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US!**

**LONDON
RENTERS
UNION**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategy Document emerged out of ongoing discussions to help ensure the London Renters Union has a clear plan to build power and win transformative changes to the housing system. The purpose of this document is to lay out how we can win. It's an action plan, getting us from where we are now to what we want to achieve.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

During recent strategy conversations, coordinating group members agreed the following 4 strategic priorities for the coming 5 years:

1. Public Housing Available To All

2. Rent controls

3. A good home for everyone

4. Building renter power across the city

The Building Renter Power Across the City priority is a general priority. It's about the need to keep building our power if we are to meet our aim of transforming the housing system.

The other three priorities are about changes we want to win in the housing system in the next five years.

Winning Public Housing Available To All can be seen as the overarching strategic priority for the coming five years. It is also the hardest to win because it would mean that we have a housing system that no longer prioritises private profit of the wealthy over the right to housing of the rest of us.

This strategy suggests that we can build our power by prioritising fighting for **Rent Controls** and **A Good Home For Everyone**, which is about focusing on the quality of our homes and the need for more regulation of landlords. Fighting and winning on these issues would reduce the power of landlords and investors and open up the possibility of bigger changes.

This strategy suggests that **Rent Controls** and **A Good Home For Everyone** are priorities across our different branches and working groups.

KEY AREAS OF WORK

Through our strategy process we began to identify several 'key areas of work' across the union. Specifically, we identified where we can continue our great organising and find new ways to build power and fight back.

In our **Community Organising** we plan for each branch to be supported to choose and run a campaign against a local power holder linked to our strategic priorities e.g. continuing with the #SideWithRenters campaign. We will also be looking closely at our organising model and as well as our overall theory of change over the next year and adapting it to this current moment. An important part of our community organising across the next year will be developing more leadership within branches and continuing to build connections to our wider communities.

Education and Training across the union will continue to be a key area of work. We will be rolling out a new role within branches, the Education and Training lead, who will be responsible for political education and training within the branch and work with the union-wide working group and Organising and Training Coordinator to make sure we deliver regular core trainings, such as Organising Skills, Get Active and others. We aim to expand the scope of our education and training work, so we do spokesperson trainings, and more regular public events.

In our **Member Solidarity** work we will continue to prioritise running powerful disputes against powerholders. We aim to bring our members' stories more into the heart of our campaigns. We'll focus more on issues identified as strategic priorities such as disrepair, damp and mould, adaptations, and rent rises. We also aim to run more training on renters rights, build more supported and focused peer support spaces, and keep building confident member solidarity teams in all our branches.

Campaigns will continue to be the backbone of what we do in the union. Over the next year we aim to run campaigns on our two priority battlegrounds, Rent Controls and a Good Home for Everyone, as well as fighting to ensure Section 21 evictions are scrapped. We aim to run more and bigger actions across the next year on these campaigns. We aim to run more workshops on our campaign strategies and more political education events on our strategic priorities.

Through our **No Borders in Housing** organising we aim to strengthen our analysis and campaigning on racism in housing. We will support more migrants to get involved by offering consistent translation services. We will work with migrant rights groups to support migrant members, and all members will have access to training and resources on how the housing crisis affects migrant, black and brown renters.

The **Disability Justice** caucus will help ensure the wider union campaigns for stronger rights to adaptations to homes, and more housing support for disabled people. Through our Disability Justice work we will also ensure that union organising is more accessible, so that all renters can be involved in the movement. Over the next year our Disability Justice organising will include running a Participatory Action Research project and finding ways to support and enhance Member Solidarity work for Disabled renters.

For **Growth and New Branches**, this strategy proposes focusing our resources in a smaller number of areas to build 2 or 3 strong new branches by the start of 2025. We're prioritising outer London boroughs or west or south London, where we currently don't have many ways for LRU members to get active. We also want to try out more flexible types of structure for members wanting to organise in a smaller geographical area than a whole London borough. A group of members will be asked to help us work out how we make sure we're activating new and less active members, and getting everyone involved. We'll set targets for growing the membership and run online and in-person recruitment drives.

When it comes to **Staffing and Finance**, LRU has been successful in recent years at applying to grants and foundations. That money has been really helpful in getting the union off the ground. At the same time, members have been arguing for the need to increase membership income and decrease the proportion of our money that comes from grants. We've developed plans so that membership income overtakes grant income by the end of 2025. That would mean adding 800 paying members through street outreach and online membership drives next year and more the following year. We also want to look at clearer ways for members to feedback on staff work plans. And we want to look at the possibility of new trainee roles in the staff team allowing the union to take on more staff who don't have previous experience of paid organising roles.



INTRO

Renting in London is becoming increasingly difficult. Rents have gone up massively, and more and more people are being priced out of the city. At the same time, many of us live in housing that is in disrepair, sometimes even dangerous for our health. It's often hard to get repairs done – renters often spend months or years complaining before any work is done. Private landlords are out of control and raising rents far beyond what most of us can afford. Rent is too high, and housing standards are too low.

But together we're making change. In 2022, all our branches successfully put pressure on their local councils to side with renters rather than landlords – to do more to ensure we're living in safe and affordable homes. We've won improvements to dozens of members' housing situations. We've stopped evictions, supported members to negotiate their rent, and forced landlords to carry out repairs and pay back deposits.

And other groups and movements are making change too. The trade unions are using strikes to demand better pay and conditions for their members. The climate movement is putting pressure on governments to act to reduce emissions and stop the use of fossil fuels. Antiracist groups and the migrant rights movement are standing up against racist borders. When we stand together with these movements, and show that housing justice is related to climate justice, migrant justice, and better conditions in our workplaces, together we can create meaningful change.

This document lays out how we can win. A strategy is an action plan, getting us from where we are now to what we want to achieve. This strategy was developed by London Renters Union's Coordinating Group – the elected leadership of the union, consisting of representatives from branches and working groups. Through a series of workshops, we discussed how to understand the current housing system, what our vision is for the future, and what demands we want to prioritise in the next few years. Members from across the union's branches have been involved in developing this strategy. We have talked about how to get more renters involved in our struggle, so that we can win the big changes we need.

By taking action to win rent controls and better housing conditions for all renters, we can start to fundamentally shift the balance of power between landlords and renters. In order to win, we need everyone to get involved in a local branch or a working group, participating in campaigns, supporting other members with housing issues, and reaching out to more and more renters. As our union grows, we can take our struggle to a new level and win bigger demands. This strategy lays out how we can build an increasingly powerful renters' movement, and start to transform the housing system.

AIMS

The London Renters Union was launched in 2018 by a coalition of local housing groups and campaigns. We're a social movement union with the following aims:

TRANSFORM THE HOUSING SYSTEM.

In the short to medium term, we want to fundamentally alter the balance of power between renters and landlords and make the private rented sector a viable place to live. More broadly, we want a housing system in which everyone has access to an affordable, secure and decent home and in which homes are held in common rather than being treated like financial assets and in which we don't have to pay rent to private landlords anymore.

REALISE A FUTURE WHERE LONDON IS A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

We want a city where migrants can easily find and live in decent homes, where we have more free time, where working class people aren't pushed to the fringes, and where no-one has to suffer evictions or homelessness

BUILD A MASS, DEMOCRATIC, MEMBERS-LED UNION

that is truly representative of London's rented sector and its diversity and that continuously works to challenge oppression both inside and outside of the union.

CREATE A RADICAL MASS COMMUNITY

where we care for each other and that is a space of social solidarity that contributes towards broader transformational change in society.



OUR OVERALL STRATEGY

1. COMMUNITY

Renters are organising to grow a powerful community that fights for the changes we need to the housing system.

We're building vibrant branches across the city that are rooted in the places we're organising in.

- Standing up to the rich and powerful is hard work so we prioritise building strong relationships with each other and creating vibrant, caring spaces that people want to spend time in together.
- Being a community helps us to understand that we share the experience of being a renter, and our shared interests. This shared sense of identity is a source of power, and politicians are already starting to see renters as a political subject that they have to listen to.
- We use a community organising approach and work hard to build our base and to make sure our branches are rooted in local neighbourhoods and communities.
- We prioritise organising with people who are most impacted by the housing crisis and those who aren't already politically active.



2. MEMBER SOLIDARITY

We take collective action against the landlords and estate agents that exploit us. Our approach is based on solidarity not charity.

- Organising together to take action against the landlords and estate agents who benefit from the rigged housing system and exploit us is a key way we build our power.
- We regularly evaluate our member solidarity.
- Our approach is based on confrontation and on solidarity not charity and on seeing each member's housing issue as symptomatic of wider structural issues.
- Organising and winning a member solidarity dispute builds the power of the union. It builds our confidence, shows others that collective action works, and demonstrates our legitimacy to speak about the housing crisis.
- Member solidarity improves the lives of our members in a concrete way, making sure we're a community that provides practical and emotional support and a home to our members.
- As well as high-profile disputes, we also support people to understand their housing rights and access casework support, where appropriate.

3. EMPOWERMENT

We're a member-led union that puts knowledge and skills in the hands of renters. We use participatory decision making. We uplift and centre those most impacted by the housing crisis.

- Mass participation in our organising by our members is essential to building the kind of powerful and large organisation that we need to transform the housing system. That means we have to empower our members to participate in and shape our organising and develop their skills and ability to lead political struggle and grow our union.
- It's the people who are most impacted by the housing crisis who have the most interest in radically transforming the housing system and the energy, legitimacy and know-how to challenge the status quo and develop alternatives. Our union must be led by the multi-ethnic and multi-generational working class in order to win. We work hard to make this happen.
- Using participatory consensus decision-making develops our collective leadership of the union and ensures that renters in our city can speak with one voice.

4. MASS CAMPAIGNING

As we grow our base and develop mass support and participation, we can threaten and take mass action and leverage our collective power to win big changes. We agree our demands democratically based on our experiences as renters.

- Power holders govern by consent, and if large numbers of people resist their rules, they will be forced to change them. We are aiming to build a mass membership organisation.
- Mass action and being visible in social media and the media builds popular support for our analysis of the housing system and our demands for change.
- We're aiming to transform the housing system so it works in the interests of working class people, not landlords and investors. Our democratically agreed demands set out some of the things that could make this a reality.
- We want to work as part of and alongside the broader ecosystem of organisations that make up the housing movement and help to bring those organisations together. We are part of and



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

2023-2028

During recent strategy conversations, coordinating group members agreed the following 4 strategic priorities for the coming 5 years:

1. Public Housing Available To All

2. Rent controls

3. A good home for everyone

4. Building renter power across the city

The **Building Renter Power Across the City** priority is a general priority. It's about the need to keep building our power if we are to meet our aims of transforming the housing system.

The other three priorities are about changes we want to win in the housing system in the next five years. **Winning Public Housing Available To All** can be seen as the overarching strategic priority for the coming five years. It is also the hardest to win. That's because at the moment, the housing system is set up to prioritise profits for landlords and investors. A housing system where we all have access to affordable public housing wouldn't be good for landlords and investors - very few of us would choose to rent from a private landlord if high-quality, public housing was available to us.. It doesn't matter which political party is in power, they are going to see it as their role to protect the ability of landlords and investors to profit from the housing system.

So we need to build our power and our ability to force the government to make big changes to the housing system alongside our movement allies. This strategy suggests that we can do this by prioritising fighting for **Rent Controls** and **A Good Home For Everyone**, which is about focusing on the quality of our homes and the need for more regulation of landlords. These are both issues that lots of us feel on a day to day basis. For many of us, our homes are so expensive that it seriously undermines our ability to live a dignified

life. The issue of landlords not being regulated and homes being mouldy, dangerous or having disrepair issues is a big public scandal right now.

If we win either serious rent controls or proper government regulation of landlords, this would significantly change the balance of power between renters and landlords. We would have reduced the power of landlords and investors and they wouldn't have as much control over our lives. Winning on either Rent Controls and A Good Home For Everyone would challenge the idea that our current profit-driven housing system is good for society and it decreases the wealth of landlords and investors and the power that they have over our lives. Through the process of fighting for these changes, we would build our power and be in a stronger position to fight for even bigger changes such as Public Housing Available To All.

This strategy proposes that Rent Controls and A Good Home For Everyone are priorities across our branches and different working groups



1. PUBLIC HOUSING AVAILABLE TO ALL

"It is perfectly clear that the existing state is neither able nor willing to do anything to remedy the housing difficulty. The state is nothing but the organized collective power of the possessing classes, the landowners and the capitalists as against the exploited classes, the peasants and the workers."

Freidrich Engels, 1872

We all deserve a safe, secure, sustainable and beautiful home - this is a basic human need. Capitalist market forces have repeatedly failed to materialise this basic human need for millions of us, instead they have prioritised another need - profits, more specifically the profits of landlords, estate agents, land speculators and developers. Only commonly owned and democratically managed Public Housing for All can be the solution to a housing crisis which has ravaged working class communities in London and all over the world for centuries.

It wasn't always like this. For generations, social housing, the right to an affordable, lifelong home, meant many working class families could live with security and dignity. For three decades after WW2 the government led a social-democratic solution to a capitalist-imperialist crisis by building an average of 126,000 homes a year, bringing social housing stock to 4.4 million at its highest.

Since the 1970's, London's public housing stock, fought for by socialists within the Labour Party, and won against the interests of British capitalists,

has been in the crosshairs of housing profiteers. A number of neoliberal initiatives, including legislation like 'Right to Buy' (1980) have secured Tory votes whilst decimating both public housing stock and the notion that a home is not a financial asset, but a public good. Public housing has since been neglected and sold off. We have over 1.5 million less council homes than we did since Right to Buy was introduced, and we're now in a situation where in 2019 only 6,287 new homes were built for the 1.1 million people on the waiting list for a secure, affordable home. 40% of council homes bought under Right to Buy are now let out by private landlords for profit.

Government prefers private homes built for profit over council homes so don't properly fund the building of council homes. The housing system is currently built to prioritise landlord profits over public wellbeing - in 2016 £9 billion in housing benefits were directly lining the pockets of private landlords, twice the amount just ten years ago. Over £700 million is paid out by local councils to private landlords annually to temporarily house working class people in squalid 'temporary accommodation', as there is no public housing. It seems there is money for everything but the building of good quality public housing.

All of these tory policies, cuts to social housing spending, billions spent in schemes which shore up landlordism, have meant that working class communities are returning to the kind of slum conditions of the 19th Century which we once left for the newly built council homes. The lack of public housing means that many many people are pushed into the chronically under-regulated private rented market and all of the disrepair and unjust evictions attached to it. Between 2000 and 2021 private rented households increased from 2 million to 4.43 million. As renters we know that another housing system is possible.

Why are we choosing this issue?

In the London Renters Union we believe renters, collectively organised and taking action, have the power to transform the housing system. Although we are not campaigning for public housing for all as a priority campaign yet, we endeavour in all of our campaigning, communications and community



organising to incorporate the following goals.

1. That all housing in London becomes democratically owned and managed by the working class people who make this city possible, day in and day out.
2. Defend our public housing! We must end the right to buy scheme immediately.
3. Council must embark on an ambitious house building programme instead of prioritising sky-high landlord profits.
4. Councils must be funded to buy-back housing stock, and to build and renovate quality public housing for their waiting lists, prioritising anyone vulnerable and in need.
5. There are 87,000 empty homes in London, we believe these homes should be expropriated and made habitable for working class Londoners who need housing.
6. Homes currently owned by private landlords should be brought into public democratic ownership.

The capitalist housing system limits our understanding of a home as four walls, but for those of us who live and work in communities across London, we understand that the city is an extension of these four walls. Working class people must have a right to the city, as world-renowned Economics Geographer David Harvey writes, “The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights”.

This means that the common ownership and democratic management of our homes must extend beyond the four walls, to the streets, roads, schools, hospitals and green spaces it is connected to, and to our greatest home - Earth. Cities consume 78% of the world’s energy, Public housing

for all is the fight for climate justice.

All but one of the 10 most ethnically diverse local authorities in England outside London has a significantly higher rate of eviction possession claims than the 10 least diverse. More than a quarter of BAME working adults spend over a third of their income on housing compared to just over 1 in 10 white workers. Racial violence is caked into the housing system. Public Housing must be for all, those who are racialised, those seeking asylum, everyone, and it is there for the fight for racial and border justice.

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2. RENT CONTROLS

Rents in London are reaching crisis levels. Londoners pay the highest rents in Europe – many of us spend more than half our income on rent. Rents are going up three times faster than wages and have risen 18% in the last year alone. While landlords, estate agents and investors get richer, we get poorer. While they profit, we are forced away from our community and live with the constant fear of a rent rise. The threat of a rent rise stops us from asking for basic safety repairs and leaves too many of us stuck in a housing situation that doesn’t work for us. We’re left with little for food, bills, essentials and enjoying life. Sky-high rents make life miserable.

Millions are stuck renting - there’s very little public housing and homeownership is simply impossible for the vast majority of renters in London. Unless we make big changes, many of us will be stuck renting overpriced and poorly maintained housing for the rest of our lives. The jobs in London where the highest numbers of workers are private renters are cleaners, hospitality and kitchen workers and care workers. It’s precarious workers, racialised workers and other working class people who are trapped by low pay at work and high rents at home.

But imagine what our lives would be like if renters got together and won rent controls. Imagine what life would be like if we didn’t have to hand over so much of our income to landlords. We’d have more free time and the resources we need to look after our health and care for the people we care about. We’d be more able to make choices about how and where we’d like to live and what jobs we’d like to take. Life would be more joyful. We’d be more free.

Winning rent controls would transform our city. It would remove the fuel from the fire of gentrification. It would help stop the replacement of vibrant, multi-racial communities with bland new developments full of chain stores. It would help make London a city for everyone, where migrants aren’t pushed into the fringes and into the lowest-quality housing.

By challenging the ability of landlords to charge as much as they want, we will chip away at the idea that housing should be something that should be invested in and profited from. This is a campaign to reduce the size of the private rented sector, to reduce private ownership of housing and for a housing system that works in the interest of people rather than in the interests of private profit. It’s time to change how housing is thought about in our city and in this country.

The introduction of rent controls would require the abolition of Section 21 ‘no-fault’ evictions and the introduction of secure tenancies. So being part of keeping up the pressure on the government to scrap Section 21 and introduce a strong Renters Reform Bill is an important part of our rent controls campaigning.

Why are we focusing on this area?

- Rent controls are hugely popular - a recent poll found 74% of people in support.
- A hard-hitting, visionary rent control is an opportunity to substantially grow the membership of the union.
- By prioritising this battleground, we can link up with other organisations, take bold direct action and take power away from landlords and estate agents. Scotland’s tenant union Living Rent has won rent controls through grassroots organising. Let’s do the same here.
- It’s easy to understand, affects a lot of people and could help build our membership in a big way.
- It helps us shape public narrative around landlordism and private property.
- Membership is majority private tenants who would benefit greatly from this. It would improve the material conditions for millions of renters.
- It can take power away from landlords and agents.



3. A GOOD HOME FOR EVERYONE

Poor quality housing is one of the biggest issues for renters. 21% of privately rented homes do not meet the decent homes standard, which states that a home should be free from health and safety risks. About 12% of privately rented homes have at least one serious hazard that could cause immediate damage to the health of the renter. About 12% of socially rented homes do not meet the decent homes standard, and many council and housing association tenants live with the consequences of decades of under-investment in social housing.

We already have strong rights about disrepair but they aren't enforced properly. Councils do not use the powers they have to hold landlords to account. The failure of councils to use their powers to hold landlords accountable means that it is more profitable for landlords to break the rules than follow them. Many landlords simply ignore key rules on things like disrepair and illegal eviction.

Living with poor conditions – including disrepair, damp, mould, leaks, pests, and extreme cold or heat – can cause serious health issues. There is a mental health cost of these issues, as they cause stress and shame.

Poor housing conditions also exacerbate the climate crisis, as we spend much energy on heating poorly insulated homes. As temperatures become hotter in the summer months, more renters will



also struggle with extreme heat in their homes. Flooding is also likely to become more common.

At the moment, renters do have some protections against these issues, as existing laws make the landlord responsible for most repairs, as well as making improvements when there are serious health and safety risks. However, these laws are not enforced properly. The lack of protection from eviction and rent rises makes many tenants worried about asking for repairs.

For disabled renters, there is a shortage of homes that are adapted to their needs. While there are some laws that ensure adaptations, funding for this is often not enough, leaving disabled renters without suitable housing.

Everyone deserves a safe home that is free from hazards. But we need more than just basic repairs and improvements. We all need homes that are suitable to our needs, that don't become too hot or too cold, and that are free from draught, damp and mould. No one should have to wait for repairs to get done. We could all live in high quality, beautiful homes with access to communal facilities and green spaces.

Why was this issue chosen?

Poor conditions affect most renters at some point, and cuts across different sectors of the housing system: social tenants, private tenants, people living in temporary accommodation and property guardians are all affected. Through our #SideWithRenters campaign, we showed that it is possible to get councils to commit to taking more action to hold landlords accountable. The poor standards of rented housing in the UK could become a national scandal, as a lot of people care about hazardous conditions.

Through our member solidarity work, we already do a lot to improve conditions for our members. But we could do more to share the stories of renters who are living with poor conditions, and link this issue with the campaigning work we do.

The government has acknowledged the issue, but doesn't go far enough. In the Renters Reform Bill whitepaper, they only commit to halving the number of people living with risks to health and safety by 2030. We also need more commitments on how new legal standards will be enforced. A focus on housing conditions can be targeted both at national and local government.

Together with the demand for an end to Section

21 (no-fault) evictions and rent controls, forcing landlords to improve standards can make it less profitable to be a private landlord, which challenges a housing system where homes are treated as financial assets.

This issue can easily be linked to LRU's commitment to disability justice, as a lack of accessible homes and adaptations is a key issue for disabled renters.

With the climate crisis already impacting people here in the UK and across the world, immediate action is needed to make sure all of the UK's housing stock is properly insulated, and that energy efficiency standards are enforced. This involves not only better insulation of walls and roofs, but also more energy-efficient domestic

4. BUILDING RENTER POWER ACROSS THE CITY

London's housing system is rigged in favour of landlords, developers and property companies while the rest of us lose out. Our rigged housing system is pushing up the cost of housing and making our city more unequal. People of colour and other working class people are being forced out of their communities and out of the city because there isn't enough social housing. Housing for private profit means that people's need for decent, secure, affordable homes will always come last.

London's housing crisis is not a fact of nature, it's a result of political choices made by politicians. London Renters Union is proving that together we can build the power we need to win a different kind of housing system. We've supported thousands of renters to stand up to their landlord, we've won repairs and compensation through collective action countless times - estate agents literally pull down the shutters when they see LRU coming! And when we've launched bold campaigns, we've shown that we can win commitments from local councils and help win big concessions from the government.

But we're still at the early stage of our journey. We can win against individual landlords and we can help shape the political agenda but we still don't have the power we need to win the big changes in the law and force politicians to make big changes to how housing works. If we want to win a good home for everyone and public housing for all, we need to be ambitious in building renter power across the city and becoming a mass movement. We need to be able to call and organise large demonstrations along with our movement allies.

Building renter power across the city means setting

appliances such as boilers.

As decent standards is something that speaks to a lot of renters, outreach focusing on improving standards could draw more renters to the union. As we build our membership, we build the power of the union to demand the changes we need.

Housing for private profit means that people's need for good homes will always come last. By campaigning for a Good Home for Everyone, we can highlight what happens when landlords and estate agents aren't properly regulated and argue for a housing system where homes are owned publicly and by communities rather than for private profit.

DEMAND CHANGE

up new groups and branches, especially in parts of the city that are far away from an LRU branch. It means setting ambitious targets for growing the paying membership through street outreach and online. And it means finding new ways to activate the LRU members who aren't regularly active.

But building renter power isn't just about numbers and size. It also means looking at ways to strengthen our approach to organising and deepening connections in the communities where we're already organising. It means making sure we're supporting black and brown renters, migrant renters and other working class renters to grow into their power and lead. And it means deepening our commitment to disability justice.

Now more than ever, building renter power also requires us to connect with and learn from the struggles around us. At the time of writing, workers and their trade unions are gearing up for the biggest period of mass strikes in a generation. Anti-racist movements and the Black Lives Matter movement and the climate justice movement all continue to grow in strength here in Britain and across the world. From Palestine to India, from Berlin to Bolivia, struggles of working class people against oppression and exploitation continue to develop and inspire. Strengthening our bonds of solidarity with these movements and showing up and connecting will be vital over the coming years. Because if we are to win a world where housing is truly transformed, we need wider movements that are fighting for alternatives to the rigged capitalist system to win too.

The plans set out in this strategy are our plan to build renter power across the city.

KEY AREAS OF WORK

A. COMMUNITY ORGANISING

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

Community organising is the bread and butter of our work in the London Renters Union. It enables us to build flourishing, representative and powerful branches across the city, fighting big campaigns and winning big disputes. Community organising ensures these branches are run by local, resourced and empowered members. Community organising includes activation and development of members, outreach, local campaigning and more. It is how we grow our membership, our reach, our relationships and our power.

Organising within the union is also an exercise in direct democracy. By participating in branch working groups, central working groups, directly-elected roles, accountability structures and committees, members experiment with and get a feel for the kind of democracy we hope to insert into housing, work and society as a whole. This kind of participation builds our power and prepares us to win our vision of a new housing system.

Community organising is essential in helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years because we need strong branches, strong relationships to community, strong campaigns and strong leadership to effectively take on power holders, run successful campaigns and grow the power needed to turn the odds in favour of working class renters.

Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

- Every branch has an active, trained and confident organising committee with all roles filled.
- Every branch is running successful outreach on a weekly basis, in a diversity of forms e.g. door knocking and stalls.
- The union is more democratic, more members, branches and role holders understand and participate in our democratic processes, and take ownership over the democracy of the union, for example we have a more ingrained culture of making and debating proposals.
- The union has a clear, published and widely

understood organising model.

- Every member who joins the union receives timely follow up and ample opportunities to become active in their branch and the wider union
- The union has grown its membership at a level in accordance with the amount needed to win on our strategic battlegrounds
- Every organising committee has a number of people in their team who are community organisers in their own right, capable of moving members to action and developing other members to become organisers.
- Organising renters living in blocks of housing doesn't help us overcome the fact that most renters are atomised and have different landlords, but it can help us build power and density effectively. A number of branches have also highlighted temporary accommodation as a key area we should be working on and there are many active members who live or have experience of living in poor conditions in temporary accommodation. By 2025, we will develop our approach and shared understanding of block organising and have successfully organised 2 blocks of tenants where temporary accommodation tenants are living.
- The union has a clear strategy for supporting members to become active and develop their skills and participation in the union. Our approach to the member journey is widely understood and there is collective responsibility for implementing it.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- Every elected role holder receives a full role induction and attends an Organising Skills training.
- Inductions and trainings become more accessible so that more branch members are getting skilled up to be in organising committees,
- Carrying out leadership development including by increasing the number of people who are supported to carry out organising tasks within their community, including outreach,,

phonebanking, 1-1s and more.

- CG and all role holders and branches feel trained and confident to use motions and move proposals through the union. Across 2023 each branch, where relevant, uses proposals and gets a feel for participating in direct democracy.
- Each branch will develop a campaign targeting a local power holder relating to the strategic themes around A Good Home for Everyone or Rent Controls e.g. fighting a big local agent or landlord, or publicly targeting a council around the commitments they made during the #SideWithRenters campaign.
- In the first three months of the year, each branch organising committee sets out a branch development plan for the year ahead that is then voted on by the branch.
- The union further develops its approach to organising, including further evaluation and discussion about block organising.

- Each branch is establishing mutual, strong relationships with a number of local grassroots organisations.
- Each branch is consciously taking steps to fairly distribute care work within the organising, and is fostering an ethos of self-care, including being able to step back and ask for help.
- Members in branches are supported to integrate migrant solidarity activity into their organising as set out in section E below.
- A temporary accommodation (TA) organising project is launched, 2 TA organisers are hired, the project identifies the block it will be organising in, and completes an organising drive.



B. EDUCATION

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

Education and training is about building consciousness, core skills, confidence and capacity. We want to grow the confidence of our members to become active fighters and thinkers in their branches, and in the struggle for housing and social justice. We want to strengthen the confidence of the union as a whole to lead the fight to transform the housing system. Specifically, education and training enables and empowers our members to become skilled in organising and taking action. It enables our members to become knowledgeable of our rights, the housing system and our enemies, and understand how the union works, and how we can work within it.

Our education and training work also ensures our politics, values and theory of change are shared and practised across branches, outreach, disputes and communications. Winning on our strategic priorities over the next five years means, among other things, having a strong organisation of organisers, able to undertake the organising and campaigning needed to win - education and training provides the skills and confidence for members to do this.

As members we feel that fighting and winning housing justice must go hand in hand with developing the political consciousness of each other, and the wider communities we live, work and struggle within. This development of political consciousness with our communities, toward transforming the housing system and society, is itself a specific, measurable and attainable strategic priority.

Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

- The Education Working Group operates a successful hub-and-spokes system via branches, where delegates are elected from the branch.

- The union provides an accessible and empowering education and training curriculum which all members are aware of and able to enrol onto, running across the year.
- The union has a well-trained bank of 'LRU Trainers and Facilitators' who are participating in delivering the curriculum.
- All members of branch organising committees are undertaking training.
- The union has a pool of trained public speakers who are able to represent the union in public forums, events and in the media.
- Through operating a healthy education and training ecosystem the union has developed more skills and capacity for branch and membership development.
- Our members' experience of the union is one where there are ample opportunities for the development of organising skills and political consciousness.
- Culture, and cultural production is resourced and becomes encouraged and regular practice across the union.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- Setting up the hub-and-spokes system for the education working group by Q2
- Every branch has elected 1 person to the Education Working Group
- The Education Working Group meets quarterly, this group is convened by the Organising and Training Coordinator
- The development of an education and training curriculum ready to be launched by 2024
- We try to move to a quarterly Get-Active training cycle.
- We run an LRU Organising training at least 3 times across the year
- We launch a training calendar so all members

can see what's on offer

- We run an LRU Spokesperson training 2 times the year
- We have trained a dozen new LRU Spokespersons
- We have trained all new role holders and other members through our Organising training
- We run public events at least 3 times across the year
- We develop and launch an LRU periodical

C. MEMBER SOLIDARITY

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

Member solidarity work is a key part of what we do as a union. It brings members into the union and empowers them to lead on their own and others' struggle for better housing. It shows landlords, estate agents, council officers, journalists and politicians that we are serious about winning and know what we're talking about. It shows other renters that we can win by taking collective action. Disrepair/poor standards and rent rises are the most common issues members are facing. Through members' lived experience of these issues, we can build a powerful story about what's wrong with the current system, and we can better understand and show how the housing system needs to change.

Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

- Each branch has an active and confident member solidarity team, which is regularly taking public action on members' housing issues, in particular on issues around rent, disrepair, and poor conditions such as damp and extreme temperatures.
- We regularly improve our members' housing conditions through peer support, collective casework, and public disputes.
- Our members' experiences of poor housing conditions and rent rises inform our campaign demands and are part of a national conversation about these issues.
- We have developed a strong culture of education and skill-sharing, and regularly run short trainings as part of our member solidarity team meetings.
- Our member solidarity resources are accessible and widely shared among members.

- We work in collaboration with external training groups to run facilitation and train the trainer trainings to build our internal capacity to run more trainings.
- Making sure our ecosystem of trainings is diverse in length and style. Some should be able to be done on a peer to peer level while some can be full day gatherings.
- Publishing a 'how we learn, how we teach' document so we have a shared pedagogy across the union.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- Using our member solidarity work to guide what legal/policy changes we are calling for in our campaigns.
- Prioritising disputes and collective casework on rent and disrepair (though teams can work on other issues as well if they build the power of the union in other ways).
- Training members on their housing rights, and developing more detailed training on areas such as disrepair.
- Members are supported to publicly tell their stories about rent rises and poor conditions in a way that shows the need for legal change.
- Developing our peer support sessions to effectively support and empower members to take action on their own housing issues.
- Challenging estate agents, councils and housing associations on poor practices in relation to standards.
- A group of members and staff carry out research into different options for supporting LRU members to access expert advice and casework support, especially in regards to our battleground issues and issues where renters can receive compensation.
- Providing training and support to make sure that each branch has 10 people who are confident to help run peer support breakout groups and disputes.
- Member solidarity teams work together with the Disability Justice Caucus to support disabled members with housing issues, especially on housing conditions and adaptations.



D. CAMPAIGNS

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

The key aim of the London Renters Union is to radically change the housing system. We're fighting to win a housing system where everyone has access to an affordable, secure and decent home. To win this overall vision we need to run powerful campaigns that improve our lives and change the balance of power and that make more revolutionary changes more possible.

This strategy suggests that Public Housing for All is an overarching long-term battleground for the union - a key way we win our vision. This strategy suggests that in the short and medium term, we have two key battlegrounds that will help us build the power we need to win those bigger changes:

1. Rent controls - starting a long-term focus on rent controls, starting with a campaign for a #RentFreezeNow.
2. A Good Home for Everyone - a focus on disrepair and housing conditions across private renting, social housing and temporary accommodation. This includes measures that make homes more accessible for Disabled renters.

This strategy suggests that Rent Controls and A Good Home for Everyone are two battlegrounds that we should prioritise. It will also be important to continue to fight to ensure that the government keeps its commitment to scrap Section 21 evictions.

Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

- Section 21 evictions have been abolished.
- The Rent Controls and A Good Home for Everyone battlegrounds are on the political agenda within social movements and the wider public. Major political parties have backed some of the demands that we have developed and have committed to implementing them if they win the next election. The LRU's demands are regularly covered in the mainstream media.
- We're taking public action about these battlegrounds regularly and these actions are growing and involving hundreds if not thousands of people. We're leveraging our success at the local level to win city-wide and contribution to national policy change.

- The LRU has a better understanding of what sort of demands we want to make about housing associations and temporary accommodation.
- The LRU has strong relationships with other unions and social movement organisations in London and across Britain and is in a number of powerful coalitions. Locally, branches have built strong links with workers in struggle and their trade unions and other groups engaged in community and political work.
- We have strong structures for running our union-wide campaigns and we're running union-wide campaigns in ways that reflect our commitment to democracy.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- Run one or more workshops that allow members from across the union to come together to develop clear demands, strategies and ways of taking direct action for the Rent Controls and A Good Home for Everyone battlegrounds. These workshops should build on the learnings we've gained through our member solidarity work and make clear the links between our campaigning battlegrounds and the struggles for racial justice, migrant justice and disability justice.
- Each branch has ensured that several key commitments won through the #SideWithRenters campaign has been implemented, especially commitments relating to Rent Controls and A Good Home for Everyone. Making sure we're building on our #SideWithRenters wins in any campaigning we do.
- We run at least one accessible, fun political education event on these battlegrounds and there are resources available to support branches wishing to run educational events locally.
- Develop a communications strategy that aims to help reshape the narrative about housing and make the key arguments around our campaigns to a wider audience.
- Members work with other tenant unions to update the Renter Manifesto we launched with other tenant unions and housing campaigns in 2019.
- Each branch will develop a campaign targeting

a local power holder relating to the strategic themes around A Good Home for Everyone or Rent Controls e.g. fighting a big local agent or landlord or publicly targeting a council around the commitments they made during the #SideWithRenters campaign.

- Establish a Temporary Accommodation working group that brings together renters living in temporary accommodation and develops an idea for a cross-union campaign.

- We have a clear approach to relationships with other unions and social movement organisations and being in coalitions and how we make democratic decisions about this work and who it is carried out.
- Improving the structure and role of the Campaigns Committee to make it more accessible and accountable.

E. NO BORDERS IN HOUSING

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

The Home Secretary recently called refugees arriving in Dover an 'invasion'. This rhetoric does not just exist in speeches, in fact it highlights a core principle that has underpinned government policy for over a decade - the principle of the hostile environment.

This has led to migrants being more likely to live in inadequate, overcrowded housing and to suffer disproportionate discrimination in the private rented sector and social housing. As a union, to apply our stated values means to stand with those most acutely affected by the housing crisis, recognising that we cannot achieve quality housing for all if our movement does not include them. Within this, we recognise that barriers for migrants are racialised and affect racialised non-migrant

communities too. Housing justice work must be anti-racist work.

The working group is focused on foregrounding the concerns of migrant members and migrant renters more broadly, in the union. We aim to carve out space for further discussion and action on issues like No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), Right to Rent, racism in housing, and translation and accessibility of our union spaces.

Applying the principle of 'No Borders In Housing' across the union makes us stronger as it brings a wider range of experiences into the movement and leaves us better equipped to organise within London's diverse boroughs. Migrant renters are often explicitly excluded from the housing market, targeted by predatory landlords and under-represented in the housing justice movement. We have the power to organise to change this and grow our movement in line with the just world we want to see.



Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

- Anti-racism is a core organising principle in all branches and working groups, such that analysis is done on our ongoing work around the specificity of migrant/racialised experiences, in order that groups are not forgotten as we continue to campaign for a better housing system.
- Translation and interpretation services are easily accessible across the union, both at the staff and member levels, with a clear budget and multilingual members being empowered to support other members with these services wherever appropriate.
- Each branch and working group has a clear understanding of what the principle of No Borders In Housing means for our work as a union and foregrounds it in their work, maintaining in clear and regular contact with the NBIH working group, able to access support from the working group and staff on how to embed the principle of NBIH effectively.
- Cross-union work on broader NBIH campaigns and solidarity initiatives with related anti-racist causes are encouraged and raised within our organising groups because of political education initiatives that give members a robust analysis of the intersections of race, class and citizenship status within the housing crisis.
- The union has strong connections with a variety of migrants rights groups, at the local and national level, whom we are able to signpost members to when they require migrant-specific services and keep abreast of migrant-related

policy changes and persistent issues facing migrant renters. We are also able to have a mutually beneficial relationship with these groups, where we work collaboratively on campaigns and projects which support migrant renters across the city.

- The NBIH working group has membership spanning across the union, who attend consistently, and is migrant-led.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- We set up a fully functioning mechanism to embed easily-accessible translation and interpretation services across the union, and a review is held within 3 months.
- A successful outreach drive to a variety of migrant-related groups across the city who we maintain in clear and regular contact with.
- We hold an event with at least one other anti-racist group that helps educate membership on a related issue.
- Every branch and working group runs a 'how to be an anti-racist branch' item in a meeting in Q1.
- Work with the Education WG to create periodic material on timely issues facing migrants and racialised communities in the housing sector or wider society.
- Each branch and working group has a designated representative who attends NBIH meetings and gives updates, both to the working group and their own group, wherever possible.

Even after securing a home, Disabled renters must fight with landlords, estate agents, councils, and housing associations to get basic adaptations made to our homes - adaptations that we need so we can bathe, we can make food, so we can sleep, along with other basic human needs.

Our opponents intentionally use our disability against us, for example offering support but within inaccessible spaces, evicting neurodivergent renters using claims of anti-social behaviour, and exhausting disabled renters with processes that work against us rather than support us. While we are often ignored, we know there cannot be housing justice without disability justice.

Even those who are not yet disabled need disability

justice. When we build a renters movement that builds power for disabled renters, a movement in which disabled renters build power, we build power for everyone.

The London Renters Union Disability Justice Caucus (DJC) supports the London Renters Union in doing both inward and outward facing work around disability - dismantling ableism in the housing system and also dismantling ableism in housing justice organising.

The spaces that our caucus holds both allow disabled renters and build power for the entire union. Our caucus spaces hold many different types of disability at once, they invite participants to bring their experience of disability into the space. The conversations that we have started have already begun to shape how the work is being taken up across the union.

In addition, these spaces have helped disabled renters win disputes and supported disabled renters take up leadership roles within the LRU. We look forward to this work continuing to spread and transform the entire LRU and our housing system.

Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

- A union wide understanding, at all levels, that accessibility is a continuous never ending conversation - and understanding that accessibility is not a box to tick but requires reflection on both the space and the people in it.
- Developing a resourced support system that allows accessibility across the union to be taken up as a collective responsibility, so that accessibility needs can be welcomed and met whether they arise in large branches or small new groups.
- Getting housing policy changes including
 - Treating a lack of adaptations on a home as a hazard and grounds for council enforcement.
 - Close the support gap, in particular winning housing support for people who have disabilities that are not considered serious enough (such as many autistic renters), or already have ad-hoc support networks (such as 50+ yr. old disabled folk being supported by 80+ year old parents who are exhausting themselves giving care)
- All LRU documentation is also available in

an easy read version.

- The PAR project and an accessibility audit should have both been completed, and work should have been initiated across the union on acting on the findings.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- Structures and resources in place that allow the DJC to support member solidarity work for disabled renters across our branches and groups through our proposed pod model.
- Regular in person meetings in addition to our online meetings and support disabled renters in coming to these meetings.
- A toolkit for strategy and tactics around direct action that allow more disabled renters to participate in direct action.
- To develop, purchase, and deploy a set of equipment for every branch and group that allows them to easily run hybrid meetings
- The finalisation of planning for the PAR project and the start of participant research activity.
- Deepening the relationship between the DJC and Disabled People's Organisations like London DPAC, Inclusion London, and We are Invisible We are Visible.
- Running disability justice trainings and workshops within the LRU and supporting disabled renters get involved in the housing justice work of the LRU.

F. DISABILITY JUSTICE

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

Disability Justice is important to building renter power and achieving our strategic priorities because Disabled renters, in both the private and social renting sectors, are one of the most marginalised groups of renters in our housing system. Disabled renters are seen as problems rather than people. We encounter constant discrimination when trying to find a home. Supporting Disabled renters to organise our communities through the DJC is essential to achieving housing justice.



G. GROWTH AND NEW BRANCHES

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

The LRU was set up by grassroots housing activists who were doing brilliant local work in their neighbourhood but felt that renters across the city needed to build a mass, city-wide union in

order to win big changes to the housing system. Growing the union in new parts of the city is crucial to realising our ambition to building a city-wide union for London's renters and a democratic union that is capable of winning big changes to how housing works. It's important for the transparency and democracy of our union that members are able to organise locally.

Growing the union in terms of numbers of members and the number of active, empowered members is just as important. Growing the power of the union also comes through more members having the confidence, skills and motivation to participate and lead.

Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

- Increasing the paying membership by 800 paying members in 2023 and 1,800 in 2024.
- We have strengthened our internal communications and the work we do to support people into activity, meaning that the number of members who cancel their direct debit drops.
- By the start of 2025, we should have

established 2 or 3 new branches, prioritising outer London boroughs or west or south London, where we currently don't have many ways for LRU members to get active. This strategy proposes focusing our resources in a smaller number of areas to build 2 or 3 strong branches by the start of 2024.

- Members who live outside of a branch area are supported to get active and campaign locally with their neighbours including through better support from members in existing branches. The union has developed clearer structures for people who live on an estate, block or in a local area that is smaller than a borough to get support and organise together.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- Establish at least one LRU group that can go on to become a full LRU branch.
- Develop and trial new more flexible types of structure for members wanting to organise in a smaller geographical area than a whole London borough e.g. members who share a landlord.
- Increase the paying membership by 800 through street outreach and online membership drives.
- A group of members and staff to be responsible for developing and implementing a union-wide approach to activating and retaining less-active members and supporting them to participate and lead (member journey).

H. STAFFING AND FINANCE

Why is this a key area of work for helping us achieve our strategic priorities over the next five years?

Organising money and making democratic decisions about how we spend it is one of the ways that we build and use our power. As well as paying staff wages, money also allows us to rent office space and book meeting space, help make our spaces and organising accessible with food, childcare and translation, and run successful projects and campaigns. The financial stability of the union is a key part of our ongoing ability to grow.

The deep community organising model that we have been developing relies on a team of dedicated paid community organisers who can help recruit members, bring them into political activity in their local branch, help branches run effectively and support elected role holders to lead. There are currently 10 members of staff and the current plan is to expand the staff team to 14 by March 2023.

Where we would like this area of work to be by the start of 2025.

By the start of 2025, we are adding an average of 150 new paying members per month with paying an average of £7.50, increasing membership income to £400,000 per year. This is an ambitious target but is achievable given that the union could be focusing a lot more of its communications work and community organising on recruiting paying members. This would allow us to become less reliant on grant income as a way of growing the union - membership income could overtake grant income by the end of 2025. If we achieve this target and increase grant income by 15%, we would have the ability to increase the staff team to above 22 during 2025 if we chose to do that.

New trainee roles in the staff team allow the union to take on more staff who don't have previous experience of paid organising roles. All staff feel very well supported and that they can set and achieve learning and development goals within their work.

The LRU has long-term, low-cost office space where members and staff can organise and host events, and we have a few smaller spaces in some of the areas we have branches in.

What are some of the key objectives for 2023?

- Add 800 paying members through street outreach and online membership drives.
- Review our membership fee structure with a view to increasing the membership fees received by those who can afford to contribute more. Regularly set and review membership growth targets.
- Develop a communications strategy that aims to help reshape the narrative about housing, communicate about our campaigns and grow the membership of the union.
- Increase grant income by 5-7%.
- All expense requests are paid within 14 days and branch role holders receive a monthly report about the finances of their branch.
- The LRU has identified a new long-term main office space for when we have to leave Pelican House in June 2023.
- Develop a plan aimed at ensuring that every branch has a local space to meet and organise from.
- The staffing and finance committee will write a proposal with different options for new revenue streams e.g. merchandise, online drives where people can sponsor someone else's membership fee.
- Creating clearer ways for members to feedback on staff work plans and feed in when the coordinating group sets the plans of the staff team.
- Update our approach to supporting staff with ongoing training and development beyond their initial induction.



