

4. HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

"I waited for a call from my Support Worker for three weeks. During this time, I had nowhere else to go and I started to sleep in stairwells. I contacted an organisation that provides shelter for rough sleepers, and they told me I had to be on the actual street for one to three days in order to get help from them. This was in the middle of December and the temperatures were below zero. I told them the weather is unbearable and streets is not safe for a young woman. However, they told me they couldn't help me unless I was living on the pavement."

SAHARA,
FROM LONDON

OUR TRACK RECORD

1. Pioneered genuinely affordable housing in an urban Community Land Trust model;
2. Successfully campaigned for the Good Development Standard, securing a change to the London planning framework, doubling the percentage of affordable housing in new developments.
3. Launched a modular homes project, Malachi Homes, in Essex, Somerset and North London to support people experiencing homelessness;
4. Secured a ban on letting agent fees in Wales.

Campaign Overview

Housing that is affordable, secure and habitable is a basic human right and need - it is crucial to security, wellbeing and health. But too many



Research from Shelter also shows that private renters who have complained to their landlord, letting agent or local council about housing conditions in the last three years were two-and-a-half times more likely to be handed an eviction notice,¹⁰ disincentivising tenants from speaking up.

How are people in our communities affected?

Housing has been an ongoing campaign area for Citizens UK since 2003 because of its central importance to family and community life. From recent listening, we know it is currently a top issue for many Citizens UK chapters and projects, including Greater Manchester, Birmingham, Cymru Wales, Peterborough, East London, West London, South London, Essex, Somerset and Parents and Communities Together (PACT). We have had many successes in tackling housing and homelessness locally, but we know there is much more that needs to change to secure better housing for our future - particularly on temporary



in the UK are living in housing that is insecure, unaffordable and of sub-standard quality.

Our community listening shows that there are people living in 'temporary accommodation for excessively long periods of time - as much 21 years. Renters are facing spiralling costs that means their rent outstrips their income, in both private and social housing. And the homes we live in are too often subject to damp, mould, and other states of disrepair that impact our physical and mental health.

What are we trying to change?

Over 80,000 households faced homelessness in England between January and March 2023 - the highest number since records began. Additionally, 100,000 households were recorded as living in temporary accommodation, including 130,000 children also a record high.⁸ Lack of social housing has pushed more people into homelessness or unaffordable private renting. And for those in private accommodation, over half experience issues with damp and mould (51 per cent).⁹

5. RACIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION

SAHARA'S STORY

"My name is Sahara I live in temporary supported accommodation. I became homeless after I lost my job as a Recruitment Consultant, and I couldn't afford to pay my rent as a result. I started sofa surfing with friends but there's only so long you can stay with people before you start to take up space.

I contacted the council and they allocated a Support Worker to help get me into temporary accommodation. I waited for a call from my Support Worker for 3 weeks. During this time, I had nowhere else to go and I started to sleep in stairwells. I contacted an organisation that provides shelter for rough sleepers, and they told me I had to be on the actual street for 1-3 days in the middle of December and the temperatures were -1 degrees. I told them the weather is unbearable and streets is not safe for a young woman. However, they told me they couldn't help me unless I was living on the pavement.

Desperate for help, I contacted my GP as my mental health was deteriorating due to the situation. My GP then contacted my Support Worker who called me within 10 minutes to let me know I have a place in temporary accommodation. I don't what would have happened if my GP had not intervened. I have now been there for 1 year and 5 months with no clear direction of housing and how to move on."

SAHARA,
FROM LONDON

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SOLUTIONS WE THINK MIGHT HELP?

1. **Temporary housing to mean temporary:** a statutory time limit on temporary accommodation.
2. **Building more affordable homes:** a genuine target for building social housing and supporting civil society landowners to build community-led affordable homes.
3. **Urgent repairs:** government to support and incentivise local authorities to complete immediate and urgent repairs to council homes causing poor health.
4. **Regulation:** higher standards and increased accountability, including a complaints mechanism, for decent homes in the private rental sector.



"The message I received at school about my place in the world was that black people were slaves and Africa was poor. Someone decided that these were the only things I and my peers needed to know. What a disservice. We all deserve an education system that endeavours to treat people with dignity and respect, regardless of racial classification or religion."

TINA SIMBO, NORTH EAST WELLBEING,
TYNE & WEAR CITIZENS

OUR TRACK RECORD

1. **Won increased spending on diverse books for Nottingham's city centre library, following on from the success of our 'Better Books' campaign, which provided all Nottingham primary schools with culturally diverse reading books.**
2. **Secured commitments from senior education leaders in Bradford and Leeds to work together to create measures that will lead to more equitable recruitment and retention of staff.**
3. **Working with schools in Tyne and Wear to create a whole school approach to anti-racism, implementing the National Education Union's Anti-Racism Charter¹¹ leading to changes impacting global majority pupils, families and staff and the wider community.**

Campaign overview

Citizens UK Chapters across the country are organising for racial justice in education and winning change. Young people have won greater religious freedoms, racist incidents are being taken more seriously, curricula are being improved and staff are having their voices heard by school leadership teams, who are listening and acting for racial justice.

Each day, so many educational leaders are working hard to create racial justice in their institutions, yet we know that there is only so much that can be done at a local level.

We want to work with the next Government to create an ambitious, inclusive, anti-racist education system that centres curricula, safeguarding, and workforce development, so that everyone can thrive.