

SHELTER



MORE THAN BRICKS

Interim Report: the Human and
Economic Impact of Social Homes

SEPTEMBER 2025



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Executive summary

Living in a good-quality social home is the foundation for a healthy life. Our ground-breaking longitudinal research project in partnership with IKEA has highlighted the immediate benefits of moving into a social rent home. Over 400 tenants have taken part in the project so far and 134 people have taken part in two surveys to allow us to track their experience over time. We have also carried out 22 interviews with new social tenants.

People told us that within three months of moving in:

Social homes improve people's health and wellbeing

- Six in ten (61%) tenants have seen a meaningful improvement to their mental health due to moving into a social home.
- Over a third (36%) say this is due to less stress about becoming homeless or losing their home.
- Three in ten (30%) say their mental health has improved due to sleeping better.

Social homes provide people with an affordable and stable foundation

- Cheaper social rents result in people having more disposable income. Over two-fifths (45%) of tenants surveyed reported that moving into a social home means they are better able to afford utility bills.
- Half (51%) of tenants who were in debt before moving in are no longer in debt.
- Six in ten (62%) tenants reported that moving into a social rent home has had a meaningful improvement on their ability to plan for their future.

Social homes encourage a sense of belonging and provide space to thrive

- Almost half (46%) of social tenants now feel a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood.
- Many of the parents we've heard from say their social home is now suitable for their children to play.

The emerging findings provide an early glimpse into the transformative effects of moving into a social rent home. We're excited to see how these benefits increase over time and identify new benefits as people settle into their new home.

As well as benefits to individuals, we know that building social housing benefits the economy and wider society. This is because it creates new jobs and means people can move into a secure and affordable home. We have carried out new economic analysis to understand the societal impact if we don't build enough social housing. This new analysis shows that:

Not delivering social homes at scale has significant economic consequences

- Not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years would lead to a cost of £117 billion in the first decade.
- This includes £64 billion in direct costs to the government.
- There would be further costs of £52 billion in missed economic opportunities due to the knock-on effects on employment and education.

The evidence is clear. Social rent homes provide significant immediate benefits to people's lives due to moving into a stable and affordable home. There are also significant costs to the government and key public services if social rent delivery remains low and households remain in poor quality and expensive homes.

The solution: the government must ramp up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes over 10 years to end the housing emergency.

Introduction

Home forms the foundation of people's lives. Yet homelessness continues to rise. A record 169,000 children are growing up homeless in temporary accommodation.¹ **Shelter and IKEA are working together to create systemic change to address the housing emergency**, because we share the belief that 'home is everything'.

Social rent homes are the only genuinely affordable homes with rents tied to local incomes. On average, social rents are two-thirds cheaper than private rents.² This helps people who are otherwise being dragged into poverty because of unaffordable housing costs and inadequate housing benefit. As well as being much more affordable, social homes also provide stability and security for people moving from insecure private renting or homelessness. The vast majority of social rent homes are let as lifetime tenancies.³ This removes the constant fear of an unexpected 'no-fault' eviction, and means people have more certainty about their future.

We know that good-quality social homes are the solution to the housing emergency. But we wanted to hear from people who have moved into a social rent home to understand the impact it has on their lives. Shelter is carrying out a ground-breaking two-year longitudinal research project, funded by IKEA. The project is exploring the short (three months), medium (9 months) and longer-term impacts (12 months). **The research is a pivotal step in our partnership that will see our two organisations joining forces to defend the one thing we value most: home.**

This is an interim report highlighting the short-term impact of moving into a social rent home. Shelter commissioned HACT (Housing Associations' Charitable Trust) to deliver the project. The findings in this report are based on the data collected up to early August 2025 and cover the first three months after tenants move into their new home.

We know the impact of social homes extends beyond tenants to wider society. The Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced £39 billion for the next Social and Affordable Homes programme. This will deliver 180,000 grant-funded social rent homes over 10 years: a vital step forward. However, to truly end the housing emergency, we must build 90,000 social rent homes a year for 10 years. The report presents new analysis by Cebr (Centre for Economics and Business Research) on the economic impacts for wider society if we don't ramp up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes a year.

The report is in two parts:

- In the first section, we present the emerging findings from the longitudinal research project looking at **the human impact of moving into a social rent home**. This shows the short-term benefits tenants experience within three months of moving into their new home.
- We then present new findings on **the economic impact of inaction**. This shows that there are significant costs to the government and wider public services if the government does not ramp up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to **IKEA** for partnering with us on this vitally important longitudinal research project. Together, we're exploring the impact of moving into a social rent home. This ground-breaking research project is one of the many initiatives we've launched to address the housing emergency.

Thank you to the **33 participating social landlords** for taking part in the project and sharing the survey with your new tenants.

Thank you to the **12 existing social tenants** who are part of the lived experience panel. They have shared their expertise to support the research project since its beginning.

Thank you to the **learnt experience panel** for giving your time and insight to share feedback on the project design and input into plans to share the findings.

Finally, we are indebted to the **new social tenants** who have shared your experiences of moving into a social rent home via surveys and interviews. We hope you will continue to take part in the project so we can build this important evidence base.



W '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.'
Social tenant, lived experience panel

The human impact of moving into a social home

Within the first three months of moving into a social home, we've seen three important changes to tenants' lives:

1. The positive impact on people's health and wellbeing due to reduced stress, better sleep and improved eating habits.
2. Immediate improvements to people's ability to afford essentials, reduce their debt and plan for their future.
3. Having more space for children to play and a greater sense of belonging.

This section summarises the key findings from the IKEA funded longitudinal research project. Over 400 social tenants have taken part in the project so far. The findings in this section are based on the 134 social tenants who have completed the first two surveys, so we can track their outcomes over time.

HACT has carried out 22 interviews with social tenants. Through these interviews, they gathered more in-depth insights into the immediate impact of moving into a social rent home. Many of the social tenants who have taken part in the research project were previously privately renting or experiencing homelessness. This included living in temporary accommodation or staying with friends or family (see Appendix I for detailed methodology).⁴

W 'I had no idea that social housing could be so good. I couldn't have afforded a flat anything like this. It's in a good location. It's a wonderful flat. It's quite secure, warm. What more can you ask?' Female, 35-44, previously living temporarily with friends

Social homes improve people's health and wellbeing

Living in a good-quality social home is the foundation for a healthy life. Private rented homes and temporary accommodation are insecure, often expensive and in poor condition. Moving to a stable and affordable social home has many health benefits. Within three months of moving in, **six in ten (61%) of tenants have seen a meaningful improvement to their mental health** due to moving into a social home.⁵ Emerging findings suggest that tenants experience immediate improvements to their mental health due to:

- reduced stress
- better sleep
- improved eating habits

Social tenants report that their mental health has been positively impacted due to reduced stress. For example, 43% of tenants say their mental health improved due to reduced anxiety about the future. Over a third (36%) say this is due to less stress about becoming homeless or losing their home. These findings suggest that the stability of social rent homes is a key reason for the immediate improvements to people's mental health.

Some social tenants report that their mental health has improved due to immediate improvements to their sleep. Three in ten (30%) say their improved mental health is due to sleeping better in their new social home. The benefit to sleep has been a key finding of the in-depth interviews, in particular for people moving from temporary accommodation. Many families in temporary accommodation are living in one or two bedrooms, and some children even have to share beds. Shelter's 2023 Still Living in Limbo report found that more than a third (35%) of parents report their children having to share a bed with a family member.⁶



'My sleep quality has been better, because obviously being in my own room, not with my child, has been easier, like because he can sleep better and I can sleep better' Female, 18-24, previously living in temporary accommodation

Social tenants also told us about immediate improvements to their eating habits due to moving into a social rent home. This was particularly true for tenants who previously experienced homelessness. People who lived in temporary accommodation or with friends and family reported having poor cooking facilities and interrupted eating habits. Social rent homes provide facilities to develop healthier eating routines and habits, as Shireen's story shows.

The emerging findings suggest that even within three months of moving into a social home, many tenants report significant improvements to their health and wellbeing.

Shireen's story: social homes improve people's health

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 long-term health needs, which means she needs to make frequent hospital visits.

'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, previously privately renting and living in temporary accommodation

Affordable and stable foundations

Social homes provide people with an affordable and stable base to live their lives. Most of the people taking part in the research project were previously living in a private rented home or experiencing homelessness. These housing situations are insecure and often unaffordable. Moving into a stable and affordable home is a key contributor to the immediate health benefits.



'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.'

Female, 35-44, previously temporarily living with family

Social rent homes are the only genuinely affordable homes with rents tied to local incomes. We know that social rents are, on average, a third of private rents.⁷ Previous Shelter research found that almost nine in ten (87%) households struggle with the cost of their temporary accommodation.⁸ Many residents have to use their own income to pay for their temporary accommodation. This is becoming increasingly expensive due to the massive growth in nightly paid accommodation, as well as the freeze to the temporary accommodation subsidy (housing benefit for temporary accommodation residents).⁹

Moving into a social rent home means that many households are paying less rent. It's therefore unsurprising that half (52%) of new social tenants report a meaningful improvement to their ability to afford rent.¹⁰ Due to the sample size, we're not able to look at the findings for households moving from a private rented home. These results would likely be much higher due to eye-watering private rents.

Cheaper social rent has a knock-on effect on other essential spending and tenants' ability to save money. **Over two-fifths (45%) of tenants surveyed reported that moving into a social home means they are better able to afford utility bills.** Over a third (37%) reported an increased ability to pay for basic necessities. Over a third (35%) of social tenants were better able to save due to moving into their social rent home.¹¹ This suggests that social tenants have seen significant improvements to their ability to afford essentials and save within just a few months.

Some social tenants have already seen their debt reduce. Shockingly, a third (34%) of tenants were in debt before moving in, and **half (51%) of these tenants are no longer in debt.** This is within just three months of moving into their new social home.

We're likely to see a bigger positive impact on people's ability to afford essentials, save and reduce their debt in the later waves of the project. This is due to the upfront costs of moving home. Several of the interviewees mentioned costs around buying white goods and decorating their new home. These costs will be particularly significant for households moving from temporary accommodation or staying with friends or family. But many private renters are also likely to need to buy furniture and white goods for their new social home.

As well as being more affordable, social homes are stable long-term homes. The majority of new social rent lettings are let at lifetime tenancies.¹² And six in ten (62%) social tenants reported that moving into a social rent home has had a meaningful improvement on their ability

to plan for their future. This is due to moving from an often insecure and unaffordable housing situation.



'It gives you that sense of feeling very secure, which is what I wanted, having an autistic son, the one thing I wanted to give us was stability.'

Female, 35-44, previously living temporarily with family

Social tenants have more money in their pockets due to cheaper rent. With more disposable income and the foundation of a stable home, they can plan for the future. Moving to a more stable home has significant health benefits. As Steve mentions, the feeling of long-term security has significantly improved his mental health. He can now afford to live near his children and plan for the future.

Steve's story: the benefits of a stable home

After being evicted from this private rented home, he spent five months in temporary accommodation - a single room in a hostel. The facilities were poor quality and didn't meet his mobility needs.

'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 limited parking added stress and additional expenses. 'I had to be in my car by eight in the morning or risk a ticket.'

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 properly 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, previously living in temporary accommodation

Sense of belonging and space to thrive

Social homes can foster a sense of belonging for adults and children due to the long-term stability they provide. **Almost half (46%) of social tenants now feel a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood within just three months of moving into their new social home.** In contrast, they did not feel a sense of belonging in their previous accommodation.¹³ This increased sense of belonging is likely due to moving to a secure long-term home.

Social tenants also report improvements to their relationships with their neighbours. Two-fifths (41%) of social tenants surveyed now regularly talk to neighbours, whereas they did not in their previous housing situation.¹⁴ The quality of our social relationships, including with neighbours, is a key determinant of our health and wellbeing.¹⁵ We expect more tenants to report changes to their sense of belonging and relationships with their neighbours after they've lived in their social home for a longer time.

Better access to space within and outside of the social home contributes to the immediate improvements to social tenants' health. Eight in ten (83%) social tenants now have easy access to green spaces, whereas they did not in their previous home.¹⁶

So far, we have received 43 responses from families with children to the second survey on impact. One of the most striking emerging findings we've seen for children is having better access to space to play. Play is a critical part of children's development and learning as it contributes to their overall wellbeing and happiness.¹⁷ Two-fifths (42%) of parents reported that where they were living before was not suitable for their children to play.¹⁸ In most cases, this was a private rented home, damaging temporary accommodation or staying temporarily with friends or family. **Many of the parents we've heard from said their current home is now suitable for their children to play** (18 out of 21).¹⁹

Emerging data from interviews suggests that households with children often move from very small spaces with little privacy. This includes living with family and friends, as Laura's story describes. Interviewees suggest that having more space often has additional impacts. For example, children with learning disabilities or mental health needs finding it easier to manage their daily lives with more private space.

One new social tenant told us about the wellbeing benefits of having more space for her one-year-old child:



'I think he's been really happy because I also have, like, a little garden area, and he's obviously got so much more room and his own room, so I think it's had a really positive impact on him. He can play a lot more freely.'

Female, 18-24, previously living in temporary accommodation

Laura's story: 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. Their social home provides stability and has space to play and spend time as a family. This has had a significant impact on her children's lives, including their mental health and wellbeing.

'But now, when I pick them back up 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, previously living with friends

Living in a stable and affordable social home fosters a sense of belonging for tenants. They're better able to save, plan for the future and form connections with their neighbours. Having better access to space within and outside of the home encourages children to play and improves their wellbeing.



The cost of inaction

We know that social housing is a good investment. Recent Shelter and National Housing Federation (NHF) research showed that building 90,000 social rent homes:

- could add £51.2 billion to the economy
- is expected to return profit to the taxpayer after 11 years²⁰

In March 2025, Shelter commissioned Cebr to deliver new economic analysis looking at the cost of not delivering social housing. The analysis estimates the costs to the government and public services if there is not a significant increase in social rent delivery.²¹ The new analysis focuses on the long-term cost of inaction (i.e. not delivering social housing at scale). This includes both the homes that are not built and the knock-on effect on future available lettings.

The economic benefits of building 90,000 social rent homes are clear. If social rent delivery remains low, these benefits will be missed. But there are also costs associated with inaction. If social rent delivery remains at current levels, there will be significant economic costs to the government and public services.

Shelter's trajectory to reach 90,000 social rent homes per year

The government has made an important commitment to delivering more social and affordable housing through the 2026-36 Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP). This is a 70% increase in funding per year compared to the last programme.

In July 2025, the government committed to delivering 180,000 grant-funded social rent homes.²² This works out as 60% of the total homes delivered through the new SAHP and around three-quarters of the total funding. The funding would deliver 18,000 social rent homes per

year on average. So, we could ramp up to deliver 30,000 to 40,000 social rent homes per year if private developers build their fair share.²³

This is a vital step forward in the fight to end the housing emergency. However, we believe that to truly end the housing emergency, the government must build 90,000 social rent homes per year for 10 years.

Shelter's plan, *Brick by Brick*, outlines the key policy and funding interventions needed to ramp up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year:²⁴

- grant funding
- developer contributions
- supporting communities to build

These interventions could scale up over five years to deliver 90,000 social rented homes per year (see Figure 1). We see councils as playing a key role in achieving this social housing revolution. Council direct delivery could ramp up to 34,000 social rented homes per year.²⁵

The findings in this section focus on the need to ramp up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes a year over 10 years, in line with Shelter's trajectory. This means the findings are not comparable with the previous Shelter/NHF research, which looked at the economic benefits of building one set of 90,000 social homes.

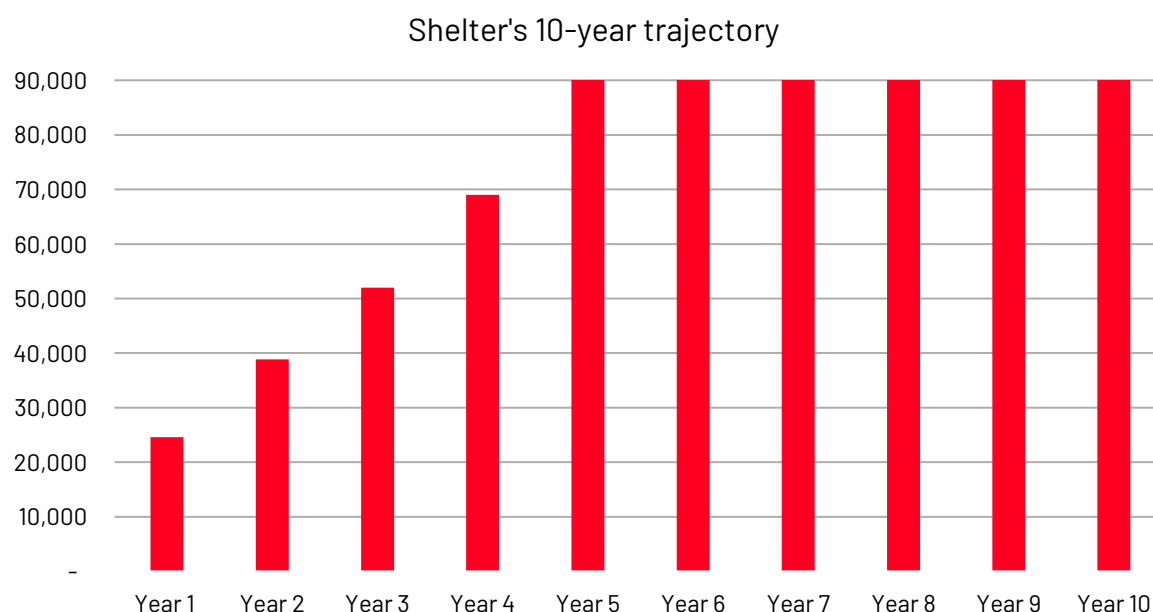


Figure 1 Shelter's 10-year trajectory to ramp up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years, Source: Shelter analysis of data and findings from DLUHC, Cebr and Arup.

Not delivering social homes at scale has significant costs to the government and wider public services

Living in a good-quality social home is associated with better health outcomes, reduced use of the NHS and improved educational attainment. This is in comparison to private renting and living in temporary accommodation. Being homeless or living in insecure, unaffordable and poor-quality housing adversely affects people's health. This can have a knock-on effect on

children's education, leading to children missing days of school and poor educational outcomes.

Around half of households moving into a social rent home were previously living in a private rented home or experiencing homelessness.²⁶ Some households move from an existing social home where they might be experiencing poor conditions or overcrowding. Our analysis assumes that if social rent delivery remains low, these households will remain in their existing home. Not moving into a good-quality social home has significant costs for the government and public services. These include homelessness, healthcare provision and education services.

Cebr used the same cost framework employed in the Shelter/NHF 2024 analysis. There were a few new additions, including calculating the costs of remaining in a private or social rented home that's in poor condition. Cebr divided the costs into two categories: direct costs to the government and missed economic opportunities (see Figure 2).

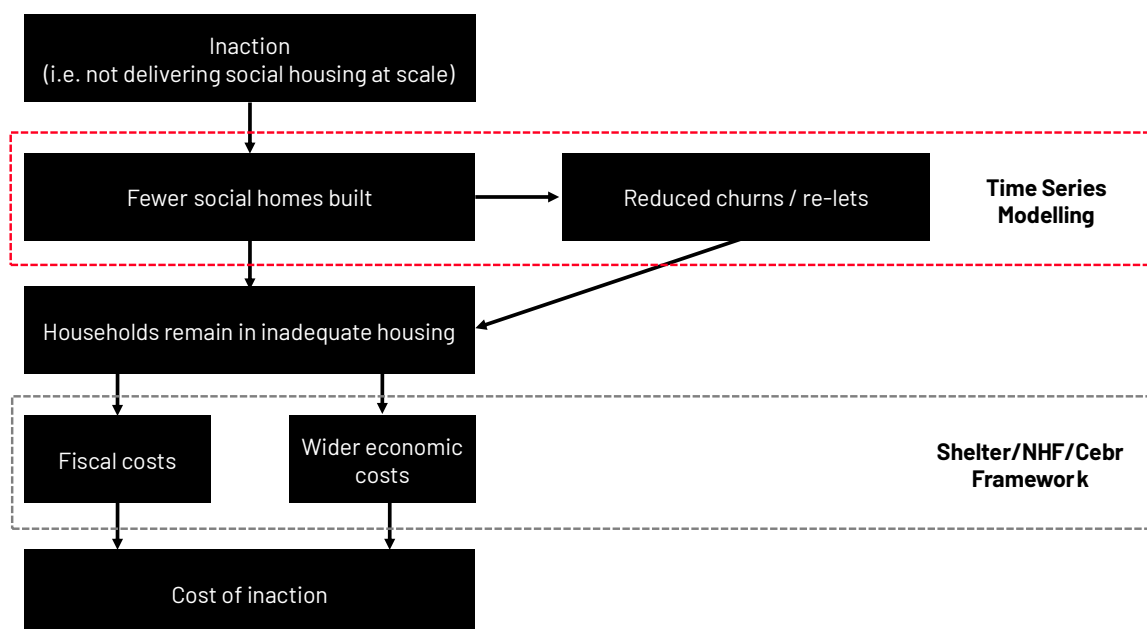


Figure 2 Diagram of modelling framework, Source: Cebr

Not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years is expected to cost £117 billion. This will directly cost the government £64.4 billion, including:

- £20 billion to the NHS due to worse health outcomes among households experiencing homelessness and people living with poor conditions such as damp, mould and overcrowding.
- £5.5 billion to housing benefit as households remain in expensive private rented homes rather than moving into a genuinely affordable social rent home.
- £3.6 billion to wider homelessness services, including prevention, as households remain homeless.
- £3.2 billion due to households remaining in damaging temporary accommodation.

Not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years is expected to have a knock-on effect on wider public services. Cebr estimates **there will be significant missed economic opportunities of £52.4 billion**, including:

- £33.5 billion due to lower employment participation and productivity. This is because people living in insecure and poor-quality homes are less likely to be able to find and keep jobs and be productive at work.
- £14.3 billion due to lost income tax receipts.
- £4.6 billion due to disruptions in education when households cannot move into a stable social rented home. This can negatively impact children's education as a result of missed days, sleep problems and anxiety at school.

The costs of inaction increase over time

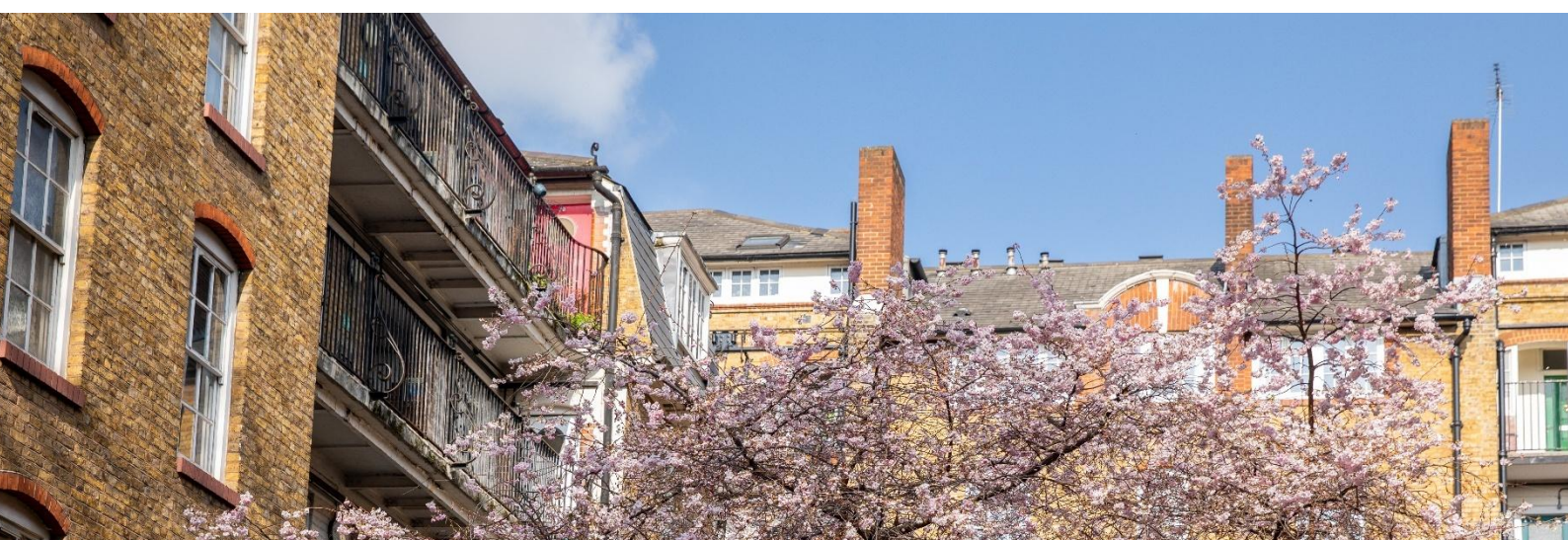
The costs associated with not delivering 90,000 social rent homes a year increase over time. **Not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes a year increases from £21 billion in the first five years to £556 billion over 30 years** (see Table 1). This is due to the cumulative effect of new social rent homes on both new lets and relets. Increasing social housing delivery directly increases the number of homes available. But it also has long-term effects after the new homes are completed.

Projection timeframe	Total cost
5 years	£20.6 billion
10 years	£116.8 billion
30 years	£556.1 billion

Table 1 The total costs of not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes a year over the projection timeframes, Source: Cebr analysis

The growing costs over time are due to the number of 'foregone lets' increasing over time. Foregone lets refers to the total number of households that miss out on a social home because new social housing was not built. It is the gap between the availability of lettings under Shelter's scenarios (significant increase in delivery) and the availability of lettings under the inaction scenario, which assumes social rent delivery remains low.

This includes both first-time tenancies and future re-lets that would have become available if more homes were added to the social housing stock. Crucially, an increase in the number of foregone lets over time leads to greater costs as more households are stuck in poor quality, unsuitable or expensive homes (see Figure 3).



Foregone lets: the long-term effects of inaction

A couple with two children are living in an overcrowded one-bedroom social home. They are allocated a newly built three-bedroom social rent home. Their move frees up the original flat, which is then reallocated to a pensioner. The pensioner has been living in a two-bedroom property unsuitable for their mobility needs. That vacated home is subsequently used to move a household out of temporary accommodation. Without the addition of the new build social rent home, this sequence of moves would not have occurred. All households would be left in their original, unsuitable housing situations.

A single parent in temporary accommodation could have accessed a relet, made available by a household transferring into a new build. But without that new build, the relet never becomes available, and the parent remains in temporary accommodation.

Figure 3 Case study of foregone lets, Source: Cebr

Building 180,000 social rent homes will reduce the costs but they remain high

The government plans to build 180,000 social rent homes in the new Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP). Doing so will minimise the economic impact on the government and public services. Cebr estimates that the costs could reduce to £14.4 billion per year compared to £18.5 billion (see Table 2). If the government delivers 180,000 grant-funded social rent homes, the annual costs could decrease by around a fifth (22%). This reflects the vital progress of the government's announcement in addressing the housing emergency.

The cost reduction is slightly smaller for the first five years. Both Shelter's 10-year scenario and the government's new SAHP will still be in their ramp-up phases. This means the gap in total lets delivered is relatively smaller, though widening.

Cost timeframe	Current social rent delivery (£ million)	New SAHP (£ million)	Cost reduction
Annually	£18,537	£14,384	22%
Over first 5 years	£20,587	£16,429	20%
Over first 10 years	£116,840	£91,158	22%
Over 30 years	£556,110	£431,521	22%

Table 2 Comparing Shelter's 10-year scenario with the status quo (current levels of social rent delivery) and the New SAHP, Source: Cebr analysis

There are still significant costs associated with not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years. In the first decade, the costs would amount to £91 billion. This includes £50 billion in direct costs to the government and almost £41 billion in wider economic costs.

Cebr's analysis shows that not delivering social homes at scale has significant economic consequences for the government and public services. The costs will increase over time as more households are prevented from moving into a stable and affordable social rent home and reaping the benefits.



Conclusion

Shelter's IKEA-funded ground-breaking longitudinal research project highlights the impact of moving into a social rent home. While the research is still ongoing, the initial findings paint a clear picture. Good-quality social housing has immediate positive effects on people's health and wellbeing.

The emerging findings show that many social tenants experience improvements to their mental health within three months. In many cases, this is due to moving to a more stable and affordable home with enough space for their children to play.

The research project will continue to gather evidence on the impact of moving into a social rent home. We will gather insights from new social tenants to build an evidence base about the medium and long-term benefits.

The research project is a pivotal step in Shelter and IKEA's partnership that sees our two organisations joining forces to defend the one thing we value most: home. Together, we're calling for the delivery of 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years to end the housing emergency. Building social homes at scale will also avoid unnecessary costs associated with people remaining homeless or staying in poor-quality and expensive accommodation.



'At IKEA, we believe that everyone deserves a place to call home that is safe, secure and affordable. It is the cornerstone of a better everyday life and why we continue to campaign for long-term change together with Shelter. The preliminary findings of HACT's research show the profound impact that social housing can have on people's lives, something we simply cannot afford to ignore.'

Peter Jelkeby, UK Chief Executive of IKEA

Appendix I: Methodology

HACT: longitudinal research project

Shelter commissioned HACT to deliver a longitudinal research project on the impact of moving into a social home. The evidence is being collected through a longitudinal survey of new social tenants. HACT is also conducting interviews to explore people's experiences in more detail.

HACT established two advisory groups at the start of the project: a lived experience panel and a learnt experience panel. The lived experience panel is made up of 12 social housing tenants from different backgrounds and geographies. The group feed into the design of the project and inform decisions around communicating the findings.

HACT also set up a learnt experience panel to bring together sector organisations. There are currently nine member organisations: National Housing Federation, Tenants' Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), Stop Social Housing Stigma, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), Local Government Association, Chartered Institute for Housing, Place Shapers and academics from the University of Birmingham and University of Glasgow.

Shelter, HACT and the two panels worked collaboratively to develop an impact framework. The impact framework set out the outcomes and impact we expect to see as a result of moving into a social rent home. The framework informed both the survey design and the interview guide.²⁷

HACT has partnered with 33 landlords to date, who have offered to disseminate the survey to households that are new to social housing. Social landlords disseminate the pre-occupancy survey, which asks tenants about their experience of where they were living before. HACT follows up with survey waves 2-4 to measure change due to moving into a social rent home.

So far, 420 tenants have taken part in the project (up to early August). This report summarises interim findings from wave 2 (134 responses, including 43 from families with children). Wave 2 measures the short-term impact within 3 months of moving into a social rent home. The majority of the survey questions have a pre-set response scale with:

- negative categories (such as strongly disagree and disagree)
- a neutral category (such as no difference)
- positive categories (such as strongly agree or agree)

We measure 'meaningful change' as a movement from a negative or neutral response category to a positive response category. The findings about the impact on children are presented as indicative or emerging findings due to the small sample size of households with children.

The findings are also based on 22 interviews with social tenants exploring the short-term impact. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted 45 minutes. All interviewee names in the report are pseudonyms. Interviewees have been offered a £15 voucher to thank them for taking part in their first interview.

Social tenants have been offered a £5 voucher to complete survey waves 1 and 2. Wave 3 will capture findings about the medium-term impact of moving into a social rent home (9 months). Wave 4 will capture findings around the long-term impact of moving into a social rent home (12 months).

Cebr: cost of inaction analysis

In March 2025, Shelter commissioned the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) to carry out economic analysis. The aim was to estimate the 'cost of inaction' for social rent delivery. Cebr are an independent economics and business research consultancy established in 1992.

The analysis is based on an analytical framework that quantifies the social rent lettings foregone due to 'inaction' (i.e. a failure to build social housing at scale). The delivery of new social rent homes increases both first lets and relets. The number of lets foregone increases as the level of inaction increases. Social housing is a stable tenure, but there is natural movement (and therefore relets) due to changing life circumstances. For example, when households need to move to a smaller or bigger home.

The next step is to understand the number of households who cannot move into social housing due to inaction. The analysis attaches socioeconomic costs to households staying in their existing housing situation. This includes households staying in unaffordable and poor-quality private rented housing or temporary accommodation.

Cebr uses the same cost framework employed in the 2024 Shelter/NHF analysis. There are a few new additions, including calculating the costs of remaining in a private or social rented home that's in poor condition. The pathways capture both external demand (e.g. individuals moving from temporary accommodation or living with family) and internal housing dynamics where households move between social homes.

Cebr calculated the cost of inaction across three scenarios:

1. Not delivering 90,000 social rent homes (1-year scenario)
2. Not ramping up to deliver 90,000 in five years (5-year scenario)
3. Not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year over 10 years (10-year scenario)

There is cross-sector agreement around the need to build 90,000 social rent homes a year to end the housing emergency. The 5- and 10-year scenarios are based on Shelter analysis carried out as part of the Brick by Brick report. They are used to estimate a realistic ramp up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes per year. This report shares findings from the 10-year scenario.

The costs are presented over four timeframes: one year, five years, 10 years and 30 years. The different timeframes show the long-term impact of inaction.

Cebr updated the analysis in August 2025 to account for government announcements about the new Social and Affordable Homes Programme. In July 2025, the government announced that 60% of the total homes delivered would be for social rent. Cebr updated the analysis to account for the 180,000 social rent homes delivered over the next 10 years. The government has not yet committed to a total social rent target including developer contributions.

The modelling provides a robust and comprehensive estimate of the fiscal and economic costs associated with under-delivery of social housing. However, there are several limitations to the analysis. For example, it focuses on general needs social rent, excluding supported housing. The costs associated with remaining in poor quality temporary accommodation are also not

included due to a lack of available data. The limitations are set out in full in the Cebr research report.

Cost type	Cost item	10-year scenario (£ millions)	
		10 years	30 years
Fiscal (direct costs to the government)	Housing benefit	£5,501	£22,601
	Universal credit	£8,932	£36,699
	Temporary accommodation	£3,195	£13,126
	Criminal justice	£20,851	£85,669
	Health services	£20,004	£82,191
	Supported housing	£1,811	£7,441
	Homelessness services	£3,603	£14,806
	Poor conditions (CAT 1 hazards)	£518	£2,946
Economic (missed economic opportunities)	Education	£4,624	£19,000
	Employment/productivity	£33,498	£190,352
	Income tax receipts	£14,303	£81,279
Total	Fiscal costs	£64,415	£265,479
	Economic costs	£52,425	£290,631
	Total	£116,840	£556,110

Table 3 The detail fiscal and economic costs of not ramping up to deliver 90,000 social rent homes a year over 10 years and 30 years, Source: Cebr analysis

Appendix II: Sources

¹ As at 31 March 2025 there were 169,050 children living in temporary accommodation. This is the highest on record (since 2004). Source: MHCLG, Statutory homelessness live tables, Table TA1, Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

² Shelter analysis of MHCLG and ONS data. MHCLG, Social housing lettings in England, April 2023 to March 2024, Table 2dii, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2023-to-march-2024> and ONS, Price Index of Private Rents, UK: monthly price statistics, Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/priceindexofprivaterentsukmonthlypricestatistics>

³ In 2023/24 80% of new general needs and supported housing social rent lettings were lifetime tenancies, including 91% of general needs social rent lettings. Of the general needs lifetime tenancies, 41% were secure lifetime tenancies and 54% were assured lifetime tenancies. Most councils offer secure tenancies, and most housing associations offer assured tenancies. Source: MHCLG, Social housing lettings in England, April 2023 to March 2024, Table 2ai, Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2023-to-march-2024>

⁴ See HACT report for the full research findings. HACT, Impact of Social Rent Homes: Interim Findings from a Longitudinal Study, September 2025, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/impact_of_social_rent_homes_interim_findings

⁵ 81% of social tenants said their previous home had negative or no impact to their mental health. 61% of these tenants have seen a positive impact after moving into their social home.

⁶ Garvie, D., Pennington, J., Rich, H. and Schofield, M. Still Living in Limbo: Why the use of temporary accommodation must end, Shelter, March 2023, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/still_living_in_limbo

⁷ Shelter analysis of MHCLG and ONS data. MHCLG, Social housing lettings in England, April 2022 to March 2023, Table 2dii, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2023-to-march-2024> and ONS, Price Index of Private Rents, UK: monthly price statistics, Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/priceindexofprivaterents>

⁸ Garvie, D., Pennington, J., Rich, H. and Schofield, M., Still Living in Limbo: Why the use of temporary accommodation must end, Shelter, March 2023, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/still_living_in_limbo

⁹ The amount spent on nightly paid, privately managed TA has increased by 4.8 times (375% increase) in the last five years. Source: MHCLG, Local authority revenue expenditure and financing England: 2023 to 2024, Table R04, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2023-to-2024-individual-local-authority-data-outturn>

TA subsidy (housing benefit for TA residents) has been frozen since 2011.

¹⁰ Due to the small sample size, we can't segment the data by previous housing situation or whether households are claiming housing benefit. Households moving from a private rented home are much more likely to experience an improvement to their ability to pay rent.

¹¹ The findings on social tenants' increased ability to afford rent, bills and other essentials is calculated by measuring change using the social value methodology. This change is defined as moving from their previous housing situation having negative or no impact to their new social home having a positive impact. We refer to these findings as 'improved ability to afford'.

¹² In 2023/24 80% of new general needs and supported housing social rent lettings were lifetime tenancies, including 91% of general needs social rent lettings. Of the general needs lifetime tenancies, 41% were secure lifetime tenancies and 54% were assured lifetime tenancies. Most councils offer secure tenancies, and most housing associations offer assured tenancies. Source: MHCLG, Social housing lettings in England, April 2023 to March 2024, Table 2ai, Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2023-to-march-2024>

¹³ 61 social tenants said they did not feel a sense of belonging in their previous housing situation. 28 now say they feel a sense of belonging (46%).

¹⁴ 39 social tenants did not regularly talk to neighbours in their previous housing situation. 16 now regularly talk to neighbours (41%).

¹⁵ Mental Health Foundation, Relationships and community: statistics, Available at:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/statistics/relationships-community-statistics>

¹⁶ 75 social tenants did not have easy access to green spaces in their previous housing situation. 62 tenants now have easy access to green spaces (83%).

¹⁷ Children's Commissioner, Playing Out: A Children's Commissioner's report on the importance to children of play and physical activity, August 2018, Available at:

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2018/08/Play-final-report.pdf>

¹⁸ This finding is based on the 148 households with children who have taken part in the first survey.

¹⁹ Only 43 households with children had taken part in the second survey by early August 2025 so the findings are presented as quantitative statements rather than statistics.

²⁰ Cebr, The economic impact of building social housing, February 2024, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/economic_impact_social_housing

²¹ Cebr, The Cost of Inaction, September 2025, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/the_cost_of_inaction

²² MHCLG, Press release: Government confirms plans for a social rent revolution, 2 July 2025, Available at: <https://mhclgmedia.blog.gov.uk/2025/07/02/government-confirms-plans-for-a-social-rent-revolution/>

²³ Shelter analysis suggests that developers could ramp up to deliver 24,000 social rent homes per year. Galarza, V., Rich, H., Trew, C., Bloomer, S., Berry, C. and Matthews, W., Brick by Brick: A Plan To Deliver the Social Homes We Need, Shelter, 11 July 2024, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/brick_by_brick

²⁴ Galarza, V., Rich, H., Trew, C., Bloomer, S., Berry, C. and Matthews, W., Brick by Brick: A Plan To Deliver the Social Homes We Need, Shelter, 11 July 2024, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/brick_by_brick

²⁵ Arup, Research: Council Housing Social Rent Delivery, June 2024, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/research_council_housing_social_rent_delivery

²⁶ In 2023/24 49% of households moving into a social rent general needs home were previously privately renting, living with friends/family, living in temporary accommodation or rough sleeping. Source:

MHCLG, Core Social Housing Lettings Tenancies 2023/24, Table 3gi: Previous housing situation of lead tenant for new social housing lettings as a percentage of yearly total, 2004/05 to 2023/24, Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2023-to-march-2024>

²⁷ See HACT report for the full impact framework and Theory of Change. HACT, Impact of Social Rent Homes: Interim Findings from a Longitudinal Study, September 2025, Available at:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/impact_of_social_rent_homes_interim_findings

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