

Building homes is important but it's not enough - we need to build communities, writes Archbishop Justin Welby.



Britain's housing crisis is one of the major challenges facing this country.

Housing is becoming unaffordable for many families, making it hard for those on lower incomes to get through the month and pushing them into debt. People are living in poor quality, over-crowded or temporary housing, putting their health at risk. Families are forced to move away from the communities they have settled in, separating them from family and support networks and breaking up communities.

Meanwhile it's the poorest who are suffering the most. It's those with least who find themselves isolated, or having to move every time they start to get established. The stress piles up in ways many of us would find hard to imagine.

That is why I'm so pleased to be launching the [Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community](#). The commission will explore these issues by combining academic and industry expertise with the lived experience of those affected by them. It will draw on the wisdom of those taking innovative approaches to housing.

The Church of England is already doing much to alleviate current suffering and build better communities. We do this every day through our 33,000 social action projects around the country – from food banks and debt counselling, to helping people of different faiths build bonds of friendship. But we also do it just by being in contact with people; by simply being there.

For this reason, building homes is important, but it's not enough. We need to build communities. We need public spaces where people can gather – parks, shops, sports facilities, but also churches and other places of worship. When we build communities, people feel they belong. They love and care for each other.

The Commission is going to look at all the ways that this can be done, drawing on expertise from its members as well as reviewing existing research.

We will also be putting people with direct experience at the heart of our work. The Grenfell Tower tragedy showed us the profound importance of hearing people's concerns about housing. We will be listening closely to the voices of those struggling with housing problems.

We'll also be learning from churches and those with experience of tackling these issues. As well as understanding the challenges, we hope to draw out the lessons of exciting and innovative approaches to building homes and communities where people can have, as Jesus puts it, "life in all its fullness."

In all of this, as the Church we have one primary motivation: in the words of St Paul, the love of Christ compels us. The example of Jesus draws us on and leads us not just to speak of God's love – but to demonstrate it by reaching out in compassion to those who are in greatest need.

To find out more about the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community visit: [churchofengland.org/ABChousing](https://www.churchofengland.org/ABChousing)

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/articles/archbishop-justin-welby-britains-housing-crisis-major-challenge>