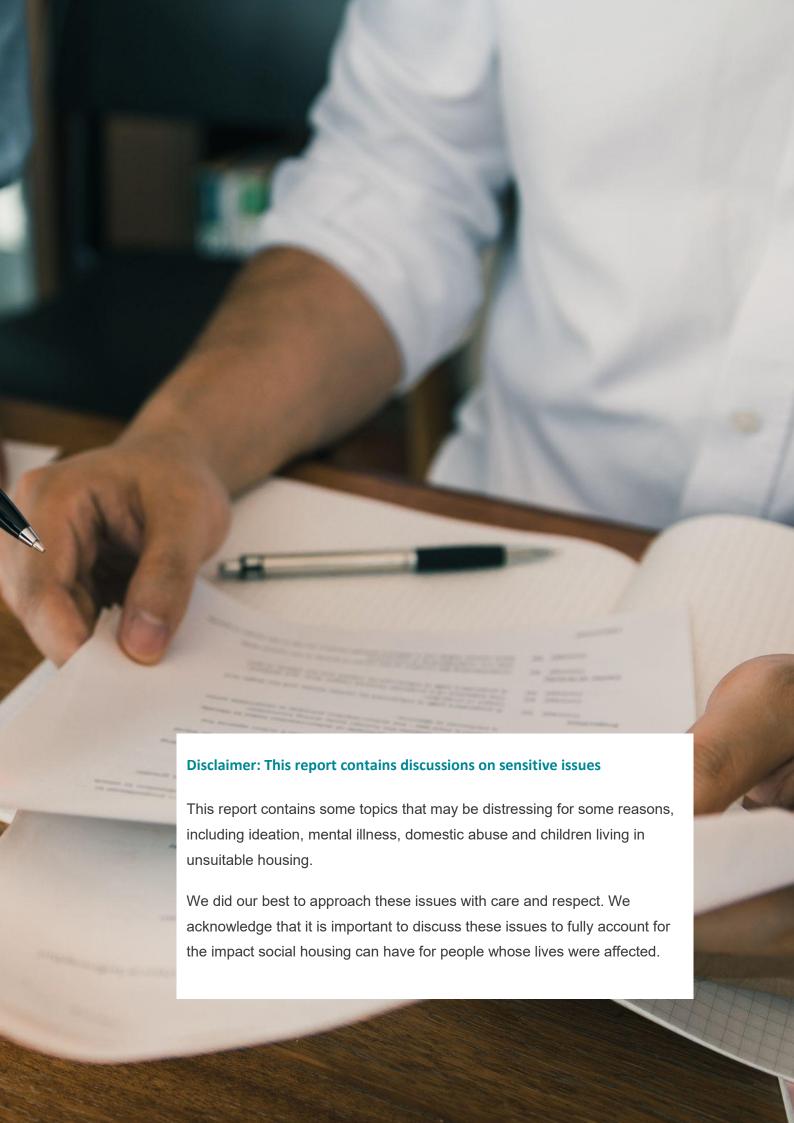


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Executive summary

Overview

Moving into a social home can be a transformative experience. While there is evidence of the economic value of social housing, there is a gap in understanding the impact of living in social housing from the perspective of tenants, and what this impact looks like over time. This longitudinal research study sought to address this evidence gap.

Shelter commissioned HACT (Housing Associations' Charitable Trust) to deliver the research project in 2024. Shelter and IKEA are working together as part of a long-term partnership that will see the two organisations joining forces to defend the one thing they value most: home. This is the first report which presents interim findings on the immediate benefits of moving into a social rent home.

Methodology

This interim report explores emerging findings on the initial impacts of moving into a social home. The findings are based on 420 responses to a survey asking individuals who have moved into a social home about their previous housing situation and the move, as well as 134 responses to a follow-up survey three months after moving in. 33 landlords in England have shared the survey with their tenants. The findings are also informed by 22 interviews with social tenants.

The surveys allow us to understand the impact that moving into and living in a social home has on people's lives, including their health, finances, access to local services and children's lives. Where meaningful change has occurred, we have quantified this impact and calculated the social value that has been generated by improving people's lives using HACT's social impact measurement methodology and social value banks.

Findings

This report provides the emerging findings from our longitudinal study on how social housing impacts people's lives over the first three months after moving into social home. Moving into a social home often resulted in substantial shifts in living conditions that subsequently impacted change in other areas:

- **Improved housing condition** 78% of social tenants said that now their housing condition is better than where they lived previously.
- Space for children to play and study. Many of the parents we've heard from said that their current home is now suitable for their children to play.

We tracked not only changes in people's lives over time, but in how social tenants' previous and current housing situation impacted these outcomes. The emerging research findings indicate that moving into a social rent home can have a significant immediate impact on tenants' financial wellbeing, health, and on their children's lives. New social tenants whose previous housing situation had negative or no impact on specific outcomes reported the following changes three months after moving into their social home:

- Improved financial wellbeing. 52% of social tenants said that they are better able to afford rent due to moving into social rent home. 45% of tenants said they are better able to afford utility bills due to moving into their social rent home.
- Improved stability and ability to plan for the future. 62% of social tenants reported that moving into a social rent home had a meaningful improvement on their ability to plan the future.
- Community and local services. Almost half (46%) of social tenants said they now felt a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood.
- **Health.** Six in ten (61%) social tenants said that their current home has a meaningful improvement on their mental health.

Over the forthcoming months we will continue collecting data to strengthen our evidence base, generating additional insights on the medium and longer-term impacts of moving into a social home. In the final report, we will conduct more segmented analysis of the different experiences of new social tenants, depending on factors such as gender, ethnic group, household type and age. This will allow us to better understand what drives different experiences of moving into a social rent home. We will report on these new findings in 2026. This interim report allows us to anticipate the key themes emerging from the study and to discuss how moving into a social rent home impacts people's lives in the first three months.

Acknowledgements

IKEA

Many thanks to IKEA for funding this vitally important longitudinal research project looking at the impact of moving into a social rent home.

Landlord partner organisations

Thank you to the 33 social landlords who have partnered with us on the project to help us reach new social tenants:

Abri Anchor Hanover Bournemouth,

Christchurch and Poole

Council

Believe Housing

Bernicia

Bournville Village Trust

BPHA Clarion

Cording Group
Dacorum Borough

Council

Folkestone and Hythe

District Council

Gentoo Hightown Home group Housing 21

Housing Plus Group /

Wrekin

Islington Council

L&G L&Q

Lewisham Council

Magna Orbit

Orwell Housing Places for People

Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) Royal Greenwich

Borough Sanctuary

SNG (Sovereign Network Group) South Derbyshire

Council

Southern housing St Peter Housing Stonewater

Worthing Home

Learnt experience panel

Representatives from Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), Joseph Roundtree Foundation (JRF), Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Place Shapers, Local Government Association (LGA), National Housing Federation (NHF), Stop Social Housing Stigma, and academics from University of Glassgow and University of Birmingham.

Lived experience panel

Thank you to the twelve existing social tenants who are part of the Lived Experience Advisory Panel and have shared their expertise to support the research project since its beginning.

1. Introduction

The housing crisis in England means that many people do not have access to an affordable and decent home. The building of social homes is a key part of addressing the housing crisis; however, over the last decade we have seen a net loss of over 200,000 social rent homes due to sales and demolition outstripping new supply.¹

There is increasing recognition of the economic value of building social housing for the public purse through reduced demand on state services and to tenants themselves with secure stable housing impacting various aspects of life, including health, education, and economic opportunity. However, there is a gap in understanding the impact that providing a socially rented home has on people's life circumstances and wellbeing from the lived experience of tenants.²

IKEA and housing and homelessness charity Shelter are working together as part of a long-term partnership that will see the two organisations joining forces to defend the one thing they value most: home. Shelter, in partnership with IKEA, commissioned HACT to undertake this longitudinal research study to address the evidence gap to understand impact from the perspective of tenants. This ground-breaking two-year research project is one of the many initiatives Shelter and IKEA have launched to address the housing emergency.

The primary aim of this research project is to identify the impact that moving into a new social rent home has in the short, medium, and longer term. We identify these impacts using longitudinal self-reported data from tenants who started a new social tenancy.

This research study has two key objectives:

¹ Shelter analysis of MHCLG and Regulator of Social Housing data, Available at: MHCLG, <u>Live tables on affordable housing supply</u>, Table 1006C, MHCLG, <u>Local authority housing statistics</u>, Section K, RSH, <u>Private registered provider social housing stock and rents in England 2022 to 2023</u>, Stock Details and Table 3.13, MHCLG, <u>Live tables on social housing sales</u>, Table 684 and Table 678

² HACT (2022), <u>Context and literature review: Developing an affordable housing programme social value evaluation framework and calculator.</u>

- To understand the impact of moving into a social rent home, with a focus on measuring impact over time.
- To understand the factors that contribute to different experiences of moving into a social home, including previous housing situation and demographic information.

The evidence collected through this project is intended to support Shelter's social housing campaign and the calls for 90,000 social rent homes over ten years to solve the housing emergency. The urgency of the housing emergency makes this research particularly timely.

This interim report presents emerging findings and includes:

- Summary of key literature that has informed the research study design.
- Overview of the research methodology and research framework guiding the design of the research study.
- Baseline findings about people's situation prior to moving into their new social home.
- Emerging findings about the immediate impact of moving into, and living in, a social rent home.
- Conclusions and scene setting for the final research report in 2026. In the final report, we
 will conduct social value calculations and analysis of the short, medium, and long-term
 impact to people's lives after moving into a social rent home.

2. Research context

This literature review provides a high-level review of the relevant research on the impact of social housing in England. It identifies key methodologies, impact areas, and outstanding gaps.

2.1. Context and policy background

While there is plenty of evidence and recognition that social rent homes can contribute to improved well-being outcomes³, political support for significantly increasing the delivery of social rent homes has only recently started gaining momentum.

In the June 2025 Spending Review, the Chancellor announced more funding to build social and affordable housing, setting out £39 billion to invest in a new Social and Affordable Homes programme over the next ten years. This is a 70% increase per year compared to the current Affordable Homes Programme and crucially lasts for twice as long. The government has committed to 60% of the homes being for social rent⁴ – the only truly affordable homes with rents tied to local incomes. This will deliver 180,000 social rent homes over ten years.

There were other key housing announcements in the Spending Review, including low interest loans for social housing providers to make it cheaper to borrow money to build more social and affordable housing. The government has also committed to over £1 billion to speed up the remediation of social housing to support providers to build more homes and improve the conditions for existing tenants.

Reforms to Right to Buy will also help to boost new supply and prevent the loss of social homes. The government-announced changes which will make it easier for councils to get building again by making it harder to exercise the right to buy. One of the key reforms is exempting newly built social homes from right to buy for 35 years and increasing the length of tenancy before you can exercise right to buy from three to ten years⁵. Councils will also be

³ House of Commons Library (2024), <u>Social Rented Housing in England: Past Trends and Prospects</u>.

⁴ MHCLG (2025), Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing - GOV.UK

⁵ MHCLG (2025), Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing - GOV.UK

allowed to claim grant funding from central government and combine it with money from right to buy receipts to build a new home.

2.2. Methodologies for impact assessment

This section considers how different organisations have approached the challenge of evaluating the impact of building and providing housing.

There is a growing recognition that it is not enough to measure outputs (such as houses built) and programme outcomes (such as numbers of people moved from homelessness). Instead, methodologies used to assess the impact of social housing need to account for multiple wellbeing indicators, such as physical and mental health, access to services, and life satisfaction.

When it comes to methodology, multiple studies use theory of change, logic models, or other structured approaches to trace how change happens and how impact is attained. Theory of change is a commonly used method to track impacts of population outcomes. For instance, Homes England's recent evaluation of the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme emphasises delivery outputs and funding distribution.⁶ It uses a logic model to evaluate impact and identify key desired outcomes of the programme, such as improved access to employment, higher quality of life, and strengthened communities.

A more recent Homes England study also uses theory of change and mixed-method approach to measure and quantify the wellbeing impacts of living in temporary accommodation and the transition to social housing.⁷

The Value of Social Tenancy (VoST), developed by Sonnet and Hyde Housing, uses theory of change methodology to estimate social value generated by social tenancies, across five wellbeing domains: financial, physical, mental, relational and purpose⁸. It also uses a counterfactual model and attributes 60% of the calculated social impact to the tenancy.

⁶ Homes England (2023), Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme Evaluation Report.

⁷ Homes England (2025), <u>Measuring Social Value: Paper 6: Measuring the Wellbeing Impacts of Temporary Accommodation & Social Housing.</u>

⁸Barnes, K., Clifford, J., Ross, C. and Hulbert, A. (2018), <u>The Hyde Group: The Value of a Social Tenancy: A socio-economic evaluation based on Hyde's housing portfolio</u>. London: Bates Wells & Braithwaite; Hyde Group (2024). <u>The Value of a Social Tenancy (Update)</u>.

There have been previous studies that used economic modelling and counterfactual analysis to estimate the economic and fiscal benefits of social housing. A recent report from Shelter and the National Housing Federation demonstrates that the economic benefits of social housing include job creation, tax revenue, and reduced demand on public services.⁹ Similarly, A New Economic Case for Social Housing makes a case for social housing, based on its ability to deliver jobs, increase income and enhance well-being (largely a consequence of housing's impact on health and education).¹⁰ It shows that living in good-quality long-term social homes can have a positive impact on children's educational attainment.

Legal & General Affordable Homes's Impact Report highlights social and environmental indicators that could guide developers seeking to maximise impact (e.g. enabling financially sustainable lives, social connectivity and digital connectivity as social metrics; provision of food growing spaces; pollinator friendly, drought tolerant planting; providing places to sit, pause and chat as environment metrics). The affordability of housing in the report is measured using traditional metrics (total housing costs fall within 35% of net income and local average earnings) rather than drawn from lived experience. The report shows a lack of depth in understanding what changes people undergo when moving into social or affordable rented homes as there is limited input from people living in social housing.

Another way to measure the impact of social housing is linked to the value of placemaking. Spatial modelling techniques have been previously used by Homes England to understand and quantify the "spillover effects" of regeneration on nearby areas using spatial rings and various economic indicators (e.g. house price uplift, access to schools, and crime rates). 12 Although social rent is not isolated, the methodology provides valuable insight into areabased impact assessment.

There have been few studies that observed changes in social tenants' outcomes over a predetermined time period. The Greater London Authority's evaluation of its Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026 also uses Theory of Change.¹³ It tracks short, medium and long term outcomes across both affordable rent and shared ownership properties, recognising that

⁹ Cebr (for Shelter & National Housing Federation) (2024), The Economic Impact of Building Social Housing.

¹⁰ Shelter Scotland, Scottish Policy Foundation & University of Strathclyde (2020), <u>A New Economic Case for Social Housing.</u>

¹¹ The Good Economy (2023), Legal & General Affordable Homes: Social Impact Report 2023.

¹² Homes England (2023), Measuring the Placemaking Impacts of Housing-Led Regeneration.

¹³ Greater London Authority (2021), Affordable Homes Programme Evaluation Framework.

impact unfolds over time. The programme aims to create a mixture of tenures, reduce fuel poverty, improve health and wellbeing, and increase access to employment opportunities through social housing provision.

A recent Homes England study also measures change in wellbeing measures (such as life satisfaction, anxiety, and depression scales), when moving into 'affordable' housing (defined as social rent, affordable rent and London affordable rent). ¹⁴ By using datasets like the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UK HLS) and Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC), the research project compared wellbeing outcomes across housing types. However, this study does not analyse changes on an individual level.

Overall, evaluations of social housing programmes consistently apply structured approaches – most often theory of change, logic models and counterfactual analysis – to assess outcomes. There has been a trend towards understanding broader wellbeing, economic, and community impacts, moving beyond assessing delivery outputs of housing development programmes. While this study aligns with the trend to use theory of change, it uses a longitudinal methodology, tracking individual outcomes over time, and thus contributing a unique approach to measuring and understanding the value and impact of social housing through lived experiences.

2.3. Impact areas

Drawing on existing literature and consultation with the research advisory panels, we identified key areas where social housing can have an impact on people's lives:

Health and wellbeing. The link between housing and structural health inequalities is
well evidenced, with much of the literature highlighting housing as a public health issue.¹⁶
Recent evidence also shows that moving from temporary accommodation to stable
social housing leads to measurable improvements in adult and child wellbeing.¹⁷

¹⁴ Homes England (2025), <u>Measuring Social Value: Paper 6: Measuring the Wellbeing Impacts of Temporary</u> Accommodation & Social Housing.

¹⁵ For more ideas see a collection of essays brought together by Shelter on economic and fiscal case for investing in social homes: Shelter (2025) Safe as Houses: Social Housing Investment.

¹⁶ SFHA, HACT & CaCHE (2020), <u>The Impact of Social Housing: Economic, Social, Health and Wellbeing.</u>

17 Homes England (2025), Measuring Social Value: Paper 6: Measuring the Wellbeing Impacts of Tempora

¹⁷ Homes England (2025), <u>Measuring Social Value: Paper 6: Measuring the Wellbeing Impacts of Temporary Accommodation & Social Housing.</u>

- **Education**. Studies by *Shelter Scotland* and *Hyde Group* connect stable housing with improved educational outcomes for children.¹⁸
- **Employment and economic inclusion**. Previous research suggests that social housing supports employment by allowing individuals to remain in areas with job opportunities and social networks.¹⁹ There is evidence that social housing contributes towards gains in productivity and public sector cost savings.²⁰
- Community and social inclusion. There has been a lot of research that connects social housing and place-based benefits. For instance, the role social rent plays in place-based social value and inclusive neighbourhoods is well evidenced.²¹ Homes England (2025) research shows that moving to social housing from temporary accommodation is also associated with social connectedness.
- Environmental and infrastructure. For instance, The Good Economy (2023) report
 outlines metrics such as electric vehicle (EV) charging, green spaces, and walkability.
 While primarily aspirational, these indicators provide a future-facing lens for sustainable
 housing.

This research project speaks to existing impact themes, while also developing a more nuanced picture of changing outcomes over time after moving into a social rent home.

2.4. Summary & gaps in the literature

Many studies focus on affordable housing more broadly which means they usually group social rent with other tenures like 'affordable' rent. This makes it difficult to isolate and evaluate the unique experiences of those living in a social rent home. This research project aims to address this gap by providing a social rent-specific analysis.

There is also a notable lack of data that reflects how tenants themselves experience affordability, housing quality, or community belonging. The GLA pilot research project and the Hyde Group (2024) report update make progress in this area, but it lacks considerations

¹⁸ Hyde Group (2024); Cebr (2024)

¹⁹ Homes England (2023).

²⁰ Cebr (2024)

²¹ Frontier Economics (2014). Assessing the Social and Economic Impact of Affordable Housing Investment.

of diverse impacts over time. Recent *Homes England (2025)* research makes some progress in measuring the change in outcomes when people move into social housing. However, the research only measures outcomes of people moving from temporary accommodation and uses averages in outcomes rather than tracking the same people over time. This makes it difficult to understand how social rent housing affects specific populations, including ethnic minorities, people with a disability, or households with children.

This research project has placed significant emphasis on both incorporating tenant voices in the design stage and ensuring that the research captures the lived experiences of those moving into a social rent home. There is a significant gap in the literature on the impact of social housing from the tenants' perspective and this research will contribute to closing this gap.

These gaps in the literature indicate that there is a need to understand not only the economic case for social housing, but also the impact of moving into a social rent home on people's lives, including their health, wellbeing, and children's lives. This research project aims to fill these gaps while also contributing to the existing evidence base and building on the established impact areas. The new evidence will showcase the experiential and material impact that social rent homes have on social tenants and their lives. The longitudinal methodology will follow people's journeys living in social rent housing over time and collect evidence of their experience in real time.

3. Methodology

The research project uses a multi-method approach to capture the different types of impact social rent homes have on people's lives. This section outlines the co-production approach to developing the research framework and outlines methods used in the project.

3.1. Advisory panels

HACT established two expert advisory panels: a *lived experience panel* and a *learned* experience panel to help guide the research. The role of both panels is to shape the design of the research, act as a sounding board to test the research framework and provide feedback on emerging findings during reporting phases.

The *Lived Experience Panel* is made up of twelve social housing tenants from across England. The group brings together people from different backgrounds and geographies to ensure viewpoints and feedback are as representative of social tenants in England as possible. Members have lived in their homes for different lengths of time, including those who are relatively new to social housing and tenants who have lived in social housing for many years. Establishing the lived experience panel ensured that the research framework was co-produced with those who have direct experience of living in social housing.

The panel views the meetings and wider research to be an important way to ensure that the tenant voice informs policy and decision making.

"A lot of decisions are made in Parliament by people who have no lived experience, and they won't have to live with the impact of the decisions they make. That is why these sorts of groups and research are so important, because it is speaking to people who have lived it and are still living it and they can describe the impact it had on their lives."

Member of Lived Experience Advisory Panel

The *Lived Advisory Panel* members recognise that inputting into this research project contributes to more democratic policymaking and contributing to better decision-making.

"This gives an opportunity to create a level playing field so that everybody is given the same respect, choice. The decision-making is in the hands of the people

who are the service users."

Member of Lived Experience Advisory Panel

The members have also noted that participating in the panel allowed them to develop their confidence and assertiveness. These skills help members of the panel to advocate for themselves and for more tenant involvement with their landlords.

Both panels have contributed significantly towards the design of the research framework and provided a space for us to test our assumptions on outcomes and impact. Their input has informed what data we collect from social tenants and how we use this data. Both panels continue to be engaged for the duration of the project, and we anticipate they will provide valuable feedback on research findings and distribution of project outputs.

3.2. Theory of change and research framework development

Theory of change is a well-established method to understand how outputs and outcomes are linked and lead to desired impact. The theory of change for this research study has been tested with both advisory panels and served as a basis for research framework development. The research framework details how the data collection methods link to outcomes and impacts indicated in the theory of change. The project aims to collect data that would allow us to understand if and how people moving into their first social rent home attain different outcomes. The full theory of change and research framework can be found in the Appendix. The project uses two data collection methods to gather evidence against outcomes in the research framework: longitudinal surveys and interviews.

3.3 Data collection

The findings in this report are drawn from 420 responses to the first survey, 134 responses to the second survey and 22 in-depth interviews.

Survey

Central to this research is the use of pre- and post- occupancy surveys designed to capture longitudinal changes in key social outcomes. These surveys are intended to compare the experience of the new tenancy with previous circumstances and the meaningful improvement social tenants experience since moving into their new tenancy post occupancy.

The survey is intended to be delivered over four waves of data collection - at the time or moving in, or retrospectively after tenant has moved in; 3 months after moving in; 9 months

after moving in; and 12 months after moving in. This allows us to collect quantitative data at different time points and undertake comparative analysis between the different data collection time points to identify what has changed since moving in.

The pre-occupancy first survey provides baseline data about people's previous housing situation and subsequent waves provide insights into changes in people's circumstances. The survey is designed to track change between the first baseline survey and the second, third and fourth surveys, linked to key outcomes of interest identified in the theory of change. The survey also captures demographic data relating to age, ethnicity, gender and the reasons for the move. It is the first step in establishing to what extent social value outcomes are realised in social tenancies.

Partner landlord organisations shared the first survey with new social housing tenants who respond on behalf of their household about their experiences of life before moving into a social home. These initial surveys are conducted at the point a tenant moves into their new home or up to three months after they move in. HACT follows up with each tenant who has responded to the first survey to invite them to participate in the subsequent waves of surveys – second, third and fourth surveys.

The majority of questions have a pre-set response scale with negative categories (such as *strongly disagree* and *disagree*) a neutral category (such as *no difference*) and positive categories (such as *strongly agree* or *agree*). We measure change as a movement from a negative or neutral response category to a positive response category. Where this change has occurred, we refer to it in the report as *meaningful improvement*. Change from negative category to neutral does not signify a meaningful change as choosing a neutral category is not enough evidence to show that the respondent has attained a positive outcome.

Interviews

To add complexity and nuance to the survey findings, HACT is conducting **semi-structured interviews** (approx. 45 mins) with social housing tenants who have completed the research surveys, as well as those who are not able to access online surveys. We are using two types of interview in this research:

• Longitudinal interviews. 25 tenants for intensive engagement – three times over the course of the project. We anticipate being able to capture insights about the short-, medium- and longer-term impact through the data collected at interview stages:

- Stage 1 provides an insight into the immediate impact of moving into the social rent home.
- o Stage 2 provides an insight into the medium-term impact.
- Stage 3 provides an insight into the longer-term term impact.
- One-off interviews with up 25 additional tenants, including those who may not be willing
 to do a second interview or those who are digitally excluded and therefore unable to do
 the survey.

HACT monitors interviews to ensure representative distribution across age groups, gender, and ethnic groups, where possible. Individuals participating in interviews receive up to £40 in vouchers for their time as well as an incentive for continued engagement. All the case studies in this report are based on interviews and participants' names are changed to respect their privacy.

Landlords have played a key role in supporting the research team to access new social housing tenants. There are currently 33 landlords disseminating the survey, with a further 30 landlords expressed a strong commitment to start sharing the survey with their tenants.

The volume of engaged landlords demonstrates the appetite for this research amongst the social housing sector in England and this is summarised effectively by our partnering landlords in the quotes below.

"Orwell is committed to making a difference in the communities in which we work, caring for and supporting people, as well as providing them with a safe home. We support Shelter's campaign for more social housing and by taking part in this research hope to play our part in providing further evidence of the positive impact that social housing can have on individuals and communities."

Orwell Housing, participating landlord

"Abri understands the significant impact social housing can have on both our customers and society as a whole, and who better to tell us than our own customers? We recognise the importance of showcasing these benefits, especially to central government, and are excited to be part of this project so that together, we can ensure social housing remains affordable and of high quality."

Abri, participating Landlord

Research Findings: Life before social housing

This section outlines the findings of the baseline data analysis, which focuses on the experiences of individuals when they were living in their previous home.

These findings are based on the data collected for the first survey up to 4 August 2025. Data collection will continue into 2026, and therefore, the final report will expand on this initial analysis of emerging insights.

Unless stated otherwise, the findings below are based on 420 responses, and the findings can be extrapolated to the entire population of new social housing tenants.

This section covers experiences and outcomes while living in their previous housing:

- Previous housing situation of social tenants, including type of housing and housing quality
- Experience of living in previous housing situation, including financial circumstances, sense of stability, health and wellbeing, addressing children's needs and access to local services and community.

4.1 Life before social housing: previous housing situation

There are multiple routes to social housing with people coming from diverse housing situations.

As illustrated in Figure 1, over three-quarters of social tenants surveyed (76%) were previously privately renting or experiencing homelessness, including a third (35%) who lived in a private rented home, over a quarter (27%) who moved from temporary accommodation and 14% who were living temporarily with friends or family. This data is broadly representative of new social tenants data.

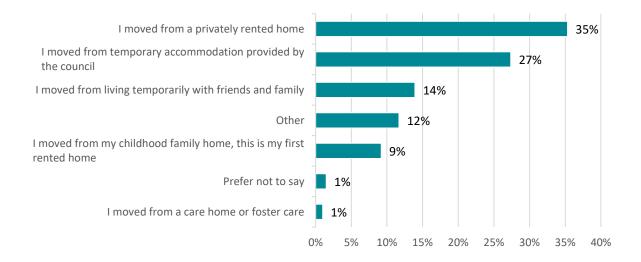


Figure 1. Routes into social housing (base: 420)

As illustrated in Figure 2 (below), there are several reasons why people need a social rent home. Respondents cited the following as the key drivers for leaving their last settled home:

- Home being unsuitable because of ill health / disability (12%).
- Being asked to leave by family or friends (11%)
- Experiencing domestic abuse (11%).

Of those who were evicted by their landlord, 79% received a 'no-fault' eviction (section 21). 14% of social tenants cited other reasons. Among these, the most common reasons for moving were landlords in the private rented sector selling the house, moving for more safety, and changes in family circumstances such as death, divorce or members of family moving into care.

Reasons for leaving their previous housing

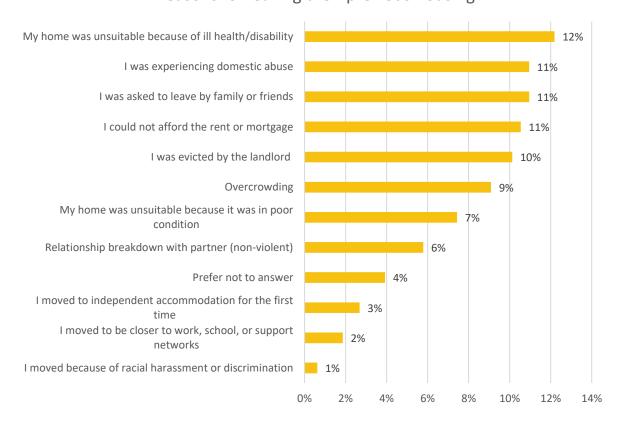


Figure 2. Reasons for moving out of last settled home (base: 420)

4.2 Life before social housing: affordability and financial wellbeing

Many social tenants were struggling to save and afford essentials in their previous home. Single parent households and single adults living alone reported worse financial wellbeing while living in their previous home, compared to other types of households. Overall, the picture is mixed:

- Just under a third of respondents (31%) reported that their financial situation prior to moving into their new social home was very difficult or quite difficult.
- A similar proportion (33%) reported that they had lived comfortably or did alright financially.
- 31% just about got by financially before moving into their social home.

People living in council provided temporary accommodation were in a worse financial position than social tenants overall (including tenants moving from privately rented sector or living with family and friends). Four in ten (39%) of them said that financial situation prior to moving into their new social home was very difficult or quite difficult.

When it comes to households with children, single parents are in significantly worse financial situation. 42% of single parents said that their financial situation prior to moving into their new social home was very difficult or quite difficult – significantly more than among the general population. Single adults also reported slightly worse financial wellbeing before moving to social housing – 35% of them said their financial situation was very difficult or quite difficult.

As set out in Figure 2, affordability is one of the key reasons why tenants moved out of their last settled home. Our research suggests that financial pressures in their previous housing situation affected other parts of people's lives, including their ability to afford necessities and build up savings.

In the three months prior to moving into their new social rent home, **51% of new social housing tenants struggled to save**, 36% struggled to afford essentials and 30% had been in debt, other than rent arrears, during this time.

The survey asked respondents to reflect on whether their previous housing situation had affected different domains of financial wellbeing:

- 44% reported that their previous housing negatively impacted their ability to save.
- 36% felt their previous housing situation had negatively affected their ability to afford necessities.
- 35% felt that their previous housing situation had negatively affected their ability to afford rent, and the same proportion indicated a negative impact on their ability to afford utilities.

While there are many reasons why people are struggling financially, there is clear evidence that for quite a significant proportion of people, high housing costs is one of them. Interviews suggested that before moving into social housing, people struggled to afford rent, fund large-

scale adaptations required for mobility or other health needs, or to build up savings to afford holidays or further education.

"I had no idea that social housing could be so good. I couldn't have afforded a flat anything like this. [..] We couldn't afford in the area. Just couldn't afford that sort of thing. [..]. I would have to spend a load of money on widening the doors and putting an accessible shower and all that sort of thing."

Sean, moved from the home he owned, 65 or older

4.3 Life before social housing: future planning

Our emerging findings show that bad housing is holding people back – nearly half of new tenants moving into social housing previously lived in housing that eroded their ability to make long-term decisions and plan for the future:

- Almost half (46%) of new tenants moved from housing that had a negative impact on their ability to plan for the future.
- For 44% of tenants, housing negatively affected their ability to make long-term decisions.

"It is nice knowing that when my daughter's older, she will have a place to come home to, that she is grown up in as well because it is your family home."

Susan, 35-44 years old, living temporarily with friend.

This evidence highlights that without a secure and affordable home people cannot plan and progress with their lives. There are many reasons why we see this negative impact on people's ability to think about their long-term future. Our interview data suggests the following:

- Uncertainty due to low financial wellbeing. In an interview, Carol shared that she was unable to use her caravan in winter, which significantly affected her outlook for the future.
- **History of multiple moves from different homes.** Another interviewee, Ryan, said that moving from the private rented sector to friends' homes was tiring. After being asked to leave, Ryan said, he "was getting fed up, having to keep shifting stuff".
- Living in temporarily with friends or family and having little control over one's life.
 Rose was living with friends when she was asked to leave and ended up being homeless. Dependence on friends created uncertainty which meant that she had little control of her life.
- Long waiting times for social housing while living in temporary accommodation.
 Following domestic abuse, Miryan stopped working and was evicted, which led to her moving from one temporary accommodation to another.

4.4 Life before social housing: housing quality and conditions

Whilst people move into social housing for a variety of reasons, poor housing quality is a widespread issue, particularly for those moving from temporary accommodation and the private rented sector. Poor conditions, including damp and mould, often have wider impacts on health outcomes.²² The high prevalence of poor conditions in people's previous homes shows why social housing is needed. We know that private rented homes are twice as likely to be in poor condition compared to social homes – 21% of private rented homes fail the decent homes standard compared to 10% of social homes.²³ Previous Shelter research found that three-quarters of temporary accommodation is in poor condition.²⁴

One in three (34%) social tenants were not satisfied with the condition of where they were living previously. Out of those who had a landlord in their previous home, nearly 4 in 10

²² see Clark et al (2023) and HACT (2025).

²³ MHCLG (2025), English Housing Survey 2023 to 2024: headline findings on housing quality and energy efficiency, Annex Table 1.4

²⁴ Shelter (2023) Still Living in Limbo.

(38%) were not satisfied with how their landlord repaired and maintained their previous housing situation or accommodation.

69% of new social tenants said that they have experienced some sort of issue with the condition of their previous housing situation or accommodation. Most commonly experienced issues were:

- Mould, condensation, or damp problems (41%).
- Issues with heating (22%) and safety hazards e.g. faulty wiring, fire risks, or poorly secured / unsafe locks and doors (20%).
- Unsuitable room sharing conditions due to not enough bedrooms e.g. parents sharing a bedroom with children, older children sharing a bedroom with siblings of a different sex, living spaces used for sleeping, etc. (14%).

Poor conditions and inadequate facilities often affected people's eating and cooking habits. Insights from the in-depth qualitative interviews showed that this is particularly pronounced among those who lived in temporary accommodation, had mobility issues, or stayed with friends and family.

Temporary accommodation often means that kitchen facilities were shared or far removed from tenants' rooms, sometimes with no space to wash dishes or make a cup of tea within their room. In response to open-ended questions survey respondents reflected that this often meant a lack of privacy or general inability to cook properly, particularly if there were mobility issues present: "due to health issues, not having my own kitchen and having a fire door between my room and kitchen made it hard to cook and eat properly".

"There was only one real cooking facility point which was on the other side of the house. I have some mobility issues, so... My diet kind of went out the window, my healthy eating went out the window. Loads of ready meals and stuff like that. I had access to a microwave."

Steve, 45-54, moved from private rented sector to temporary accommodation

The lack of cooking facilities meant that people in temporary accommodation had to buy more take-away food than they usually do. This led to greater expense and further financial pressures ("you're having to buy takeaway food if you can't cook for yourself").

4.5 Life before social housing: local services and community

Belonging to a community and having access to local services, such as community centres, is a key part of a fulfilling life. To be able to assess the impact of access to community services in new housing, we need to understand tenant's experiences of local services and local community in their previous housing. When people are moved away from the area they know and from their support networks, this can put their access to such services at risk. Overall, most respondents had access to local amenities like shops and parks in their previous homes or housing situation. However, travel to support networks or workplaces was often more time-consuming than to other essential locations.

"And we were still running backwards and forwards, because I refused to change the kids' school, because moving had already had such a detrimental effect on their health, I refused to move them away from all of their friends. So, we were still traveling Monday to Saturday."

Joanne, 25-34, on driving 50 minutes one way to take her children to school and nursery while staying in temporary accommodation

There is growing evidence that access to local, neighbourhood-level social services and social infrastructure improves economic outcomes, builds community resilience, and improves social trust.²⁵ This includes both physical infrastructure, social networks, and other physical and digital connections. To assess access to this social infrastructure, we asked respondents to share how long they used to travel (one way) in their previous housing to key services:

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²⁵ Local Trust (2023), *Policy spotlight 1: How social infrastructure improves outcomes*

- Most people lived within 30 minutes from shops (91%), public transport (93%), or local green spaces (90%). These locations were quickest to access, with only about 3% travelling more than an hour to get to these locations.
- 83% of respondents with children lived within 30 minutes of their child/children's nursery or childcare. 81% lived within 30 minutes of their child/children's school. Only 3% lived more than an hour away from nursery or school.
- Travelling to see friends or family was more time consuming for more people. Only 64% lived within 30 minutes of their support networks, while 12% had to travel more than an hour to see their friends or family.
- Workplace was another location that was further away. 64% of people lived within 30 minutes and 7% lived more than hour's distance.

Feeling safe at home and in the local area makes a big difference to everyday life and to people's ability to feel settled. 40% of respondents say they worried about crime in the area they lived previously. Over half reported that they felt safe in the area (53%). This shows that social housing can have an additional benefit of making people feel more secure in their local areas and as a result make people feel more settled in their new home.

4.6 Life before social housing: health and wellbeing

Before moving into social rent homes, tenants reported far poorer health than the general population. Many also reported that their previous housing worsened their health. Over half said their old homes harmed their mental health – driving anxiety, stress, and sleep problems, while many also suffered physical health issues such as muscle-related pain or discomfort (e.g. back pain).

- Prior to moving into their current home, 30% of tenants experienced poor health and 19% had excellent or very good health.
- 41% of new tenants said that their previous housing situation had a negative impact on their physical health. Among this group, the most common issues are difficulty sleeping (55%) and bone or muscle-related pain or discomfort, such as back pain (44%). Only 17% of new tenants feel that their previous housing situation had a positive impact on their physical health.

• 55% of new tenants felt that their previous housing situation had a negative impact on their mental health, with the most common issues being anxiety about the future (79%), difficulty sleeping (67%), stress about becoming homeless or losing their home (53%) and financial stress (47%).

4.7 Life before social housing: children's lives

In our research, we are particularly interested in how children's lives are impacted by moving into and living in social housing. So far, we have surveyed 148 households with children to understand children's experiences before they moved to social housing.

We found that children struggled with having suitable spaces to study and play. The condition of the home in particular had a negative impact on their performance at school. Many social tenants reported that their previous housing situation had a negative impact on their children's lives, including:

- 42% reported that their previous housing situation was not suitable for their children to play.
- 35% lived in homes that were not suitable for children to do homework or study.
- 27% reported that their previous housing situation had a negative impact on their children's performance at school. 20% reported that their children arrived at school or nursery tired, 25% missed days at school or nursery and 15% were unable to keep up with school or nursery work. Hunger at school was not as significant an issue, with 3% of respondents reporting their children experiencing hunger at school.

People's previous housing situation had a negative effect on children's physical and mental health, mostly due to quality of housing and disruptions to children's lives, such as having to change schools or leaving friends behind when moving to a new housing. Social tenants also reflected on how their previous housing affected their children's physical and mental health in the period before moving into their social home.

 Nearly a third (30%) of respondents indicated that the physical health of their children had been negatively affected by their previous housing situation. Most common issues were children having trouble sleeping and having chest or breathing problems.

- 40% of those who have children living in the household reported that their children's mental health was negatively affected by their housing. Out of these:
 - 43% of children had difficulty sleeping. Often this is linked to having inappropriate space or living in noisy temporary accommodation.
 - o 32% of children felt lonely or had difficulties making friends.
 - o 26% of children felt stressed about their schoolwork.

People we spoke to told us that living in temporary accommodation with children can have additional negative impacts. Our interviewees suggested this has detrimental issues for children who have learning needs or developmental disabilities as any change or instability is particularly difficult to manage. Below, we share Cynthia's story to illustrate how children's lives are affected while in temporary accommodation.

Children in temporary accommodation

Cynthia is a young parent who is currently living in a social home with her one-year-old child. Shortly after getting pregnant, she had to move out of her mum's home due to overcrowding and was allocated a room in temporary accommodation for young parents. With certain obligations placed on tenants, such as curfew, and the CCTV in operation, Cynthia found the place invasive to her and her son's privacy.

Whilst living in a room with her son, there was no space to store his toys and no bathroom facilities to have a bath for her young child. The housing was also disruptive to her son's sleep: "he was trying to sleep and because my bedroom was like right next to the [communal] living room and the kitchen, so any move that I would make would just wake him up".

Cynthia, 18-24, moved from temporary accommodation

4.8 Summary

The data in the first survey provides unique insights into the lives of people before they move into a social home. The baseline results will be used to observe change over time and the impact that living in social housing has on people's everyday experiences.

Our research found that many of the new social tenants were previously homeless or living in insecure private renting. Their housing situation often had a negative impact on their lives, including:

- Financial wellbeing. Many respondents faced financial hardship and experienced
 difficulties with planning their future in their previous housing situation. Half of
 respondents (50%) struggled to save and many experienced difficulties with being able
 to afford essentials (44%).
- Planning for the future. Their previous housing situation also affected people's abilities to build fulfilling futures. For almost half (46%) of new tenants, their previous housing had a negative impact on their ability to plan for the future, and for 44% it negatively affected their ability to make long-term decisions.
- House quality and condition. Housing quality was a substantial issue for many tenants before they moved to their current homes. 69% of new social tenants said that they experienced some sort of issue with the condition of where they were living before.
- Health impacts. Many social tenants say where they were living previously negatively
 affected their mental health (55%), causing anxiety, stress, and sleep problems. 42%
 suffered physical health issues related to their previous accommodation, such as chronic
 pain.
- Impact on children. The health and wellbeing of children was significantly affected by
 their previous housing situation, with many experiencing sleep and respiratory problems.
 A significant proportion of parents reported that their children experienced disruption to
 their education, due to limited or no access to suitable space to study or worsened
 mental health, such as stress about homework and general anxiety.

5. Research Findings: the impact of a new social home

To understand the immediate impact of moving into a new social home, we tracked changes in the lives of tenants from where they lived previously to how they are doing three months into their new tenancy.

We measure 'meaningful improvement' as a movement from a negative or neutral response category to a positive response category in line with social value methodology (see Methodology).

Please note, not every respondent to the first survey has responded to the second survey at the time of writing this report. To date we have received 134 responses to the second survey on immediate impact (within 3 months after moving in). This means the first survey results in this section aren't comparable to the findings in the previous section due to the smaller sample size (134 compared to data from 420 people who responded to the first survey).

The following section shares the emerging findings looking at the immediate impact on:

- Affordability and financial wellbeing
- Stability and future planning
- Housing quality and condition
- Local services and community
- Health and wellbeing impacts
- Impact on children's lives

5.1 New social home: affordability & financial wellbeing

Moving into secure housing and paying social rent can have a substantial impact on the financial wellbeing of tenants. Analysis by Shelter suggests that social rents are around two-

thirds cheaper than private rents.²⁶ Our research shows that moving to social housing can have significant impact on financial wellbeing: due to lower rent and being better able to afford utility bills, transport costs and an overall improved ability to manage finances.

Prior to moving in, 73% indicated they were just about getting by or found it quite difficult to manage financially.²⁷ Out of those who were not doing well financially, 25% reported meaningful improvement in financial wellbeing.

The survey results show there has been significant improvement in social tenants' financial wellbeing within a few months of moving into their new social home (based on 134 responses).

- Struggling to afford to keep the home warm. Nine in ten (89%) tenants who struggled to keep their previous home or accommodation warm no longer experience this in their new social home.
- Being in debt (not including rent arrears). Out of those who were in debt before moving to social housing, half (51%) are no longer in debt three months after moving in.²⁸
- Struggling to afford essentials. 44% of those who had reported struggling to afford
 essentials before moving to social housing no longer experienced this three months after
 moving in.
- **Struggling to save.** Four in ten (39%) of those who had reported struggling to save in their previous housing no longer experienced this in second survey.
- **Struggling to afford travel cost.** Out of those who struggled to afford travel costs prior to moving to social housing, 59% no longer experienced this in the second survey.

While there might be many reasons why these outcomes changed for tenants, the emerging findings suggest that social housing has a direct meaningful improvement on financial outcomes, particularly when it comes to tenant's ability to afford rent and utility bills. The

²⁶ Shelter England (2024), Living in a social home is over 60% more affordable than private renting.

²⁷ We are discussing only findings from 134 respondents who took part in both survey waves. As a result, some findings might be different from the data presented in previous sections that was based on 420 responses.

²⁸ A third (34%) of tenants were in debt before moving into their social home. Base: 134 social tenants.

survey tracks and compares the impact of previous and current housing on their financial wellbeing over time:

- **Ability to afford rent.** 52% of social tenants said that they are better able to afford rent due to moving into social rent home. That is, out of those whose previous housing situation had negative or no impact on their ability to pay rent, just over half said that their current home has led to a meaningful improvement on their ability to afford rent.
- **Ability to afford utility bills.** 45% of tenants said they are better able to afford utility bills due to moving into their social rent home.
- Ability to afford basic necessities, such as food and clothing. 37% of respondents said that they are better able to pay for basic necessities due to moving into their social rent home.
- **Ability to save.** 35% of respondents said that they save are able to save better due to moving into their social rent home.

Findings suggest that moving into a new social rent home has meaningful positive impact on financial wellbeing, particularly in relation to a tenant's ability to afford rent and afford utility bills.

The findings suggest a significant improvement in people's financial wellbeing. While there are many reasons why people's ability to save and afford to keep homes warm improves, reduced housing costs are a significant factor. Social tenants recognise that over time, reduced housing costs and greater stability of housing contributes to improved financial outcomes. However, some tenants still struggle to save and afford essentials within three months of moving into a social home. One of the reasons for this may be initial costs of moving that can affect people's savings at the point of moving in.

Living in social housing helps residents handle unexpected expenses easier, particularly when it comes to repairs. Tenants feel more secure knowing that if something breaks, they will not have to spend money fixing it, as the quote below illustrates.

"When things go wrong, when the repairs, stuff like that, there's less pressure. I think with regards to that and finances and if something does

go wrong. [..] it relieves the stress because a lot of that stress of finances, affording things is taken off because you know that there's someone there to help."

Susan, 35-44, used to live with friends or family

Tenants engaged in this research project have highlighted the impact that costs associated with moving into a new social rent home can have on household finances. Key costs include the hiring of a company or transport to move furniture and belongings to the new property and initial home improvements such as flooring and painting.

Many social rent properties are let without flooring or furnishings, which adds a financial burden to tenants. Over half (57%) of social tenants said they were not provided with white goods (such as a fridge or a cooker), flooring or window blinds when they moved into their social home.²⁹ We anticipate this may be a short-term effect associated with moving homes and will report on the long-term impact on ability to save in the final report.

"We've had to buy so much, and we needed absolutely everything from flooring to sofa, fridge, freezers, curtains. It's been a lot, but I have obviously got a lot of help around me, but it will just be a difficult 2-3 months [..] I had to borrow a lot of money, and it will get paid back in the future. My family, they don't need it back at the minute so they're happy to. It would just take a couple of months to pay them and get back on our feet."

Poppy, 18-24, moved from living with friends or family

There have not been significant changes to people's employment in the first three months. Only a handful of respondents reported changes in employment.

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²⁹ Base: 420 survey respondents.

Financial wellbeing after moving to social housing

Carol is retired and up until recently lived in a caravan where winters were "absolutely freezing" and heating costs made life "very miserable." High bills and rent left her struggling, especially while managing serious health conditions. Moving into social housing allowed her to stay near her GP and family. Her monthly costs have dropped by around £400. She estimates that her bills are nearly eight times lower than before.

The impact on her wellbeing has been immediate. Lower rent and running costs mean she worries less about money, sleeps better, and can focus on managing her health. Social housing, she says, gives her the security to remain independent in older age without the constant financial strain.

The difference has been life-changing: "I worry less about money, I sleep better, and I can concentrate on my health." For Carol, social housing provides both financial relief and the security to stay independent.

Carol, 65+, moved from living in a caravan

5.2 New social home: stability & future planning

While there may be many reasons why social tenants may feel more in control of their lives after moving, social lettings can offer substantially more security. 80% of new social rent lettings are lifetime tenancies.³⁰ The stability offered by lifetime tenancies contrasts significantly with the insecure nature of living in private rented accommodation, temporary accommodation or staying temporarily with friends or family.

Social tenants say they're better able to plan for the future. 71% of respondents indicated that their previous housing situation had either no impact or a negative impact on their ability to plan for the future (base: 130). 62% reported that moving into a social rent home has had

³⁰ MHCLG (2025), Social housing lettings in England, tenancies: April 2023 to March 2024

a meaningful improvement on their ability to plan for the future. One social tenant, Michael, told us that moving into a social rent home had reduced his suicidal ideation. His quote below illustrates that the extent to which providing safe secure accommodation can have on people's ability to plan for the future.

"Words cannot express that. I have hope for the future. [..] I do not have to take my life now at the end of the day because I am safe and secure."

Michael, 45-54, moved from hospital stay

Tenants also report being better able to make long-term decisions. 79% of respondents said that their previous housing had either no or a negative impact on their ability to make long-term decisions.³¹ Out of these, 60% said that their new housing has led to meaningful improvements on their ability to make long-term life decisions.

In interviews people told us about the positive impact that stable housing has on their lives, including ability and confidence to control bigger changes in life.

Moving from temporary accommodation to stable housing

After a relationship breakdown, Steve left the rented property as he could not update the tenancy in his name. Following an eviction, he spent five months in temporary accommodation, a single room in a hostel. The living conditions the living conditions were poor and the facilities were inadequate. "There was only one cooking facility on the other side of the building... I have got mobility issues, so my diet went out the window," said Steve. Shared bathrooms, no laundry facilities, and no free parking options added stress and expenses. "I had to be in my car by eight in the morning or risk a ticket."

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³¹ Base: 122 survey respondents.

Since moving into his new ground-floor social housing flat, the change has been substantial. "It's the first time I've lived on my own property in 48 years... it's a safe space." With proper kitchen facilities, his diet has improved, and he sleeps better. "Just the feeling of long-term security" has boosted his mental health. Now living near his children and familiar places, Steve says, "I can plan for the future – it's a whole new outlook."

Steve, 45-54, moved from temporary accommodation

5.3 New social home: housing quality and condition

Poor conditions and inadequate repair services were common for many new social tenants in their previous housing situation. Our research suggests that moving into social rent homes has transformed their experience. The majority report significant improvements in both the quality of their homes and the way repairs are handled, showing that affordable good quality housing can raise living standards.

- 49% said they were not satisfied with the condition of their previous housing situation (base: 129). Of this group, 78% reported an improvement to housing conditions after moving into their social rent home.
- 53% of tenants said that they had not been satisfied with how their previous landlord handles repairs (base: 111). 70% reported a meaningful increase in their satisfaction with how their landlords handles repairs.

Our qualitative research adds to existing evidence that the link between the housing quality and health is significant.³² The case study below illustrates how one of the interviewees experienced profound improvements to his mental and physical health due to the improved housing conditions in his new social home.

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³² HACT (2025), <u>The Story of ADaM: A process review of the collaboration between Housing and Health in the East of England around Asthma, Damp and Mould (ADaM)</u>

Quality of housing and health

Jacob used to live in a privately rented home with a flatmate before moving to his current social home. He moved partly because of the relationship breakdown with the flatmate and because of the state of the property. "The condition of the house, severe damp to the point where the wooden window frames were rotting through and you could poke through from the outside to the inside", says Jacob. As a result, "the mould and the damp became just overwhelming, I couldn't actually smell anything by the time I moved out of there." This had an impact on his eating habits: "I think there were so many spores in the area. I seemed to be having a reaction to it, so I didn't really care about eating". The state of the property was having significant impact on his flatmate and their relationship: "He was constantly trying to clean and get rid of smells [..] and he lashed out a lot".

Jacob is relieved that now he does not have to worry about repairs as the quality of his social home is significantly better: "Building is more manageable, rent is more manageable, everything works better". This change had a significant positive impact on his health. "My mum commented as well [that] I seem to become more myself, more vibrant, healthier, and my mental health improved dramatically," says Jacob. The improved quality of his home also had a significant impact on his physical health and eating. "In the new place I can smell and taste, I have grown more interested in having nice food and making time to prepare something. It's easier, more convenient as well because the kitchen [in previous property] was deteriorating, with countertops falling apart and a failing cooker".

Jacob, 35-44, moved from private rented sector

5.4 New social home: local services and community

Moving to a new area and housing situation presents individuals with both opportunities and challenges relating to being part of the local community. Responses from the first survey showed that 42% of new social tenants were able to stay in the same area where they grew up or had lived for a long time. As previously noted, access to community spaces and social infrastructure can substantially improve people's lives, including their health and wellbeing.

Our findings show that moving into a social home is driving measurable improvement in community related outcomes. Many tenants are now more connected to neighbours, have better access to advice locally, and have a stronger sense of belonging. These changes show that investment in social housing can make people more connected and strengthen communities.

The changes include the following:

- 70% are now able to obtain advice locally, whereas they could not in their previous home.
- 46% now belong to the neighbourhood, whereas they did not in their previous housing.
- 83% now have easy access to green spaces, whereas they did not in their previous housing.
- 41% now regularly talk to neighbours, whereas they did not in their previous housing.

This suggests that a substantial group of the social tenants we've tracked have already seen meaningful changes to their ability to connect to the local community in three months. We are keen to see how people's lives change over time and how many more people attain these changes over a longer period of time.

5.5 New social home: health and wellbeing

In the previous sections we showed that many people moving into a social home are moving from insecure and unaffordable accommodation that can harm their physical and mental health. In this research project, we are particularly interested in how health outcomes change over time and the extent to which their new social home influences these outcomes.

A substantial proportion of social tenants report that they see improvements in their physical and mental health shortly after moving in the social housing (within three months of the start of their tenancy). 44% of social tenants said their new housing has led to meaningful improvements to their physical health, while their previous housing did not. By far most common physical health aspect to improve after moving is sleep. 59% of tenants said their physical health improved due to sleeping better after moving into new housing. 19% of those who reported improvement in physical health said their chest or breathing problems have reduced and 18% saw a reduction in bone or muscle-related pain or discomfort.

"I started crying. I was just so relieved to finally have my own place. [..] Since moving here, there has been far less depression and anxiety. I'd say my mental health has really improved because I get out every day. I take my dog walking, my physical health as well as much better [..] I have my own space and it's actually quite large. It's got like a lovely wooden floor throughout, I am able to do my yoga and do like a little workout every day so I'm able to do those self-care things."

Miryan, 35-44, moved to social housing from temporary accommodation

Moving to a new social home leads to meaningful improvements on people's mental health. Six in ten (61%) social tenants report a meaningful improvement to their mental health three months after moving in. That means that the majority of people whose previous housing situation negatively impacted their mental health have since seen improvements to their mental health due to moving into a social home.

Social tenants report improvements to their mental health due to various factors, including sleep and a reduction in financial pressures since moving to their new social home (base: 134):

- 43% reported a reduction in anxiety about the future.
- 36% reported a reduction in stress relating to becoming homeless or losing their home.
- 30% are sleeping better.

25% reported a reduction in financial pressures.

Social housing and improved health outcomes

For nearly two years, Shireen waited for a social home while moving between poor-quality private rented and temporary accommodation. Her last privately rented flat was damp and mouldy, affecting her health and daily life. "I didn't realise how much anxiety the place was causing me until I drove there [after moving out] just to clean it."

Living far from essential services also made life harder. Shireen has longterm health needs, which makes hospital visits frequent. "Having the hospital thing [so close] is such a big relief, rather than spending three hours to get to and from an appointment."

Her new social home has transformed her routines. "My eating habits – I'm actually properly sorting out the dog, then eating a proper dinner... before, it was hit and miss if I ate at all." She also feels a stronger sense of safety and support: "It's more of a sense of security... knowing that if you do have a problem, you've got a voice compared to being a private tenant."

For Shireen, the move has meant more than a roof over her head – it has brought stability, better health, and the reassurance that she can plan for the future.

Shireen, 45-54, moved from private rented sector

5.6 New social home: impact on children's lives

A record numbers of children are homeless with their families (as many as 169,000 in March 2025), – which is another key reason why more investment in social housing is needed.³³ A House of Commons report highlights how children's lives are affected by living in temporary accommodation: they aften face frequent moves, long stays, overcrowding, and otherwise unsuitable facilities.³⁴ Shelter's "Still Living in Limbo" report on temporary accommodation shows that more than one in three (35%) parents say their children do not have their own bed.³⁵

"It's nice knowing that when my daughter's older, she'll have a place to come home to, that she's grown up in as well because it's your family home."

Susan, 34-45, moved to social housing after her home was repossessed

We monitored change in children's outcomes, as reported by their parents in the survey. So far, we have received 43 responses to the second survey from households with children under 18 years old. This data allows us to explore change in children's lives over the first three months of moving into their new social home. Most households with children in our sample moved from privately rented accommodation (35%) or from temporary accommodation provided by the council (40%).

Our interim findings suggest that many families see a big change in children's space to play. Out of the 21 households where children did not have enough space to play, 18 now live in homes that are suitable for children to play. As the number of responses grows, we will explore this finding further.

³³ MHCLG, Statutory homelessness live tables, TableTA1; Investment in social housing: the sustainable solution to child poverty; Government data on homelessness - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

³⁴ England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation

³⁵ Shelter (2023) Still Living in Limbo.

Our interview data also suggests that having more places to play and particularly more outdoors play is one of the biggest impacts that moving into social housing has on children's lives. Households with children often move from very small spaces with little privacy or space, including living with family and friends. Interviewees suggest that more space often has additional impacts: children sleep better and those with learning disabilities or mental health needs find it easier to manage their daily lives with more with more private space.

Housing security and space to play

Laura had to leave her previous private rented home where she lived with her two children after her relationship broke down. She and her children temporarily stayed with a family member in overcrowded conditions before moving into her social home. Her children's ability to play was significantly limited due to a lack of space. Moving to a stable social home with space to play and spend time as a family has had a significant impact on her children's lives, including their mental health and wellbeing.

"But now, when I pick them back from school, we cook, we sing songs together, so they spend more time with me. And yeah, we get to play together, and now they have their own space. So I think the big impact would be spending more time with me and having the space that they have now to do all the things that they like, to play around and be kids."

Laura, 35-44, moved after living with friends and then in temporary accommodation

Many of the parents who had unsuitable space to study said that their children now have suitable space to study (18 out of 23 parents).

When it comes to direct impact of housing to children's lives there are a few emerging themes from the research so far:

- Children's mental health. Our findings suggest that moving to social housing can lead to significant meaningful improvements to children's mental health. Emerging findings suggests this is due to sleeping better, feeling more secure and anxious about the future.
- Children's physical health. The emerging findings on children's physical health are similar. Parents report that their children's physical health has improved due to having more space, reduced noise, and better access to outdoors spaces.
- Children's development. Social housing also can lead to led to meaningful
 improvements to children's development within just three months of moving into a social
 home. This could be due to many parents reporting having more suitable space to play
 and do their homework.
- Children's performance at school / nursery. We are already seeing some early signs
 that children's performance at school or nursery has improved. This could be due to
 having better space to study, having to travel less to nursery or school, sleeping better
 and more stable everyday routine.

While interviewees shared stories of long commute times to children's schools, nurseries, or daycare while living in temporary accommodation, our survey data does not yet provide evidence to understand the scale of this impact. We will keep monitoring survey results over the next half a year to capture any emerging findings.

Social housing and changes to children's lives

Poppy, a mother of three, has faced years of housing instability that deeply affected her family. Her journey included seven moves in five years, eviction from privately rented flats, and prolonged stays in unsuitable emergency accommodation. One landlord told her, the day before she went into hospital to give birth, that she could not return with her newborn.

Her eldest daughter, who has ADHD and autism, "does not like change," making each move more and more distressing. Once, while living in temporary accommodation, Poppy used to drive 90 minutes each way to just to keep her daughter in the same nursery and maintain stability in her

life. Temporary accommodation was noisy and overcrowded, which had additional negative impact on her daughter.

Social housing has transformed their lives. "It is just independence... it is finally a happy home for me and my children. My landlord now is amazing... they come out the same day if it is an emergency." The family now lives near relatives in "a very quiet... very safe" area, with a garden "so big they can run around and play with their toys." For Poppy, the difference is clear: "it's perfect, really."

Poppy, 24 or under, moved from privately rented home

7. Conclusions

Summary

Shelter, in partnership with IKEA, commissioned HACT to deliver this longitudinal research project looking at the impact of moving into a social rent home. Shelter and IKEA are working together as part of a long-term partnership that will see the two organisations joining forces to defend the one thing they value most: home.

The emerging findings from the project show that moving into a social rent home drives immediate improvements to people's lives, including their health, financial wellbeing and children's lives. We surveyed people within 3 months after they moved into their new social rent home. This allowed us to understand the immediate impact social housing has on people's lives.

The findings show significant immediate changes in social tenant's mental health, their ability to pay rent, improvement in the quality of their home, and significantly improved ability to plan future and acquire a sense of stability in their lives. The emerging findings show that children's lives are positively impacted by moving into social housing as many have more space to play and study in their new social homes.

Key emerging findings from the data collected to date show the following changes within three months:

- Improvements to financial wellbeing. 52% respondents reported their new social rent home has had a meaningful improvement on their ability to pay rent. 45% respondents said their new social rent home has had a meaningful improvement on their ability to afford utility bills.
- Improvements to stability and ability to plan for the future. 62% reported that moving into a social rent home has had a meaningful improvement on their ability to plan for the future.

- Improvements to housing conditions. Where tenants were not satisfied with the condition of their previous home, 78% of them reported an improvement in their housing conditions after moving into their social rent home.
- Improvements to engagement with community and local services. Almost half (46%) now report feeling they belong, whereas they did not in their previous accommodation.
- **Improvements to health.** Six in ten (61%) tenants who said that their previous housing situation had no or a negative impact on their mental health reported that their new social rent home has led to meaningful improvements in their mental health.
- **Improvements for children.** Many of the parents we've heard from report that their children now have suitable space to play and study.

Next steps

This report is a mid-project interim report intended to share emerging insights from the data collected to date on the immediate impact of moving into and living in a social rent home.

The sample of data collected for the first and second surveys will increase between now and the final report and we will collect data to understand the medium- and longer-term impacts of moving into a social rent home. The third survey is due to commence shortly, with the fourth survey to follow later in 2025, following up with tenants nine and twelve months from moving in respectively.

We have conducted 22 in-depth interviews to date with a further 28 tenants due to take part in interviews between now and the end of the project. With some of them, we will conduct repeat interviews to gain a deeper insight into how people's lives change over time.

This data will enable us to understand the type of impact we can expect in people's lives in the short, medium, and long-term after moving into a social rent home. In the final report, we will conduct more segmented analysis to develop insight on people coming from different routes into social housing, those living in local authority and housing associations' properties and the different experiences of new social tenants, depending on factors such as gender, ethnic group, household type and age.

This data will be presented in the final project report in 2026.

Appendix 1: Theory of Change

Theory of Change:

- Stable, good quality, and affordable social rent housing enables individuals to plan their future, be independent, attain good health, wellbeing, educational, and employment outcomes in the area where they live.
- Local communities are sustainable and diverse, enabling effective support to address different needs.
- A well-functioning society where individuals can get support to attain good life outcomes.

Inputs

- Public support (attitudes to social housing).
- Appropriate allocation policies.
- Wrap around support provided by social landlords.
- Community activities and support services
- Well-functioning statutory services.

Outputs

- Housing that is affordable and provided in places of most need.
- Housing that is good quality.
- Secure and stable tenure housing.
- Housing and landlords that meets different needs.
- Timely and responsive local support services.
- Access to social capital and aspirational spaces.

Outcomes

Stability of tenure & staying in the same area (employment and education)

- Individuals can maintain their existing employment/training/education and access new employment/training/education opportunities.
- Services, work, and education are geographically accessible (i.e. shorter commutes).
- Individuals can stay in stable housing and make long-term life decisions.
- Children have stable education without disruption (e.g. miss fewer days of school, arrive at school ready to learn).
- Children have improved educational attainment (e.g. keep up with homework)
- Key workers are able to stay in the area to provide essential services.

Good quality housing

- Individuals live in safe, warm, and appropriate housing.
- Housing is maintained through responsive services.

Health & wellbeing

- Individuals and their families have better overall physical and mental health.
- Relief from stress/depression/anxiety due to greater security
- Individuals have access to timely support that that address their needs.
- Decreased need for healthcare appointments due to fewer health problems
- Reduced public spending due to improved health.

Affordability

- Increased financial comfort due to decreased debt or increased savings
- Better able to afford rent and pay for other essentials
- Reduced public spending as people move from TA or PRS (reduced HB spend).

Relations & community

- Individuals live in a safe environment and have access to green spaces.
- Individuals belong to their communities.
- Individuals have control and responsibility over their communities.
- Interdependent and diverse tenure communities.
- Individuals have access to socialising opportunities locally.

Assumptions (based on existing evidence)

- Social rent housing allows individuals to stay in area they were living & working due to cheaper rent & security of tenure.
- Housing quality in social housing is better than in PRS & TA.
- The impact will be different for people moving from PRS and with different types of homelessness experiences (e.g. out of area
- People's experiences of moving into a social home are affected by various factors, including but not limited to:
- o Previous tenure and condition/quality of the previous housing situation (incl. size of property/overcrowding/responsive repairs).
- o demographic factors (e.g. disability, ethnicity, age, household type).
- o type of landlord and support services available.
- o type of home (e.g. general needs/specialist),
- o future aspirations.
- $_{\odot}$ satisfaction with allocation/moving in process, incl wait on housing lists.

Appendix 2: Research framework

The evaluation and research framework translates theory of change into measures, bringing the gap between expected impact and ways to measure it. Each impact area and outcomes indicated in the theory of change are then linked to specific measures. Measures are developed based on comparable studies and HACT social value bank. Each of the measures will be used in either survey, case studies, and/or interviews. The following outcomes will be different for people moving from different tenures (PRS, TA) and with experiences of different types of homelessness. We will aim to capture this through the survey.

Impact area	Outcome	Evidence required	Question in the pre-survey
Stability of	Ability to develop long-term plans /	Ability to stay in the area where they have grown up or lived	18; 23
tenure &	ambitions and feel secure in their home	for a long time.	
staying in the	Independence / ability to influence life	Individuals feel more in control of their life	23
same area	decisions		
	Ability to maintain their current	Individual would have lost their job/training/education	Covered by interviews and
	job/training/education by staying in the	opportunities if they moved to a different area	case studies
	area		
	Ability to find employment / training /	Individuals were able to find new education and employment	37 & Post-occupancy survey
	education in the area	opportunities since moving in in their local area	
	Services, work, and education are	Living closer to services, work and education compared to	17
	geographically accessible (i.e. shorter	where living before	
	commutes)		
	Key workers are able to stay in the area	Key workers can afford to live in the area where they work	38; 39; 42; 43
	to provide essential services.		
	Children have stable education without	Children are missing fewer days of school	30; 36
	disruption (e.g. miss fewer days of	Children are arriving at school ready to learn (e.g. less likely	
	school, arrive at school ready to learn).	to arrive at school tired)	
	Children have improved educational	Children are keeping up with home and school work	30; 36
	attainment (e.g. keep up with	Children have improved results from home and school work	
	homework)		
Quality of	Improved living conditions	If living conditions in social rent house are better than their	20; 21
housing		previous accommodation	

	Responsive services	If housing services are better/more responsive than in their previous accommodation	19
Health & wellbeing	Relief from stress/depression/anxiety	Reduced stress that is linked to more stable and secure housing	23-27
	Good overall health	Meaningful improvement in overall health since moving in	22
Affordability	Increased financial comfort	Meaningful improvement in individual's ability to pay for rent Relief from debt burden/increased savings Ability to pay for essentials & non-essentials	42; 43
Relations & social capital	Access to community infrastructure / local social groups	If individual is a regular member of local social groups Regular use of community centres Ability to access local services Able to obtain advice locally	18
	Feel belonging to neighbourhood	If individual feel like they belong to the area If individuals feel the area belongs to them	18
	Ability to maintain friendship and family ties in local area	Individuals would have lost those ties if they had to move to a cheaper area.	17
	Reduced loneliness - having regular social contact	Individuals are able to maintain their pre-existing relationships that they would have lost if they move out Individuals feel less isolated since moving in	18 To be explored in interviews and focus groups
	Individuals have control and responsibility over their communities.	If individuals take up activities where they have control over decisions made about their community There are opportunities provided by their landlord to get involved in governance of their community/housing; or if there are shared decisions.	18

Appendix 3: Methodology detail

Demographic data

This section considers the profile of people participating in the research and the previous housing and life circumstances of these tenants. It's based on the responses to the first baseline survey.

The demographic picture of tenants engaged in this research reflects the population of all new social housing tenants. Within the data sample:

- 70% of respondents are female and 27% are male.
- 35% are under age 35 and 16% are over age 65.
- The majority (76%) identify as White, 3% are Asian and 7% are Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African. The full breakdown can be found in The Appendix.

In terms of other characteristics of respondents at the point of completing the first survey 23% were employed full-time, 15% were employed part time at the time and 24% were unemployed due to health or disability reasons.

31% of respondents' day-to-day activities were severely limited because of a physical or mental health condition or illness which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months, 26% said their activities were a little limited. 35% said their activities were not limited due to health

At the point of completing the first survey:

- 35% of respondents lived with children under 18 in their household. 48% of these respondents had children of school age (4-18) and 41% had a newborn or a toddler (one to three years old).
- 5% of respondents lived with children over 18 years old in the household.
- 25% of all respondents live in single parent households

Interview data

The report draws on 22 qualitative interviews with residents from 11 different landlords. Each interview took 45-60min and was conducted either online or by phone. Out of these interviews, we created 6 case studies that are included in the report.

Of these 22 interviewees, 5 moved from living with family and friends, 7 from temporary accommodation or homelessness, and 9 from privately rented sector. 2 interviewees used to be owner-occupier.

8 out of 22 (36%) interviewees had children in their household.

17 out of 22 (77%) were from white ethnic group, 2 were of mixed ethnicity, 2 from Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African ethnic background, and 1 was Asian or Asian British.

The table below show the age groups of participants:

24 or under	2
25-34	3
35-44	5
45-54	6
55-64	1
65 or older	5

Accessing a social rent home

The experience of moving from their previous housing situation to the new social rent home varies amongst respondents.

The time it took to be awarded a tenancy varied, with the data showing that more than half (55%) of applicants are awarded a tenancy within a year of application (see Figure 3). There is no significant difference in waiting times between people in temporary accommodation and other routes to social housing. While waiting times for a tenancy while living in temporary accommodation vary across different locations, the most common length of time for single households with children to be in temporary accommodation was for less than six months.³⁶

³⁶ MHCLG (2024), Statutory homelessness in England: Infographic 2023-24

Waiting times to be awarded tenancy

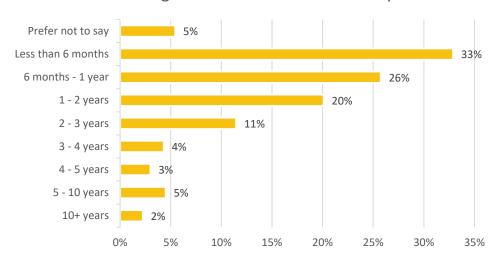


Figure 3. Waiting times to be awarded a tenancy. Base: 584

Figure 4 (below) outlines how long people lived in their previous housing situation or housing situation. For those who did not live in council-provided temporary accommodation, most had homes where they lived for more than two years. While people in temporary accommodation were more likely to have stayed for a short time in their previous accommodation, nearly half (45%) of them lived in accommodation that is supposed to be temporary for more than a year. This is a long time to live in damaging temporary accommodation.

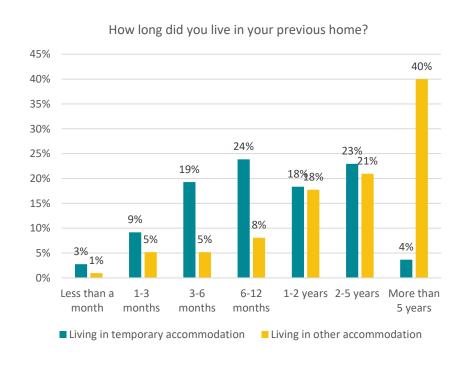


Figure 4. Time lived in previous housing situation (base: 420)

People move into social housing from various circumstances, and it is important that their new long-term home addresses their needs and preferences. We asked the new social tenants if the tenancy allocation process gave them meaningful choice of where they are going to build their lives.

- 74% of respondents reported that their needs and preferences were taken into account when being allocated new social home.
- However, when it comes to seeing their future home or considering between different options, 52% were given choice of which home to move in.
- 37% were given one choice.
- 70% of those who were previously placed in temporary accommodation were awarded tenancies in the same local authority where they asked for help.

Our interview data suggests that the experience of having to choose between taking a home that is not suitable or not having a home at all is not only common but has long-term impact. In the quote below, we hear from Shirley, who was allocated a home dedicated for retired people and was not given a different choice. She finds it difficult to connect with her neighbours and feels isolated, as the home is far from her family. Poor ventilation in her home makes living and especially cooking difficult.

"When I viewed the property, they said if I do not accept it, then they would just pass me back onto the Council again. So, I did not really have a choice but to accept it. [..] I do not feel like I belong here. [..] I do not even want to decorate. I have not even bought carpet or nothing because I just do not want to be here."

Shirley, 65+ years old

Advisory panels

To date, there have been 8 online lived experience panel meetings between May 2024 and August 2025. During the meetings members provided feedback on the research framework, survey design and presentation of emerging findings. If members couldn't made the meetings, they were offered one-to-one phone calls. Panel members have shared their

experiences of being a social housing tenant and this insight has informed the design of the research project from the outset.

To date, there have been 8 online learned experience panel meetings between May 2024 and August 2025. As with the lived experience panel, members have provided feedback on the research tools and shared reflections on emerging findings. Members of this panel have been instrumental in supporting landlord recruitment and providing engagement opportunities for HACT and Shelter colleagues to share the research.

Appendix 4: HACT and social value

HACT's approach to social value measurement

HACT partners with organisations across the UK housing sector to drive value for individuals and communities through insight-led products and services, encouraging innovation and collaboration. HACT has pioneered social value in the housing sector, driving value for organisations inside and outside the social housing sector, as they seek to measure and understand their social impact.

Launched in 2022, HACT's online tool Social Value Insight was developed alongside the social housing sector through their Social Value Roadmap which brought together over 50 organisations across housing, procurement and the supply chain to design and develop a new tool to meet the specific requirements of the sector. As such, it provides users with the support, advice and insights needed, whether evidencing social value for an ESG fund, monitoring the social value created through procurement, generating forecasts for proposed developments, or looking to capture the impact of and improve community investment services. Housed within Social Value Insight is HACT's unique suite of social value metrics from the UK Social Value Bank (UKSVB) and UK Built Environment Bank (UKBEB) which focus on individual wellbeing as the determinant for social impact.

HACT's work on social value, community investment and the use of data enables organisations to drive better understanding of the communities they serve through their own services as well as the social impact of their partners. HACT's research and consultancy services help organisations identify cost benefits, analyse and evaluate performance data and deliver strategic insights.

HACT's impact measurement methodology sets the standard for measuring social value from a wellbeing approach. The methodology is based on wellbeing valuation, which is compliant with HM Treasury's Green Book, which endorses wellbeing valuation as one of its recommended methods for measuring social value. The focus is measuring impact, not inputs, meaning HACT's approach focuses on the transformation, rather than simply the transactional.

At the core of the methodology is a suite of social value banks, each of which includes a set of outcome measures that have been quality assured and co-created with Simetrica-Jacobs, who are members of the UK Government's Social Impact Taskforce. Every outcome

measure has a financial proxy attached to it and these are based on the WELLBY, the UK Government's standardised unit of wellbeing value. The HACT methodology has become the standard method used by the social housing sector to measure social impact, with more than 400 organisations attending training and using the model in their business decisions.

This research has used outcome measures from the UK Social Value Bank (UKSVB), which is based on wellbeing valuation and uses data from national data sets relating to self-reported wellbeing and life circumstances and income levels. To calculate the outcomes, large national datasets have been analysed to show how people's self-reported wellbeing changes due to different life circumstances.

Analysis reveals the impact of these various outcomes on life satisfaction and calculates the amount of money that produces the equivalent impact on life satisfaction. Impact is then converted into a monetary amount by estimating the sum of money which would have an equivalent impact on subjective wellbeing. Wellbeing valuations in the UK Social Value Bank provide a £ proxy equivalent uplift in wellbeing the same amount as the outcome.

The UK Social Value Bank provides a suite of 88 outcomes and measures that can be categorised into eleven thematic areas as follows.



Each of these outcome measures have been monetised and include four key elements³⁷:

- Wellbeing value direct impact to an individual in terms of wellbeing.
- Exchequer value indirect impact on the public purse in net fiscal terms.
- Deadweight this is the probability that this outcome would have happened anyway and is applied to social value calculations.

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³⁷ Technical detail about wellbeing and exchequer valuations and deadweight are available in methodology notes published by HACT.

• Total social value – this is wellbeing value plus exchequer value (and includes the deadweight that has been applied to the wellbeing value).

Social value created through the provision of social housing

A key feature of this research is quantifying the impact creating by moving into and living in a social rent home in social value terms.

Using outcome measures from the HACT social value banks and the data collected from tenants, we have quantified the meaningful improvements captured in the second survey and calculated that a **total social value of £2,221**, **719** has been created through the provision of tenancies in the current research sample.

The total social value captures both the direct impact to the wellbeing of tenants as well as the indirect secondary impact to the public purse in net fiscal savings.

Social Value Outcomes	Outcomes achieved*	Total social value
Temporary accommodation to secure housing (no dependent children)	52	£127,997
Temporary accommodation to secure housing (with dependent children)	60	£147,849
Able to obtain advice locally	45	£103,679
Feel belonging to neighbourhood	42	£303,801
Financial comfort	32	£353,707
Full-time employment	1	£12,309
Good overall health	35	£643,132
Greenspaces are easy to access	39	£154,910
Regularly talk to neighbours	38	£99,300
Not worried about crime	14	£56,763
Part-time employment	2	£17,291
Satisfaction with how landlord maintains and repairs home	41	£200,981
TOTAL		£2,221,719

This is an interim figure based on the current research sample and meaningful change captured in the second survey. As our sample increases, we can get a more accurate number of average social value that will allow us to assess potential social value on a larger scale.