

Open letter to:

**Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP (SoS Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - simon.clarke.mp@parliament.uk), and
Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP (SoS Ministry of Justice - brandon.lewis.mp@parliament.uk)**

Dear Secretaries of State

With reports that the government is to break its manifesto promise to end no fault evictions comes confirmation, if it were needed, that this government has abandoned any ambition to have any leadership role in mitigating the long-standing housing and homelessness crisis in a time of the current cost of living crisis.

The government's own statistics show that the most common cause of homelessness in families is the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy¹. And yet we are told that this government does not consider its own 3-year-old manifesto commitment to abolish the 'no fault' ground to end such tenancies to be "a priority".

Notwithstanding the government's apparent lack of ambition, HLPAs continues to call for sensible targeted measures to protect renters and borrowers and we urge the government to rethink and show some compassionate leadership.

We therefore write to urge that the government follow the lead of the Scottish Parliament and instate a moratorium on evictions this winter. We further urge measures to support renters and borrowers to as to prevent a tsunami of evictions and homelessness.

The challenges faced by renters and borrowers are comparable to the conditions that pertained in March 2020 when the moratorium on possession proceedings was introduced due to the Coronavirus pandemic crisis.

Because little or nothing was done to recognise and ameliorate the problems of rent and mortgage debt during the pandemic, a huge rent and mortgage debt mountain has accrued. That then is the baseline situation faced by many individuals and families before you add the following crises: cost of living crisis (general); cost of living crisis (fuel); benefits rates, caps and sanctions; interest rate increases (both mortgages and rents will be affected); residual Covid-19 issues; the onset of winter.

We have said consistently that previous measures to stem the tide of evictions and homelessness, while welcome, were simply 'kicking the can down the road' given that structural support for renters and borrowers was not forthcoming.

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1105577/Annual_Statutory_Homelessness_release_2021-22.pdf

We are now nearing the end of the road. Immediate steps to prevent unmanageable quantities of evictions and homelessness are required urgently. But structural reforms and support for renters and borrowers must also be put in place in the medium to long term.

One step short of a moratorium would be to suspend operations of mandatory grounds for possession, (including 'no fault' evictions given that they are one the major causes of family homelessness). Proceedings would go ahead but judges would have the ability to consider whether a possession order was reasonable in all the circumstances. We think such a step on its own falls well short of what is needed but it would at least mean that tenants and borrowers would have fair judicial consideration of their circumstances.

What we are sure of is that doing nothing at this moment of crisis, and the breaking of the 3-year-old commitment on 'no fault evictions' would be a total abnegation of leadership and responsibility.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mullings and Patricia Tueje
Co-chairs of HLPAs