



## WE Party Conference

Kettering 7 – 9 September 2018

**Title:** Housing Motion

**Proposed by:** Pamela Ritchie

**Seconder:** Virginie Bellaton

**Supported by:**

Amy Killen	Sellisha Lockyer	Marta Brebner
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Laura Wood	Alexia Pepper De Caires	Sarah Daly
Donna Ingram-Fletcher	Janet Baker	Helen Shay

**Type of motion:** Policy

**Motion text:**

- 1 WE call for the government to review the definition of housing affordability to reflect:
- 2
  - 3 ● The gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps.
  - 4 ● That lone parents, the majority of whom are women, and their children are affected by
  - 5 housing and child benefit caps and lack of access to secure, long-term housing.
  - 6 ● The impact of the bedroom tax on caring responsibilities.
  - 7 ● Survivors of domestic abuse, for whom the lack of access to safe, affordable housing is the
  - 8 single biggest barrier to leaving abusive relationships.
- 9 We acknowledge that there is no silver bullet to fixing the current situation; we need to work towards
- 10 being able to supply the right homes in the right places that people can afford. This means looking
- 11 at all areas of the housing market from social, affordable and private rental to shared ownership and
- 12 traditional home ownership.
- 13 To start to redress these imbalances, we call on the government to:
- 14
  - 15 1. Unfreeze housing benefit and remove the under-occupancy penalty and two child benefit cap
  - 16 (both already done in Scotland).
  - 17 2. Halt plans in England to move funding for refugees into supported housing.
  - 18 3. Overhaul private renting practices and increase the average length of tenancies.
  - 19 4. Scrap the viability rule, which allows developers to challenge the amount of affordable homes

- 18 that are targeted, based on profits.  
19 5. Return right-to-buy receipts to local authorities to reinvest in social housing in England and  
20 Northern Ireland.

### **Motion Rationale:**

21 WE recognise that the current housing situation has a profound and disproportionate effect on  
22 women. Austerity measures put in place by central and local governments disproportionately impact  
23 on women. The impact increases with intersecting axes of oppression such as ethnicity, socio-  
24 economic status and disability, as well as for women with caring responsibilities and other gendered  
25 experiences. As part of our commitment to ending violence against women and girls, as well as  
26 promoting equal pay and opportunity for women, developing policies on housing is key to achieving  
27 our objectives.

28 The UK has seen rents increasing while wages stagnate, with the gender pay gap leaving a smaller  
29 portion of the housing market available to women than men. With the introduction of the housing  
30 benefit freeze in April 2016, along with other benefit caps, this has resulted in a decreased ability for  
31 women to provide for their own and their family's housing needs.<sup>1</sup>

32 Women's homelessness is often hidden, with women more likely to be sofa-surfing or on public  
33 transport to avoid vulnerable situations<sup>2</sup>. The result is a power imbalance between renters and their  
34 landlords adding to the vulnerability and instability of living arrangements, seeing some less  
35 scrupulous landlords looking to exploit their tenants<sup>3</sup>.

36 We need to ensure we create long term, sustainable funding for a national network of refuges which  
37 are a lifeline for women and children seeking to escape domestic abuse. Devolving this to local  
38 authorities whilst not ensuring the specific funding for refuges is protected, leaves some of our most  
39 vulnerable women without a safe route from their situations.<sup>4</sup>

40 We welcome the government's recent announcement to consult on increasing tenancies from 6  
41 months to 3 years and seek to ensure that families are able to feel secure in their homes.<sup>5</sup>

42 We believe that the housing sector should be accountable to the Care Act and seek a clear legal  
43 requirement for all organisations and individuals providing housing or home services to be able to  
44 recognise and support potential victims who are residents in their properties.<sup>6</sup>

45 Research shows that thousands of potential affordable homes have fallen into the viability  
46 loophole.<sup>7</sup> Developers are currently able to challenge the amount of affordable homes they build  
47 based on the profitability. We welcome the government's proposals to restrict the use of this  
48 practice,<sup>8</sup> however would like to see the viability scrapped and the future of communities put ahead  
49 of profits, challenging the idea that developers aren't able to make profit.

50 Central government keep almost 1/5 of all right to buy<sup>9</sup> receipts, which leaves local authorities  
51 facing a loss of rentable social housing whilst not being able to afford to replenish the existing stock.  
52 Local authorities are preferring to invest in temporary accommodation (£845m of £1.1b spent by  
53 English authorities<sup>10</sup>) which does not have a right to buy and therefore guaranteed to remain within  
54 the local authority stock.

55 All these policies need to be adopted with sensitivity to the devolved powers of the four nations of  
56 the UK.



## References:

- <sup>1</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/nov/23/uk-no-earnings-growth-budget-brexit-productivity-ifs>
- <sup>2</sup><https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Article%20Womens%20Homelessness%20Nov%202017.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup><https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/landlords-exploit-house-crisis-with-sex-for-rent-deals-25m9lj97t>
- <sup>4</sup><https://www.womensaid.org.uk/womens-aid-responds-governments-supported-housing-reforms-announcement/>
- <sup>5</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/overcoming-the-barriers-to-longer-tenancies-in-the-private-rented-sector>
- <sup>6</sup><https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/facts>
- <sup>7</sup><http://blog.shelter.org.uk/2018/03/new-viability-rules/>
- <sup>8</sup><https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/government-announces-viability-assessment-changes-amid-planning-shake-up-55058>
- <sup>9</sup><http://www.politics.co.uk/reference/right-to-buy>
- <sup>10</sup><https://www.themj.co.uk/EXCLUSIVE-Whitehall-grabs-875m-Right-to-Buy-receipts/210754>
- <sup>11</sup><http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Final%20Rethinking%20social%20housing%20report.pdf>