Local authorities are soundly blamed for tho misery sufferd tamilles in slum clearance areas in a report from Shelter published last week. Delay, neglect, and lack of information charactetise the evidence collected by Shelter in studies of London, Liverpool, Siltotd. Newcastle. Nottingham, Birmingham,Sheffield and Glasgow .Life in a clearance area is indescribably appalling." the report says. Con dittons there would revolt and disgust anyone who spent a few hours walking through the streets and talking to residents. It is abhorrent that such conditions should be allowed to exist at all: the fact that they should be allowed to persist for years is one of our society's greatest crimes. The country has never allocated sufficient resources to housing and only a radical change in social prionties will ensure that everyone can live in decent home, says the report. It sees no early solution. Even the hope that more than 1.25 million houses currently classed as unfit can be cleared or improved by 1980 is unrealistic. Emphasis on housing Improvement has silenced discussion on the problems of clearance and redevelopment programmes, yet many houses are beyond improvement. and all must eventually be pulled down Most councils, it says, have been over–ambitious and totally unrealistic in drawjng up clearance plans. which seem to have no regard to the council's ability to carry them through within the period originally envisaged. Residents are very often written off by welfare agencies, education authorities and town halls. Unfit housing, once designated for clearance. "becomes an area of appalling and disgusting dereliction, whose residents suffer every kind of the most distressing social deprivation and physical discomfort. Some blame attaches to central government for house building cost controls and shortages of labour and materials. but much of the distress suffered by residents stems from the high–handed attitude of local authority departments which show contempt for the feelings and fears of those whose lives are completely overshadowed by uncertainty about the future and depression over their present living conditions. There is a patent lack of honesty in local authorities' dealings with these people. Families are still awaiting rehousinq up to 20 years after being included in clearance programmes, because there are not enough houses of the right size in the right areas available. the report says. Neglect of repairs by landlords. including councils, means that thousands are forced to live in houses with leaking roofs, peeling wallpaper and plaster, and damaged walls, floors, and windows. one house in Glasgow was so dilapidated that corporation workmen boarded it up, assuming it was so bad that no one could live there. The tenant came home from holiday to a home surrounded by corrugated iron.. Council claims that it is not worthwhile spending, say. E300 on repairinq a house where a family may have to live for months or years. are outrageous. Shelter says. Empty houses. dereliction and neglect lead to vandalism and rodent infestation. People are made ill by depressing surroundings, uncertainty and breakup of the the community . Councils are .notoriously inefficient in ensuring that residents are given information about when and where they are to be rehoused. about their legal rights and about which departments to approach on different problems. Opportunities for participation are few. Residents views are usually neglected. and decisions are taken which are wholly unsatisfactory to the people they affect. The report calls for a faster programme of public house–building and says that councils must carry essential repairs, and clean up clearance areas. Where possible, families should be rehoused in the same area. There should be a comprehensive system for giving information, and people should play a far greater part in planning and decision–making Whitehall should approve clearance plans

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only when the time-scale is realistic, and should exercise tighter control over their execution. Shelter Rerott on Slum Clearance "50 from Shelter 86 The Strand Londcc

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