

Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani is to become the Church of England's Lead Bishop for Housing to spearhead the Church's efforts to help ease the UK's crippling housing crisis.

The announcement comes ahead of the publication next month of the findings of a major two-year commission, set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury, examining the role of the church in tackling housing inequality and examining possible solutions.

Bishop Guli, currently the Bishop of Loughborough, will take up the new role later this year when she becomes Bishop of Chelmsford.

The new post will involve leading efforts to implement the recommendations of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community which will be published in late February.

The Bishop of Barking, Peter Hill, will serve as deputy and the Bishop of Kensington, Graham Tomlin, currently vice-chair of the Commission, will also provide continuing support.

They will work alongside dioceses and other church bodies as well as strengthening relationships with groups from housing associations to developers and national organisations and landowners. The aim is to ensure the Church of England can play its part including, wherever possible, using its own land well to help resolve the housing crisis.

The announcement was made as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, was interviewed by the BBC's Mark Easton on housing and communities in one of the National Housing Federation's "Summit Shorts" events.



Archbishop Justin said: "In April 2019, I set up a Commission to look at what the Church could do to resolve our housing crisis and to strengthen our communities.

"That Commission will report next month but has already recommended that the Church appoints a Bishop for Housing to ensure that we follow through on its recommendations.

"I am delighted that Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani will fulfil this role, bringing, as she does, enormous understanding of the disadvantaged and disenfranchised to this important work.

"Housing is an issue of justice, which Jesus cares about intimately. My prayers will be with Bishop Guli as she embarks upon this vital role, and with all those who suffer from unsafe, unsuitable and unaffordable housing"

Bishop Guli said: "The work the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community is inspirational." "I'm delighted to be joining others in working to ensure that the aspirations become reality and the hopes are translated into concrete change. It will be a privilege to be part of this."

Charlie Arbuthnot, chair of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community, said: "Over the last two years, the Housing, Church and Community Commission has been brought face to face with the harsh and painful reality of our housing crisis. Our longing as a Commission is that we can make a difference. Bishop Guli's appointment, supported by Bishop Peter as Deputy and with the continuing support of Bishop Graham, our Vice-Chair, means that we can expect to see the recommendations and goals of the Commission followed through. I am therefore thrilled with this news."

For more information on the Commission [visit the Archbishop of Canterbury's website.](https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/bishop-guli-francis-dehqani-lead-church-england-drive-tackle)

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