



## **SHELTER SCOTLAND BRIEFING ON UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL VALUE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SCOTLAND: YEAR ONE IMPACT REPORT**

### **Introduction**

Shelter Scotland exists to defend the right to a safe home and fight the devastating impact the housing emergency has on people and society. We work in communities to understand the problem and change the system. We run national campaigns to fight for home.

As part of our [2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#), we committed to publishing research looking at the social impact of new social housing on our communities. This research is being undertaken in partnership with the Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT), with support from an expert advisory panel and currently with involvement from 14 participant organisations.

The project aims to report yearly for three years outlining the social value created by new or refurbished social housing. The first impact report was recently published, containing data and findings from the first full year of the project (2022). This briefing paper provides a summary of those findings, offers some initial conclusions, and outlines the next steps for the project.

### **Research purpose**

The research aims to better understand the experiences of those taking up new social tenancies in both new build and refurbished properties, looking at the social outcomes generated from an individual perspective. This is part of an effort to connect and link lived experience data with the objectives of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) – moving beyond simply looking at numerical targets when judging the success of this programme. Instead, the research attempts to look at the ways in which the AHSP can improve the lives of the individuals living in social housing. It should provide additional evidence on the contribution of social housing to the national performance framework, as indicated in *Housing to 2040*.<sup>1</sup> The project builds on the Audit Scotland report from 2020 on the Scottish Government’s affordable housing target, which recommended the Scottish Government “work in partnership with RSLs to implement performance measures to demonstrate the value for money of new-build homes, and work to demonstrate the social value of investment.”<sup>2</sup>

These ‘social values’<sup>3</sup> include issues such as resolving homelessness, improving affordability, improving housing conditions, improving health, environmental impact, community building and more.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2021) [Housing to 2040](#)

<sup>2</sup> Audit Scotland (2020) [Affordable housing: The Scottish Government’s affordable housing supply target](#)

<sup>3</sup> HACT believes that social value is only delivered when social impact is achieved. Impact only happens when outcomes meet identified need. For more detail, please consult Appendix 2 of the full Impact Report.

## Key findings

This first impact report includes data collected in 2022 from 231 pre-occupancy surveys and 93 post-occupancy surveys (completed 3-6 months after tenants had moved into their new home). The surveys determine key information on individuals prior to taking up their new tenancy, and find how experiences and life outcomes have changed following them taking up their new tenancy. Analysis was undertaken on 72 pre and post survey comparisons which starts to build a picture of the social impact of new tenancies. The methodology then uses UK Social Value Bank calculations to understand and quantify the difference as a value made to an individual's wellbeing and what exchequer savings are made for the state. Given the small number of respondents having completed post-occupancy surveys at this stage, these numbers need to be treated with caution. However, they begin to demonstrate just how important and valuable social housing can be to people's lives as well as how it can contribute to other social justice objectives.<sup>4</sup>

- Positive social change can be demonstrated on ten different outcomes from the UK Social Value Bank 2022.
- In particular, new tenancies have resulted in tenants feeling more part of a community, no longer being worried about crime, pollution and belonging to a 'good neighbourhood'.
- On average, £11,371 of social value has been generated for each of the 54 respondents who noted any positive change from their move. This equated to an average of £543.96 of exchequer savings made to the state per respondent.
- A total of £614,041 of social value was created based on UK Social Value Bank calculations from the new social lets captured in the project.
- As might be expected, initial findings show people moving from temporary homeless accommodation, from a private rented property or from a property they owned generated higher social value from their move, compared to those moving from another socially rented property.
- Importantly, around half of respondents reported positive change in how their home makes them healthier. 88% of respondents said life would be 'significantly worse' if they hadn't moved – citing they would have had new or continued mental health issues including suicidal thoughts and anxiety, other health issues, or being less independent.

## Conclusions and next steps

At present, the small sample size restricts more detailed analysis or firm conclusions. However, initial findings suggest that social value can be demonstrated by social homes, particularly in relation to neighbourhood impacts, mental health and increased independence. Much of this can be attributed to the reasons given for moving: we might expect that for the 20% of tenants who had previously been homeless, their stress and anxiety around their unsecure housing situation would improve, or that for the 14% of tenants moving because their previous home was being demolished might note improvements to their neighbourhood.

As the report notes, "additional data will allow more confidence in making a case for the strong impact social housing makes in relation to the national performance framework and the value of the Affordable Social Housing Programme funding." The next report analysing year 2 (2023) data will be available at the start of 2024 and this should include some case studies to add to the qualitative data available.

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<sup>4</sup> Figures should be used with caution and no generalisations drawn due to the current small sample size.

The full report is available on [Shelter Scotland's Policy Library](#) and the project remains open for further housing organisations to join this exciting research – please get in touch.

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