

Labour Party Conference 2019 Composite 19 - Homelessness

Conference believes that homelessness should be treated as a national emergency. We propose that all parts of the country apply a suitable strategy to eradicate rough sleeping and homelessness.

Conference notes the number of people sleeping on the streets has increased by 165 per cent under the Conservative government over the past nine years. Conference further notes the amount of vulnerable former servicemen and women who slip through the net and end up homeless after leaving the armed forces.

Conference notes recent data shows a homeless person dies on average every 19 hours in the UK.

Conference believes the government's failure on housing supply and affordable housing, poverty, unemployment and welfare have all impacted the rise in homelessness.

Conference recognises the work of several armed forces charities including the SSAFA – the Armed Forces Charity and the British Legion, and many other homelessness charities and organisations who provide invaluable help and support to the most vulnerable in society.

There are a number of measures in place which can criminalise begging and rough sleeping, including the 1824 Vagrancy Act, Public Space Protection Orders, Criminal Behaviour Orders, Community Protection Notices and dispersal orders.

So-called 'enforcement' measures criminalising people for living in public spaces affect more than 70% of people experiencing homelessness.

Labour has pledged to repeal the Vagrancy Act once in government saying "Homeless people need help, not punishment".

Migrants experiencing homelessness are at risk of further 'enforcement' measures, and those with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) status can face being denied support and threatened with deportation as a result of interacting with services.

Conference calls on the Labour Party to:

- Have a radical approach to dealing with the housing crisis in its manifesto including; investing more than any previous government in social and affordable homes and safe places to live.
- Support our veteran community by; working to ensure that all housing policy considers the impact on our veterans, that housing support for veterans is properly resourced and that local authorities ensure former members of the armed services are made a priority for support.
- Work both in government and as the Opposition to end the homelessness crisis.

- Commit to making 8,000 more homes available for those with a history of rough sleeping.
- Making £100m available to councils in year one to provide additional help for rough sleepers in cold weathers.
- Call on all local authorities to cease the use of measures which could criminalise rough sleeping and begging.
- Call on all local authorities to cease the practice of embedding Home Office immigration officers in their local services, as denying support to migrants is driving the crisis on our streets.
- Repeal of the 1824 Vagrancy Act, an end to all powers to regard begging or rough sleeping as 'Anti-social' behaviour.
- That the Labour Party adopt the Homeless Bill of Rights and thereafter in all its policies, practices and procedures that affect the homeless endeavour to comply with the letter and the spirit of the Homeless Bill of Rights, and promote it within the membership. The Homeless Bill of Rights is a compilation of basic rights drawn from European and international human rights law, but made specific to the situation of the homeless and it includes those of people in emergency and temporary accommodation and the "hidden homeless". <https://homelessrights.org.uk/the-homeless-bill-of-rights/>