

Conclusions

This new collection of eight local Citizens Advice studies demonstrates the huge reach and potential of local, community-led research. It helps Citizens Advice and policy makers in local and national Government to understand the lived experience of housing problems and to explore possible solutions, with the guidance of researchers who know their communities intimately.

Our studies demonstrate why politicians in town and county halls, in Whitehall and in the Welsh Assembly should make greater use of local intelligence to inform policy decisions that will have the best outcomes for people across all tenures and in all kinds of local housing markets. As a service, Citizens Advice will use the same approach to explore other major public policy challenges in the future.

In their own words, our researchers have shown how housing markets around England and Wales are shaped by the histories, geographies and economies of different places. Housing outcomes are also intimately connected to local and national policy decisions around transport, growth, employment, benefits, environment, public health, planning and communities, and our studies demonstrate welcome innovation and creativity at the local level.

Our approach also highlights three important themes for the housing debate. In the private rented sector, our research in Pembrokeshire, Conwy, Enfield and Dorchester found that poor quality, unaffordable, and inaccessible **private rented housing** has a hugely detrimental effect on physical and mental health. Our recent research, '[A nation of renters](#)', found that this is a pervasive problem; one in six private renters in England are living in physically unsafe accommodation. Research in Pembrokeshire and Conwy highlighted similar conditions; however the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 should provide an integral first step in addressing and improving poor quality housing in the Welsh private rented sector. Our [Settled and safe](#) campaign aims to improve renters' rights in England too.

However, our Durham and Blackpool researchers' studies showed that many of the same experiences are also shared by **lower income owner occupiers**. Alternative



routes may be needed to support those who are struggling - either to help them to remain in their home or to transition to alternative housing.

Our Exeter, Crawley and Blackpool studies also demonstrated the importance of **local planning decisions** and the significant impact of zoning restrictions on landlords and tenants. The right local planning and zoning decisions can support social integration.

Forthcoming research from Citizens Advice will draw on these studies and on our data and experience to suggest new policy routes for local and national decision-makers to consider.

List of figures

Figure 1: Exeter Student numbers 2006-2020

Figure 2: Pavement stencils aimed at students during 2014 Freshers' week [picture courtesy of the Exeter Express and Echo]

Figure 3: Exeter student accommodation costs per week (GBP)

Figure 4: Some Exeter streets are almost entirely houses in multiple occupation

Figure 5: A dilapidated B&B in central Blackpool

Figure 6: Queen's Square: the heart of Crawley new town centre

Figure 7: Tilgate neighbourhood shopping parade, Crawley

Figure 8: Small Meads, West Green

Figure 9: Average private rents per month in Crawley

Figure 10: Typical street in a County Durham mining town

Figure 11: A typical home in rural Pembrokeshire

Figure 12: Llandudno, Conwy Borough County

Figure 13: Conwy CBC/Cartrefi Conwy social housing waiting list

Figure 14: Main problems encountered after setting up a privately rented home

Figure 15: Gentleman's Row, west Enfield

Figure 16: Alma Estate, east Enfield

Figure 17: Damp in a participant's home

Figure 18: Clothes ruined by mould

Figure 19: Damp and mould in participant's home

Figure 20: Availability of privately rented homes within LHA rates

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