

A plan for London's renters

How the winner of the
2020 election can fix the
capital's renting crisis.



GENERATION RENT
The national voice of private renters

The UK is experiencing a renting crisis

Nowhere is this more apparent than London.

Over two million Londoners are private renters, facing high rents, unsafe and even dangerous conditions, all in the knowledge that they can be evicted by their landlord at just two months' notice. Lack of suitable affordable homes in the private rented sector (PRS) is fuelling the unacceptable rise in homelessness and temporary accommodation in the Capital. Almost 1 in 50 Londoners is homeless.¹ This manifesto sets out a plan for the next Mayor to tackle the renting crisis and ensure London renters have access to safe, secure and genuinely affordable homes.

1. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/press-release/22-january-2020/%E2%80%98one-50%E2%80%99-london-homes-potentially-used-short-term-let>

Affordable homes

End the temporary accommodation scandal

In the last 5 years, the number of London households living in temporary accommodation has increased by almost a third (29%). 59,950 households, including 89,130 children, are living in temporary accommodation, often for years on end.²

This shocking rise is a direct result of the lack of affordable rented housing, either in the private or social sector.

The end of a private tenancy is currently the most common cause of homelessness. A lack of secure and affordable rented housing in London has made more families homeless and made it more difficult to move on from temporary accommodation into the private rented sector.

The next Mayor must commit to building a minimum of 60,000 new homes at London Affordable Rent to ensure that no Londoners are forced to live in temporary accommodation for more than 6 months before moving to a permanent home.

The Mayor should use their powers to designate land for specific uses to allocate land solely for this purpose, which would remove competition with speculative for-sale developments and improve the viability of affordable developments.

Bring rents down to 30% of local incomes

London is one of the most unaffordable cities in the world, with rents at 65% of the local salary.³ High rents force renters into poverty and make it almost impossible to save towards the future. No one should have to spend more than 30% of their income on rent, so Londoners urgently need bold action to make renting more affordable. Rent controls would offer immediate protection and relief, but public investment in house-building is needed to make renting more affordable long-term. The next Mayor must build the evidence base and develop the case for measures that will sustainably bring rents down to 30% of incomes and lead a campaign for the Government to devolve the powers the GLA needs to implement them.

Regulating sham 'holiday' lets

As many as 1 in 50 properties listed for rent in London are Airbnb-style 'short' lets.⁴ The growth in short term lets contributes to the housing shortage and results in fewer homes becoming available for renters in London, pushing up rents. Despite the 90-day limit for short lets in London, many hosts illegally list properties year-round, often setting up duplicate accounts on listing sites. **The next Mayor must take urgent action to clamp down on this unregulated market and ensure homes are available for those who need them.** Mandatory data sharing with local councils' enforcement teams would enable councils to monitor and crack down on sham holiday lets. Londoners need homes, not hotels.



29% increase
in households living in temporary accommodation in the last 5 years



1 in 50
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2. <https://www.24housing.co.uk/news/london-sees-a-big-rise-in-temporary-accommodation-households/>

3. <https://metro.co.uk/2019/06/26/map-shows-much-salary-spend-rent-different-areas-london-10072789/>

4. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/press-release/22-january-2020/1%E2%80%98one-50%E2%80%99-london-homes-potentially-used-short-term-let>

Safe homes

Driving out rogue landlords

One in seven privately rented homes is unsafe, with more homes classed as 'non decent' than any other tenure.⁵ These conditions directly affect renters' health: over 2.7 million private renters in the UK have suffered mental health consequences and more than 2 million have been made physically ill as a result of their housing circumstances.⁶ ***The next Mayor must develop City Hall's Rogue Landlord Checker to ensure it continues to deter criminal landlords and drive up standards.***

The Mayor must commit to ensuring that all data on the checker is publicly available. The scope of the Checker should be widened to allow tenants to check the licensing status of their home and support them to claim rent back from non-compliant landlords. Temporary accommodation providers must be subject to the same standards, monitoring and enforcement as other private rented homes, and should be included in the Checker. These providers, which are funded by local government and house vulnerable Londoners, all too often fail to meet basic minimum standards and must be held accountable

A national register of landlords

Many London councils lack the information and resources to identify and prosecute criminal landlords; presently, many local authorities do not even know the true number of landlords operating in their borough. The Mayor must call on Government to devolve powers which would allow the creation of a London-wide

register of all rented properties. A register would mean all landlords would be required to register and provide basic information such as address, rent, type of let, number of tenants, tenancy start date and end date. Landlords would also have to provide documents that prove the property is decent and safe, such as an EPC rating, gas and electricity certificates. The requirements would apply to lets of all types, including short term holiday lets. The register would be made available to local authorities, and members of the public could check if a rented property is registered, what type of let is permitted and who the landlord is by searching online. Renting out a property without being registered would be a criminal offence.

Ringfenced funding for enforcement

London councils are tasked with enforcing standards in a rapidly growing private rented sector in the face of budget cuts. London councils need increased funding, specifically, ring-fenced annual budgets instead of piecemeal "rogue landlord" grants. Annual ring-fenced budgets would enable council enforcement teams to plan for the future, rather than relying on small, unreliable pots of money. ***The next Mayor must take an active lead on campaigning for the money councils need from Central Government to keep renters in London safe.*** Alongside this, the Mayor should develop a London-wide Skills Strategy for enforcement and environmental health specialists, to enable councils to consistently deliver best practice enforcement and use existing resources efficiently.



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privately rented homes in
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2.7 million
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5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-headline-report>

6. https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_releases/articles/2_million_renters_in_england_made_ill_by_housing_worries

Renters' rights

Open-ended tenancies and an end to unfair evictions

Security of tenure in England is among the worst in Europe: Tenancies are as short as six months and the government has yet to make good on its pledge to end Section 21 'no fault' evictions. Eviction from the private rented sector is the leading cause of homelessness. To ensure that London renters have the security to build a stable life, ***the next Mayor must call on the Government to introduce open-ended tenancies that offer renters protection from eviction.*** Landlords should only be able to end a tenancy in very limited circumstances, and relocation payments should be made to tenants who are evicted without being at fault. If the tenant wishes to stay in the property, landlords who wish to sell should sell with the tenant in situ.

Giving renters powers in local decision making

Too often, the needs of renters in the local community are overlooked in favour of landlords or large developers. All private renters should be balloted in binding ballots on decisions that will directly affect their housing, such as estate regeneration, rather than just those who have been on council waiting lists for more than one year.



Security of tenure in London is among the worst in Europe

Generation Rent is the national voice of private renters. We make sure that the voices of private renters are heard – by landlords, by policymakers, and by politicians.

We're fighting for a housing system that supports renters' wellbeing, strengthens communities instead of weakening them, and prioritises people instead of profit.