

# SQUATTING IS STILL LEGAL

Contributed by Administrator  
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## PRESS RELEASE: SQUATTING IS STILL LEGAL –

Political in-fighting hides the real crisis in housing

\* Recent news items published in the mainstream press regarding squatting have been inaccurate, say Advisory Service for Squatters (A.S.S).

Advisory Service for Squatters has been running an advice service for squatters and other homeless people since 1975. Its Squatters' Handbook, which details the practicalities of squatting, has this week been the source of much controversy in the Daily Mail, Telegraph et al. The Handbook is now in its 12th edition and has been in print since 1974.

Eric Pickles, Conservative MP for Brentwood and Ongar, has used the existence of the Squatters' Handbook and the contact details of A.S.S on Council websites as a stick to beat Labour councils with. He is quoted in the Telegraph as

saying: "Homeowners will be horrified that town halls are giving squatters the green light to break into law-abiding citizens' homes ...

Promoting such lawlessness is breathtaking, but is sadly an indictment of social breakdown that has become rife under Labour and the prevalence

of 'human rights' laws. This revelation coupled with fact violent crime is doubling blows apart Labour's claim to be the party of law and order."

A.S.S replies:

1. Squatters only occupy empty properties. In those cases where a mistake is made and there is an occupier, the squatters can be quickly removed by legal mechanisms.

2. Squatting mostly happens in housing that's been left to rot, whether by councils or private owners. The combination of the number of empty

properties and the difficulty of getting housed makes squatting very attractive.

3. It is often the case that empty buildings are left open or are broken into and used by local kids or drug users etc; as such, squatters make repairs to buildings and bring them into use, thus contributing to local communities.

4. A.S.S does not promote lawlessness, as squatting is still legal. We help disadvantaged people to find housing, to help themselves when no-one else will. We often recommend that people who are eligible for Priority Need Housing apply to their local Council.

5. Human Rights laws are generally unavailable to squatters as a defence.

6. The real issue is the difficulty of getting housed, due to profiteering through privatisation and gentrification, which leads to unaffordable

rents and the need to take personal action.

7. Councils sign post A.S.S on their websites because we offer free advice to homeless people and those with housing problems.

8. Advisory Service for Squatters is an organisation run by unpaid volunteers and has never received any government funding. It is kept afloat by donations, and by benefits organised by squatters and activists.

9. No one is saying all squatters are perfect, but neither are tenants or even home owners.

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