federation
19. Samantha Stewart, Interim CEO, Nationwide Foundation
20. Mike Ainsley, Chair, National Federation of ALMOs
21. Sir Peter Wanless, CEO, NSPCC
22. Peter Barber, award-winning architect
23. Abigail Ampofo, Interim CEO, Refuge
24. Polly Neate, CEO, Shelter
25. Jean Templeton, CEO, St Basils
26. Tim Bissett, CEO, St Martin's in the field charity
27. Emma Haddad, CEO, St Mungo's
28. Laurence Guinness, CEO, The Childhood Trust
29. Emma Revie, CEO, The Trussel Trust
30. Fiona Howie, CEO, Town and Country Planning Association
31. Manny Hothi, CEO, Trust for London
32. Jo Riley, Head Teacher, Randal Cremer Primary School
33. Denise Hatton, CEO, YMCA