

Sian Berry for Mayor 2021

A safe place to live is a human right. We must keep reforming the private rented sector, and fight together for better rights and the power to bring in rent controls.

I have been a private renter in London for nearly 25 years, and have championed renters' rights on the London Assembly right from the start, putting forward the idea of a London Renters Union in my manifesto for the 2016 election. Before that, I wrote to Sadiq Khan while he was still an MP in 2015 asking him to help amend legislation to give rent control powers to city mayors. I continued to put pressure on the current Mayor for three years until, in late 2018, he finally took action.

I will stand with millions of my fellow renters to strengthen their rights. I will work with other Mayors from across the country, to campaign for the devolved powers we need to set rent controls, bring down runaway rents, forgive rent arrears accumulated during the pandemic, and end unfair evictions. The current Mayor has been defeatist and slow when it comes to winning a better deal for housing. I will be a committed champion for London's renters.

We also need better rights for social housing and council tenants. Hard won ballots for estate residents facing demolition are a start, but we need to put more tenants fully in control of homes. Our existing homes need fixing too. Councils and housing associations already have a huge job to do on fire safety, and our next Mayor must assess the problem and make plans for the Green New Deal London needs.

The health impact of Cold Homes

A Green Mayor will work from day one for every Londoner to have their right to a decent, secure home respected, including the right to good standards, security from unfair evictions and protection from high rents.

Throughout the pandemic, I have stood up for the rights of renters, fighting for the eviction ban and proposing fair ways to cancel rent arrears built up, not turn them into debts. Landlords who need support should be able to claim it from Government. I will continue to campaign until renters are not made to bear the burden of the crisis.

Cold, damp homes have a hugely negative health impact and further exacerbate health inequalities faced by people, predominantly from Black communities with sickle cell and thalassaemia conditions. I will target fuel poverty programmes to the homes of people who have sickle cell and thalassaemia conditions as a priority, and make sure outreach programmes in all boroughs are able to find and refer relevant people to Mayoral programmes.

Additionally, I will set up an immediate insulation and ventilation taskforce to deal with cold damp homes, and cut the number of these by at least a third by 2024 – going faster if more funding can be obtained.

Tackling fuel Poverty in London and the contribution this will make to reducing carbon emissions.

As Mayor I will take immediate action to reduce energy use in homes and cut fuel poverty, using London's own resources, and would campaign with other city mayors to push the Government to invest in a huge programme of energy-saving across the country.

Cutting fuel poverty, poorly heated and damp homes will be the focus for who benefits from our programmes for energy saving, with every Londoner benefiting by 2030

Energy saving is as neglected and urgent as the safety work needed on our homes. Greens have been highlighting the lack of work on our many 19th and 20th century homes since a major report was produced in the early 2000s by Jean Lambert MEP. A Green Mayor will start on day one with a full, new assessment of the city's needs. I would use this to make plans and demands for huge investment in our housing, which will get the carbon emissions from our homes down to zero and show fuel poverty the door.

For example, the Green budget amendment for the GLA in 2020 was able to deliver a tripling of the current Mayor's plans for greener homes; simply by leveraging borrowing from expected savings to the energy costs on the GLA's own estate. With a Green Mayor, this approach will be extended across London to create a Green New Deal that multiplies by an order of magnitude the energy saving investment in London's housing stock.

I will work in partnership with councils, pension funds and housing associations to amplify our Green New Deal investment fund further and create a massive new level of investment for our homes. It would focus investment initially on council and housing association homes, but also seek to bring private landlords and homeowners into the scheme as it matures.

I will campaign hard for Government to put a zero carbon new home standard in place by 2023 at the latest and will write new planning rules for London to make it easier to apply to work on insulation and retrofit projects for whole streets at once. Within City Hall we will set up a team of experts who can be employed by councils that are struggling to properly staff energy standards inspections in private rented housing. We will compile data on the results of these inspections and report to councils on their performance and how they compare to others.