

Responding to the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

Summary of the report for Spring Synods

There is a growing housing and homelessness crisis in this country. Rough sleeping has risen by 169% over the past decade, whilst the lack of affordable housing has contributed to the hidden homeless population. Today, there are an estimated 320,000 homeless people in Britain. Many more people are badly housed or over-crowded. Recent welfare reforms – such as the benefit cap, spare room subsidy, and the introduction of Universal Credit – have exacerbated the housing crisis and increased the risk of rent arrears.

Around the country, Methodists and Methodist churches are helping people who are homeless or in housing need, responding to Our Calling to be a good neighbour to people in need and challenge injustice.

This report results from the call at last year's Methodist Conference for more action to be taken. It gathers just some examples of current practice, from churches and associated charities.

There are churches responding in faith and making a meaningful difference in their local communities, providing food banks, shower and washing machine facilities, internet and computer use, offering assistance with administrative tasks, distributing toiletries, and cooking hot meals. Some churches are involved with winter night shelters, providing volunteers and opening up their buildings for rough sleepers to stay during the coldest months of the year. Others have developed their property to provide affordable housing. Many other examples exist throughout the Connexion.

The need is immense. The Church is not trying to put a sticking plaster on a growing problem. Instead it is proposed that a holistic response is needed:

Reduction: tackling the causes of homelessness. This includes practical and political actions.

Respite: providing a safe place for people off the street.

Recovery: managing issues, stabilising individuals and working towards independence through support, wellbeing, life skills and steps towards employment, volunteering, training and education.

Reconnection: enabling individuals to lead meaningful lives with choice and agency in our community.



What more can the Methodist Church do, working with others, to confront the crisis of housing and homelessness? How can we – together – offer a holistic response?

Below are some questions aimed at gathering a more detailed picture about what is happening throughout the Connexion.

Questions for discussion at Synods:

1. What housing and homelessness needs do you face in your local area?
2. Are you aware of churches in your District trying to meet these needs? If so, please give details and describe what they are doing.
3. What practical actions or support from the Methodist Church or others would help your churches respond more effectively to the needs in your area?
4. Are there ways in which your churches might provide affordable housing, perhaps by redeveloping redundant buildings or excess land?

Please send your responses to nom206@methodistchurch.org.uk, or Will Fremont-Barnes, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR.

