

# PRIVATE RENTERS MANIFESTO



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**DEMANDING A NEW NORMAL  
FOR RENTERS POST COVID-19**

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**MAY 2021**

# INTRODUCTION

## HOMES NOT ASSETS



A deepening housing crisis demands intervention to provide homes for all, uphold tenants rights, and properly regulate landlords and letting agents. The economic shock of Covid-19 will cause many unfair evictions, a huge concern for a city region struggling to tackle a considerable homelessness crisis. A broken planning system allows speculators to avoid contributing to affordable housing, while short term lets take away family homes, increase transience and profiteering. While the pandemic has exposed our housing systems fragility, the 'Everyone In' policy has demonstrated what can be achieved when political will and sufficient resources are in place.

**“ We now have more than 97,000 households in Greater Manchester waiting for a social home -- GM Housing Strategy 2019 ”**

The GM Housing Strategy sets a target of 201,000 new homes by 2037, with 50,000 of them 'affordable.' The strategy identifies the importance of social housing in providing quality homes to those in housing need, and that numbers have fallen since 1981. Housing outcomes for people on low incomes, and homelessness will get worse unless this is reversed. If we are to 'level up,' GM, needs powers and funding to tackle this effectively, just like the GLA in London. We need powers to close loopholes allowing developers to avoid building 'affordable' homes, raise taxes on empty dwellings and take control of them to house those with nowhere to live. The Mayor must act:



**1: Prioritise housing need; Build the 30,000+ social rent homes, end conversions to so called 'affordable housing,' demolitions of homes & right to buy, which are constantly reducing the number of homes available for social rent.**

# END DISCRIMINATION

## EQUALITY IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Housing migrants with 'No Recourse To Public Funds' was a key achievement of the 'Everyone In' policy, and should be continued with A Bed Every Night. GMCA and the ten local authorities should refuse to report migrants to the Home Office and oppose guidance which would encourage migrants to stay in exploitative environments for fear of being deported should they flee and be found homeless, this would encourage and exacerbate already difficult situations of abuse, trafficking and modern slavery.

**Housing is a critical driver of  
inequalities of both health and wealth.**

-- GM Independent Inequalities Commission

The pandemic highlighted the intersecting inequalities suffered by those with the worst health outcomes. Discrimination on disability and ill health should not be allowed, 'No DSS' policies must be outlawed, and more action taken to prevent discrimination and harassment against those on low incomes, LGBTQ+ people, on the basis of ethnicity and gender based and sexual harassment. Housing and Homelessness services should be psychologically and trauma informed, and social landlords should be encouraged to adopt the HouseProud Pledge.

The GMCA and councils should support more specific provision for LGBTQ+ people, those with mental health and learning disabilities, victims of domestic violence and disadvantaged ethnic groups including Gypsy Roma and Traveller people. We demand:

**2. An end to policies which allow discrimination based on migrant status, disability, receipt of benefits, or low income such as 'No DSS' and adopt policies to address inequality, support and protect disadvantaged and marginalised groups.**

# RENT CONTROLS

## TO TACKLE THE AFFORDABILITY CRISIS



The issue of affordability continues to plague the housing sector in the UK and not least in Manchester. Decades of rising house prices and stagnating wages, compounded by an inadequate supply of social homes and draconian welfare cuts, have left thousands in the city with no alternative than to seek accommodation in an expensive and insecure private rented sector, shelling out large amounts of their income on housing costs.

“ **48% of young people had to cut back on essentials to meet their housing costs.** ”

In Manchester, as elsewhere, it is marginalised groups in particular that are feeling the strain of a housing market that works in the interests of private landlords and property developers. Research from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism revealed that just 1.6% of rental properties in the city are affordable for those in receipt of housing benefit, equating to a benefit shortfall of £188 in order to meet just the bottom 30th percentile of two-bed properties. Unaffordable rents are forcing people into poverty, inadequate conditions and into homelessness. **The situation cannot continue.**

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We welcome the fact that the GMCA Housing Strategy recognises the definition ‘affordability’ as one that relates to what people’s incomes can afford, rather than what the market can withstand.

We demand:

**3. The implementation of rent controls that both bring rents in line with 30% of median household income in the city and prevents future rises that are out of step with levels of income growth.**

# CANCEL COVID-19 ARREARS



The issue of affordability was acute before Manchester, as with the rest of the UK, went into lockdown. A year of restrictions on livelihoods and incomes has only exacerbated the rent debt crisis, especially considering the absence of substantial protection for renters during the pandemic.

Generation Rent estimates that 45,000 people could face homelessness as a result of rent arrears incurred during the pandemic, with 1 in 8 renters now indebted to their landlord.



**In Manchester the number of private renters in receipt of Universal Credit has increased by 40% since the start of 2020, a foreboding figure given the current LHA shortfall and the fact that the eviction ban looks set to be lifted by the end of May.**



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In light of the growing pressures renters face to meet payments, and the prospect in a post-eviction ban spike in homelessness, we call on GMCA to:

**4. Issue a forgiveness of rent arrears that have accumulated during the pandemic with landlords who may struggle to meet the costs of such measures being encouraged to seek means-tested support.**

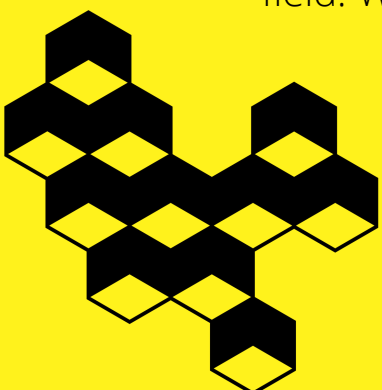
# FIGHTING MASS LANDLORDISM IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Landlords are taking over the property market. Half of rented homes in England are owned by just 17% of landlords, who own 5 or more properties each. This leads to increased rental prices, poor building management and dangerously low living standards. The growth of landlordism is putting our communities at risk.

“ **Half of the private rented sector tenancies in England are let by just 17% of landlords.** ”

To protect Greater Manchester tenants from negligent landlords we need to pull the breaks on the growth of mass landlordism. Our rights to secure living are in constant threat by the growth of mass landlordism. We need reduced access to mass property ownership, and to even out the renting playing field. We demand:

**5. A cap of 5 properties for tenancy landlords, and an increase of income tax for landlords who own 3 properties or more. This is vital in deterring landlords from buying up multiple properties in Greater Manchester, and letting them in dangerous and unsafe ways.**



# HEALTH BEFORE WEALTH



The quality and condition of homes has a direct effect on health. Much of rented housing stock consists of older properties that have been 'fixed up' quickly and on the cheap so that revenue can be collected quickly.

Mould, inadequate heating, faulty wiring, plumbing and structural problems are commonplace in the private rented sector, and getting these issues addressed causes untold worry for tenants.

Damp, mouldy houses cause lung problems and cold homes force people to choose between eating and heating resulting in poor nutrition. This also increases the burden on the NHS.

Aside from damage to physical health, tenants' mental health may also be affected. The precarious nature of renting and the shortage of affordable homes means that tenants fear repercussions if they complain about a dilapidated property or inadequate repairs.



**In the UK 20% of us live in a home with inadequate heating resulting in 171% higher reporting of ill health.**



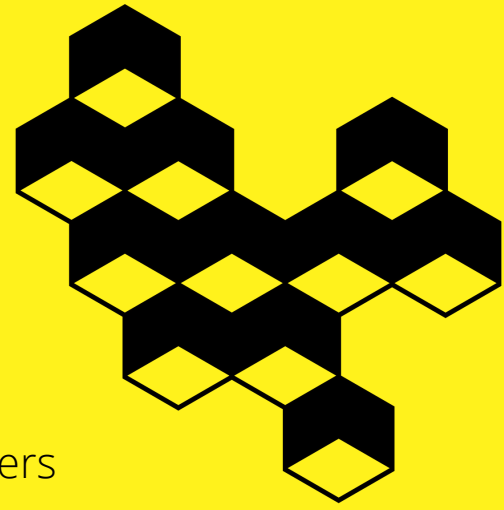
Broadly speaking, there are two types of landlord in the UK:

- Amateurs owning one or two properties who don't really know what their responsibilities are.
- Large companies or letting agents who care more about profits than their tenants.

**Neither address the issue in a timely manner.**

**6. We need an independent "Rented Property MOT" with a body of inspectors to ensure agreed healthy living standards and legislation in place to swiftly enforce landlords to adhere to them.**

# RENTERS & OUR RIGHTS



When it comes to rights and regulations, private renters suffer from a double burden. Not only do they have to rely on their landlord to provide them with important information about what rights they have as renters, but they also sit within an imbalanced system where the rights they have access to are few and far between.

Time and time again, politicians make policy which is bad for renters and beneficial to those who are landlords. **110 out of 650 sitting MPs are landlords, including the Housing Minister.** We see property developers who profit from unaffordable housing sitting on committees created to combat homelessness, with democratic tenants unions shut out of the conversation.



**One third of surveyed renters did not know that legally, their deposit has to be put into a protection scheme.**



Legal aid services have been brought to their knees after years of successive cuts and the crippling effects of a global pandemic, meaning that even if renters feel able to challenge the landlord class, there are no resources to do so if you are poor. We ask:

**7. The GMCA work with democratic tenants unions across GM to distribute up to date, tenant-led versions of the *How To Rent* booklet mandatory with every private tenancy. This will go some way to ensure renters are being provided with full, unbiased information about their rights.**