

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HOUSING IN THE NORTH

Chair: Ian Mearns MP

Vice Chairs: Grahame Morris MP, Paul Howell MP

Mary Foy MP, Lord Goddard of Stockport, Kim Johnson MP, Lord Stunell,
Ian Lavery MP, Tony Lloyd MP, Dan Carden MP, Andy McDonald MP



All Party Parliamentary Group for Housing in the North Delivering Housing Quality in the North

Monday 13th March 2023, 16.00 – 17.30, Room O, Portcullis House

Post Meeting Pack

Background

There is political consensus behind the drive to ensure every single person lives in a home that is decent, safe and secure. Not just a moral right, the Government's Levelling Up agenda is right to assert that housing sits at the heart of physical and mental wellbeing, contributes greatly to the sense of belonging to a community, and offers a strong foundation from which to participate in the local economy.

Despite these imperatives, housing decency remains a persistent challenge. The Northern Housing Consortium's annual Housing Monitor notes that non-decency in the North of England sits at 17.6%, comfortably above the national average of 15%.

The Decent Homes Standard is currently under review, along with proposals to apply any new standard to the private rented sector. These are welcome developments, but progress has slowed.

Against this backdrop, The APPG for Housing in the North is meeting to consider the vitally important issue of housing quality across all tenures, as well as lessons to be taken from the Decent Homes Programme of the early 2000's.

Overall, the APPG looks to call on Government to redouble efforts around the national Levelling Up Mission to halve non-decent rented homes by 2030; outline the policy and legislative support needed to assist the housing sector in achieving this Mission; and, highlight the good work already taking place to deliver the safe, energy efficient, homes, with access to green space, which meet residents' modern day expectations.

In Attendance:

Ian Mearns MP
Peter Gibson MP
Lord Callanan
David Simmonds MP
Rehman Chishti MP

Apologies:

Andy McDonald MP
Mary Foy MP
Ian Lavery MP
Liz Twist MP
Paul Howell MP
Tony Lloyd MP
Mary Glendon MP

Dan Carden MP
Lord Shipley
Peter Dowd MP
Lord Stunell
Ian Byrne MP
Lord Kerslake

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Non-Verbatim Notes

Agenda

AGM & Chair's Welcome

Ian Mearns MP, Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group for Housing in the North

The AGM for the APPG for Housing in the North was conducted.

All existing officers have retained their involvement with the exception of Richard Holden MP, who has had to relinquish his APPG role upon becoming a Government Minister; Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Roads and Local Transport).

Minister's Opening Remarks – Housing Decency and Energy Efficiency

Lord Callanan, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Energy Efficiency and Green Finance)

The APPG was delighted to welcome Lord Callanan to open the first APPG for Housing in the North of the 23/24 reporting year.

Lord Callanan used his time to discuss the important connections between housing decency and energy efficiency, summarising Government support to households to date and outlining further programmes to come.

Summary of Discussion:

- Job of all to raise energy efficiency up the political agenda.
- Energy efficiency currently one of the largest Government spending programmes. £6.6billion allocated over this Parliament, £3billion targeted at the lowest income households.
- £1.8billion announced to improve energy efficiency of homes and buildings across Homes Upgrade Grant (HUG), Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS).
 - SHDF £1.1billion in match funding for social housing to be invested from April 2023 to March 2025
 - £800million in SHDF grant funding to be awarded in coming weeks.
 - SHDF demonstrators have upgraded around 2000 homes.
- Energy Company Obligation phase 4 running, 2022 – 2026. Expansion may soon be announced.
- Supply chain shortages a challenge, recently announced 9.2million Home Decarbonisation Skills Training competition to fund training for people working in the energy efficiency, retrofit and low carbon heating sectors.

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Questions & Discussion

Question:

Retrofit for fuel efficiency and insulation; is the Government doing anything particular for hard to heat homes?

Lord Callanan:

All homes eligible under various schemes, lots of good work being carried out across the country with the most challenging properties.

Comment/Reflection:

Skills challenge; just completed in four depth retrofits across North Yorkshire with lots of learning. Biggest challenge going forward is skills across the board. Not just about people doing it but also those in an advisory capacity.

Lord Callanan:

The skills challenge is really important. There has been some developments in this area with technological devices for insulation and ventilation. Setting up training competition funding internally, working closely with the Department for Education, as more we need to do, to train up new and existing people in sector. Key that any work being done is 'properly and correct' first time.

Comment/Reflection:

The consequences of the skills gap is creating price gouging in the market, particularly linked to insulation. Need continuity in market and to avoid peaks in prices.

Question:

Regarding the PRS, how can ECO be designed and attracted to those in PRS, as quite often they are disadvantaged as they require landlord permission?

Lord Callanan:

The PRS is the worst performing sector after owner occupiers, government consulted on MEES across the PRS last year. Worried about the North and looking at affordability exception. ECO will be available for PRS landlords and tenants, and new government website will be linked to this, giving tailored recommendations on how they can improve their properties.

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Delivering Housing Quality in the North - Panel Discussion

Summary of Key Points

Charlie Norman, Chief Executive, MSV; Vice-Chair of the Northern Housing Consortium; and co-chair of the sector steering group for the Better Social Housing Review discussing the work and recommendations of the Better Social Housing Review

- The sector is full of caring colleagues who are passionate about what they do and come to work to do their best. We need to focus on basics and getting this right, developing the right cultures across the whole organisation.
- Non-decency decency is at over 17% across North compared to average of 15%, this is a huge challenge.
- Challenge of inequality which is increasing across the board; chronic overcrowding and lots of families in temporary accommodation. These factors have to 'put fire in our belly' to do more.
- Many welcome developments from the Government in relation to the Decent Homes Review; damp and mold focus as part of Awaab's Law and connections to energy efficiency.
- The National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing instigated the Better Social Housing Review, a joint-review into standards in the social housing sector based on lived experience.
- Report launched in September with seven recommendations. The sector is responding and an action plan is being developed to launch in April. This is supported across the political spectrum. Important the sector gets behind this, across Greater Manchester, we have incorporated it into a Good Landlord Charter. This is about people as much as homes.

Michael Marshall, Urban Studies and Planning Department, University of Sheffield sharing insights from the research Lessons from Last Time: A Review of Evidence on the First Decent Homes Programme in the Social and Private Rented Sectors

- Carried out an evidence review of the first Decent Homes Programme across the social and Private Rented Sectors.
- Positive outcomes:
 - The size of the programme and the long term ambition
 - High level of customer satisfaction and impetus on resident choice and inclusion
 - Localized co-ordination and collaboration
- Challenges/lessons learnt:
 - Stopped at front door, not a holistic approach to decency.

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- Accessibility wasn't always a consideration.
- Experiences across PRS generally poor, data is poor and landlords require support.
- Future programme considerations:
 - Holistic approach to decency – beyond kitchens and bathrooms.
 - For the PRS; any application needs to be part of a on overall review of the sector.
 - Co-ordination across tenures.
 - Overlap between decency and Decarbonisation needs to be coordinated to prevent inefficiency and errors.

Steve Coffey, Group CEO, Torus sharing his reflections on the Decent Homes Programme from within the sector, and what is needed from a revised Decent Homes Standard Questions and Discussion All Close

- The Decent Homes Programme was a huge success and was very much needed at the time.
- Lots of common themes to where we are today and making housing fit for purpose.
- We need to start with the question whether our properties are ok for our loved ones? If not, then why are they ok for anyone else. This is the moral compass that we must set for the Decent Homes Standard.
- Green agenda; if we only achieve zero carbon homes this is a missed opportunity. Should also mean investment in skills and other economic benefits.
- Housing is not a vacuum. It is a part of a place that has to function effectively.
- To have an effective North means an effective place, community and economy.
- Any new Decent Home Programme needs to cover stock conditions but go broader to pick up lived experiences and comfort of homes so we can give people a decent place to live.
- Decent housing is the foundation of people's lives. Means more positive outcomes for everything in their lives. We should be giving people that foundation and working with them to improve their lives.

Questions and Discussion

Ian Mearns MP

Need to think about whole environmental context not just the home, ensuring a safe and comfortable living experience.

Comment

For a PRS standard to be worthwhile it can't be heavily influenced by private landlords. We need to bring in the voices of those with lived experiences of the homes in question.



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Ian Mearns MP

The variety of the Private Rented Sector must be taken into account.

Comment

Need a culture shift and stop blaming the tenant, which we fall back into always and feel like we just haven't moved on.

Also need to complete Review of Housing Health and Safety Rating System; minimum standards which will give guidance to landlords on what they need to do to meet basics.

Speaker final remarks:

Steve Coffey

We need to have a conversation on how we create a decent place to live, and it needs to be a non-party political point.

Charlie Norman

We need to be progressive and not lose the ambition. This means culturally sensitive services and looking at the mismatch of people and the homes they live in. Don't make assumptions on cultural issues. Pathological short-termness is a huge challenge, we need a long term strategy supported across the political spectrum.

[Close](#)

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Supporting Information

[Last Time: A Review of Evidence on the First Decent Homes Programme in the Social and Private Rented Sectors](#)

**Northern Housing Consortium / UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence
November 2022**

With the Decent Homes Standard under review, and a consultation on extending the Standard to the private rented sector having recently closed, the new report seeks to inform policy and practice.

Key themes emerging from the review:

- The benefits of a holistic approach to decency in the dwelling, combined with long-term programmes and funding. This will avoid false economies associated with piecemeal interventions.
- Resident engagement is key to building momentum around Decent Homes 2, and building trust, especially for works that may not have obvious immediate benefits to residents.
- Localised coordination and collaboration is needed to achieve economies of scale, coordinate skills and training strategies, and to bring the private rented sector up to the new standard.
- There are merits to a tiered standard looking beyond the front door to the wider neighbourhood, and a staggered approach to implementation.
- There is a need to plan for the legacy of any Decent Homes 2 programme, safeguarding the investment made and maintaining compliance with the new standard.

[The Better Social Housing](#)
September 2022

The poor quality of some social housing has been in the spotlight in 2022. This review, run by an independent panel, spent six months investigating this issue and has produced a detailed report and recommendations.

Recommendations:

- Every housing association, and the sector as a whole, should refocus on their core purpose and deliver against it.

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- Housing associations should work together to conduct and publish a thorough audit of all social housing in England.
- Housing associations should partner with tenants, contractors and frontline staff to develop and apply new standards defining what an excellent maintenance and repairs process looks like.
- The Chartered Institute of Housing should promote the traditional housing officer⁴ role as a supported and valued employment opportunity with a Chartered Institute of Housing recognised programme of training and continuing development.
- Housing associations should work with all tenants to ensure that they have a voice and influence at every level of decision making across the organisation, through both voluntary and paid roles.
- Housing associations should develop a proactive local community presence through community hubs which foster greater multi-agency working.
- Housing associations should support tenants and frontline staff to undertake an annual review of the progress each organisation is making in implementing this review's recommendations.

[Northern Housing Monitor 2022](#) **Northern Housing Consortium** **November 2022**

The Monitor collates and then probes Northern housing data to provide a state of the market report for housing in the North of England - an account of trends and of the impact of current policy and funding on Northern housing, identifying the developments having the most significant impact on regions in the North.

Overall, the Monitor displays the inextricable links between housing and the UK's economic performance.

Chapters include:

- **Energy Efficiency**, highlighting that 3.8m homes in the North are below Band C, and reaching Band C in all northern homes by 2035 requires retrofitting one home every 2 minutes.
- **Private Rented Sector**, showing that 30% of private rented homes are non-decent in the North. All three Northern regions have above the 13% England average of fuel poor households.
- **Housing Supply**, outlining that despite northern regions comfortably outperforming aggregate target for housing delivery in the last 3 years, building in the North is recovering from the pandemic at a slower rate than the rest of the country.



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[No Home Left Behind – An Inquiry into Property Standards in the North’s Private Rented Sector](#)

**All Party Parliamentary Group for Housing in the North, supported by the Northern Housing Consortium
November 2020**

No Home Left Behind: An Inquiry into Standards in the North’s Private Rented Sector represents 18 months of working in close collaboration with Local Authorities, Housing Associations, Combined Authorities, those representing both tenants and landlords, and third sector organisations.

With the report and its recommendations to Government, the APPG for Housing in the North hopes it has offered a set of practical proposals to ensure the PRS is a positive choice and experience for all households.