



DEBATE PACK

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Private renting solutions for homeless and vulnerable people

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Summary

This debate pack has been prepared ahead of the Westminster Hall debate on private renting solutions for homeless and vulnerable people, to be held on Wednesday 8 February 2017 from 4.30pm to 5.30pm. The debate has been tabled by Richard Benyon MP. Housing policy is a devolved matter. This briefing focuses on the situation in England.

The private rented sector (PRS) is now the UK's second largest tenure after owner occupation. The *Localism Act 2011* gave English local authorities the power to discharge their duty towards statutorily homeless households in the PRS, previously households had been able to refuse this as a rehousing option. In the context of increasing levels of statutory homelessness and rough sleeping in England, the PRS has assumed more importance as a means of securing accommodation for homeless households (discharge of duty) and as temporary accommodation for households waiting for a final offer of suitable accommodation. However, the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy was cited as the cause of homelessness in 17,900 cases (31% of the total) accepted by English local authorities in 2015/16.

There is evidence to suggest that homeless and vulnerable people face particular barriers to accessing and retaining accommodation in the PRS. The key issues include: affordability; landlords' reluctance to rent to Housing Benefit recipients; lack of security of tenure; poor housing quality; and lack of support for vulnerable people.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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1. Background

Housing is a devolved matter; policy approaches to homelessness and the private rented sector (PRS) in the devolved administrations differ. This briefing primarily focuses on the situation in England. However, many of the same issues arise across the UK. Some links are provided to further information on policy in the devolved administrations.

The financial year 2010/11 saw a 10% increase in statutory homelessness acceptances by local authorities, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/4. Homelessness acceptances continued to rise over the next three years but fell by 3% between 2012/13 and 2013/14. The 2014/15 financial year recorded a further increase, with acceptances 36% higher than in 2009/10 (but 60% below the peak in 2003/4). The 2015/16 financial year saw acceptances increase by a further 6% on 2014/15.

In addition, the official rough sleeper counts have risen in each year since new methodology was introduced in autumn 2010. The most recent statistics published on 25 January 2017 recorded a 132% increase in the number of people sleeping rough in England since 2010. Existing programmes have recorded successes in helping individuals to exit rough sleeping, but the flow on to the streets continues.

The PRS has overtaken social housing and is now the UK's second largest tenure after owner occupation. The PRS is increasingly being used by local authorities and agencies to house homeless people. Measures to enable local authorities to discharge their duty towards statutorily homeless households¹ by offering a tenancy in the PRS were included in the *Localism Act 2011*.

There has been a substantial increase in statutory homelessness due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy. In 2010/11, this was given as a reason in 6,630 cases (15% of the total), rising to 17,900 cases (31% of the total) in 2015/16. In London, 40% of statutory homeless acceptances between July and September 2016 were due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy.²

Although the PRS has expanded significantly in recent years, homeless and vulnerable people face particular barriers to accessing and retaining accommodation in the PRS. The key issues are briefly explained below, including: affordability; landlords' reluctance to rent to Housing Benefit recipients; lack of security of tenure; poor housing quality; and lack of support for vulnerable people.

¹ Those unintentionally homeless households in priority need that are owed a rehousing duty by local authorities under Part 7 of the *Housing Act 1996*.

² DCLG Statistical Release, 15 December 2016, *Statutory Homelessness*, 3rd Quarter 2016 - England

1.1 Barriers to accessing and retaining accommodation

Affordability of the private rented sector

The decline in the affordability of home ownership together with pressure on the social rented sector has prompted a growth in the PRS. Private renting is at its highest rate in over thirty years with the proportion of households renting in the sector at 19% (4.3 million households). Private sector rent levels have increased in response to demand. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) private housing rental index indicates that private rents grew by 2.3% over the year to August 2016 in Great Britain.³

There have been several changes to Housing Benefit (HB) entitlement since 2010 which, together with changes in the pipeline, mean that it is more likely that a claimant's HB entitlement may not cover the full amount of the rent due. This has implications for low income households' ability to access and retain rented housing.

The key changes include:

- Since April 2011, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (HB for claimants living in the private rented sector) have been calculated with reference to the 30th percentile of market rents within a Broad Market Rental Area. Prior to this date LHA rates were based on median rent levels. National LHA caps were introduced at the same time.
- The uprating of LHA rates has been subject to restrictions since 2012. LHA rates are currently frozen for four years from April 2016 with some exceptions for the most expensive areas.
- The Shared Accommodation Rate, which limited Housing Benefit for single people aged under 25 to the LHA rate for a room in a shared house or flat, was extended to the under 35s from January 2012.
- Since September 2013 total household benefit entitlement has been capped at £500 per week for a family and £350 for a single person. Households with benefit entitlement above these levels have experienced a reduction in their HB entitlement. A reduction in these caps has been implemented from 7 November 2016 to £20,000 per year outside of London and £23,000 within London.
- From April 2017, those out of work aged 18 to 21 making new claims to Universal Credit (UC), with some exceptions, will no longer be automatically entitled to the housing element of UC.

Commentators have argued that the freezing of LHA rates will make accessing private rented housing, particularly in London, increasingly unaffordable for people on a low income. An analysis by Shelter found that in nearly 70% of England, LHA rates have fallen behind actual

³ Office for National Statistics, [Index of private housing rental prices in Great Britain](#), August 2016

rates. This means families and individuals have to make up the difference themselves or compete for the smaller number of properties at the bottom of the market that are covered by LHA.⁴

The Commons Library briefing paper [Housing Benefit measures announced since 2010s](#) (SN05638) contains a detailed assessment of HB measures and some modelling of the impact of these changes on HB claimants, particularly the freezing of LHA rates.

Landlords refusing to rent to Housing Benefit recipients

It is not unusual for private landlords to advertise properties to let stating that they will not accept applications from Housing Benefit (HB) claimants. Research by Sheffield Hallam University in 2016 found that only 20% of landlords indicated willingness to rent to homeless people.⁵

A number of factors have been cited as reasons for landlords' reluctance to let to HB claimants, including:

- the requirement that HB, except in certain specified circumstances, is paid to claimants rather than landlords;
- concerns about the gap between Local Housing Allowance rates and market rent levels;
- uncertainty around the roll-out and implications of Universal Credit;
- the payment of HB in arrears;
- restrictions in mortgage agreements and insurance requirements; and
- impending tax changes resulting in landlords focusing on "less risky" tenants.

Further analysis is provided in the Commons Library Briefing Paper: [Can private landlords refuse to let to Housing Benefit claimants?](#) (SN07008)

Residential Landlords Association

The Residential Landlords Association (RLA) has released a [briefing](#) in advance of this Westminster Hall debate, which makes the following recommendations:

- To give landlords greater confidence to rent to those who find themselves homeless, tenants should be able to choose if they want to have the housing element of Universal Credit paid directly to their landlord. This would give both the landlord and the tenant greater confidence and assurance. This could be reviewed on a regular basis to

⁴ Kate Webb, [Shelter policy blog](#), 9 July 2015

⁵ Sheffield Hallam University, [Homeless people's access to the private rented sector](#), July 2016, p.4

prevent individuals simply refusing to acquire the skills necessary to manage their own finances.

- It is also critical that a system is put in place that enables landlords to recoup rent arrears amassed by Universal Credit claimants who subsequently leave their property...
- ... we believe that the mortgage interest relief changes should apply only to new borrowing for new purchases to prevent the likely reduction in the number of private rented sector properties that house families.
- Rather than imposing longer tenancies on the sector, efforts need to be made to create an environment in which it is easier to offer longer tenancies. Data compiled for the RLA has found that 25% of landlords were not allowed to agree tenancies longer than a year by their mortgage lenders or insurers...
- We support calls being made by Crisis for the Government to provide £23.6 million to fund a Help to Rent service in every English local authority area to support the homeless to access private rented housing.
- We also support calls from Crisis for the Government to provide £6.5 million to establish a national rent deposit guarantee scheme to support homeless people to rent in the private sector.⁶

Sheffield Hallam University PRS Research

Sheffield Hallam University, commissioned by Crisis, undertook a study to explore landlord views and lettings practices on the one hand, and prospective (homeless) tenants' experiences of trying to access the sector on the other. The research also explored views and experiences of private rented access schemes – schemes that seek to provide better access to housing for vulnerable people.

The key findings, set out in the research report, [*Homeless people's access to the private rented sector*](#) (July 2016), include:

- Although the private rented sector has expanded significantly in recent years, access to the sector remains severely restricted for homeless people.
- Government policy is compounding rather than mitigating the difficulties faced by homeless people and benefit claimants trying to enter the private rented sector.
- Difficulties finding accommodation within the LHA rate was also an issue raised by homelessness service users as well as by local authority officers, nearly all of whom reported that LHA rates were inadequate in their area and that there was a shortage of accommodation available at the Shared Accommodation Rate.
- Landlords clearly perceive both benefit claimants and homeless people to be higher risk as tenants.
- Access costs emerged as a key barrier preventing homeless people from accessing the private rented sector - and these

⁶ Residential Landlords Association, [*Briefing: Debate on private renting solutions for homeless and vulnerable people*](#), February 2017

costs can be higher for homeless people than for other potential tenants.

- Evidence from landlords, local authority officers and from tenants suggests that PRS access schemes and similar forms of support can help overcome some of the barriers homeless people are experiencing when trying to secure a PRS tenancy.
- There are landlord incentives that could be put in place to lift barriers to access for homeless people and/or benefit claimants.⁷

Sustain Project – housing outcomes and wellbeing in private rented accommodation

The Sustain project, jointly funded by the Big Lottery Fund, Crisis and Shelter, undertook a longitudinal study of housing outcomes and wellbeing in private rented accommodation. The study tracked the experiences and wellbeing of 128 people who had been rehoused in the PRS following a period of homelessness. The study identified a range of issues with renting in the private sector, and that these had a significant impact on wellbeing.

The Sustain Project report, [*A Roof Over My Head: The final report of the Sustain project*](#) (2014), made the following recommendations:

The research findings clearly indicate that the PRS is not providing a decent quality stable home for all who need it and that there is a need for improvement in current enforcement and working practices, in four key areas:

- Support and funding for people accessing the PRS must be improved. Any agency moving people into PRS accommodation must carefully consider their needs and offer support to them for longer than six months.
- Households must be placed in properties suitable to their needs and as a minimum should not be placed in properties with category 1 hazards.
- Urgent action must be taken at local level to improve poor property conditions.
- There is a need for stronger national frameworks to tackle problem landlords and such landlords must be challenged by local authorities. Tenancy lengths must be extended, at least for those who are vulnerable and/or have previously experienced homelessness, to help people achieve housing stability.⁸

1.2 Preventing homelessness from the private rented sector

The number of households recorded as statutorily homeless has been increasing. Homelessness acceptances by local authorities were 36% higher in 2014/15 than in 2009/10 (but 60% below the peak in

⁷ Sheffield Hallam University, [*Homeless people's access to the private rented sector*](#), July 2016, p.4

⁸ Big Lottery Fund, Crisis, Shelter, [*A Roof Over My Head: The final report of the Sustain project*](#), 2014, p.8

2003/4). In 2015/16 acceptances increased by a further 6% compared to 2014/15.⁹

Bob Blackman's Private Members' Bill [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#) is currently progressing through Parliament, with Government support. The Bill applies to England only and seeks to refocus local authorities on efforts to prevent homelessness, including homelessness that arises from the PRS. Its measures include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- Clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a section 21 notice of intention to seek possession from an assured shorthold tenancy.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Commons Library Briefing Paper [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17](#) (CBP07736) provides further information about the Bill. Information on amendments to the Bill in Public Bill Committee can be found in Library Briefing Paper [Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-17 Committee Stage Report](#) (CBP07854).

Further information on homelessness and measures to address it are provided in the following Commons Library Briefing Papers:

[Statutory Homelessness in England](#) (SN01164)

[Comparison of homelessness duties in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#) (CBP07201)

[Homelessness: Social Indicators](#) (SN02646).

Local-level data on homelessness in England can be viewed using the Library's [homelessness stats tool](#).

1.3 Private rented sector policies

As noted earlier, the PRS has overtaken social housing and is now the UK's second largest tenure after owner occupation. The [English Housing Survey](#) (EHS) reported that in 2014-15, 19% (4.3 million) of households were renting privately. There has also been a change in the nature of households living in the sector; over the last 10 years there has been an increase in the proportion of households with dependent children.

The expansion of the PRS has resulted in greater focus on conditions in the sector. There have been, and continue to be, calls for improved regulation of letting and managing agents, particularly in relation to fees and charges. Shelter has argued for tenants' rights to be

⁹ DCLG, Statutory Homelessness statistical release (30 June 2016), Live Table 770

strengthened to provide a greater degree of security of tenure and to protect tenants who request repairs to their homes. In response, landlord organisations point to the 'burden' of existing regulation and argue that more regulation in the form of registration schemes will be ineffective in identifying and tackling the worst offenders.

Housing is a devolved matter; policy approaches to the PRS in the devolved administrations are showing some significant divergences. Both Scotland and Wales have introduced legislation to implement a new framework for the sector – both are introducing comprehensive landlord registration schemes. Scotland has gone further and has abolished additional fees and charges by letting agents; in addition, the *Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016* will introduce a new form of PRS tenancy under which there will be no 'no fault' ground for possession available to landlords to use to evict tenants. January 2017 saw the launch in Northern Ireland of a [consultation paper](#) proposing changes to the PRS.

In England, the Government has generally adopted a less interventionist position. However, measures have been introduced to increase transparency around letting agent fees and, in the *Housing and Planning Act 2016*, to strengthen the sanctions available to tackle 'rogue' landlords. In the [Autumn Statement 2016](#), the Government announced its intention to introduce a ban on letting agent fees. It will consult affected parties on this proposal 'in the Spring.'

The Commons Library Briefing Paper: [Comparing private rented sector policies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland \(CBP07624\)](#) provides further information.

2. Parliamentary

2.1 CLG Select Committee inquiry into homelessness

The Communities and Local Government Committee published its [report on homelessness](#) in August 2016. The Committee heard evidence on the increase in homelessness as a result of the ending of assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) in the PRS. The Committee recommended:

In light of the shortage of social housing (discussed further below), the private rented sector is an essential means to help people escape and avoid homelessness. However for many the financial barriers and instability of tenancies are too great. The Government should explore measures to give greater confidence both to tenants and to landlords to encourage them to let to homeless people. Local Housing Allowances levels should also be reviewed so that they more closely reflect market rents. Landlords should be encouraged to offer longer Assured Shorthold Tenancies which allow tenants to leave early without penalty.¹⁰

The Committee awaits the Government's response to its report.

2.2 Debates

Some recent debates have touched on the issues around private renting for homeless and vulnerable people, including:

[Homelessness](#)

Sixteenth opposition day debate (part two).

14 Dec 2016 | Opposition days | House of Commons | 618 cc853-910

[Housing](#)

Lords question for short debate on how the Government plans to improve the quality and affordability of housing.

11 Oct 2016 | Questions for short debate | House of Lords | 774 cc1858-1880

2.3 Parliamentary questions

[Private Rented Housing: Homelessness](#)

Asked by: Smith, Royston | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2017 to Question 58921, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of re-introducing funding for private rented sector access schemes to support single homeless people to access private rented housing.

¹⁰ House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, [Homelessness - Third Report of Session 2016-17, HC 40](#), 18 August 2016, para. 21

Answering member: Mr Marcus Jones | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

Policy proposals to help vulnerable people and low income households to access and maintain tenancies in the Private Rented Sector were discussed at recent meetings of the Affordability & Security Working group. The group is made up of representatives from across the housing sector to look at what more we can do to improve affordability and security within the private rented sector. The working group's final report is due to be submitted to ministers for consideration by the end of January.

We are committed to preventing homelessness. That is why we have protected £315 million for local authority homelessness prevention funding, secured £149 million central government funding in this Parliament, and we are supporting Bob Blackman's Homelessness Reduction Bill, which will ensure that everyone who needs it, is supported to prevent a homelessness crisis.

We recently announced the allocation of our £50 million Homelessness Prevention Programme which is supporting 84 projects covering 225 areas all over England to provide an innovative approach to tackling homelessness, with prevention at its heart. This includes £20m for those at imminent risk of sleeping rough to secure accommodation and get them back on their feet.

We are also investing £100 million to deliver low-cost accommodation for those ready to move on from a homelessness crisis – including rough sleepers leaving hostel accommodation. Details of the bidding process outside London will be announced by the Homes and Communities Agency in the spring.

2 February 2017 | Written questions | House of Commons | 60156

Date tabled: 16 Jan 2017 | **Date for answer:** 18 Jan 2017 |

Date answered: 2 February 2017

[Housing Benefit](#)

Asked by: Baroness Lister of Burtersett | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 21 December 2016 (HL Deb, col 1656), what is their assessment of the impact of housing benefit cuts on homelessness; and what steps they are taking to ensure that low income people, in and out of work, have sufficient income to pay their rent.

Answering member: Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

There are many reasons for homelessness but there is no robust evidence which establishes any direct connection with welfare reform. Our welfare reforms are a central part of the

Government's long-term economic plan to create jobs and make work pay.

Alongside welfare reform, we are ensuring working families earn more in the first place - through the National Living Wage - and keep more of what they earn - by cutting their taxes at the same time. The Government is committed to protecting the vulnerable, and following the £560 million in Discretionary Housing Payment funding provided in the last Parliament, we are providing a further £870 million funding in this Parliament.

We've also invested £500 million to tackle homelessness - including our £50 million Homelessness Prevention Programme - and we are supporting Bob Blackman's Homelessness Reduction Bill, to improve the support available for those facing a homelessness crisis and to ensure that people get help earlier to prevent a homelessness crisis in the first place.

Our efforts to tackle homelessness are supported by our investment in housing supply. We have already seen nearly 900,000 new homes delivered in England since 2010. We aim to deliver an additional one million new homes by 2020, and we will set out our proposals in our Housing White Paper.

30 Jan 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL4694

Date tabled: 16 Jan 2017 | **Date for answer:** 30 Jan 2017 |
Date answered: 30 Jan 2017

[Accommodation Agencies: Fees and Charges](#)

Asked by: Smith, Royston | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the cost of letting agent fees on the ability of homeless people to access private tenancies.

Answering member: Gavin Barwell | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

We are committed to doing all we can to prevent homelessness. We made a significant investment of nearly £14 million from 2010 to 2016 for Crisis to develop a programme to help single homeless people access private rented sector accommodation. Over 9,000 people were helped, with over 90% maintaining tenancies for at least 6 months.

There is evidence that letting agents' fees have increased significantly in recent years, and Citizens' Advice found that a majority of tenants experienced problems paying these fees.

The Government is keen to see all tenants receiving a good service from their landlord and letting agent. That is why we announced in the Autumn Statement a ban on letting agent fees paid by

tenants in England. Tenants will be better able to search around for properties that suit their budget and there will be no hidden costs.

The Government will consult later in the year on the detail of how best to implement a ban. An impact assessment will follow the consultation and the effect of the ban on homeless people will be considered as part of this work.

12 Jan 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 58921

Date tabled: 06 Jan 2017 | **Date for answer:** 10 Jan 2017 |
Date of holding answer: 11 Jan 2017 | **Date answered:** 12 Jan 2017

[Social Security Benefits: Homelessness](#)

Asked by: Healey, John | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the effect of the new household benefit cap on homelessness.

Answering member: Caroline Nokes | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

I am replying to this question as assessments of the effect of the benefit cap are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Evaluation evidence in relation to the existing cap showed very little, if any, impact on homelessness as a direct result of the cap. The small numbers of capped households who have been evicted were noted by Local Authorities as having other reasons for rent arrears and also failing to engage with relevant services; they were considered intentionally homeless.

Where claimants need further financial support with their housing costs in order to adjust to the benefit cap, for example while they find work or move to more suitable accommodation, Local Authorities can provide additional support through the use of Discretionary Housing Payments.

To help Local Authorities protect the most vulnerable and to support households adjusting to the reforms, the Government will provide £870 million funding for the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme over the next 5 years.

15 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 52110

Date tabled: 07 Nov 2016 | **Date for answer:** 14 Nov 2016 |
Date answered: 15 Nov 2016

[Private Rented Housing: Single People](#)

Asked by: Debonnaire, Thangam | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to improve access to the private rented sector for single people who are homeless.

Answering member: Gavin Barwell | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

One person without a home is one too many and we are committed to do all we can to prevent homelessness.

Increasing access to the private rented sector is one of the many ways we are trying to achieve this. We have already made a significant investment of nearly £14 million for Crisis to develop a programme to help single homeless people access private rented sector accommodation. This has helped over 10,000 people, with over 90% maintaining tenancies for at least 6 months.

In Budget 2016, we also announced a £10 million fund to support and scale-up initiatives to prevent and reduce rough sleeping and a £10 million Social Impact Bond to support the most entrenched rough sleepers off the streets.

In addition, we are working to increase supply, and therefore affordability, in the private rented sector by accelerating the development of a new market for private renters, including our £1 billion build to rent fund and the £3.5 billion private rented sector debt guarantee scheme.

20 Jul 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 42532

Date tabled: 12 Jul 2016 | **Date for answer:** 14 Jul 2016 | **Date answered:** 20 Jul 2016

[Housing Benefit](#)

Asked by: Lord Ouseley | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the freeze on housing benefit rates, combined with an extended benefit cap and rising rents, on homeless families, and especially children, in particular in cases where local authorities have to place families in temporary housing far away from their local areas.

Answering member: Lord Freud | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The Government routinely publishes cumulative analysis of the impacts of its tax, welfare and public spending policies on households. The most recent assessment was published at Budget 2016 and is available on gov.uk. Nevertheless, such static analysis is limited in that it cannot robustly capture the behavioural changes encouraged by these policies. Considering welfare

measures in isolation, such as Housing Benefit changes, would fail to recognise the impacts of tax and spending decisions such as the increase to the personal allowance and the provision of early years' childcare, which are benefitting families up and down the country.

07 Jun 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL285

Date tabled: 24 May 2016 | **Date for answer:** 08 Jun 2016 |
Date answered: 07 Jun 2016

[Homelessness](#)

Asked by: Slaughter, Andy | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of underwriting a national rent deposit scheme to help more homeless people access the private rented sector.

Answering member: Mr Marcus Jones | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

One person without a home is one too many and we are committed to doing all we can to prevent homelessness. That is why we have increased central investment to tackle homelessness over the next four years to £139 million. At Budget, we went one step further and announced £100 million to deliver low cost 'move on' accommodation to enable people leaving hostels and refuges to make a sustainable recovery from a homelessness crisis, providing at least 2,000 places for vulnerable people to enable independent living.

We have also protected Homelessness Prevention Grant for local authorities, totalling £315 million by 2019-20. In doing so, we expect them to provide quality advice and assistance to all those that approach them for help. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities, developed by my Department working with local authorities and the voluntary and community sector, already encourages them to use this grant to provide rent deposits, guarantees or rent in advance. Many local authorities, housing associations or charities in England have put such schemes in place.

31 Mar 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 31916

Date tabled: 21 Mar 2016 | **Date for answer:** 23 Mar 2016 |
Date answered: 31 Mar 2016

[Private Rented Housing: Disability](#)

Asked by: Robinson, Mary | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to help people with disabilities with the cost of housing in the private rented sector.

Answering member: Justin Tomlinson | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

There are a number of ways the Department helps people with disabilities who are entitled to Housing Benefit and are renting in the private sector.

The enhanced package of Discretionary Housing Payments funding (£870 million over 5 years) will enable LAs to protect vulnerable claimants and support households affected by the Housing Benefit reforms.

In addition to this, single disabled people under 35 years of age who are in receipt of the severe disability premium are exempt from the shared accommodation rate under the Local Housing Allowance scheme.

Disabled people with overnight care needs may be eligible for an additional bedroom for a non-resident carer under the size criteria rules.

18 Mar 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 30723

Date tabled: 10 Mar 2016 | **Date for answer:** 14 Mar 2016 | **Date answered:** 18 Mar 2016

[Private Rented Housing](#)

Asked by: Austin, Ian | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what advice his Department issues to local authorities on advising private rented sector tenants subject to court orders for possession on the steps they should take to find accommodation.

Answering member: Brandon Lewis | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Communities and Local Government

The statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities includes advice and guidance to authorities on the actions they can take to prevent homelessness where a person is at risk of eviction from a property. This includes negotiation with landlords or with help to address rent arrears for example. It also explains how authorities should carry out their homelessness duties where eviction takes place.

We have also introduced protections for tenants against "retaliatory eviction". Where a tenant makes a genuine complaint

about the condition of their property that has not been addressed by their landlord, their complaint has been verified by a local authority inspection, and the local authority has served either an improvement notice or a notice of emergency remedial action, a landlord cannot evict that tenant for 6 months using the 'no-fault' eviction procedure (a section 21 eviction). A 'no fault' eviction is one where the tenant does not have to have done anything wrong, for example not paying the rent, to be asked to leave. The landlord is also required to ensure that the repairs are completed. These rules, set out in the Deregulation Act 2015, apply to all new assured shorthold tenancies that start on or after 1 October 2015. A guidance note is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465275/Retaliatory_Eviction_Guidance_Note.pdf

19 Oct 2015 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 11229

Date tabled: 09 Oct 2015 | **Date for answer:** 13 Oct 2015 |
Date answered: 19 Oct 2015

3. Press articles

BBC, 5 February 2017

[Affordable rent measures promised in housing White Paper](#)

The government is promising a new emphasis on people who rent their homes when it unveils its housing strategy for England this week.

Guardian, 21 January 2017

[Housing benefit claimants increasingly shut out of private rental market](#)

Campaigners say growing instances of 'No DSS' are problematic.

Independent, 30 December 2016

[Number of private renters made homeless has trebled since 2010, figures reveal](#)

The number of private renters being made homeless is at a near-record high and has more than trebled under the Conservative government.

Financial Times, 25 December 2016 [subscription]

[The twilight world of Britain's hidden housing crisis](#)

Strain on the rented sector puts 50,000 families in temporary accommodation.

Guardian, 20 August 2016

[Private landlords double housing benefit haul to £9.3bn](#)

Private landlords in the UK received twice as much in housing benefit last year - £9.3bn - as they did a decade ago, a report says.

Scotsman, 4 June 2016

[Jeff Salway: New tenancy laws not enough, claim critics](#)

Pressure groups call for further powers to improve quality of rental property and keep rent increases sustained.

Scotsman, 16 May 2016

[Scots being pushed into homelessness due to high rental costs](#)

Thousands of Scots are being pushed into poverty and homelessness because of higher private rental costs as a direct result of failures to protect the country's social housing stock, a new report reveals.

4. Further reading

[Crisis - Private Renting Programmes](#)

With the support of government funding, the charity Crisis has been running a range of programmes intended to support homeless people back into accommodation through the private rented sector.

[The Homelessness Monitor: England 2016](#)

Crisis, 2016

The homelessness monitor is a longitudinal study providing an independent analysis of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments in England.

[Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2016](#)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Chapter 2 – Housing, 2016

[The Future of Private Renting: Shaping a fairer market for tenants and taxpayers](#)

CIVITAS, January 2015

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