NOT THE STEREOTYPES

#SeeThePerson @2benefitsociety www.seetheperson.org

Martyn Lund, Campaign Chair, See The Person campaign, ARCH national committee, tenant of Kettering
Yaw Boateng, See the Person campaign, ARCH national committee, tenant of Croydon
Chris Moseley, Vice-Chair, See the Person campaign, tenant of Homes in Sedgemoor
Pam Hankinson, See the Person campaign, tenant of South Yorkshire Housing Association

About the campaign

- Founded 2017
- Tenant led committee
- 30+ housing organisations sponsor
- Aim to tackle negative stereotypes and stigma about living in social housing

Quick quiz!

- 1. What % of households in England live in social housing?
- 2. What % of people renting social housing in England are unemployed?
- 3. What % of people renting social housing in England are aged 55 or older?
- 4. What % of people renting social housing in England say the media portrays them in a negative light?
- Answers!
- * Do you think there is a stigma around social housing? Why? Discuss!

Why is there a stigma?

LSE research says:

Findings

- Social housing is increasingly a residualised sector. A reduction in numbers of properties, together with changes in housing policy, have led to the sector housing more vulnerable households.
- Fewer people now have direct experience of social housing and increasingly it is seen as a tenure of last choice and as a safety net. The public over-estimate the number of people in social housing who are unemployed.2
- This view of social housing is reflected in pejorative media programming, recognised in 'poverty porn' and moralising broadcasting such as *Benefits Street* and *Council House Crackdown*, which specifically link tenure and benefits status together, also drawing links to perceptions of unacceptable behaviours.² 90% of tenants say the media portrays a stereotype of social housing tenants.⁴
- Social housing tenants have a very different perspective and their narrative shows the value of community in their local area and of their volunteering, caring and work roles.2
- This narrative is supported by the English Housing Survey which shows that 70% of social housing tenants are in work or retired, with just 7% unemployed. The remaining 22% are unable to work due to caring responsibilities or disability with 1% in full time education. Tenants recognise the contributions made to society by all these people.1
- Social housing tenants view an increase in stigma as being one of the major challenges to the tenure and to their wellbeing.2

 "It is still a misheld believe that people in social housing are somehow less intelligent and therefore less able to make informed decisions about all sorts of issues from politics to their own housing needs. Social Housing tenants often feel they are of no worth as no one seems to listen or take seriously their opinions. There is still the idea that they should be grateful for their home and they should shut up and put up with it."

"A neighbour who had bought their house started moaning from the day I moved in about me being a single mum, (I was separated after my husband walked out on me and my children after 20 yrs). I was heartbroken at having to move and start all over again. I was working and supporting my children but that was not good enough for my neighbour, he never had a good word to say about me or my children and it got me down."

"I work in social housing (three HAs, 15 years in total). The worst negative stereotyping has been from colleagues... I heard one colleague say: "You can tell who's in social housing, their curtains are filthy." At the same HA, I told another colleague that I had bumped into one of our tenants in town who I knew from our Tenants' Panel - this tenant had given me a hug. My colleague said: "You let a tenant hug you? Ew, gross!" I reminded both colleagues that I was also a tenant - cue apologies from them."

"I do not tell anyone other than those closest that our home is social rented, most will assume it is private rented, as many of these properties are having been sold off. I feel i have to keep it a secret to avoid stigma. I believe that the road has a stigma attached as a 'poorer road' despite being mixed tenure and a peaceful, well kept, low crime area. I dread contractors coming in to do work...as they often show little respect and express stereotypes about who or how they expect you to live. I feel as if I need to prove myself, and it is ridiculous, I shouldn't."

Impact of stigma

1. Personal

"Serious anxiety in a place that you should feel most comfortable."

"I feel ashamed to say that I live in social housing"

"It's painful to be looked down on and to know that to some you're a second class person."

2. Family / community

A number of people reported their children's friends were told not to play with them after they had visited and parents realised they lived in social housing

People avoiding my neighbourhood / making assumptions about it

Impact of stigma

- Impact on support for new social housing?
- Impact on funding for new social housing?



See the Person Committee

- 15 tenants
- From around the country
- Working locally and nationally
- Mailing list of nearly 500 people who support us

Campaign achievements

- House of Commons launch in 2018 with Housing Minister
- Last PM acknowledged stigma of social housing is an issue – we haven't heard from current PM
- Green Paper has a chapter on tackling stigma tenant campaign leaders invited to discuss with the MHCLG
- Previous Housing Minister signed our pledge to tackle negative stereotyping
- We reached more than 300,000 people through social media
- LSE research published setting out the background of stigma
- Reprint of Fair Press for Tenants (our publication with the NUJ)
- Working with MHCLG on White paper (and working, and working...)

... but there is more to do

The PM seems to have forgotten she's a Conservative

houses ignore the basic Tory tenets of personal aspiration and pride

BARTHOLOMEW



rofit motive along the way. Meanwhile she had nothing but raise and encouraging words for ate-controlled housing, housing sociations and tenants of council mes. She approvingly quoted some named person who had suggested at the rise of social housing Britain had been "the biggest lective leap in living standards in tish history". She wanted more of nd of higher quality. She wanted ial housing indistinguishable from vate housing - so good that people ald be "proud to call it their home". is as if she has not seen or

Mrs May's views on council understood any of the important things that have happened in British housing in the past 70 or 80 years. It is as if she does not grasp what being a Conservative means.

Does she really expect people to be as proud of a home which is subsidised by other people as they would be of one which they struggled and saved to buy over 20 or 30 years? That is fantasyland psychology. Nor is it fair that people who worked and saved should find themselves next door to someone in an equally ample home who never made such sacrifices.

She has the perfectly good intention to be kind. But she does not understand what Margaret Thatcher so firmly grasped: that the less welloff do not want kindness. They want opportunity - the chance to improve their lot through their own efforts. They want the independence that buying a home creates.

Tenants of the state are at the mercy of the state. They are not allowed to make significant alterations. They are building up no capital. They cannot legally sub-let. If they want to move to another town, it will be difficult or impossible to get a similar property. They are trapped. This is Big Brother world. That is why Mrs Thatcher brought in the Right to Buy for council tenants. They at last overcame these limitations and often celebrated by painting their front doors in the colours they wanted instead of the council-imposed colour. Mrs Thatcher said: "If a Tory does not believe that private property is one of the main

bulwarks of individual freedom, then he had better become a socialist and have done with it."

Yes, "individual freedom". That is a bit of Conservatism that Mrs May seems to have trouble with. She has it herself, of course, But being a Conservative means wanting it for everybody and wanting a private home for everyone who wants one. It is about personal aspiration and pride not a false pride of receiving a gift from a condescending government.

Her knowledge of housing history is weak. Aneurin Bevan, the postwar Labour minister responsible for housing, like Mrs May, wanted to build or any of the rest. It is government top-quality council homes. But it takes more money and land to build at that standard. Bevan's policy resulted in a disappointing number of homes being built. So a modest number of people got good homes but the needs of hundreds of thousands of others were not satisfied. Fewer homes were built than after the First World War. After that, governments started building tower blocks to accommodate people more cheaply. That was a disaster. Many were vandalised and became ghettos of crime. Hundreds of council estates consisting of two or more tower blocks were demolished because no one wanted to live in them.

For these and other reasons, social housing has been in decline as a proportion of all housing for the past 40 years. The process continued uninterrupted under Tony Blair's government because it had become obvious that social housing

did not work. And this has been the experience around the world. Germany, America and Australia have all seen significant drops in the proportion of social housing. Go online and you can watch the demolition of the Carpendeguy estate in France or the vast Pruitt Igoe estate

Mrs May showed yesterday that she does not grasp the extent of the housing crisis and how inadequate her little measures are to meet it. The cost of buying a flat or house is now far too high in relation to incomes. This is not because of builders or letting agents that is to blame for our housing crisis. The planning system is not fit for purpose. It does not allow for the building of lots of homes in places and in styles that people are happy about. It is all about the cost of land with permission to build. The demand is there but the supply is constrained by a planning system dating back to the post-war Labour government. If Mrs May seriously wanted to tackle the problem, she would send researchers to Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere to analyse the superior systems there.

James Bartholomew is the author of 'The Welfare of Nations'



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Following

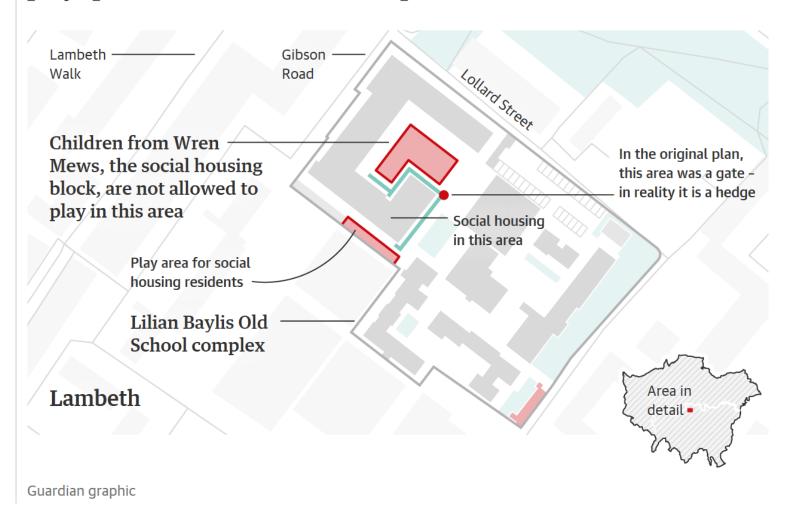
This is the BBC adding to the stigma of social housing tenants on today of all days

#NHF2018 #NHF18 #ukhousing



8:59 AM - 19 Sep 2018 from Huddersfield, England

Social housing residents have been blocked from using shared play spaces at a 149-home development in south London



Current work

- MHCLG questions in British Attitudinal Survey – they are taking it seriously!
- MHCLG white paper new housing minister?
- CIH joint project toolkit for landlord watch this space!

Toolkit

- Working with the CIH
- Why we need a toolkit
- What we've done so far
- How you can get involved



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRj_NgZEHXg