



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing

RETHINKING  
SOCIAL  
HOUSING

Final report



## About CIH

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple - to provide housing professionals and their organisations with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world.

Further information is available at: [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)

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## Foreword

What is the purpose of social housing? Who lives in it? What is its potential? These, we believe, are some of the most important questions of our time.

As our national housing situation continues to worsen, the future of social housing is rapidly becoming a question about what we want the future of our nation to be.

After decades of change and challenge, which have transformed society and our sector in ways we couldn't have imagined, the time has come for us to ask if we see the provision of a safe and secure home for everyone as an essential part of a modern, civilised society. And, if we do, what should that look like today?

Our *Rethinking social housing* project was established with this and other fundamental questions in mind.

In June 2017 the Grenfell Tower tragedy shocked the nation and shone a spotlight on social housing like never before.

When it was revealed the investigation into the tragedy would not explore the wider implications for social housing, we felt the need to step in at a crucial time for our sector. We wanted to explore a number of questions about the role of social housing and we wanted the people who live and work in it to lead that debate.

We were delighted that more than 3,000 people took part in our specially-designed workshops, 36 per cent of whom were tenants. Meanwhile our public polling with Ipsos MORI surveyed 1,700 adults. The results of this project represent and reflect those views.

This report takes the results of that consultation and a widespread review of evidence and combines them into a strong series of recommendations to the government and the sector about the future of social housing.

A number of things became clear during the course of the project.

Firstly, it is very clear that people view the role of social housing as crucial and that there is widespread support for it both from the people that live and work in it, and, significantly, from the wider public.

Secondly, despite that support, there are still some negative stereotypes and misconceptions about social housing that as a sector we all have to do more to tackle and reframe social housing in terms of its positive impact on families and communities.

And finally, it became apparent that there is a significant disparity between the support for social housing indicated by our new evidence and the current level of investment in it by government.

Based on this we have developed a series of focused recommendations for the government and the sector, which we feel will help us to reclaim the role of social housing and place it where it belongs - at the heart of housing policy and at the centre of our efforts to tackle chronic housing problems found across the country.

We want to be very clear that this is as much about what we as a sector ourselves can do, as it is a plea to the government. It is very clear that the housing sector must own its future and though our recommendations rightly include calls for significant action on the part of the government, they also challenge the sector in a number of crucial ways as well.

We hope that we have stimulated a debate about the future of social housing and provided a strong answer to what we think the government and the sector needs to do to secure that future. This is just the start of that debate, and we hope that the government and housing organisations can take our recommendations and develop them into focused action.

As ever with a major project of this nature many people play a crucial role.

Thank you to all of our sponsors, our advisory group members and the many other people who have helped us over the course of the last year.

We hope that you find the *Rethinking social housing* report insightful and we hope this report helps to bring about change that can help to place social housing at the centre of our efforts to address our national housing situation.

**Terrie Alafat CBE,**

chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing

**Paul Tennant,**

co-chair of the *Rethinking social housing* advisory group

**Ken Gibb,**

co-chair of the *Rethinking social housing* advisory group

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# 1. Why does social housing need a rethink?

Are we happy to live in a society which is failing to provide a safe, decent and affordable home for everyone who needs one?

This is one of the key questions for our times and it lies at the heart of this new research into the role and purpose of social housing in England.

Since the Grenfell Tower fire, social housing has commanded a lot of attention. Questions are being raised about the way we manage and maintain our housing; how, as a sector, we are governed and regulated; and government policy, the fundamental role of social housing in society, and who social housing should be for.

Social housing is of huge importance. In England, 3.9 million households - 17 per cent of the population - live in what is usually described as 'social housing': a home provided by a council, housing association or other organisation on a not-for-profit basis at a below-market rent. It also benefits society by contributing to health and wellbeing, tackling poverty, creating cohesive communities and stimulating the wider economy.

We have an acute shortage of homes at rents that people on low incomes can afford and, in some parts of the country, even people on relatively high incomes are struggling to afford to buy or rent a home. Despite rising demand, there has been no significant increase in the supply of social housing for over a decade, and funding has been reduced. But focusing on numbers alone isn't enough - new homes must be the right type, in the right places, and at a range of prices so that no one is left unable to find a decent place to live. Homes also need to be adaptable to meet the changing needs of tenants and their families.

The UK Housing Review 2018 considers how the role and purpose of social housing has changed over the last 50 years and how it continues to change. It identifies three very different roles that social housing might have:

- An 'ambulance' service for people in the most acute need, usually for a short time and with restrictions such as income limits
- A 'safety net' which offers broader, long-term help for people on lower incomes who can't afford market housing, and meets needs like homelessness
- A 'wider affordability' role catering for a range of income groups, competing with private housing, encouraging higher standards and curbing excessive price rises

Underpinning all three are questions about who should have access to social housing, and for how long. Is it a 'home for life', a short term option until people can afford to move on, or something in between?

The chronic shortage of genuinely affordable homes means that, for now at least, social housing in England is tending towards a safety net role. CIH believes that social housing should have a wider affordability role. We also believe we need a longer term ambition for social housing which offers affordable choice and opportunity to allow tenants to get on in their lives without having to get out. We need a significant increase in supply to make this a reality.

The evidence from our research, and the national debate it stimulated, highlighted the following key themes:

- Social housing, its affordability and the security it offers to people living there, are highly valued
- It has much wider value by allowing residents to prosper and thrive, through its contribution to tackling poverty, the success of local and national economies, and individual health and well-being
- However, there is stigma attached to social housing as a 'product' and to the organisations providing it and the people living in it

Social housing has a unique and positive part to play in housing people, helping to create thriving, mixed communities, and meeting needs that the market will not. Done right it does great things. But it isn't always the case that homes and neighbourhoods are well managed and well maintained and it's important that we own and address this.

We make a number of asks for government here but it's vitally important that the sector shows leadership and steps up with solutions without waiting to be told what to do. In short, we must chart our own course.

It's time to reclaim the role of social housing as a pillar of the society we want to be, along with free health care and education - and it must be at the centre of government plans to solve the housing crisis. And, having 'reclaimed' the role of social housing, we need to push on - creating an ambitious vision of what a plentiful supply of social housing can do help people thrive in communities that prosper.

## 2. Our headline messages

Our aim was to stimulate a national debate and discussion about four fundamental questions:

1. What is social housing?
2. What does social housing do?
3. Who is social housing for?
4. What should the role and purpose of social housing be?

Our research, and the brand new evidence it has generated, raises a number of challenges and questions. Some of the solutions may not be about radical change and might even involve returning to approaches that we know have worked in the past – and we make no apologies for that – but others are genuinely progressive, seeking to carve out a new vision for the sector.

Our headline messages and suggested solutions are firmly rooted in the evidence we gathered and in CIH's expertise and history. Taken together, the six areas for action outlined below provide a framework for the sector and government to move social housing to a positive and ambitious place.

### 1. Adopt a common definition and understanding of the role and purpose of social housing.

To understand the role and purpose of social housing, we need a common definition which is adopted across the sector and more widely. In our view, social housing is decent, secure housing which is affordable to people on low incomes, wherever they may live in the country, provided by not-for-profit organisations.

### 2. Ensure that tenants have a voice.

We need to ensure that tenants have a strong voice at a local and national level, the opportunity to shape and influence services, with appropriate mechanisms in place to address concerns and deal with poor performance.

### 3. Increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes.

We need more genuinely affordable homes. A package of measures to deliver this should include a combination of government investment, redistributing existing housing funding towards more affordable housing options and suspending the Right to Buy, while developing other opportunities for tenants to move into home ownership.

### 4. Ensure everyone can afford a place to call home.

We need to move towards a policy framework which links rents to local incomes. This would take account of local and regional differences and make sure that no one is priced out of finding a decent place to live. We also need welfare policy that supports this ambition.

### 5. Make sure that existing homes and neighbourhoods are of good quality and well managed.

Social housing providers must make sure that they manage homes and neighborhoods that meet 21st century standards in quality, comfort and safety.

### 6. Challenge the stigma and stereotyping attached to social housing.

We need to show leadership by telling our own story of the vital and positive part that social housing plays in our society. We also need to make sure that social housing and services are the very best that they can be.

These areas for action and the recommendations which underpin them are discussed in detail in section 4 of this report.

As anticipated, our research hasn't given us all the answers. We plan to continue the conversation and do further research in selected key areas which we will consider later in this report.

## 3. What does our research show?

What do we mean when we use the term ‘social housing’ in this research? The term can be used to describe the homes themselves, the areas where they are located, and also in part to define the organisations that provide them. A number of organisations provide a diverse range of housing options with any profit reinvested in new homes or services. This can include homes for outright sale, shared ownership where people part buy and part rent, homes at full market rents, ‘affordable’ rented homes at up to 80 per cent of a market rent, and homes at ‘social’ rents. This project focuses on homes provided at affordable and social rents.

We also use the term ‘social housing provider’ throughout this report. In doing that, we are referring to any landlord providing homes for rent including local authorities, housing associations, co-operatives and arms length management organisations providing landlord services on behalf of local authorities.

Unlike the usual approaches to commissioning research (although we have done that too), our main way of ‘rethinking’ social housing has been through talking with a huge number and range of people. This has given us a broad and significant evidence base.

One strand in particular was hugely successful. Keen to stimulate a national conversation about the four research questions, we developed a toolkit to help people to organise and run their own local discussions and then send us the results. We backed it up with an online survey posing the same questions for those who weren’t able to take part in a workshop. This generated an enthusiastic debate and a response which was way beyond what we had hoped to achieve.

We received results from 199 workshops with 766 people completing online surveys. We estimate that around 3000 people across England have had a say – 36 per cent of them tenants – along with housing professionals, board members, local politicians and partners. This is a remarkable achievement and says much about how seriously people living and working in the sector view the contemporary situation. You can see the full analysis of results here.

And there’s been a great by-product from this with many organisations telling us how much they valued the workshops as an opportunity to take time out and reflect on their own role and purpose, where they are and where they want to be.

We partnered with the Housing Plus Academy to run a *Rethinking social housing* think tank event for tenants. We also commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out face to face interviews with 1,700 members of the general public to capture their views about social housing.

Details of all the methods we used to gather evidence and the other activities we did are listed in appendix one.

In carrying out our research we posed four key questions:

- What is social housing?
- What does social housing do?
- Who is social housing for?
- What should the role and purpose of social housing be?

This section explores what the results showed us.

### 3.1 What is social housing?

In his 2007 report *Ends and means: the future roles of social housing in England* John Hills defined social housing as:

“...housing provided, normally at sub-market rents, by not-for-profit landlords.”

When we asked people taking part in workshops and completing the online survey to tell us what they thought social housing was, a number of terms came up frequently.

- **Affordability** featured in 80 per cent of the responses
- For almost 80 per cent **meeting need** was a key feature
- **Security** - both safe homes and neighbourhoods and a permanent home - came up in 60 per cent of responses
- **Good quality and well maintained** featured for almost half
- For 35 per cent it was seen as playing a part in **building and maintaining communities**
- **Social purpose** was mentioned in around a third of responses

The quotes opposite give a sense of the views expressed.

We interviewed a small number of people who were either in temporary accommodation or on waiting lists for social housing. Affordability and cost was the most frequently mentioned reason for wanting a council or housing association home, closely followed by the security it provides. Help with maintenance and repairs, space, standards and quality also featured.

That social rented housing is there for people who can't afford to buy a home and is a positive alternative in terms of price and quality compared to the private rented sector (PRS) came up often. The survey of members of the general public that Ipsos MORI carried out for us revealed that 72 per cent thought that social housing is important because it helps people on lower incomes get housing which wouldn't be affordable in the PRS.

The Hills Report sums up these overall views well:

*"Social housing plays a crucial role for nearly four million households in England. It gives many families stability and security in a fundamental part of their lives. The quality of housing it provides is usually significantly higher than tenants with low incomes could afford in the private sector. The existence of social housing has protected affordability for its tenants even while real house prices have doubled in the last decade."*

So we can see that there is a great deal of agreement about what puts the 'social' in social housing when compared to other forms of rented housing. Affordability, meeting need, providing security, and quality all feature strongly. With this in mind, we believe that a more apt definition of social housing is "decent, secure housing which is affordable to people on low incomes, wherever they may live in the country, provided by not-for-profit organisations".

That it builds and maintains communities and has a social purpose sets it even further apart from other housing options. We will discuss this in section 3.4.

### 3.2 What does social housing do?

In our analysis of the feedback from workshops and surveys, that social housing is overwhelmingly seen as a positive thing and a benefit to both individual tenants and society as a whole shone brightly. Being well housed is seen as the "bedrock" of people's lives – and social housing is seen as fulfilling a valuable role in this. Responses often refer to social housing as "enabling" or "empowering" and associate it with positive impacts on other important areas of life such as health and education. Research by JRF in 2016 showed that the security of social renting was vital

### What people told us

*"Social housing is an essential component of a civilised society."*  
- Housing worker workshop, South West Midlands

*"Social housing is the proof that society knows everyone needs a secure place in which to thrive regardless of their financial status."* - Tenant, East Midlands

*"For me it's high value affordable housing for those people that cannot afford their own home nor choose to rent in the private rented sector."* - Housing worker, North West

*"Social housing is there to ensure everyone who wants a safe, secure home has one, despite their income or means, and from a landlord they can trust and rely on who is invested in the local area and communities."* - Online survey

for people at the margins of work who were trying to escape poverty by seeking and staying in work.

As we will see below, social housing makes an important contribution to tackling poverty, health and wellbeing, and the wider economy.

### It helps to tackle poverty

Over 40 per cent of households in social housing are in work and contributing financially to our economy, but often on very low wages, including providing essential public services, with the remainder typically pensioners or long term carers on low incomes.

In its 2013 report, The links between housing and poverty, JRF describes the importance of social housing in the following way:

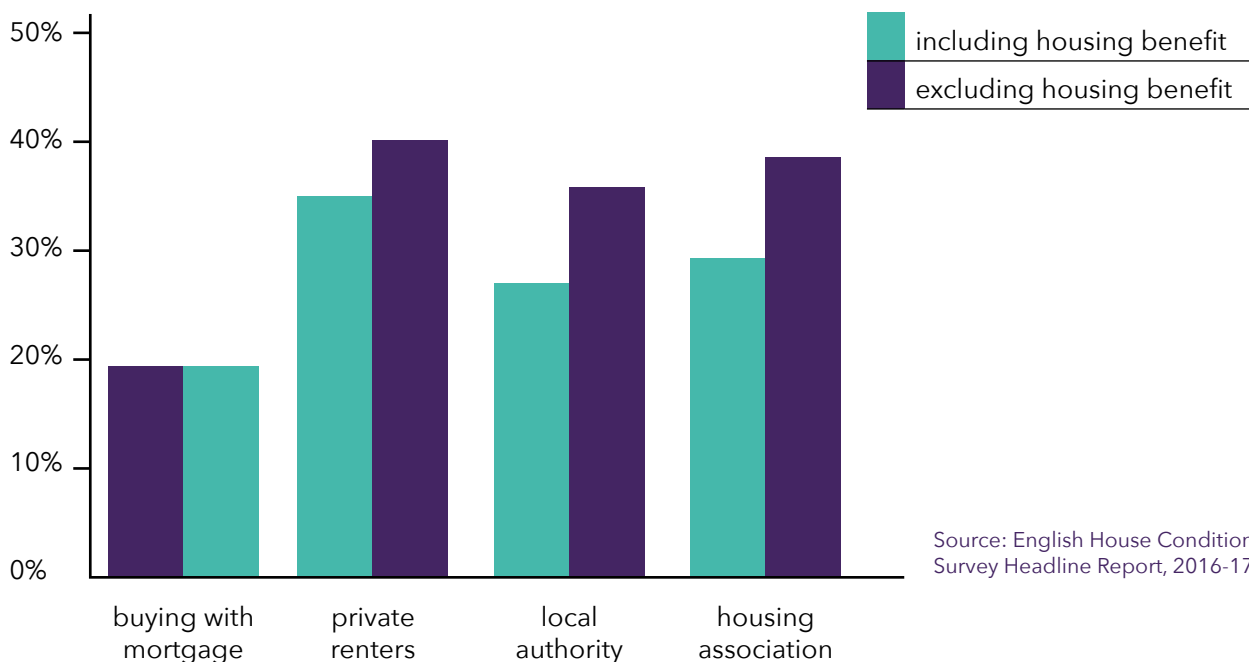
*"Low rents, such as council and housing association rents, make an important contribution to reducing the degree of 'housing cost induced poverty' and material deprivation amongst social tenants. Social housing is highly targeted on people with low incomes and has been shown to be the most 'pro-poor' and redistributive major aspect of the entire welfare state."*



We wanted to find out if the general public agreed with this proposition and, when Ipsos MORI asked this in their poll, 68 per cent agreed that social housing plays an important role in tackling poverty.

Even so, DWP data on households below average income 2016/17 shows that 27 per cent of social renters are in poverty before their housing costs are accounted for and, despite sub-market rents, this increases to 47 per cent once housing costs are paid. This will be partly affected by higher 'affordable' rents which are up to 80 per cent of market rents and cuts to help with housing costs as a result of measures such as the bedroom tax and the reduced benefit cap. The chart below shows how this compares for people living in different types of housing (note the higher figures before and after HB, in the private rented sector).

### Housing costs as a proportion of household income (including and excluding housing benefit) 2016-17



### It supports health and wellbeing and reduces pressure on other public services

Good quality housing plays a key role in helping people to live happy, healthy and independent lives. The Building Research Establishment estimates that poor housing costs the NHS around £1.4 billion a year, with largest costs coming from excess cold and falls.

The examples below show how social housing providers are reducing pressure on other public services and their over-stretched budgets.

- Peabody worked with the London School of Economics to evaluate two support interventions with groups of residents aged over 50, to identify the impact for their health and potential savings for NHS. Published in 2016, the final report, Health begins at home, identified benefits particularly for more vulnerable residents and estimated that, if these services were delivered across all its residents aged over 50, the NHS could save up to £3 million a year

- The ExtraCare Charitable Trust commissioned Aston University to do a long term evaluation of its wellbeing service which provided support to its residents to identify/manage long term conditions. Better lives, health, future found that these services reduced the impact on NHS costs by 38 per cent over a 12 month period with shorter hospital stays, savings for social care and positive outcomes for residents
- A 2017 study by Demos for Anchor, Hanover, and Housing and Care 21, The Social Value of Sheltered Housing, estimated an overall saving of £486 million from sheltered housing based on reductions in costs of in-patient stays, immediate care costs from falls, health and care costs of hip fractures, and health service use from loneliness

Our online survey for health and social care professionals showed that they think social housing makes a positive contribution to the lives of people who live in it.

When asked to respond to key statements about social housing, they clearly felt it:

- Is a positive factor in terms of providing a decent home that supports people's wellbeing (98 per cent)
- Provides a long term, secure home (over 90 per cent)
- Helps people to live well and connect with other services and opportunities (over 80 per cent)
- Enables people with long term care needs to live as independently as possible (95 per cent) by providing housing and support
- Enables communities to develop resilience and mutual support (89 per cent)

The survey comments highlight clear positives but also some tensions, especially in relation to partnership working with social housing providers.

People giving us feedback from our other activities also made the connection between social housing and health and wellbeing.

## What people told us

*"Good housing is one of the three cornerstones of public health (alongside decent work and positive social connections). Social housing in the UK should be celebrated in the same way that we celebrate the NHS."* Non-housing local authority worker, London

*"There are many fantastic opportunities working with housing providers. The biggest issue is demand far outweighs supply..."* Non-housing local authority worker, North West

*"...the need to achieve value for money and because of reducing budgets it is less easy to work in partnership and be innovative... government reforms of universal credit and changes to the funding of supported housing have been very negative on developing new schemes and partnerships. We are also seeing that energy is going into mergers and larger organisations and there is less partnership working on the ground level and many support teams are disappearing."* Social care worker, South East

*"It helps build strong, diverse communities and helps to prevent a homelessness crisis."* - Tenant, North East

*"[It] adequately house(s) residents to reduce pressure on other public sector budgets, adult social care, health."* - Housing worker, North East

*"Enables independent living and gives choices and opportunities."* - Tenant and housing worker workshop, North West

## It contributes to the economy

In addition to the contribution of many working households in social housing, existing social housing provides low cost homes for the workers that local and national businesses and public services, such as the NHS and schools, need. But travel to work figures show there is still huge demand for social housing closer to low paid employment. Building new affordable homes makes a significant contribution to the wider economy as the examples below show.

- SHOUT, the campaign which makes the case for social housing, states that every affordable home built generates an additional £108,000 in the economy and creates 2.3 jobs. It also points out that housing associations invest £750 million annually in community initiatives, helping over eight million people
- Homes and Communities Agency data for 2016/17 shows that housing associations own 2,518,565 social units (rented and leased). Analysis commissioned by the National Housing Federation shows that:
  - o The day-to-day management of these homes directly adds an estimated £6.6 billion GVA (gross value added - the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy) to the English economy, and supports an estimated 142,000 full time equivalent jobs
  - o These figures rise to £15.2 billion GVA, supporting 285,000 full time equivalent jobs each year when impacts which are indirect (jobs created, for example) and induced (the results of increased personal income) are added
- Local housing authorities and arms length management organisations (ALMOs) raise from rents, and spend, over £8 billion annually. In 2016/17 they invested £4.7 billion in new and existing stock - ten times more than is invested by central government. They also provide over £1 billion annually in capital receipts, much of which benefits the Exchequer

## It has some negative associations

Not all aspects of social housing are seen as positive. Stigma and the stereotyping of social housing and the people who live in it appears to have increased in more recent times and it came up in some of the responses we received from the Rethinking workshops, the online surveys and the think tank event.

Interestingly, the Ipsos MORI polling showed that 65 per cent of the members of the general public who were interviewed agreed that the negative view of the

## What people told us

*"Social housing is stigmatised, people assume we are all on benefits. Community housing is a better description, it's about community."* Tenant-led workshop

*"Social housing is demonised in the media".* Housing worker workshop

people that live in social housing is unfair with only 10 per cent disagreeing.

It's clear that the overwhelming view of social housing and its contribution to individuals and society is positive. It helps to tackle poverty; it supports health and wellbeing and reduces pressure on other public services; and it contributes to the wider economy. There are some negative perceptions about it which we will explore in section 4. But overall this is a good news story that we need to add to and build on.

## 3.3 Who is social housing for?

To a large extent the feedback we received to this question reflects the reality of the current housing market, with its serious shortage of affordable housing options, either to buy or to rent. In many parts of the country, local authorities are struggling to meet their legal obligations to people who are homeless or living in overcrowded or unfit housing, and people who need specialist housing, such as an accessible home if they are disabled, face a long wait too. Crisis and JRF's Homelessness Monitor: England 2018 shows that 70 per cent of local authorities across England faced difficulties accessing social rented housing to prevent or resolve households' homelessness situations.

So while many responses said that social housing should be for "anyone", there was an element of pragmatism with recognition that some form of 'rationing' was currently unavoidable. Low income and needs such as homelessness, disability or "vulnerability" featured as key factors in determining who should be accessing and/or living in social housing. This was backed up by the Ipsos MORI polling in which 78 per cent agreed that social housing should be available to people who cannot afford the cost of renting privately, as well as the most vulnerable.

Some people also expressed concerns that, with the current focus on affordability checks and tenancy sustainment, some social housing providers' policies and practices are 'screening out' or excluding the people most in need of housing.

The following quotes give a flavour of views expressed.

### What people told us

*"Social housing is for anyone who needs affordable housing."* - Tenant workshop, East Midlands

*"Social housing is for mixed communities - building a cultural and intergenerational mix."* - Tenant workshop, East

*"Social housing is for everyone from a variety of backgrounds without discrimination. A tenure of choice, meeting a need for people to access affordable housing to those who are unable or do not want to buy."* Tenant, Housing Plus Academy think tank event

*"Social housing should be prioritised to people who have lived and contributed to the UK for at least 5 years..."* - Online survey response

*"Social Housing should be available to those with the greatest need; to provide an opportunity to support and stabilise those who are unable to access services without a stable home that will provide better life chances for them and their household."*

*"We will end up excluding vulnerable people as we move forwards using insight and credit checks!"* - Housing worker workshop, Yorkshire and Humberside

*"Social housing should be the first choice housing for the majority of people in a local area, (there should be no stigma attached to it), so that it genuinely represents the communities in which it is situated."*

*"It is moving away from those it used to help by going more business-like and restricting access to some. And accordingly it is becoming available for those determined as able to afford rents and sustain tenancies."* - Housing worker workshop, South East



## Who is living in social housing now?

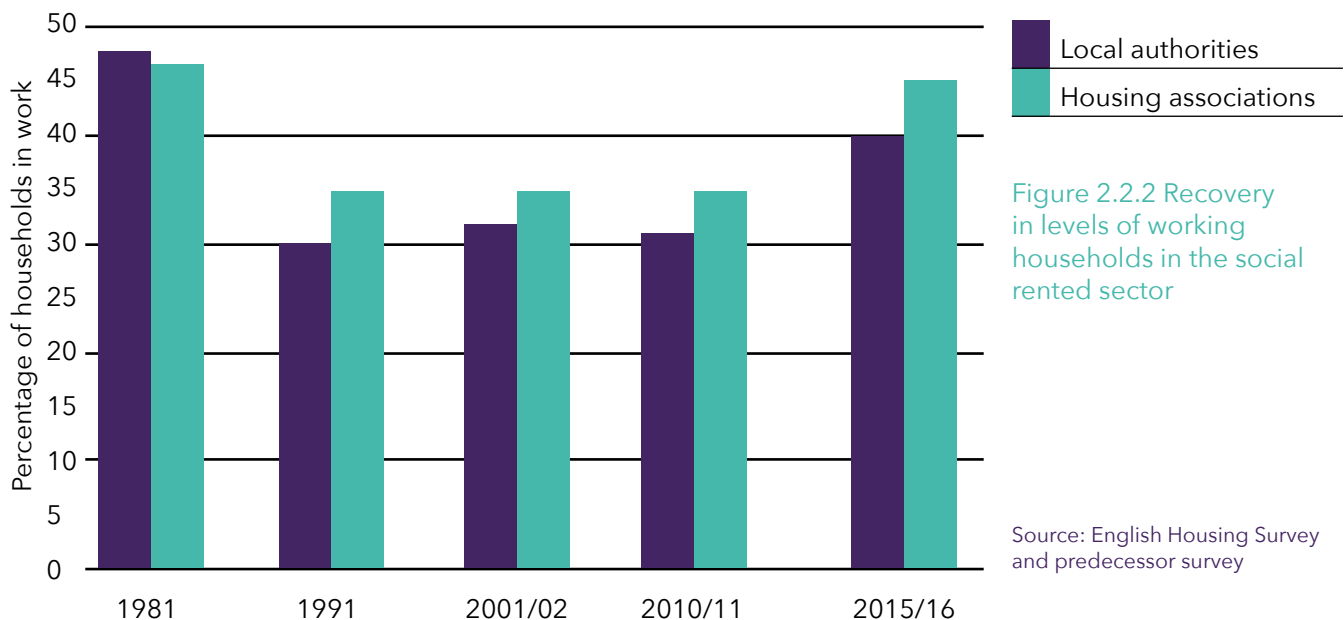
We wanted to build up a picture of the people who live in social housing. Drawing on information from a range of sources, including the English Housing Survey and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government data, we know that:

- 43 per cent of social housing tenants are working
- Only 8 per cent are registered unemployed
- A high proportion of tenants – 28 per cent – are retired
- 17 per cent of people living in social housing are registered as disabled with nearly 50 per cent of all households reporting at least one member of the household suffering a long term illness or disability
- 58 per cent receive help with some or all of their housing costs
- Over 40 per cent of households are single people and around 20 per cent are couples with either dependent or non-dependent children living with them
- On average, people in social rented housing have lived in their current home for an average of 11.4 years compared to 17.5 years for home owners and 4 years for private renters

The number of new social housing lettings is falling with a 16 per cent reduction since 2010/11.

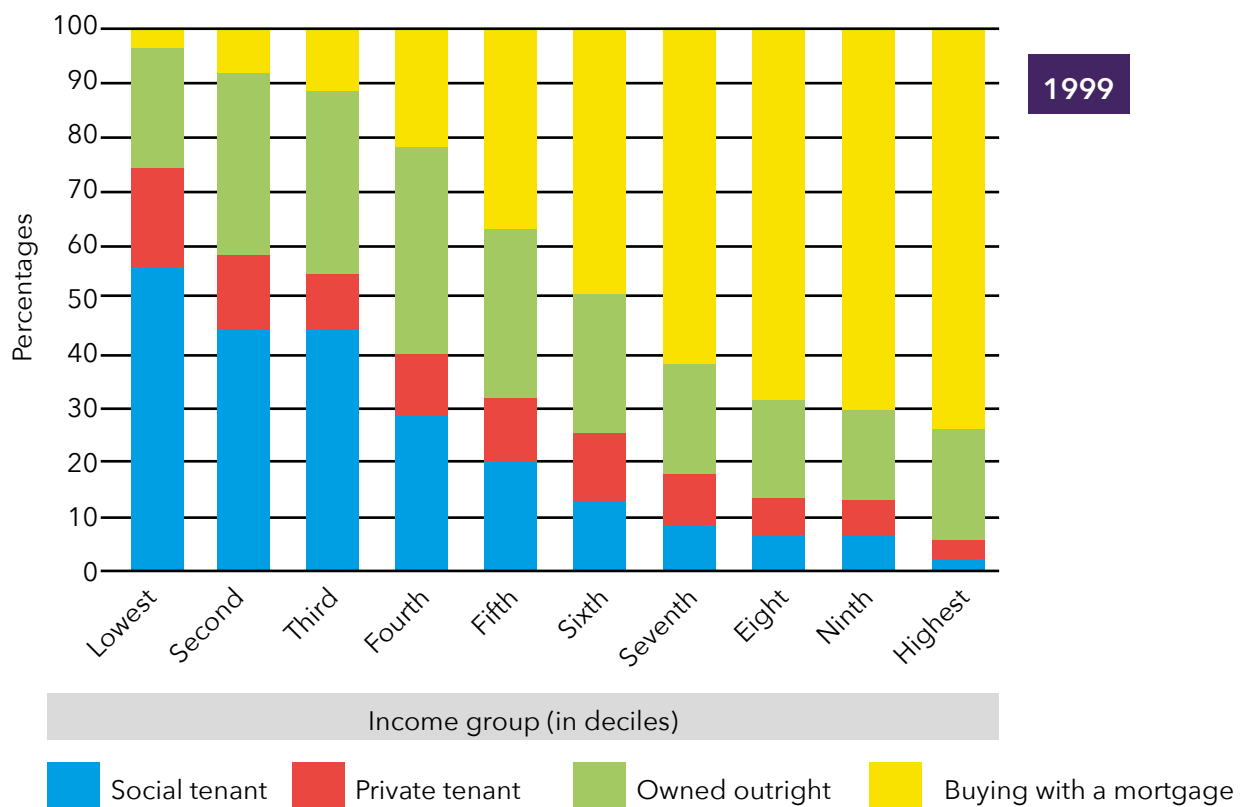
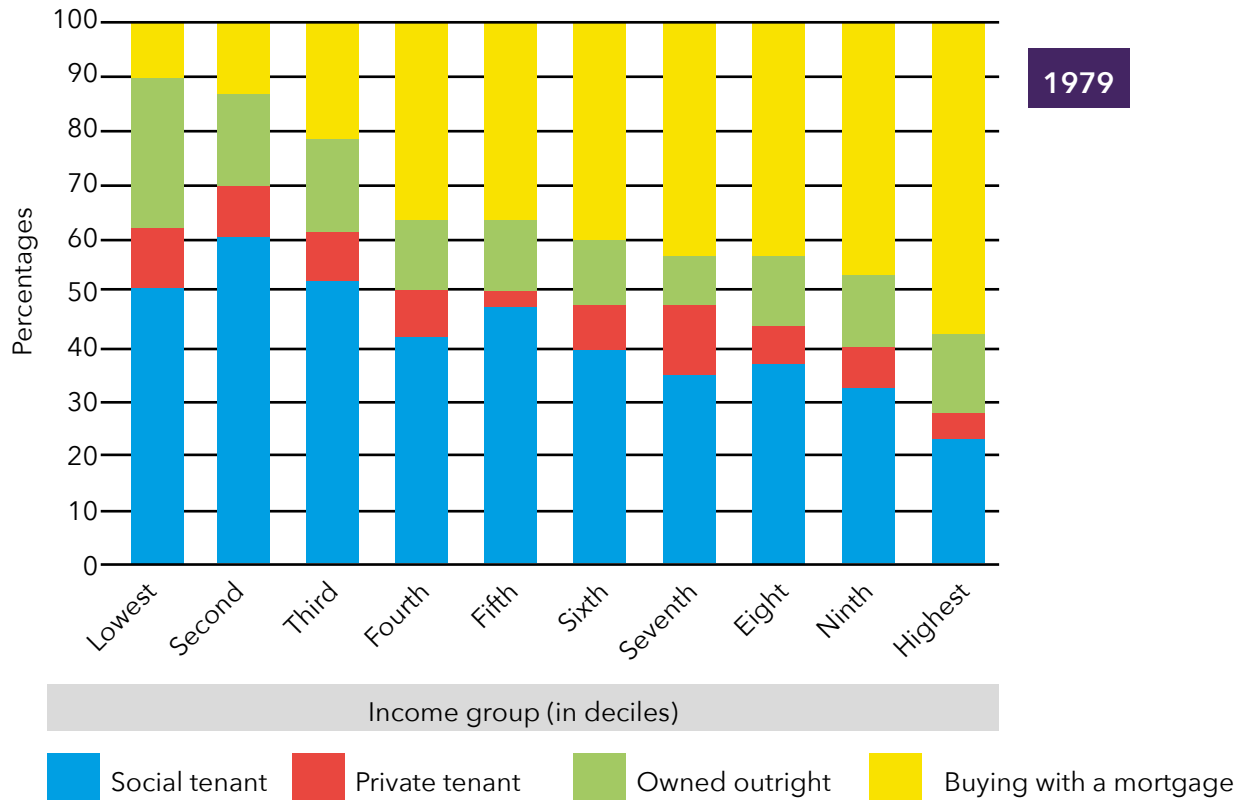
A quarter of new housing association lettings are now at 'affordable' rents – a policy introduced in 2011 – and almost a quarter are fixed-term tenancies. The proportion of new lettings going to homeless households has increased slightly since 2010/11 but – perhaps surprisingly – is still less than a quarter, with most still going to waiting list applicants. New tenancies continue to be awarded overwhelmingly to UK nationals (92 per cent). There are signs in the last three years that new tenants are less dependent on benefits – currently 67 per cent receive housing benefit compared with 79 per cent in 2012/13 (new general needs tenants only).

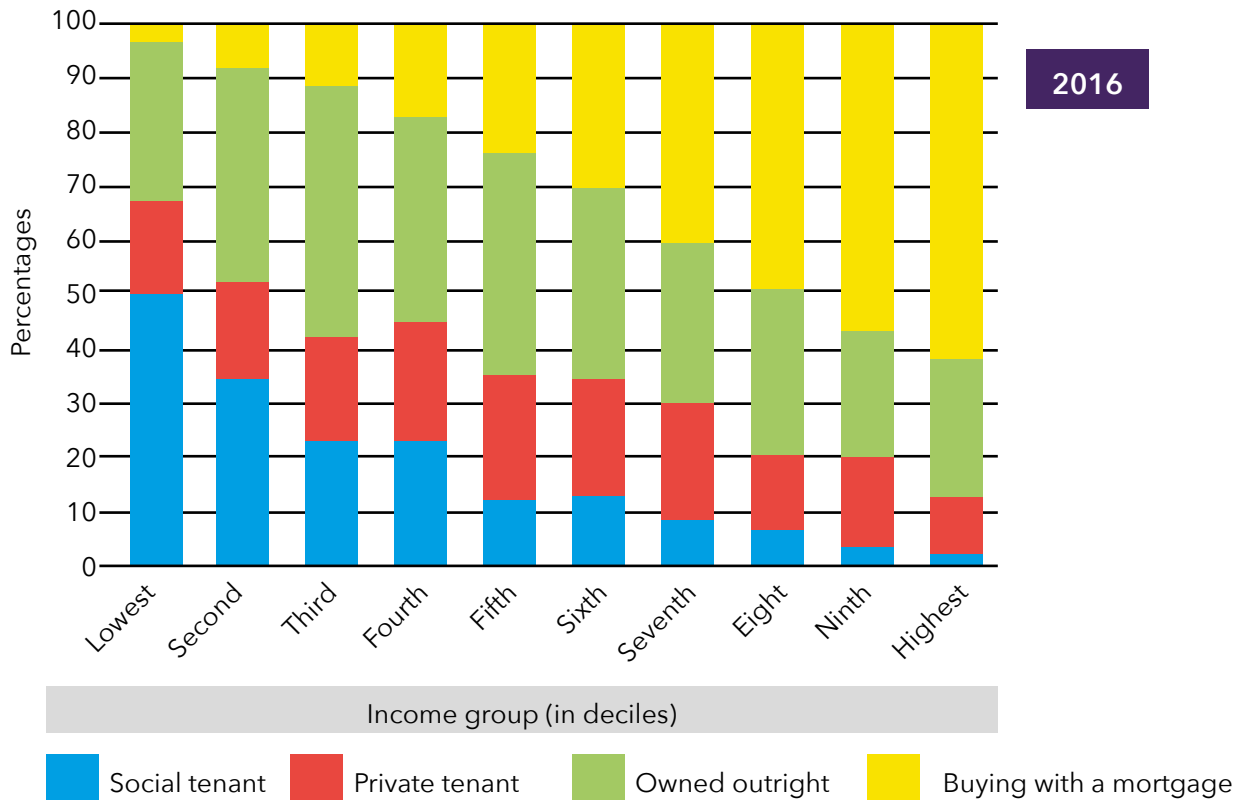
There has been a more general recent shift in the economic status of those living in social housing. For example, more people are working (see chart), although wider evidence, for example from the Taylor report, suggests that much of their work is likely to be precarious (low-paid, part-time, self-employed or all three) and fewer people are registered unemployed.



The UK Housing Review 2018 reconstructed earlier charts from John Hill's Ends and Means report, showing how tenure related to incomes in 1979 and 1999, and added data for 2016 (figure 2 below). Back in 1979 tenants were more evenly spread over income groups, so that even 20 per cent of the highest-earning group lived in social rented housing. By the 1990s tenants were overwhelmingly concentrated in the bottom half of income groups. While the concentration of low-income groups in social housing has continued, private renting is also now more significant for low-income groups. Our evidence review for this research identified that the residualisation of social housing might be plateauing with some signs of 'de-residualisation'. Although not directly evident from the chart, buying with a mortgage has in the last decade become almost impossible for the lowest 20 per cent of earners.

Figure 1.3.3 Tenure and household income distribution, 1979, 1999 and 2016





Source: 1979 - Hills, Ends and Means; 1999 & 2016 - Compendium table 38 and earlier versions

The profile of social housing tenants is not what many should expect with over two fifths in employment, relatively low rates of registered unemployment, a high proportion of retired people and signs of further change.

In wrapping up this section, we can see how much opinions about who should live in social housing vary. While many have said it should be for anybody and everybody, most answers reflect the constraints imposed by the acute shortage of affordable homes to rent in this country. There are no easy answers but it's something we intend to explore further in our upcoming 'rethinking allocations' project.

### 3.4 What should the role and purpose of social housing be?

The UK Housing Review 2018 considers how the role and purpose of social housing has changed over the last 50 years and how it continues to change. It identifies three very different roles that social housing might have:

- An 'ambulance' service for people in the most acute need, usually for a short time and with restrictions such as income limits
- A 'safety net' which offers broader, long-term help for people on lower incomes who can't afford market housing, and meets needs like homelessness

- A 'wider affordability' role catering for a range of income groups, competing with private housing, encouraging higher standards and curbing excessive price rises

It suggests that, in Britain, we have a 'safety net' model - a term that appeared often in workshop and survey feedback. We recognise that, in reality, it is not as clear cut as this. With its not-for-profit focus and providers which, on the whole, have a sense of social purpose, there is no doubt that social housing has a unique and positive part to play in housing people, creating mixed communities and meeting needs that the market will not.

Yet in the past four decades social housing has declined in both its numbers and in its share of the housing market. An important factor in this was the introduction of the Right to Buy in 1980 which led to the sale of almost two million homes to sitting tenants. The homes sold were often of the best quality and in the most popular areas and, crucially, very few of them were replaced. The remaining homes are ever more strictly rationed and in many parts of the country only those in the most urgent need are being 'allowed in' to social housing.

We have also seen a huge growth in the PRS with 20 per cent of England's households living there. The PRS now houses people who are priced out of home ownership as well as those who are unable to access a social rented home, either because they don't meet local eligibility criteria or because, if they do, they face a lengthy wait. Mostly due to the lack of social rented housing, councils are increasingly looking to the PRS to help tackle homelessness. But the short term nature of PRS tenancies, along with higher rents than those for social housing, mean that this is a far from stable or cost-effective solution.

Recent policy developments in England could be seen as an attempt to nudge social housing closer to the 'ambulance' model. Presented as a way of making best use of the scarce and shrinking supply of social rented homes, the introduction of voluntary fixed term tenancies in the Localism Act 2011 and proposals to introduce mandatory fixed term tenancies for council tenants in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, reinforce the idea that social housing should be only a stepping stone to better things rather than a permanent option. Government's focus on fixed term tenancies appears to run counter to the things that tenants say they value and want and this is something we will explore and consider further in the future.

These comments from workshops and surveys show some varied opinions on this point.

## What people told us

*"Council housing was built on the ideological basis that people had the right to dignity, stability and a chance to raise families, create secure communities and a good local economy. That's what it should continue to be."* - Online survey response

*"Social housing should be a long term housing solution accessed by all. The stark reality is that it will only ever be available to those in desperate need."* - Housing worker, East

*"For non vulnerable residents - it shouldn't be looked upon as a long term solution, but a safety net and stepping stone to be able to better help yourself and achieve some social mobility."* - Online survey response

*"I believe social housing should not be a full stop where there is no more movement but should be a stepping out of what ever situation one may find themselves with the understanding this is not permanent. It really should be a revolving door but obviously exclusions will apply for those who need the stability..."* - Online survey response





Of course, people do move out of social housing, although numbers of movers have fallen as affordable options to rent or buy privately have become scarcer. Just 36,000 households moved out last year, compared with 60,000 in 2008/09. We also need to consider, and challenge, the expectation that people's housing circumstances should progress, when their employment situation does not. Analysis by the Social Mobility Commission found that a quarter of low-paid workers remained permanently stuck in low pay and 48 per cent had moved in and out of it over a 10 year period. In that same period only one in six workers on low pay had moved into better paid work and stayed there, while most were trapped in a cycle of part-time and insecure jobs.

How does this fit in with the wider question of what the role and purpose of social housing should be? The feedback we've had makes it very clear that it's

about more than just providing a roof over people's heads. It extends to healthy, balanced communities and vibrant neighbourhoods. Many social housing providers see their responsibility as creating and shaping 'places' and are diversifying their activities beyond providing housing. This includes community development, providing support services, offering training and helping people into work, supporting social enterprises, and, in the case of the Jigsaw Group, sponsoring three academies. Obviously, healthy places need a degree of stability, something which is difficult to achieve if social housing is being a 'revolving door'.

The comments we received in answer to this question show just how strongly people feel about the role and purpose of social housing - and communities - in the 21st century.

## What people told us

*"History shows that good secure housing provides a community and safe way of life for all people in society. Fundamentally housing and home is the hub of the society, without it society can't work. People don't get to work, children don't go to school. There is no society, no community, no commerce without people."* - Tenant, North East

*"Like healthcare, housing should be a universal right provided by the state to everyone and anyone regardless of background or circumstances. We should move away from a housing 'market' as part of a larger scheme to decouple financial value from the means of human survival, and start treating quality housing as a human right."* - Housing worker, London

*"It should be seen as a valuable contributor to social infrastructure, 'social good' in the long term and the benefit to society as a whole."* - Housing worker workshop, West Midlands

*"Social housing should be a choice, foundation to build your future and assurance no matter what life throws at you it will always be there to catch you."* - Housing worker, West Midlands

*"Provide short term, high quality accommodation."* - Housing worker workshop, North West

*"The role and purpose of social housing is to provide decent homes, decent communities that are affordable (social rent not 'affordable rent')."* - Online survey response

*"Social housing should be about creating balanced, resilient, successful and sustainable communities that support social mobility. If we achieve all of these we can challenge the stigmatisation of the sector and of social housing tenants."* - Housing worker workshop, West Midlands

This section has shown that, while views about the role and purpose of social housing are positive on the whole, things are not clear cut. For example, opinions on whether it should be a long term housing option or just a stepping stone are polarised, although this is influenced by the acute scarcity of affordable housing in England. But it's certainly about more than just putting a roof over people's heads, as so many social housing providers are demonstrating in their roles as community leaders.

## Conclusion

Our research, and the debate it stimulated, shows how highly social housing is valued. It provides decent, affordable, stable homes - and communities - for 3.9 million households. It also benefits society by contributing to tackling poverty, health and wellbeing, and stimulating the wider economy. As we've seen, there are some negative perceptions of social housing and the people who live in it which we have to challenge - something we'll return to in section 4. Even so, there is strong agreement that it has an important and continuing part to play in the 21st century - we need it now as much as we ever have, and we need more of it.



## 4. Where do we go from here?

The evidence we gathered, particularly from the workshops and survey, showed an overwhelmingly strong, positive narrative about the role and purpose of social housing. But if we don't invest in, properly manage, or value existing homes, and build more, the unique part that social housing plays in our society will diminish over time.

Having considered what the evidence tells us, we offer suggestions about the things we need to do. This includes calls for the both the sector and government to step up and play their part in ensuring the continued health of this valued social asset.

We must now:

- Adopt a common definition and understanding of the role and purpose of social housing
- Ensure that tenants have a voice
- Increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes
- Ensure that everyone can afford a place to call home
- Make sure that existing homes and neighbourhoods are of good quality and well managed
- Challenge the stigma and stereotyping attached to social housing

### 4.1 Adopt a common definition and understanding of the role and purpose of social housing

One of the drivers for this research was the obvious gaps in people's understanding of what we call 'social housing'. In section 3.1 we offered a definition of social housing as "decent, secure housing which is affordable to people on low incomes, wherever they may live in the country, provided by not-for-profit organisations".

There is also a lack of understanding about its role and purpose. In section 3.2 we explored social housing's wider contribution to society and the economy and it's clear that this is not consistently well understood by government and the general public with many misconceptions about what it is and about the people who live there.

#### What people told us

*"The role and purpose of social housing is to contribute an element of breaking the cycle of disadvantage for millions of people, i.e. a warm comfortable, affordable home."* Tenant, South East

*"[The role of social housing is to] provide short term, high quality rented accommodation."* Housing worker, North West

*"Social housing provides a stable home and roots in a local community. It should not be a safety net but provide a longer term home for people on lower incomes. Social homes should be integrated in mixed communities with people of other tenures."* - Housing worker, London

#### What do we need to do?

##### The sector should:

- Adopt CIH's definition of 'social housing'
- Act as ambassadors to embed the definition and the understanding of the wider benefit and role that social housing plays in society

##### Government should:

- Adopt CIH's definition of social housing
- Develop its policies with reference to the adopted definition and an understanding of its wider role and purpose

##### CIH will:

- Engage with the main political parties to make the case for housing's contribution to wider society

## 4.2 Ensure that tenants have a voice

As well as raising concerns about building regulations and the safety of tower blocks, the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire has also posed broader questions about social housing providers' accountability and how tenants' voices can be heard at both a local and national level. There has also been a sense that there has been a breakdown in trust between landlords and tenants; there will be an important job to do in rebuilding this trust which will involve working differently both in terms of regulation and engagement. These discussions were strongly reflected in the feedback we received from the workshops, survey and specifically at the think tank event.

While many social housing providers have well thought out approaches to involving their tenants and residents in influencing the way that services are designed and delivered, this isn't always the case. Since the introduction of the 1 per cent rent reduction each year from 2016 to 2020, some social housing providers have reprioritised their spending. Anecdotally, this has led to reduced resources for tenant involvement in certain cases.

In light of this, it may be time to revisit more broadly how we engage with our tenants to ensure that they are put at the heart of services and can secure rapid redress where needed.

Improving involvement and engagement is currently being considered in a number of ways:

- The final report of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety makes specific recommendations to government about how to give tenants a voice through:
  - more transparent information on building safety
  - better involvement in decision making through residents' associations/ panels
  - a "no-risk" route for residents to escalate concerns on fire safety through an independent statutory body

The report goes as far as recommending that government should provide funding for organisations working at both local and national level to provide advice, guidance and support to residents, landlords and building owners on effective resident involvement and engagement in order to develop a national culture of engagement for residents of all tenures

## What people told us

*"Social housing will become a thing of the past unless we get heard." - Tenant, Housing Plus Academy think tank event*

*"Where tenant involvement is positive, social housing can be empowering." - Tenant, London*

*"Grenfell shocked me to the core...Residents are constantly ignored, managed, sidelined etc. by my local government provider, but they are happy to manage our images in annual reports. We need proper, healthy dialogue and accountability. Organisations seem to have forgotten why they are there. We should be at the heart of provision...It also breaks my heart that hardly anyone seems to stand up for the values of social housing." - Tenant, South East*

- The recent government consultation on strengthening consumer redress in housing
- The government is due to publish its housing green paper shortly, though it is not yet clear what, if any, changes will be proposed to ensure that tenants have a voice locally and nationally
- Housing for the many, the Labour Party's housing green paper, included a number of proposals including setting up an independent organisation to give tenants a voice in national policy development and consulting on changes to regulation

## What do we need to do?

### Social housing providers must:

- Ensure they have the right systems and approaches in place to build up trust by listening to and acting on issues and concerns raised by their tenants
- Review and continue to improve mechanisms for tenant scrutiny and the means by which tenants can compare and contrast the performance of their housing provider in the management and maintenance of their homes

### Government must:

- Review the current approach to consumer regulation with particular reference to the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and ensure that it is consistently applied to all social housing providers
- Create a mechanism to enable tenants to shape the direction of future government policy at a national level
- Create a compliance framework that is transparent and ensures that tenants receive rapid redress and providers who don't comply receive meaningful sanctions
- Act on the recommendations set out in chapter 4 of the final report of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety

### CIH will:

- Gather and share good practice and create a framework for what 'good' looks like

## 4.3 Increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes

As our evidence clearly demonstrates, not only does social housing provide a home to one in five of our population in England, it also makes an important contribution to tackling poverty, health and wellbeing, and the wider economy. By increasing the supply we will benefit individuals, communities and the nation.

In section 3 we talked about the polarised views about whether social housing was a short term 'safety net' option or somewhere where people could live as long as they wanted to. If supply was sufficient, the debate about who it was for, and on what terms, would no doubt be different.

## What people told us

*"[Social housing] provides value for money to the tax payer as rents are recycled to build new homes, not to line the pockets of private landlords. [It] creates belonging and community. HAs and councils invest in places too!" - Housing worker, West Midlands*

*"Keep building more homes to take people out of expensive high rent private housing." - Tenant, South West*

*"Everyone needs a home. True social housing provides a safe and well kept home at the lowest possible cost." - Tenant, East Midlands*

We have an acute housing shortage. Since Alan Holmans's 2013 research into housing demand and need, the number of new homes required in England has been understood to be around 240,000-250,000 each year to meet existing and newly emerging need - this includes 78,000 affordable homes. Heriot-Watt University, commissioned by Crisis and the National Housing Federation, has carried out new research. Although the full findings will not be available until summer 2018, it suggests that England has a shortfall of 4 million homes. It argues that we need to build 340,000 homes each year to 2031, with 145,000 affordable homes including 90,000 for social rent, 30,000 for intermediate affordable rent and 25,000 for shared ownership. While government is to be commended for setting a target of 300,000 homes per year, 2016/17 saw only 217,000 added to our overall supply.

Alongside this, homelessness in all its forms is increasing dramatically. The number of statutory homeless households has increased by 48 per cent since 2010 and the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 58 per cent. In the same period, rough sleeping has risen by 169 per cent. This is a national disgrace. As well as creating

misery for those affected, it is also a huge waste of public money. A 2017 National Audit Office (NAO) report showed that, of the £1.1 billion spent by English local authorities in 2015-16, £845 million was spent on temporary accommodation.

Although the evidence of the need for more homes is compelling, this isn't just about numbers. We need the right types of homes, in the right places and of the right quality, including environmental and space standards. If we ignore this we will be fuelling a future housing crisis. New homes also have to meet a range of needs including those of our aging population and people who are disabled. We must also recognise that different parts of the country face different problems - so the solutions need to be varied.

As the need for homes at the genuinely affordable rents is increasing, the number is decreasing. Our analysis shows that, since 2012, we have lost 151,000 of the homes at the lowest 'social' rents. This is through a combination of sales to sitting tenants who have the Right to Buy, converting vacant homes from social rents to 'affordable' rents at up to 80 per cent of local market rents, and demolition. We expect to lose a total of 230,000 homes by 2020. We cannot allow this to continue and therefore call on government to suspend the Right to Buy while exploring other options to help tenants who wish to become home owners to do so.

Over the past five years only 50,290 new genuinely affordable homes have been built - just 5,380 in 2016/17. Two thirds of these were all funded by social housing providers using their own reserves and without any government subsidy.

We firmly believe that we need more genuinely affordable homes and the social attitudes polling Ipsos MORI carried out for us shows that the general public support more social housing being built in their local area by 4:1. In a May 2018 blog, Savills suggested that it would cost £6.8 billion to build 100,000 social rented homes each year with estimated savings of £431 million each year or £23 billion over 30 years based on current government borrowing costs. It concluded that "grant funding to build social rented homes makes real economic sense and could be considered a good investment."

Government and the sector need to take steps to increase new supply and stem the loss of existing homes at genuinely affordable rents.

## What do we need to do?

### The sector must:

- Work effectively and efficiently to maximise resources available to innovate to boost supply and also manage and maintain existing homes
- Make sure that its governance arrangements oversee a balance between making a positive contribution to new supply while managing risk as well as ensuring that its core purpose and values are agreed, clear and central

### CIH will:

- Continue to make the case to government for new genuinely affordable homes and lead work to explore alternative funding models

### Government must:

- Shift the balance of its £53 billion housing budget so that affordable housing - including homes at genuinely affordable rents - receives a fairer share than the 21 percent currently allocated
- Provide investment to enable an adequate supply of new homes at genuinely affordable rents - we are producing a discussion document setting out how this could work in England
- Suspend the Right to Buy, explore other ways to help tenants into home ownership and, in the meantime, move the barriers which prevent local councils from replacing the homes lost through Right to Buy

## 4.4 Ensure that everyone can afford a place to call home

Feedback from the Rethinking workshops and survey showed that affordability was the most common characteristic associated with social housing for 80 per cent of respondents. The increasing unaffordability of homes to rent (either privately or, in some cases, from a social landlord in some regions) or buy is one of the main challenges we face and it's making it hard for a growing number of people to find a decent place to call home.

For social housing, while rents are the main source of income to underpin investment in new and existing homes, they are also key to it remaining genuinely affordable. Until the recent freeze, social housing rents had been growing faster than incomes. And a quarter of new housing association general needs lettings are now at higher 'affordable' rents. Our 2017 Building Bridges report proposes developing local housing affordability frameworks which would set ranges for rents in relation to local incomes while

also enabling social housing providers to maintain and manage homes. We think government should consider this as an option for future rent policy.

An important part of the affordability equation is to make sure that people who need it receive help with their housing costs. CIH has highlighted a number of areas in which government's welfare policy is undermining people's ability to find a decent place to live and we urge it to take a step back and review the overall impact this is having.

Many social housing providers are showing leadership by helping tenants into work through a range of activities including training, placements, apprenticeships and support to become 'job ready'. There is scope to build on this through partnerships involving housing, training providers, colleges and DWP offering targeted support and interventions to help more tenants into work.

## What do we need to do?

### Social housing providers should:

- Set rents to make sure that people on low incomes are not priced out of social housing
- Learn from existing good practice to build partnerships with training providers, colleges and DWP to offer targeted support to help more tenants into work

### Government must:

- Work with the sector to develop a fair and transparent rent policy which defines affordability in relation to local incomes and enables social housing providers to manage and maintain homes to a good standard while not pricing out people who need them
- Urgently review the impact of welfare policy on people's ability to find and retain a home

## 4.5 Make sure that existing homes and neighbourhoods are of good quality and well managed

Our evidence shows that secure, of good quality and well managed homes are some social housing's most valued features. Although we urgently need to build more homes at genuinely affordable rents, we must also make sure that existing homes and the surrounding neighbourhoods are well managed and looked after. The Grenfell Tower fire has also raised challenges about how our homes are managed and maintained and whether we have been too focused on new supply to the detriment of existing homes.

## What people told us

*"Social housing provide[s] affordable, safe and secure accommodation meeting the expectations of customers and allowing them to live a decent quality of life, with access to good education, health services, transport and amenities."* - Tenant workshop, North East

*"It is the cheapest, best maintained, most secure form of housing in the country."* Tenant, online survey

*"Social Housing, in itself, does not create community cohesion but, good quality neighbourhoods are a key component."* Social care worker, London

We have to make sure that people living in social housing now have safe, well maintained homes which meet modern standards.

Bringing the majority of social housing up to the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) by 2010 was a great achievement. Maintaining that standard is posing a challenge for some social housing providers. The English Housing Survey 2015/16 showed that 525,000 homes did not meet the standard. Of those, 244,000 had at least one of the most serious category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Nevertheless, that only 13 per cent of social housing is non-decent compared to 30 per cent in the private rented sector demonstrates the efforts housing providers are making to ensure that tenants' homes meet modern standards.

Until recently, the government maintained a fund to subsidise programmes to attain the DHS where a social landlord could not finance works from their own resources. We believe there is a case for a one-off fund to enable landlords to 'catch up' with the DHS, to be available where they can show how their business plans will enable them to maintain the standard from then onwards.

For all its virtues, the DHS is out of date. As well as committing to maintaining the standard, it should be revised to incorporate more ambitious energy efficiency standards, as has been done in Scotland with its Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing. This would help tackle fuel poverty and make an essential contribution to meeting the government's carbon reduction targets.

Good quality housing management is central to providing homes and communities where people want to live. How it's done will vary widely depending on the local context, the nature of the housing and services provided, what tenants want and need and, increasingly, what social housing providers can afford.

It's important to get the basics right. This includes managing tenancies and estates well, maximising income collection and minimising arrears, and dealing with neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour effectively. Some social housing providers now routinely give support and advice to tenants who want and need it in areas such as maximising their household income, gaining new skills and finding work - and they see this as a core part of what they do.

We think it's time to reflect on whether or not the way housing is managed now meets tenants' needs and expectations. What might a 21st century service look like and how are some social housing providers beginning to do things differently? What are the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to deliver the quality of service that tenants expect and deserve? We are scoping out a 'rethinking housing management' project which will begin in summer 2018.

Feedback from the Rethinking workshops, survey and think tank event shows that social housing is seen as much more than just providing roofs over people's heads - neighbourhoods and communities are just as important. The English Housing Survey shows that, while 82 per cent of social tenants are satisfied with their local area, this is lower than for the other two main tenures.

There are some challenges here. In some areas public spending cuts are having an impact on neighbourhoods, for example, reductions in council budgets mean that the quality of grounds maintenance and street cleaning is falling and reductions in police budgets mean crime and anti-social behaviour may be harder to tackle. In many cases social housing providers are showing community leadership by stepping in and filling gaps where they can but is it fair that they should foot the bill when it's not just their tenants who benefit from this?

## What do we need to do?

### Social housing providers should:

- Make sure that they manage homes and neighbourhoods that meet 21st century standards in quality, comfort and safety
- Critically consider their role in providing well managed and well maintained homes which are used to best effect

### Government must:

- Act on the recommendations in chapter 3 of the final report of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety to ensure buildings are safe and well maintained
- Make a firm commitment to the decent homes standard and update it to include more ambitious aims

### CIH will:

- Ensure that we equip housing professionals with the skills and competencies they need to manage and maintain homes

## 4.6 Challenge the stigma and stereotyping attached to social housing

Feedback from the workshops, online surveys, the think tank event and our social attitudes polling highlighted that there is a perception that both social housing and the people who live there are subject to stigmatisation and stereotyping.

### What people told us

*"People think everybody in social housing is on benefits, never worked and don't deserve to live in a nice property in a nice area."* - Tenant, Housing Plus Academy think tank event

*"Social housing is associated with poverty, stigmatised, socially divisive".* Housing worker workshop



In recent years we have seen an increase in negative representations of social housing, and the people who live in it, in broadcast, print and social media. Social housing tenants are frequently portrayed as choosing to live on social security – when, in fact, 43 per cent of working age tenants are working – committing tenancy and benefit fraud, and perpetrating anti-social behaviour. Their homes and the surrounding estates are presented as being of poor quality and run-down – yet 30 per cent of privately rented homes fail the DHS compared to 13 per cent of social housing. Politically, this has been used to justify the reduction in funding social housing and giving priority to other forms of housing tenure, in particular home ownership.

The political narrative about social housing has been negative over successive governments with politicians using negative language, for example, ‘sink estates’ and describing residents as an ‘under class’. Despite a recent welcome change in tone, we have yet to see any tangible outcomes of this.

As well as challenging the media and government to avoid negative stereotyping, we also need to consider our own part in this as housing professionals. Although well intentioned, overuse of terms like ‘needy’ and ‘vulnerable’ to describe tenants does not serve them well and is not how they would describe themselves. A number of campaigns are taking positive steps to begin to tackle this including:

- JRF’s talking about poverty project with the FrameWorks Institute looked at ways of ‘framing’ poverty to avoid triggering negative thinking
- The latest work by Crisis, also with the FrameWorks Institute, considers this in relation to homelessness and has relevance more widely
- The Benefit to Society campaign which is addressing many of these issues

We believe strongly that the housing sector must tell our own story about people who live in social housing as well as promoting the positive contribution that social housing makes to our society. We all need to think carefully about how we communicate about what we do and the stories of tenants and the people who work in housing.

## What do we need to do?

### The sector, including CIH, must:

- Show leadership by telling our own story, backed up by evidence, about social housing and the people who live in it, emphasising the role of social housing as a ‘social good’ and telling the positive story of its role and purpose
- Challenge negative perceptions of social housing and people who live there
- By adopting CIH’s definition, ensure that government and the general public understand the vital role that social housing plays in our society

### Government must:

- Acknowledge social housing’s value in society. Social housing needs to be treated as of equal worth to home ownership. This should be reflected in the content and tone of its messaging and policies

## Conclusion

As we have demonstrated through our research, social housing has a unique and positive part to play in housing people, helping to create thriving, mixed communities, and meeting needs that the market will not. Done right it does great things. But, as we have recognised, it isn’t always the case that homes and neighbourhoods are well managed and well maintained and it’s important that we own and address this.

We have made a number of asks for government here but it’s vitally important that the sector shows leadership and steps up with solutions without waiting to be told what to do.

Taken together, the six areas for action outlined above provide a framework for the sector and government to move social housing to a positive and ambitious place.

We must now reclaim social housing as a pillar of the society we want to be, along with free health care and education – and it must be at the centre of government plans to solve the housing crisis. And, having ‘reclaimed’ the role of social housing, we need to push on – creating an ambitious vision of what a plentiful supply of social housing can do help people thrive in communities that prosper.

This is only the beginning of the conversation.

# Appendix 1

## What we did

- Carried out a review of existing evidence on social housing with a supplementary evidence review provided by the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE)
- Developed a toolkit to support local discussions about:
  - What social housing is
  - What it does
  - Who it it's for
  - What its role and purpose should be
- Collated and analysed feedback from 199 workshops held across England
- Analysed results from 766 completed online surveys with questions mirroring those for the workshops
- Interviewed 13 people waiting to become social housing tenants
- Designed, ran and analysed the results from an online survey for people working in fields which complement housing e.g. health and social care with 62 completions
- Commissioned Ipsos MORI to carry out social perception surveys via face to face interviews with 1,700 members of the public across England
- Commissioned CaCHE to undertake secondary data analysis building up a picture of who is living in social housing now
- Partnered with the Housing Plus Academy to run a 'think tank' event with tenants which focused on *Rethinking social housing*
- Held a Twitter debate on 22 March posing the questions:
  - What is social housing and what does it do?
  - What are your experiences of living in social housing?
  - Does the name 'social housing' need a rethink?
  - What is the value of social housing?



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