

Response to Labour Party's manifesto

13 April 2015

One Housing's response to the Labour Party's manifesto housing pledges

Labour's manifesto outlines pledges that we believe will affect both housing associations and residents. One Housing welcomes some of the policies brought forth, but offers constructive feedback on others with suggestions on how to improve them so that housing associations can continue to develop and provide affordable homes for people who need them.

Reducing red tape, risk and regulation

One Housing agrees with Labour's commitment to building at least 200,000 new homes a year, but they fail to answer *how* they will get the additional houses built.

We would suggest that in order to increase this figure further, the Government should do more to de-regulate the housing sector, freeing up housing associations to build more homes. Housing Associations have assets with a market value of £300 billion but cannot use those assets effectively to fully optimise their value and borrowing potential. This is because the housing regulator, Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) does not currently allow housing associations to use their balance sheets to finance the building of new homes for sale. If housing associations were allowed to use their full assets, they could build an additional 60,000 affordable homes per year and use the profits to build more affordable homes.

Building more senior living care homes and freeing up public land for housing

Labour confirms that it will invest into the NHS. It will ensure 20,000 more nurses, 8,000 more GPs, and 3,000 more midwives. They say they will pay for it by a mansion tax, a levy on tobacco firms and tackling tax avoidance. One Housing can suggest more cost saving opportunities for the NHS that Labour should consider.

We agree with Labour that there needs to be a focus on health for the next Government. We recognise the balance with needing to save money, while still providing quality care for people. We have set out suggestions in two areas of health policy that can save the NHS millions while providing much needed care to older people; and, people with mental health issues. We suggest that instead of the Government selling off surplus public land to the highest bidder, we think it makes longer-term sense for NHS trusts to use this asset as equity. Housing Association like One Housing can build and operate long-term care schemes at a fraction of NHS costs. We've already shown how we can do this through our unique partnership with Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust at our mental health care scheme, Tile House. We've saved the NHS £900,000 just from one scheme. We would like to build more developments like Tile House to help alleviate the stress on the NHS while providing much needed care to people who need it the most.

Freeing-up more land for housing

We think there was a missed opportunity for Labour to look again at greenbelt land, which is often not fit for purpose and unused.

There is evidence to suggest that safeguarding all of the greenbelt land will cause even greater strain on housing. Over the past 30 years we have not built enough new homes and we need to be building at least 250,000 more new homes a year if we want to prevent the crisis deepening. Many areas around London which are classified as 'greenbelt' are neglected or poorly used. Allowing controlled development and regeneration of the greenbelt by responsible developers such as housing associations will help to counter this.

Devomax for London

We think that Labour's policy to devolve power and end the housing crisis locally is smart.

We would also suggest devolution of property tax to London. Stamp Duty raises £2.7 bn a year in taxation in London. If this money were invested in London's housing supply it could be used to decontaminate brownfield sites or to provide equity or development finance so that housing associations can increase their output.

We would suggest going further and allow the GLA and London boroughs to set housing benefit so they would be empowered to use funds to invest in housing as well as to subsidise rents. We already have a successful development called Arlington near Camden, which houses people working on low incomes; they are able to save up for private sector rent deposits, while developing their career. We would love to build more developments like Arlington to provide more affordable rents for low-income Londoners.

You can read our full manifesto where we've highlighted key policies we would like to see implemented by the next Government. Contact us if you could like a copy.

Contact:

Aisha Vance

T: 020 7428 4179

E: avance@onehousinggroup.co.uk

-Ends-

Notes to editors

One Housing helps people to 'live better' by providing high quality homes and care. We manage over 15,000 homes across 27 London boroughs and surrounding counties and care for over 11,500 people to help them live independently.



We're a 'not-for-profit' that loves to make a profit. We build and sell new homes on the open market or rent them out commercially to raise money for more affordable homes and for services for our customers. In the last three years we have delivered more than 1,500 new affordable homes and we plan to build a further 3,600 by 2019 to help meet the housing shortage. We offer a wide range of housing options including homes for affordable rent, shared ownership, private rent and private sale.

We work hard to make a positive difference to our residents' lives by promoting aspiration, independence and well-being through a range of training and support services.

For more information please visit onehousinggroup.co.uk