

# Labour pledges 'consumer rights revolution' for renters as it reveals £800 million a month in rent going to bad landlords

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Shadow Secretary of State for Housing John Healey has today pledged that under

a Labour government there would be a 'consumer rights revolution' for renters,

starting by introducing tougher legal minimum standards for all private rented homes.

Mr

Healey will say Labour's new minimum standards will empower renters to "call time on bad landlords" letting out dangerous or sub-standard homes and who are

being let down by Conservative Ministers who have weakened key legislation.

Labour

analysis released alongside the pledge shows for the first time the cost of England's 1.3 million sub-standard private rented properties, now home to 400,000 families with children. Tenants are spending £800 million every month (£9.6 billion a year) on homes which the government classes as 'non-decent'. Around a quarter of this— some £2.3bn a year – is paid by housing benefit.

At

present, there are effectively no minimum standard for private renters, and tenants are reliant on over-stretched council environmental health teams to weed out dangerous homes rather than being able to take matters into their own hands.

Mr

Healey will point out that in practice people have "fewer rights renting a family home than you do buying a fridge-freezer". Consumer rights legislation is limited in housing so while consumers will normally get protections requiring that goods and services are 'satisfactory quality', and 'fit for purpose' with clear redress and 'repair or replace' provisions, there are no equivalent protections for renters.

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Labour government would consult with landlords and relevant professionals on new legal minimum standards to ensure properties are 'fit for human habitation'

on specified criteria, for example:

- safe wiring and appliances
- freedom from serious damp and vermin infestation
- appropriate water and sewage facilities
- appropriate facilities for the preparation and cooking of food
- general good repair.

Research

by Shelter in 2014 found that six in ten renters (61%) have experienced at least one of the following problems over the last 12 months: damp, mould, leaking roofs or windows, electrical hazards, animal infestations and gas leaks.

As part of Labour's five point plan on standards announced today Mr Healey will also pledge new powers for councils to license landlords and tough fines for those who flout the rules.

**John Healey MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, said:**

"Our homes are at the centre of our lives but at the moment renters too often don't have basic consumer rights that we take for granted in other areas. In practice you have fewer rights renting a family home than you do buying a fridge-freezer. As a result, too many are forced to put up with unacceptable, unfit and downright dangerous housing.

"The number of families renting from a private landlord has soared since 2010 but decisions made by Conservative Ministers have made it easier for a minority of bad landlords to game the system. Most landlords provide decent homes that tenants are happy with, but these rogue landlords are ripping off both renters and the taxpayer by making billions from rent and housing benefit letting out sub-standard homes.

“After

seven years of failure the Conservatives have no plan to fix the housing crisis. The next Labour government would call time on bad landlords. We’d introduce proper minimum standards to put renters back in control, and give councils the powers they need to tackle the worst offenders.”