

Homelessness rates in UK hit five-year high, as cost-of-living crisis deepens

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London, July 31 (RHC)-- The homelessness rate across England is at its highest since 2018 due to government policies, which have forced a record number of families to live in temporary accommodation,

according to official figures.

According to official government data for January to March, published on Tuesday, around 79,840 households were owed help from local authorities to address homelessness or the risk of homelessness, as experts blame a “shameful” lack of social housing.

Meanwhile, around 105,000 households were in temporary accommodation, up 10 percent from a year earlier and the highest since records for the figure began in 1998. This number included more than 131,000 children, the highest level since records for that measure began in 2004.

While the number has fluctuated in recent years, charities and statistical institutes have described the new figures as extremely “worrying.”

For the same period in 2022, the number of children living in temporary accommodation was 119,780. However, it was a decrease from 2021, when there were 121,300 children in the same period. The numbers have sparked calls for the government to reform renting laws faster and build more affordable housing, with campaigners warning that “the time for empty words on building social homes” had “long past.”

Matt Downie, chief executive of Crisis, said families were trapped in temporary accommodation due to “the crippling cost [of] years of no investment in housing benefit and a shameful lack of social house building.”

Homelessness charity Shelter also called on the government to take decisive action to prevent the situation from becoming worst. Polly Neate, chief executive at Shelter, said: “To end homelessness for good, we need genuinely affordable homes. Michael Gove agrees social homes are essential to solving the housing emergency, so it’s time for his government to get on and build them.” “No-fault evictions are fueling homelessness and throwing thousands of families’ lives into turmoil,” Neate added.

Meanwhile, Riverside, another leading organization, providing accommodation for homeless people, depicted the figures as “very worrying.” The latest figures come a day after Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove expressed his manifesto commitment to build 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s - but did not say when that would be achieved.

Prime Minister’s official spokesperson Rishi Sunak also stated that the government is on track to meet its target of building one million houses between 2019 and 2024. However, Rick Henderson, chief executive of Homeless Link, the national membership charity for frontline homelessness organizations, said the latest figures were “distressing reading”, describing the current situation as “serious”.

The Salvation Army warned that unless the freeze on housing benefits is lifted, more families would lose their homes due to rent rises.

Nick Redmore, the charity’s director of homelessness services, said: “Today’s figures show more people than ever are losing the battle to keep a roof over their heads. Unless housing benefits are urgently raised to cover the cost of rent, the homelessness crisis will only worsen.”

The UK is stuck in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, with high rates of inflation leaving people struggling to pay for essentials and meet rapidly rising rental prices.

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