

The 2009 Budget announced that from January 2010 18-24 year olds who have been jobless for 12 months will get a job or training place. Yet nearly 1 in 5 (19.1%) people aged between 16-24 years old are currently unemployed – there needs to be greater urgency in the Government's actions. A council led, large scale house building programme could provide local apprenticeships with quality, skilled employment at the end of training.

The impact of policies such as a large-scale council housebuilding drive, combined with help for those facing repossession and the buyout of private builders' unsold homes is clear. Not only do such policies meet the need for homes available for social rent, fill the gap left by the collapse of the private sector but also create powerful multiplier effects across the economy.

Implementation of such policies would also ease social tensions in the country's most deprived areas. A severe shortage of such an essential of life as a decent home gnaws away at community cohesion, allowing myths and outright lies to circulate and gain credence. The effective exploitation of this situation has allowed the fascist BNP to make electoral advances.

To these ends the recent government announcements of increases in the overall funding available for new socially rented and affordable housing alongside those for private sale, is welcome. In the 2009 Budget £100million was allocated to the social housing sector to insulate homes and a further £100million for councils to build energy efficient homes. The 'Kick Start' programme is to get stalled building works back on track – a possible 22,400 homes, including 8,600 of these being for affordable rent or sale, creating 20,000 jobs.

The scale of the need for housing demands ambitious action urgently - in short, Unite is asking for the Government to go further, faster.

Unite is the UK's biggest trade union, and the only union to represent members across the whole of the housing agenda

Unite represents members who work in:

- **local government**, where members maintain and repair council housing and estates;
- the **not-for-profit** sector where members work for Registered Social Landlords, and in particular supported housing working with some of the most vulnerable people in society, in housing advice and support services.
- the **construction industry** – in both building and the manufacturing supply chain – which has been badly hit by the economic downturn; and
- the **finance sector**, where members are increasingly working with homeowners at risk of, or concerned about repossession.

**Going further
and faster to meet
housing need:**



**Building Britain
out of recession**



Building Britain out of recession

For the first time in decades social housing and the wider housing agenda will be to the fore at the general election next year. A constellation of factors has brought this about - the economic situation arguably playing the biggest role.

There are currently almost 1.8 million households, or 4.5 million people, on the local authority housing waiting lists. The National Housing Federation reports that nearly 5 million people are expected to be on the housing waiting lists by 2010. The recession has led to a collapse in the private house building sector, adding to the housing shortage.

Failing to address the housing crisis is simply not an option - an ambitious, large scale house building programme is needed, and would yield social and economic benefits. In 2009 the Government has taken many positive steps in the right direction but it needs to go further, and act faster.

There is a growing campaign that includes Unite, around the need for investment in a new house building programme and a 'retro-fit' scheme to properly insulate houses (see Box 1 for Unite's five key housing demands). These actions are key strategic economic levers the Government can and should use to build economic recovery, create jobs, meet housing need and prevent homelessness and poverty.

Unite have five key housing demands:

Building new homes and create jobs

A programme of new build, high quality, environmentally sustainable social housing, including council homes, would meet the policy objective of housing those on the waiting list but also create thousands of jobs across the country in the house building sector of the construction industry. This would help prevent the loss of important skills and labour capacity. Rural areas should receive their fair share of housing

Provide skills and apprenticeship training

A local government house building programme could provide local skills training apprenticeships, particularly for those who have recently left education.

Prevent repossessions and regulate the financial sector

The Government is now a major stakeholder in the banking sector - it should promote policies and practices in the interest of society and ensure that lenders act with compassion and prevent repossession.

Invest in a 'retro-fit' programme of existing homes

Housing represents 27% of the UK's total carbon emissions; improving the energy efficiency of homes is crucial if the Government is to achieve its carbon reduction goals. A council led programme providing basic insulation measures to homes would create jobs

Support Housing Associations

Housing Associations need to receive

Housing and the recession : why it is right the Government takes action

Whether or not Government should take action in the recession, and the form that action should take is a key political difference between the major parties. There is a growing lobby, led by the Tories, rallying to make savage cuts in public expenditure and not invest in further packages to stimulate the economy. This would be catastrophic. Using effective economic levers can make the recession shallower and achieve sustainable economic recovery faster. Unite believes it is right of Government to take effective action to protect people from the harsh impact of the economic crisis and the human cost of the recession.

Unemployment has climbed to a national rate of 7.8%. At a national level unemployment feeds the recession further, adding to the banks' bad debts and further squeezing spending power. At an individual level unemployment takes an emotional toll on people as people deal with the shock, and feel a loss of status and identity alongside the loss of income. The sudden loss of income has a significant impact on people's ability to continue to afford their homes. The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) estimated in August 2009 that this year there will be 65,000 repossessions. The CML's original estimate, made in February 2009, was that there would be 75,000. However, the CML have warned that "With unemployment rising and the economy still weak, the outlook will remain challenging for the rest of this year and into 2010". Repossession causes huge distress and disruption to people's lives. Schemes unveiled by the Government so far in preventing people from experiencing repossession, and on-going programmes such as the Support for Mortgage Interest scheme, are to be applauded. The Government is also a major stakeholder in the financial sector now, and must use its position to promulgate policies that benefit the whole of society and prevent repossession - lenders must act with compassion.

According to the National House Building Council the number of 'new builds' reached an all time low in December 2008, and although recovering from this point, activity remains significantly below that of previous years. Redundancies in the construction sector hit a 10 year high in November 2008 - there is a danger that trained people may leave the industry altogether leading to a damaging loss of skill and long-term reduction in our capacity to meet the growing housing need.

The '2020 Coalition', chaired by the Prime Minister's former Housing Advisor Kate Barker, and includes the TUC, have calculated that building up to 100,000 homes for social rent over a 2 year period would save 30,000 jobs in the construction industry.

Poor standard housing - dwellings that are cold and damp, overcrowded or badly designed and built - has a detrimental impact on people's physical health and their mental well being. The Local Government Association has called for a national, council led programme to provide basic insulation measures to the 10 million homes which do not have cavity wall and full loft insulation. Rolling out such a programme at £500million a year would create 20,000 jobs. There are an additional 7 million homes requiring solid wall insulation - action in meeting this need would create another 5000 jobs, reduce fuel poverty and mean people have warm homes.