

**Online Conference 2020**

## Ending Homelessness in Wales

Proposed by: Policy Development Committee

**Conference notes:**

1. That since March local authorities have accommodated more than 2,000 people sleeping rough or with no safe place to stay in response to the Coronavirus outbreak.
2. That homelessness takes many forms, both visible and invisible, with many more people hidden from view.
3. Homelessness has increased significantly in the last decade. In 2016, an estimated 5,100 people were thought to be experiencing some form of homelessness in Wales.
4. The 2019 National Rough Sleeper count estimated that 405 people were sleeping rough in the two-week estimate period, 17 per cent up on the previous year and 29 per cent up on 2015.
5. More than 60,500 households were on social housing waiting lists in Wales in 2018.
6. Estimates suggest Wales needs 14,000 new homes per annum of which a minimum of 4,000 should be social rent.
7. That the burden of debt is a significant contributor to homelessness, and the historical pressure of rent arrears can form a barrier to people being given access to social housing;
8. The Welsh Liberal Democrat commitment to building 20,000 new affordable homes over the course of this Parliamentary term, which Kirsty Williams MS secured on entering Government.

**Conference believes:**

1. That the Beveridge principle that the state should provide a safety net that gives everyone the support to stay on their feet and rebuild their lives is needed more than ever and should form the basis of a new contract with the people of Wales;
2. That in a fair and Liberal Wales everyone should have the right to adequate housing and access to affordable good quality housing which supports stable, healthy lives.
3. That access to a safe, secure, and affordable home is a human right and a key tenant of a fair, free and liberal society in which everyone has the opportunity to thrive.
4. Homeless isn’t inevitable. In most cases, homelessness can be prevented and, in all cases, homelessness can be ended with the right policies and approaches.
5. That nobody should ever need to sleep rough, and that rough sleeping is a failure to provide the appropriate support and resources to prevent homelessness.
6. That all people experiencing homelessness should be entitled to support, whoever they are and whatever their circumstances. This includes migrants without access to public funds.
7. That practices such as priority need, intentionality, and local connection rules entrench homelessness and are incompatible with our view of a liberal society and an enabling state.
8. That homelessness can be ended in Wales if we have the right policies, frameworks and investment in housebuilding and public services.

**Conference calls on the Welsh Liberal Democrats in its 2021 Welsh Parliamentary election manifesto to:**

1. Commit to ending homelessness in Wales, setting out a government, public sector and civic commitment to ending homelessness. This should include;
   1. Building 30,000 new social homes for rent over five years;
   2. A public sector responsibility and approach to prevent and relieve homelessness across housing, health, the third sector and the criminal justice system;
   3. Ensuring that social housing is accessible to those who need it, grounded in a strong civic and social purpose;
   4. Ensuring that the Private Rented Sector is a suitable and secure option for households.
2. Commit to using the social housing grant mechanism, to require social housing landlords to remove debt records from clients / residents the moment they write the debt off internally;
3. Legislating to introduce a legal right to adequate housing into Welsh law.
4. Commit Welsh Liberal Democrat Police and Crime Commissioners to eliminate the use of the Vagrancy Act in response to rough sleeping.