



*Championing
better homes and
communities*

A century of council housing: **Building on the legacy**



National Federation of ALMOs

ANNUAL REVIEW 2018-19

MEET THE NFA BOARD AND TEAM

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Cover image: The Little Cross Street development, Northampton –
18 new family homes completed just before Christmas 2018 by Northampton Partnership Homes. ©NPH



Hugh with Bury North MP James Frith and tenant ambassadors Amy Kirk, Scott Whitestone and Kelly Dickinson

WELCOME

Hugh Broadbent, Chair

Welcome to this year's NFA Annual Review. I stand down as NFA Chair at this year's conference and, as I look back, I am struck by the dramatic shifts we've seen in housing policy over the three years since I took on the role.

Back in 2016, central government policy was distinctly negative towards social housing. Now it recognises what we in the ALMO sector have known all along; that council housing is a vital social asset. Our residents – like all of us – aspire to a settled life and a secure home. What pleases me most is the marked change of tone towards social housing and the people who live in it.

It seems fitting that this turnaround comes as we celebrate the centenary of the Addison Act. This 1919 post-war legislation underpinned the first wave of 'homes fit for heroes' and recognised that local authorities were ideally placed to build the decent, affordable housing that so many needed so badly.

Now, at last, we're seeing a renewed appreciation of social housing's many benefits. More specifically, we're seeing growing recognition of the ALMO sector's ground-breaking work on added social value – employability initiatives, apprenticeships, community-building programmes – and on vitally important issues such as zero-carbon retrofitting and new-build to combat climate change.

Of course, nothing can erase the horror of the Grenfell tragedy. But as NFA Chair I have seen our membership push on towards the future good that we all hope will come from responses such as the Social Housing Green Paper and the Grenfell Inquiry.

Personally, I have been very impressed by the housing management work of Tower Hamlets, Colchester and Sutton, with their emphasis on the fact that this is the most fundamental aspect of what we do; it's what matters most to the quality of life experienced by our residents and it demands the full commitment of all landlords.

Comprehensive and genuine tenant involvement is part of the ALMO DNA. Our members are and always have been committed to sharing and building on best practice. This is why NFA members have no fears about the prospect of closer regulation – we're open to it and see the positives for both landlords and tenants. The NFA will continue to lobby for an effective regulation regime that recognises what tenants see as important.

Inspection may also be on the cards and the NFA will try to persuade government that the "stick and carrot" approach from the Decent Homes funding days, in the early years of ALMOs' existence, could be replicated. It could help members support the holistic approach to investment in a community's assets that tenants deserve.

However, our members fight on many other, equally challenging fronts and our highly skilled team has not lost sight of those vital battles. They have won deserved praise for widely referenced research on Universal Credit and their persuasive lobbying for the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap.

And the NFA has been a key player in a number of other crucial successes: the scrapping of high value asset sales; the retention of lifetime tenancies; and the return of rent certainty from 2020. We continue to hope that government will come round to our view of how RTB receipts should be used.

Finally, it seemed both amazing and heartening to me, in the closing months of my service as Chair, to hear a Conservative Prime Minister publicly condemn negative stereotypes of council tenants. Through our photography competition, through partnerships with See the Person and, most recently, the Communities that Work initiative, we've campaigned for several years for recognition that our tenants' aspirations for their families, homes and communities are no different to anyone else's.

Looking to the future, I see a cultural shift among our members that brings them closer to their parent councils and will make them key players in the 'local government family'. As public sector reform develops, housing management companies are likely to be seen as critical elements of the new style of service delivery – and the skill, expertise and detailed local knowledge that our members have will be just the tools councils need.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the NFA team and my Board colleagues. I have been consistently impressed by the quality of those who work so hard for our members. Though at first glance we may appear to be flyweights in the social housing sector, the expertise of the NFA team and board make it possible for us to consistently punch above our weight.

Looking back over 2018, it's hard to believe how many things we accomplished as a sector. But the evidence is there for all to see; for the first time since self-financing was introduced for council housing at the start of the decade, local authorities can look at their business plans and decide for themselves how much to borrow. No arbitrary limit will be imposed by central government.

A YEAR TO REMEMBER

CHLOE FLETCHER, POLICY DIRECTOR



We know it is not the answer to everything. Our members still have to find ways to deal with the impact of the 1% rent cut and high Right to Buy discounts – but we must recognise that this was a momentous change in both Government policy and the Treasury's control of public finances. It is an opportunity that the sector needs to grab with both hands to both invest seriously in building new council housing and maintain the quality of existing homes.

The forced sale of 'high value assets' has gone too. It was one of the worst aspects of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and we have persuaded the Government to return control of asset management strategy and future investment to local councils. This, combined with a promise that rents will be allowed to track CPI plus 1% for at least five years from next April and housing benefit can be used to fund supported housing, means that council housing has more stable future.

Alongside this work, we continued our joint surveys with ARCH on the impact of Universal Credit and published our fifth report, Carrying the Debt, on the continued impact of benefit reform on both tenants and landlords. This body of evidence harvested from our members highlights both problems and improvements in reform roll-out and has earned great respect from MPs, ministers and DWP officials. It has helped us make a strong, evidence-based case for changes to both UC administration and to policy. This year the Government has announced more funding for the UC programme and more measures to protect tenants migrating onto UC.

Tenant engagement is and has always been central to the way in which ALMOs operate. After the tragedy at Grenfell Tower and the publication of the Social Housing Green Paper, we wanted to show the world what our members were doing to give tenants a voice within their organisations, whoever they were and however they wished to make themselves heard. In May 2018, we published Every Voice Counts, a good practice briefing on tenant engagement, and briefed MPs, civil servants and others on the variety of ways tenants have to engage with their landlords across the country. Our aim was to spread good practice across the whole social housing sector.

Our work on the Social Housing Green Paper had one focus: to spread the word that the ALMO model was good for both tenants and councils. The NFA team drew up a pre-Green Paper position paper for Government, organised events and briefings for members and tenants to collect views, and sought meetings with Ministers and MHCLG officials.

The lifting of the HRA debt cap is an opportunity we need to grab with both hands to invest seriously in new council housing.

As part of this process, we briefed MPs to help them understand ALMOs' unique advantages and collaborated widely with other stakeholders including the CIH, NHF, LGA, ARCH and CWAG. The NFA submission was finally delivered on 6th November 2018 but we continue to work with members, partners and Government to help develop emerging policy ideas on the issues raised during the consultation process. Most significant was the Green Paper's recognition of the stigmatisation of social housing tenants and the Government's request for ideas to combat it. We have submitted our own ideas and continue to try to persuade both the media and some politicians to discard these stereotypes. We also continue to support the wider sector campaign See the Person – previously Benefit to Society – and have been helping set up its new tenant-led committee and organise a leadership election for the group.

The NFA has been an active member of the A Voice for Tenants (AV4T) alliance through Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall (Nottingham City Homes and NFA Vice Chair). She has attended their meetings and other events and was a vocal advocate for their vision when she met Housing Minister Kit Malthouse last November.

Throughout 2018, the NFA maintained its high profile and significance to Government policy and discussions. We had meetings with Kit Malthouse, Liam Booth-Smith (special advisor to MHLGC Secretary of State James Brokenshire), and DWP Ministers Alok Sharma and Justin Tomlinson. We also developed relationships with Labour's Shadow housing team, meeting its two new members, Bury MP James Frith and Croydon MP Sarah Jones. We remain in touch with Shadow Housing Minister John Healey MP.

After a challenging year in 2017, we asked members whether the NFA was providing its members with what they wanted and considered how we could effectively focus our reduced resources. Our membership survey told us that 91% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the NFA had successfully represented the interests of ALMOs to central government and influenced national policy to improve the environment that ALMOs operate in.

All respondents who had contacted the NFA for advice or assistance in the previous 12 months rated the service as excellent or good. So, while we have made some slight changes to the staffing structure during 2018 and appointed a new part-time press and communications officer, we are not fundamentally changing our service to members.

We hope to continue to deliver an excellent service to NFA members in 2019.

BACK TO THE BASICS OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Lisa Birchall, Policy, Communications and Research Officer

Our members' core housing management work has become a focus for the NFA in the context of the Grenfell Tower fire and the Social Housing Green Paper which followed it. We will be exploring best practice and how the sector gets the basics right.

Nearly 20 years after ALMOs were first created to deliver high quality housing management services for council stock, our sector is still demonstrating its expertise and innovation. We might be a smaller sector now, but we have never lost sight of our primary duty to deliver homes which meet the needs of council housing tenants.

So just before Christmas, we launched a survey designed to capture the current state of ALMO housing management. The results revealed much excellent practice across the country in all aspects of our work, but they also revealed how much larger and complex the picture is now. The data reveals the stark impact that 'rolling back the state' has had on communities and, as a result, on social housing managers' work.

Asked to name the biggest issues they face, almost all senior managers pointed to the impact of welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit. This was, they said, just one more factor in tenants' increasing vulnerability that added to the complexity of the issues many face, such as ASB, drugs and crime. Another key concern was the rise of homelessness.



A snip at £200,000: St Martins community hub, now the thriving heart of Allenton, Derby, was refurbished on a shoestring through a tenant-empowering partnership between local residents, the centre's volunteers, Derby Homes and Derby City Council.

As the central cog in local services and key partner to parent local authorities, ALMOs have filled many of the gaps left by cuts to community services even as they coped with the double financial hit of the 1% rent cut and welfare reform. Our members strive to give more, offering support that helps residents who need it to sustain their tenancies and improve their life chances. It is difficult to measure the impact of employability and financial advice services or projects to improve health and well-being, but we do know that the quality of our tenants' lives and the quality of our management are inextricably linked.

We asked our survey respondents to tell us about significant changes they have seen to housing management. The list was a long one: having to find ways to free up resources from a dwindling HRA pot to work with the most vulnerable and complex cases; wrestling with the digitalisation of services without isolating those who are not online; the development of intensive tenancy sustainability programmes for those who need them; the need to restructure staff teams and move to mobile working; creating new specialist posts – offering, for instance, specific financial well-being or mental health support competencies – to support frontline housing managers.

For many of our members, increasing complexity has prompted them to return to basics. They are doing more face-to-face work and door-knocking.

Colchester Borough Homes, for example, set themselves a three-year challenge of getting to know every tenant in all their properties. The result:

- Rent arrears reduced from £433,000 to £256,000
- 28 fraudulent lets uncovered
- 954 unauthorised alterations
- 29 referrals for support
- Under-occupation reduced through incentives and home swaps
- Communication with tenants improved - email addresses & mobile numbers collected
- Most importantly, happier residents

"About time somebody kept an eye out, and found out what is happening," said one resident who responded to the audit. "Great to see someone from CBH – without having to wait for something to go wrong," said another. And, simply: "What I'd expect any good landlord to do." The NFA will be working on this data over 2019 to produce a detailed piece of research. We'll visit members and interview housing officers, tenants and senior managers. We will look at how organisations structure their housing management services, what advantages and disadvantages each approach brings and how to find what makes the best local fit.

We hope that this project will help raise the profile of housing management and inform discussions with tenants about how we deliver services which are fit for the times in which we live.

Universal Credit 101

Molly Dunne, Financial Inclusion Manager,
Your Homes Newcastle

What's your top piece of advice for colleagues facing the Universal Credit (UC) system for the first time?

Right away I have to say that we were one of the first areas to deal with UC and we have had time to develop our approach and respond to changes. Back in 2015, we were able to begin with relatively low numbers of customers. UC Live Service wasn't fully digital and it was aimed only at single job seekers. We were able to set up a specialist team and get a feel for the likely problems on a small scale. We know that many of our colleagues won't have the same run-in period and will have to cope from the start with the inevitable impact on a much larger proportion of their income.

So what was the single most important lesson you learned during the pilot?

What really helped was to put clear systems in place and make sure every member of the team was thoroughly trained and felt confident when supporting a customer in difficulties caused by the transition. There are many potential glitches which teams need the confidence to deal with. For instance, UC systems don't pick up 'untidy' tenancies where only one person in a joint tenancy still lives in the property, and work-arounds are needed. Clear guidance from the start makes all the difference, as does building in plenty of flexibility to respond to the unforeseen.

Are arrears an inevitable outcome of the shift to UC?

There's certainly a spike in arrears initially but we've found they do drop over time. When we look at our data in three-month cohorts, collection rates are certainly low in the 0-3 month

and 3-6 month groups, especially when customers are waiting for the first payment to come through. But with supportive collections work and careful tracking, rates return to pre-UC levels somewhere between 18 and 24 months for most of our customers.

What have you tried that proved particularly successful?

Co-locating members of our team at Job centres so that we could support customers face-to-face was invaluable. Even if we were simply helping our residents understand what to expect, it all helped build trust. We were also able to build good relationships with our local Job centre staff. I'd say any opportunity for partnership working of this kind is worth looking at.

There has been a constructive response from the Minister recently on some UC difficulties such as payments for 18-21-year-olds and care leavers. What's on your own wish-list for future improvements?

Where alternative payment arrangements have been agreed, keeping track of collections would be a lot easier, a lot less worrying for customers and less off-putting for all landlords if the DWP were able to issue APA payments at the same time as the customer receives their UC payment.

By now YHN must have written the definitive Housing People's Guide to UC? Sorry, no. If we've learned anything,

it is that there are no short cuts. No guide we'd written even 12 months ago would still be valid. We're certainly not trying to hoard the knowledge – we'll share anything and everything we know – but over the last four years we've generally found that as soon as we draw up one set of guidance, the goal posts move. The seven-day waiting period, for instance; not in the regulations when we began, then it arrived, and then it was taken away again. Flexibility has been and still is our best friend.

RENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

ALMO housing managers track the transformation they've witnessed in the sector over the last three decades...



By **Tony Griffiths** Housing Management Group Manager, Berneslai Homes

HOUSING chose me – like many of my colleagues, I feel it's a vocation. I was born in a council house, so from the start I felt it was something I knew and

understood, and I've loved everything about the 35 years I've spent working both in the sector and in Barnsley. I joined Barnsley Council aged 18 as an admin assistant and rent collector. I spent time in the lettings and housing benefit teams and eventually moved to frontline housing and estate management work. I've loved the frontline jobs best, working directly with people and helping to change and shape people's lives.

The miners' strike began just a few months after I started work and as the dispute dragged on, I remember seeing miners burning anything they could find in their fireplaces and finding it ever more difficult to feed and clothe their families, never mind pay their rent.

We're now much more than rent collectors and I like that; a social landlord gives people the tools to sustain their tenancies. Those early experiences taught me we have to work in partnership to support vulnerable tenants and their families. We now put significant effort into helping residents sort issues before they escalate.

'Housing management roles now have the support of specialists who can advise on issues such as mental health.'

Our Vulnerability Strategy makes all of us, regardless of roles, responsible for recognising where tenants may have difficulties. Our simple message to all staff is 'if something doesn't look right, don't ignore it'. After so many years in the sector, I know that things go in cycles. Sometimes housing management is generic, sometimes centralised, sometimes decentralised, and the government's recent stronger commitment to social housing is a massive positive. But we need a balanced mix of approaches; the buildings we manage take second place to our communities and people who live in them.



By **Richard Dowling** Housing Manager, Colchester Borough Homes

WHILE the way we do our work has been transformed by training and technology, I still think it's the same job I started three decades ago – it comes down to a building positive relationship between landlord and tenant. Technology and better working practices have obviously made it easier to meet our residents' needs and to keep staff safe.



Here Come The Women Last summer, Berneslai Homes ran a successful apprenticeship recruitment campaign targeting women of all ages. "Frontline jobs, particularly in the trades, were widely seen as men's territory when I started working in housing," says Tony Griffiths. "That's changing and it's right that our workforce should reflect the inclusive values that we encourage and support in our communities."

In the early days of my career I once got taken down into a basement flat with a tenant who got absolutely mad with me, and I was terrified. There were no mobile phones and, in fact, very little information about the people we were visiting – a house file generally held information buildings rather than tenants. You knocked on every new door without much idea of what might be on the other side.

'We have all learned that there's no point in being a social landlord if you don't build tenancy support and sustainability into the job.'

Our professionals are now much more knowledgeable, much better trained, much better prepared. They set out with conflict management training and instant emergency alarms. At the same time, I think it's fair to say that residents with mental health issues are a much bigger

challenge in this sector than they used to be. People live much more complex lives now and yet the support networks most people used to have are dwindling away.

When I first started, this job was about collecting rent and maintaining property. We have all learned since that there's no point in being a social landlord if you don't build tenancy support and sustainability into the job. In the last six years, we've halved our eviction rates by developing systems that work with tenants who have hit difficulties.

But it's also important to remember that this is a service, not a consumer relationship. We still need to get the basics right – management, rent, maintenance, tenancy conditions – before we can expand and do other things.

HOUSING PLUS

THE ALMO APPROACH

NFA members manage more than 417,000 homes across 34 local authorities in England. They work with councils to deliver decent housing, of course; but they also work hard with limited resources, and in partnership with other agencies wherever possible, to provide quality services and support tenants who need it to improve their health, life chances and employability. The whole community benefits. Here we offer a flavour of how the ALMO sector approaches its mission to do 'more than housing'.



STEPS TO SUCCESS

Steps To Success (S2S) is an employment programme run exclusively for people who live in homes managed on behalf of Bury Council by **Six Town Housing**. Since its 2014 launch in partnership with Bury College and the DWP, S2S has helped 242 people find jobs, supported 136 into work placements and 41 have started apprenticeships. Life coach support also helps applicants tackle any personal barriers that might affect their employability.

"I'm enjoying every minute," says Six Town Housing tenant Curtis Sandiford (pictured), now an apprentice with a gas maintenance company. "S2S coached me in interview techniques and I'm now working with a fun team who have taught me a lot."

PROJECT 2020

When **Homes for Haringey's** Project 2020 was launched just over six years ago, its aim was to help 16 to 24-year-olds in Tottenham find work or move into further education or training. Its successful work has now been extended to the whole of Haringey. In the last year, the team have given one-to-one guidance to 159 people, helped 57 residents into work and 33 into apprenticeships. Project 2020 set out to engage local youngsters early, offering a weekly homework club and regular 'radio station' workshops where they can learn interview, podcast production and DJ skills. Half-term programmes covers topics that range from first aid to building healthy relationships.

DOING THE RIGHT THING

Barneslai Homes' theme this year is #DoingtheRightThing, which aims to reassure tenants that it is doing just that. They continue to deliver much more than the basic landlord functions, listening and responding to the tenant voice. As part of this, linking to the Chartered Institute of Housing 'Make a Stand' campaign which Barneslai Homes has signed up to, staff have been asked to make pledges to the people of Barnsley to help stop Domestic Abuse. These include, 'To be aware, listen and don't be afraid to ask "are you okay?"', 'To notice and report anything out of the ordinary' and 'Be open for anyone to confide in me and help however I can' whilst continuing to effectively manage the Housing Service.

BOATHOUSE BUS

A mobile youth club called the 'Boathouse Bus', which takes youth services into the heart of communities, has benefited this year from the Tenants Project Fund (TPF) established by **Blackpool Coastal Housing**. Projects that can show they make a positive difference to residents and communities can apply for large and small grants. Other initiatives to benefit most recently include Care & Share who provide clothing and toiletries to those in need, and a group that runs Art in the Community sessions for people who struggle to leave their homes.

HOUSING PLUS

THE ALMO APPROACH

REACHING THE HOMELESS

Two outreach workers work in the early mornings through to late at night in Colchester, telling rough sleepers where they can find support or take the first step towards getting somewhere safe to stay. It's a proactive initiative launched by **Colchester Borough Homes** in partnership with Colchester Borough Council. CBH have also led on the local Homelessness Prevention Charter and work in partnership with a number of other local agencies. Taking services to the homeless rather than waiting for them to ask for help has reduced rough sleeping numbers by nearly a third.

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD

The development of Gladstone House, a purpose built social housing development for people aged 65 or over, earned **Newark & Sherwood Homes** Project of the Year in this year's Building Communities Awards. The accolade recognises the successful project management and partnership with Newark & Sherwood District Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Homes England to create a beautiful scheme that supports independent living, reduces social isolation, and is carefully designed to deliver a dementia-friendly environment.

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT

Barnet Homes plays a key role in a multi-disciplinary raft of initiatives that give wrap-around support to domestic abuse survivors. These range from practical help, such as installing extra home security measures in collaboration with local police and fire services, to a weekly one-stop shop run by BH that brings a number of agencies under one roof to offer advice and legal help. Clients are given the support they ask for, whether to stay in their home or referral to place of safety. Advocacy and advice services are also commissioned by BH's parent council from the Independent Domestic Abuse Advisory Service.

EMPLOYABILITY AND SOCIAL VALUE

The Yes employment scheme and **Northwards Housing** celebrated the fifth anniversary of their partnership last October. Since the service was established, three centres have opened across north Manchester and it's estimated that for every £1 spent funding the service, £42 of social value has been recouped. Social value includes gains such as moving off benefits and better health. Through the scheme, 582 people have been supported into employment, 211 people have found training and volunteering opportunities, and 6,207 hours of time has been donated by volunteers.



THE HAPPY POTTERS

Vandana Lake (pictured) and fellow residents approached **Cheltenham Borough Homes** towards the end of last year with an exciting plan to turn an overgrown allotment close to a CBH-managed block into a new community gardening scheme. With support from the CBH Community Investment Team and The Conservation Volunteers, a sustainable tenant-led gardening group grew quickly.

They call themselves 'The Happy Potters' and meet regularly to get the ground cleared and plan how they will create a flourishing community space. CBH will continue to work closely with them and help them bid for funding.

HOUSING PLUS

THE ALMO APPROACH

FARESHARE

The healthy, affordable meals produced by 10 FareShare projects, overseen by **Poole Housing Partnership's** community engagement team, have generated a host of benefits over the last three years. The meals don't just address food poverty: they bring vulnerable and isolated local residents into closer contact with their communities, and help recruit and train resident volunteers. The food itself, perfectly edible but just past its official 'sell-by' date, is collected from local retailers who would otherwise be sending it to landfill. Over 100 PHP residents enjoy regular FareShare meals.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Finding ways to help people live independently for longer is good for everyone, especially residents themselves. So while **Sutton Housing Partnership** tenants can be referred to its new independent living support service by housing partners or social services, the ALMO is also encouraging over-55s to self-refer if they feel they need extra help or advice to enhance or adapt their day-to-day living skills. On offer from Sutton Connect will be help to reduce accident risks in the home, money management and health care advice, access to local services and guidance about how to get involved in local activities.

LISTEN AND LEARN

A new Consultation Tracker helps **Cornwall Housing** staff record how they listen to tenants and act on and respond to their feedback. The core aim of a recent comprehensive review of the way staff and tenants communicate was to make sure that the ALMO's Board could monitor whether key performance indicators for constructive engagement were being met. The new system also makes residents confident that when they've taken part in consultations, their contribution is heard and makes a difference. Six residents now sit on the Board's Services and Engagement Committee to feed 'street-level' views into decision-making.

CUSTOMER FIRST

A Same Day Repair Service introduced by **Homes in Sedgemoor** sets a high standard, and the latest figures show that more than eight out of ten routine jobs (83.82%) are now fixed on the day they're reported by tenants. Unsurprisingly, satisfaction rates among residents are currently 100% and HiS's approach to customer service has won praise and awards. The culture of putting customers first extends to an innovative support system for tenants on Universal Credit. No-one has been evicted since January 2018 because of rent arrears and although over 1000 HiS families are on UC, total arrears were just 1.1% at the end of January.

SUSTAINING TENANCIES

A specialist service goes on working with the most vulnerable **East Kent Housing** residents long after the keys have been handed over, to support them with the complexities of modern life. The Housing Sustainment Team links up with other agencies and charities to bring in expertise on issues such as mental health, domestic abuse, debt and safeguarding. Where, for instance, a resident seems to have difficulty looking after themselves, East Kent Housing officers work with other agencies to get care packages in place. Over 1000 referrals have been made to the service since it was set up two years ago.

WORK READY

No amount of interview training will secure a job offer if an applicant doesn't have the right skills. A pioneering Work Ready Assessment scheme helps **Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing** employment support team put together learning programmes that precisely meet the needs of each individual tenant who chooses to use the service. The assessment is completed with the tenant before they are referred to the specific courses that will help fill the gaps in their skill set. This approach is helping more tenants into training and work and supporting economic growth across Kirklees.

EMPOWERMENT ON A SHOESTRING

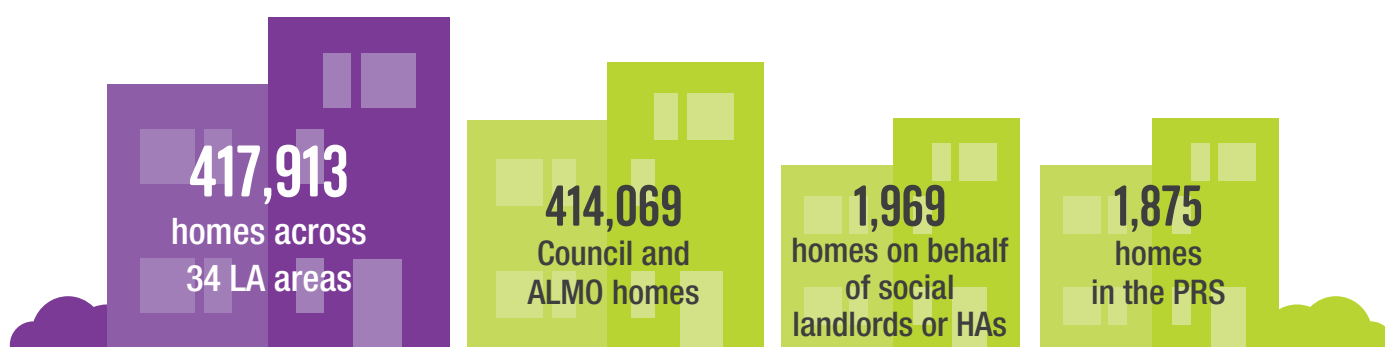
Money was tight and yet Allenton, one of Derby's most disadvantaged areas, was in pressing need of a high quality community centre. The role of **Derby Homes** and its parent council was to work closely alongside the team of volunteers at St Martin's Methodist Church and help residents, many of them Derby Homes tenants, realise their dream of creating a vibrant local hub. With support, local people mobilised and organised themselves, and in February this year, they celebrated the completion of a refurbishment worth around £1m – but cost only £200,000.

CARING FOR CARE LEAVERS

Landlord of the year nominees St Leger Homes are particularly proud of one of their many awards. It celebrates their partnership with other agencies in the Doncaster area to help young care-leavers make a safe and successful transition to independent living. St Leger has a six-bed facility which offers them more than a home; it has round the clock on-site support, and staff and local agencies deliver a life skills programme that teaches them the all-important basics of general housekeeping, healthy eating, gardening, money management and social interaction. The facility also makes it possible for them to stay in the local area and maintain their community links, rather than finding themselves allocated accommodation outside the borough where they know no-one.

The Shape of the Sector

31 ALMOs managing:



Eight ALMOs have Registered Provider status

20 ALMOs have a Direct Labour Organisation (DLO)

Three ALMOs have a separate repairs subsidiary

15 ALMOs or their local authorities have other housing companies for development or housing needs. In total, they have 21 companies. The majority are concentrated on increasing housing supply in the local area.

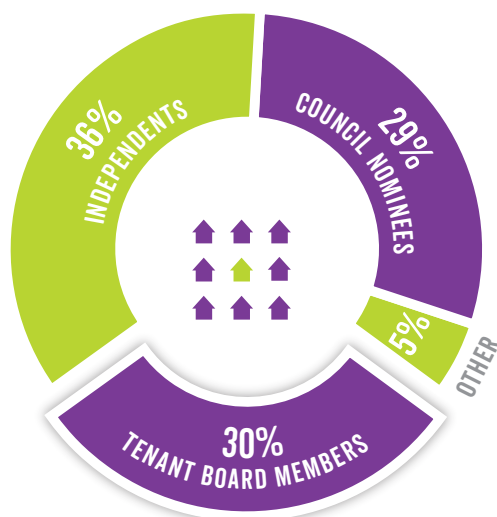
Apprentices

90% of ALMOs employ apprentices. In total, the ALMO sector employs **352 apprentices** in a range of roles. Just over half of apprentices are employed in **trade roles (57%)**, **11% in Housing Management**, **12% in office administration** (including HR, IT and finance), with the remaining **20% in a variety of other roles**.



ALMO Board Composition

ALMOs have continued to ensure tenants have a voice at the highest levels of their organisations.



Services

Alongside the core housing management services, ALMOs have continued to deliver a range of services on behalf of their parent local authorities. These include:

80% provide lettings, allocations or housing advice

73% provide money or financial inclusion services

53% provide emergency out of hours services

53% tackle worklessness

53% deliver homelessness services

50% provide management or maintenance services for other non-domestic properties

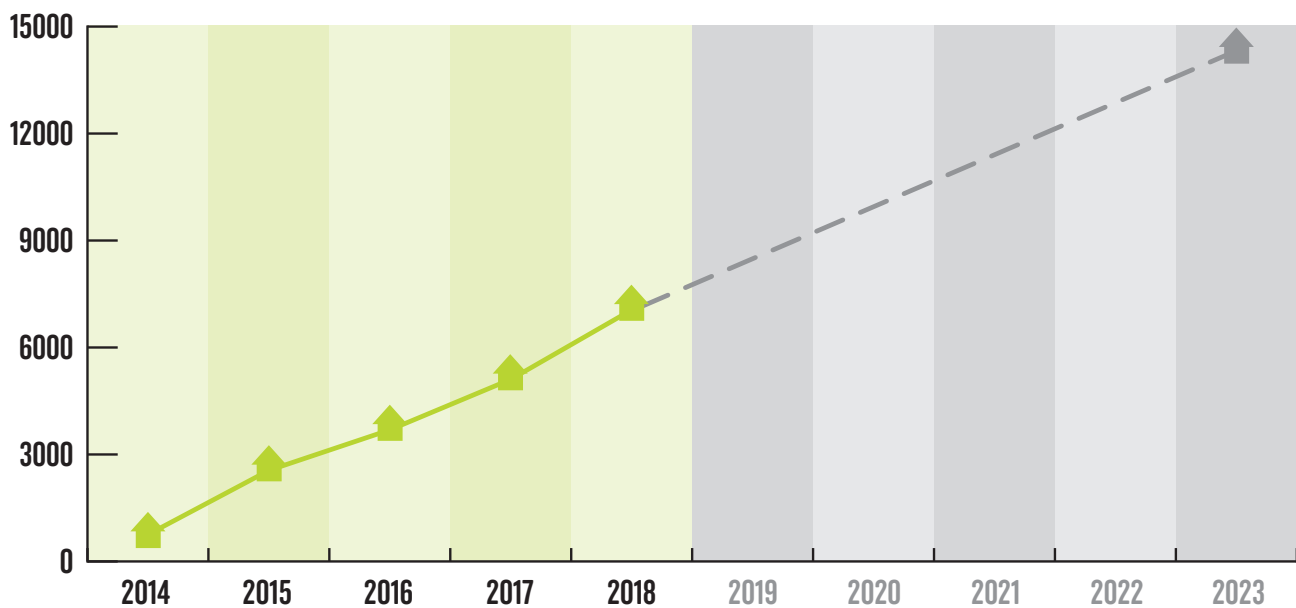
50% deliver care and support services

63% of ALMOs utilise their experience to deliver services in the wider market place as a means of generating additional income.

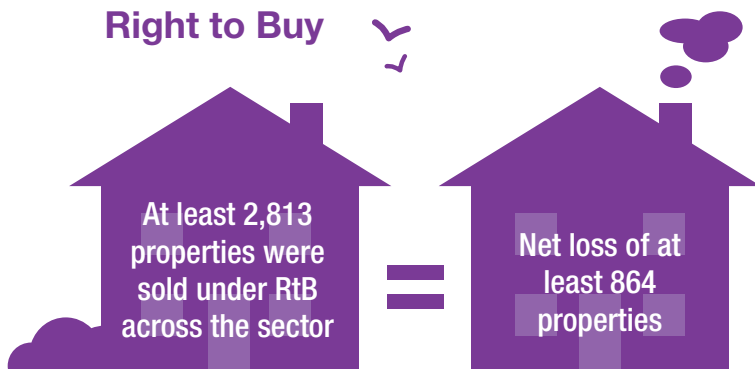
Adding to Housing Stock

2018	The ALMO sector built or acquired 1,949 properties (*increase of 38% from 2017)	1,280 NEW BUILD	66% AFFORDABLE RENT
		669 ACQUISITIONS	15% SOCIAL RENT
2019	The sector has plans to build 2,514 properties in 2019	1,801 NEW BUILD	66% AFFORDABLE RENT
		713 ACQUISITIONS	14% SOCIAL RENT

Over the last 5 years, the sector **has contributed 7,055** new build and acquisitions
Over the next 5 years, the sector **plans to contribute 7,265** new build and acquisitions



Right to Buy



69% of RtB sales were replaced with new build and acquisitions in 2018.

RtB sales are highest in the Midlands, but across the country most ALMOs are not able to replace all the stock sold each year.

NFA Asks – RtB

- Extend all proposed flexibilities to councils across the country as soon as possible
- Implement proposal to allow councils to pass RtB receipts to their ALMOs
- Vary discounts locally and regionally to support the sector to replace homes sold without reducing overall number of sales.

HOUSING PLUS

THE ALMO APPROACH

COMMUNITY FIRST

The 'Hubs' established by **South Essex Homes** are community spaces where residents can find all sorts of support, from all things digital – including bringing their own pesky devices along to solve the mysteries of how they work – to savings, loan and budgeting advice. Such community initiatives have earned South Essex a consistently high place in annual landlord rankings. In coming years, it intends to take full advantage of its ability to generate profits from its commercial subsidiary, South Essex Property Services, and reinvest the money in its core social and community-focused role.

DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY

As one of the first organisations to train its staff to recognise the signs of dementia, **Rykneld Homes** hopes to create a dementia-friendly culture among its communities. Dementia Friends training is not only offered to all staff, but is now available to a range of tenants and groups including the ALMO's Community Improvers – young volunteers aged 11 to 19. The aim is to do everything possible to help Rykneld residents live in their own homes for as long as possible, and it's hoped that raised awareness will create dementia-friendly neighbourhoods.

STABILITY

Four tenants at Ashgrove, Albrighton, celebrate their 55th year of friendship this year. They all moved into their **STAR Housing** council houses in 1964 when the houses were brand new. George Evans and his three neighbours have now spent more than half their lives together, watching each other raise their families and, in recent years, keeping a friendly eye on each other. Not only has social housing given them a secure home for life; all have also become pillars of their communities, actively involved in what goes on at Ashgrove. They show, say STAR staff, how decent, secure housing culminates in fantastic community spirit.

TENANTS' ANNUAL REPORT

The 11th **South Tyneside Homes** Tenants' Annual Report is due out now. It's a simple concept; each year tenants from across the borough get together to look at all the facts and figures that track South Tyneside's performance over the previous 12 months and assess how the organisation is performing against the standards set out in the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing. Importantly, the writers get to recommend areas for improvement.



KENTWELL HOUSE

On the face of it, this well-kept block of low-rise flats looks nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, Kentwell House on **Lewisham Homes'** Honor Oak Estate is a visual testament to the transformational possibilities of a housing management approach that sets out to involve tenants in the running of their homes and communities. At one time in its history, this 1930s estate was known to many as Tenement Town. In the early days it was sharply criticised for its location, then considered too remote from many of the capital's job opportunities, and for the brutal appearance of its housing blocks. As post-war rebuilding got underway in the 1950s, it was often cited as an example of what planners should avoid. Now, refurbished, well-kept – in a thriving partnership between residents and LH staff – with pleasant green open spaces and secure play areas, it illustrates the pride everyone involved takes in making the estate welcoming and safe.

HOUSING PLUS



FOLLOWING IN MUM'S FOOTSTEPS

Chloe Hullis and Kelly Swift first met 25 years ago when they began work as apprentices with Northampton Borough Council. They both graduated to permanent jobs and moved to **Northampton Partnership Homes** after the ALMO was set up by the council in 2015 to manage its homes. Then, last year, they realised that they both had sons applying for places on the NPH apprenticeship scheme, set up to give local youngsters the skills the ALMO needs. Chloe's son Jake and Kelly's son Jordan won two of the six trade apprenticeships awarded in October 2018. "Our mums have had long and good careers from their apprenticeships so we are already thinking about staying when we've finished our training," says Jake. "We are even recommending apprenticeships to our friends."

THE ALMO APPROACH

HAPPY STAFF

Fulfilled staff are as important as happy tenants. Earlier this year, **Stockport Homes** won its highest listing ever in the 2019 Sunday Times Top 100 list of best not-for-profit organisations to work for. Its third place is an incredible climb up the list from 40th place last year, and the ALMO also received an award for 'Best Improved' organisation and special recognition for being on the list for the tenth consecutive year. It's a valuable accolade since the placings are determined by an anonymous survey of all staff who are asked about management quality, social principles and employee wellbeing. Chair of Stockport Homes' Board Robin Burman says, 'A decade in such a prestigious list is real recognition that we have a great culture here and are an employer of choice.'

AREA PANELS

Four area panels made up of Eastbourne Homes residents and leaseholders across the area are helped to organise and oversee community initiatives throughout the year by their ALMO. **Eastbourne Homes** believes residents who see their neighbourhoods at close range are best placed to know what's missing and how to fill the gaps. The panels deliver a range of community events but also feed into social action campaigns such as the introduction of defibrillators across the town, a scheme to help police combat anti-social behaviour and the provision of dog mess bag dispensing machines. They've organised community art projects, raised funds for charities and – on a practical level – tell their landlord about the need for improvements such as dropped kerbs. EHL continues to add to the panels' opportunities to get involved.

EXTRA CARE

A £7million extra care living scheme in Chelmsley Wood, built and managed by **Solihull Community Housing**, was formally opened early this year. It's very different to the traditional model of residential care accommodation. Each of its 51 apartments have their own kitchen and wet room so that residents can live and eat independently if they wish, but the extensive open plan ground floor is designed to encourage a sense of community and the building has a hair salon, hobby room and garden access. An SCH wellbeing co-ordinator will promote a range of activities selected by residents themselves.

MOVING FORWARD

The Gateshead Housing Company is committed to investing in both its buildings and its people. Its Moving Forward rolling schedule of free short courses is open to all local residents (though tenants and leaseholders have priority) and it supports participants' own efforts to create communities where people want to live. More unusual courses include 'Spot the scam' to explain how fraudsters target victims on the doorstep and online, and safeguarding awareness to help protect the young and vulnerable from neglect or abuse. They are all designed to improve wellbeing and reduce the risk of social isolation and support the priority of GHC's parent council to make Gateshead an enriching, positive environment. To help everyone join in, extra support is on offer including reimbursement of travel costs or the help of an interpreter if needed.

HOUSING PLUS

THE ALMO APPROACH



RUSTY ROAD TO RECOVERY

From tenant Vince Davis's own struggles with mental health issues came the inspiration for a unique social enterprise to support others with similar problems. He asked **Homes in Sedgemoor** to help him set up a not-for-profit classic car restoration workshop where people recovering from poor mental health could meet and work towards a common fulfilling goal and, at the same time, become part of a supportive group. He presented his 'Rusty Road to Recovery' idea to the tenant panel that decides how to distribute Homes in Sedgemoor's Making a Difference Fund. They awarded him £1,500 to get going and HiS helped him set up the enterprise just before Christmas.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE TENANTS

Your Homes Newcastle's apprenticeship scheme looks far beyond the needs of the ALMO. Recently recruited apprentice Bethany, who has always dreamed of working in gardening and horticulture, discovered that YHN were willing to help her learn to drive. They know that having a full licence is likely to be an essential skill she'll need for this kind of work when she applies for jobs at the end of her apprenticeship. They've also made sure that she now has her PA1 and PA6 spraying and pesticide qualifications which will make her highly employable. "It's a fantastic opportunity and I'm so glad they've helped me," says Bethany. "YHN have paid for ten driving lessons and the theory and practical tests. Learning to drive is so expensive and it would have taken me far longer to do it on my own."

IN THE VANGUARD

Wolverhampton has always laid claim to being in the vanguard of social housing. In November 1918, days after the end of the First World War, Prime Minister David Lloyd George spoke at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, declaring, 'The housing of the people must be a national concern.' Barely a year later, two homes said to be Britain's first council houses, close to what is now the Green Lanes Estate, were formally opened. A century on, **Wolverhampton Homes** is still innovating. Last year tenants moved into four new homes constructed off-site to a state-of-the-art modular design. At a time when both housing and land to build on is in short supply, WH were able to make use of a relatively small plot close to a major route into the city with minimum disruption to local people and traffic because construction times were so much shorter than traditional building methods.

TENANT ACADEMY

All ALMOs want to get their tenants involved – but taking part in public meetings and formal decision-making processes may be a step too far out of many residents' comfort zone. **Nottingham City Homes** has, like other ALMOs, tackled this problem by running a Tenants' Academy that offers courses throughout the year to teach basic community skills such as basic book-keeping and grant bid-writing. The aim is to grow residents' confidence to join discussions about their neighbourhoods and, on the way, introduce them to skills that will empower them in other parts of their lives. Hundreds of residents have taken part in more than 90 courses in recent years and it's estimated that every £1 invested in the Academy brings NCH communities and the wider city economy around £17 in social value.

DIVERSITY AND COHESION

Tower Hamlets is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the UK, home to people with origins in more than 20 countries. It's a source of great pride to **Tower Hamlets Homes** that their surveys show a high level of social cohesion, with 87 per cent of residents agreeing that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. The volunteer-run Poets Corner Community Garden in Bethnal Green captures this positivity well – an oasis of green where locals can grow their own veg or simply sit and enjoy it. The next project on the group's calendar is a residents' cookbook which, unsurprisingly, though inspired by a very English garden and allotment, will feature recipes from around the globe.

PUTTING ALMOS ON THE MAP

The NFA currently represents 31 ALMOs which manage 417, 913 properties* (414,069 Council and ALMO homes) across 34 local authorities in England

NORTH

Berneslai Homes	18,878
Blackpool Coastal Housing	5,182
Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing	23,224
Northwards Housing	13,332
Six Town Housing	8,075
South Tyneside Homes	17,850
St Leger Homes of Doncaster	20,545
Stockport Homes	12,167
The Gateshead Housing Company	20,607
Your Homes Newcastle	28,282

TOTAL 168,142

MIDLANDS

Derby Homes	13,702
Newark & Sherwood Homes	5,700
Northampton Partnership Homes	12,389
Nottingham City Homes	27,359
Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing	4,284
Solihull Community Housing	11,243
Rykneld Homes	8,010
Wolverhampton Homes	24,555

TOTAL 107,242

SOUTH WEST

Cheltenham Borough Homes	5,088
Cornwall Housing	11,105
Homes In Sedgemoor	4,146
Poole Housing Partnership	5,099

TOTAL 25,438

LONDON AND SOUTHERN

Barnet Homes	14,295
Colchester Borough Homes	7,060
Eastbourne Homes	4,185
East Kent Housing	17,226
Homes for Haringey	21,186
Lewisham Homes	17,969
South Essex Homes	6,614
Sutton Housing Partnership	7,375
Tower Hamlets Homes	21,181

TOTAL 117,091

OVERALL TOTALS

417,913

*Includes stock managed for the private rented and social rented sector, but not garages. Self-reported data for ALMOs for December 2018

AIMING FOR 2050

Nick Murphy
Chief Executive Officer, Nottingham City Homes

In Nottingham, we manage homes that were built in every decade of the last century. They last a long time, longer than many might think, and we knew it was time to look at the horizon. When our friends at the NFA told us about an approach to retrofitting those older homes that could bring them in line with 2050 carbon reduction targets, rather than razing them to the ground and starting again, we were really interested.

2050 sounds quite a way off but in housing 30 years is nothing. After all, we hope our homes will last at least that long. So if we're building or refurbishing older stock today, then the 2050 goal of making our housing carbon-neutral as part of the push to halt climate change is where we should be aiming. Our existing approach certainly wasn't going to get us there.

We're very fortunate. We work closely with our parent council, a forward-looking body that has a lofty vision of what the future might be, a vision we share. So this exciting new approach, which lets us super-insulate homes with factory-fabricated panels and minimum disruption to our tenants, fitted well with our strategic direction.

It can be scary signing off on something that you don't fully understand and putting yourself in the hands of experts but Dutch innovators Energiesprong, the energy-saving retrofit designers we chose to work with were able to show us plenty of practical evidence of what works.

And the end results are incredibly attractive – their residents love them. Our pilot scheme was a terrace of 1960s houses that were particularly energy inefficient and looked very dated. As it happens, the complete transformation this retrofit delivers is plain for all to see, because one house in the row is a Right to Buy property now owned by a private landlord who declined to join in with the retrofit. The contrast is stark. I can also tell you it's been great for the reputation of both our company and Nottingham Council. There's been lots of interest in us and what we're doing.

But that's not what we're doing it for. We do it for our tenants. They had homes that were cold and expensive to heat, and now they have the same homes, but they are comfortable, always warm and so affordable to heat that they can hardly believe the difference.

We should never underestimate how crippling fuel poverty is for those in the grip of it, and tenants also hit by the difficulties that Universal Credit has forced on them really struggle. Here is something completely practical and even life-changing that we, as landlords, can do for them.

We have also built some new homes to 2050 standards, and our satisfaction survey brought back a lot of answers. But the one thing that all of them mentioned was how shocked they were by their new fuel bill – how low it was. Everyone benefits, because that extra money will not be disappearing into the bank account of some massive energy conglomerate, but will be spent in local shops.

On top of that, our tenants are really happy we haven't swept their homes away and moved them somewhere else. This approach has preserved their community while giving them a home that they love to live in because they can afford to heat it, and is so beautiful that they are proud of where they live.

This year is the centenary of the Addison Act. It's a good time for looking back and appreciating the social good that social housing has done over the last 100 years. But we

should also be thinking about the next 100 years and about the warm, comfortable and attractive homes we want to refurbish and build.



Nick with Nottingham City Homes' Head of Sustainable Energy Emily Braham who leads on NCH's net zero carbon retrofit programme



NCH's pilot scheme terrace retrofitted to 2050 net zero-carbon targets – the privately owned home pictured here opted out of the retrofit



A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP

Laurice Ponting, CEO, Housemark

This has been our first full year hosting the NFA at our Warwick University Science Park office. For me this has been a great opportunity to develop strong professional rapport with Eamon and the NFA board, complementing the positive relationship HouseMark already has with our ALMO clients.

HouseMark's aim is to provide the operational and back office support that leaves Eamon and his team free to devote their energies to the work with government, policy makers and front-line campaigns which has been so fruitful over the last 12 months.

It is, I hope, a symbiotic relationship that brings advantages to both sides. Our data, governance and operational expertise has the power to enhance and inform NFA policy initiatives, and I know that Eamon has a keen interest in a number of HouseMark solutions for specific challenges the sector faces.

We collect data from just over three-quarters of the overall housing sector in the UK that tracks cost and performance in a range of ways. We develop individually tailored analysis for client organisations to help them compare their performance with others working in similar contexts. We're also a repository of case studies and best practice and have a huge knowledge base. And our relatively new relationship with the NFA, alongside our longer liaison with ARCH, obviously feeds into our teams' better understanding of the real issues in the council sector.

In the coming year, HouseMark will be introducing a number of new products that we think will be of key strategic use to our ALMO clients. We'll have recently launched our 'Local Authority Housing Statistics', a database which is available to all our members to carry out regression analysis on the data in order to better understand organisational performance and investigate areas such as housing demand, the condition of non-social stock in each area and compare new build programmes between local authorities.

Given the contents of the Social Housing Green Paper, following on from the tragedy of Grenfell, it's clear that stronger consumer regulation is on the way for the sector. Although no-one yet knows exactly what that will mean, I think it's widely accepted that the regulator will want to see measurement of customer satisfaction. The sector should expect to have to report upon consumer metrics which could be published by the regulator in some form to demonstrate transparency and enable comparisons across providers.

The right metrics, or indicators, provide tangible evidence of performance, so it's easy to see why the government may favour a suite of measures as a quick win to demonstrate to tenants their commitment to improving sector accountability and showing what good looks like.

HouseMark's current focus on contemporising our core data, developing new reporting tools and making it much easier for our clients to upload data will help NFA members, among others, with this work. Our core system will be able to offer much better and quicker analysis, from the strategic through to the operational. A new reporting system will make it possible for members to analyse that data in the way they want instead of waiting for us to do it.

It's widely accepted that the regulator will want to see measurement of customer satisfaction; the sector should expect to have to report upon consumer metrics which could be published to demonstrate transparency and enable comparisons.

We are also looking for partners to join us in two important new data gathering projects. We want to pilot a database that tracks property performance at street and estate level. We hope this will make it possible to compare landlords' performance even on different sides of the same street.

The other project looks at one of the big questions that all landlords want answered: is it possible to accurately predict how much they'll need to spend on repairs and maintenance in the short, medium and long term? Will big data sets from the sector reveal patterns that help landlords do this? We already have interest in this work from NFA member Lewisham Homes, and we're keen to hear from other ALMOs interested in getting involved in either of these initiatives.



THE LEGACY OF THE ADDISON ACT

Lisa Birchall

"I think there is no dispute in any quarter that this matter is of the utmost importance, from the point of view not only of the physical well-being of our people, but of our social stability and industrial content..."

This was how Dr. Christopher Addison, Minister of Health in Lloyd George's post-war government, began the second reading of the Housing, Town Planning Act on 7 April 1919. Royal Assent was given in July 1919 and since then the legislation that launched the large-scale building of local authority housing has been widely referred to as the Addison Act.



The First World War had put many social problems and their close connection with dire housing conditions into stark relief. Poor quality housing, slums, over-crowding and lack of sanitation were blamed for a high infant mortality rate and the general poor health of the population, especially the men who had gone away to fight. Some conscripts had been turned away even by army doctors, judged too unhealthy to fight.

The survivors came home to a severe shortage of housing suitable for a modern industrial workforce; nearly all the UK's brickyards had been shut for the duration of the war and there was a chronic shortage of labour. Private rental homes were often poor quality and local government did not have money or infrastructure to supply new homes.

Finally, housing – in part seen as a 'women's issue' since the women of the time spent most of their time at home – had moved up the agenda with the enfranchisement of women, who 'were

all agreed upon the present intolerable conditions of the present state of affairs...', as one parliamentary debater pointed out.

All these factors were seated in the unique context of their time. Yet reading the Hansard record of the debates which led to the Act, it is striking how many of the challenges facing the country a hundred years ago are echoed today: the recognition that housing is a health issue, and that poor quality housing leads to poor health; land availability and prices; the failure of the market and private enterprise to deliver the homes the country needed; the cost and availability of building materials needed to deliver a housing revolution.

Then there were the questions of who should pay for 'public housing' and whether rents should be subsidised, and moral questions around perceptions of the deserving ('genteel') poor and undeserving ('ne'er-do-well') poor. Even in 1919, there was talk of the importance of home ownership for creating a sense of having a stake in one's country and of the wider impact on all society of homelessness. Finally, there is also some irony in ministers complaining about the number of undelivered housing and town planning bills which preceded the Addison Act...

But with the battle won, the advent of council housing revolutionised living conditions for millions of British people in the twentieth century. They had high quality, affordable homes built to excellent design standards in communities where people were – and are still – proud to live. By and large, the standard of homes in the private rental sector improved too simply because a benchmark had been set.

After many years of neglect and sometimes open attack on the very concept of social housing, it seems fitting in this centenary year that the sector once more has a favourable headwind. Policymakers on all sides are openly recognising that social housing has a key part to play in resolving the housing shortage and improving standards. There are still challenges to overcome – including the mechanics of Right to Buy and the availability and cost of land – but there is a sense that the time is now ripe to start building a new wave of council housing that the country can be proud of. It is as vital today as it was in 1919 to do what the market cannot.

The NFA and ARCH are celebrating 100 years of the Addison Act with a parliamentary tea reception for tenants and MPs in July, the Act's anniversary month. The aim will be to spotlight the role that social housing has played in society across the years and the quality of new housing now being provided by councils and ALMOs. We are also looking forward to sharing the many events and activities which are being organised by our members locally.

'We can never get at the root of our difficulties until we are able to give the people a home which will be something worth having' – debate speaker, April 1919.



WHY SOCIAL HOUSING?

Chris Wood, Head of Policy, Shelter UK

This has been a massive year for Shelter. With Brexit dominating the political debate, we are pleased that housing remains high on the agenda for government and politicians. We've won important changes, such as the introduction of two new laws to protect private tenants: The Fitness for Human Habitation and Tenant Fees Acts.

Outside the world of politics, Shelter also launched the results of our Big Conversation on the future of social housing. Bringing together a diverse range of people including politicians from both major political parties, our independent commission set out a bold new vision for the future of social housing and its role in our society.

When people think of social housing, they too often picture run-down estates and poor conditions and that stigma stalks residents. But it wasn't always like this. The post-war years were a golden age for social housing, and up until the 1980s we were building an average of 126,000 social homes a year. Yet last year, only 6,000 more were delivered.

Through our Big Conversation public events and mass consultation, we spoke to thousands of tenants who gave their lived experiences, which showed both the positive foundation that an affordable, secure social home can provide, but also the stigma that pervades discussions about social housing. Although they face greater protection from eviction than private renters, some social housing tenants feel that their complaints are not listened to, leaving them vulnerable to prolonged periods of disrepair. One of the tenants we spoke to told us "It's not just the impact of the damp and mould that gets to me, but the way I've been treated: like dirt on someone's shoe. There's no help for people in social housing suffering from disrepair."

We firmly believe that social housing is a force for good, and that it can be restored to its former glory.

At Shelter we firmly believe that social housing is a force for good, and that it can be restored to its former glory. What the commissioners are proposing is a new regulator with powers to proactively inspect and enforce standards, an easier system of complaints, and measures to ensure tenants are protected, as well as tenants having a stronger voice both locally and nationally. With these improvements, the commissioners propose an ambitious new social housebuilding programme to deliver 3.1 million more social homes over the next twenty years. This expanded vision means social housing for families in temporary accommodation and on waiting lists, as well as younger people who are trapped in the private rented sector, and older renters whose incomes are unable to support increasing housing costs.

It will also give millions of people the stability and genuinely affordable rents they need to save money and get on in life, making it the ideal springboard for social mobility. Social housing also helps to support and encourage stronger family life. People will not be forced to move around frequently, which can jeopardise children's education and force parents to spend long hours commuting to schools and work. They will also be able to live without wondering how they will pay their rent, or under the threat of eviction. It is a place where people are secure, part of the community and are proud to live.

Building more social homes takes time, so in the meantime we need to improve the private rented sector. Due to the scarcity of social housing and falling homeownership, thousands of people on low incomes are forced into a private rented sector which is often expensive, insecure and subject to poor conditions. The number of people living here has doubled over the past 20 years, gaining more and more families and older people. We hope the ability to take legal action through the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act will improve conditions; but we're also calling for the introduction of permanent tenancies in the private rented sector. Without this, renters will still be at risk of eviction at any point, forcing them to move frequently, with it becoming harder and harder to find an affordable place to call home.

Though these reforms are important, we fundamentally believe that social housing is the only tenure which can solve the housing crisis. With a commitment to large-scale building, as well as long-term sustained funding, this government can address the years of problems which have led to the scale of the crisis we currently are facing. Only then can we ensure that nobody goes without a safe place to call their own.

TENANTS' VOICES



By **Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall**,
Tenant member and Vice-Chair,
NFA Board

IF I COULD have just one wish granted, it would be to see social housing in this country invested in properly. This kind of housing should be a stable part of what we do for our society, not something we add on when there's either a bit of money to spare or, at the other extreme, when

the housing shortage becomes so dire that we're absolutely forced to do something about it.

There are so many homeless people, and families in overcrowded conditions. It can't be right in this day and age that children are living like this, or waiting years to find their forever homes stuck long-term in bed and breakfast accommodation. Sometimes I feel like a stuck record – but research is done, we reach the same conclusion that the private sector can't possibly meet all the needs of our communities, and yet very little changes.

Why do people come to social housing? Social housing comes with a firm guarantee, missing from private rented accommodation, of secure tenancy and decent living conditions. There are some excellent landlords out there, of course, but I also hear so often about revenge evictions because someone asked for repairs to be done, or about poor quality private accommodation that people have to put up with because there's little regulation and bad landlords have little competition. A good supply of social housing would solve those problems.

Social housing comes with a firm guarantee, missing from private rented accommodation, of secure tenancy and decent living conditions.

If I had the chance to speak directly to the policymakers, I'd talk about the discrimination directed at people because of the kind of housing they live in. Whether it's applying for a job, speaking to your children's teachers, shopping or giving your address to delivery people, we all encounter it at some point. It was refreshing to see that addressed in the Green Paper, but we need more than encouraging words. This is the key issue that I'm looking forward to working on with the See the Person team this coming year.



By **Chris Moseley**, Tenant Chair,
Homes in Sedgemoor Board

LOOKING back on the last year, it's been an interesting one for all housing tenants who have felt unheard and without power for so long. We've seen the Green Paper and we're now waiting for the White Paper. It's given me the feeling that government is listening, and that's good.

It was 25 years ago this year that I first walked into a tenant engagement office. I have fought for 25 years for landlords to listen to tenants, and I do at last feel that our place in the system is now recognised and things are so much better now it has been. Communication is better, and a lot more people are thinking that tenants do need information and might have an opinion. While we might not always get the answer we like, we are being listened to.

We need to get people talking and listening, understanding the lives of people who happen to live in social housing.

The highlight of my year has been my role as Chair of the Homes in Sedgemoor Board. We've just come out of a review which says we're doing all the right things. We have a great board who all see themselves as being there for tenants. And when it comes to making sure the tenant voice is heard, having a chair who is also a tenant is really important.

I'm also proud of the work that the anti-stigma See the Person campaign [formerly Benefit to Society] has done this last year. I think it is beginning to have an impact and people are starting to question the idea that where you live says who you are. Now the campaign has a leadership committee, I'm looking forward to help pushing it forward.

We need to get people talking and listening, understanding the lives of people who happen to live in social housing. I think it's important that it comes from tenants, and that we include as many tenants in the campaign as possible. But I also think we need to be working across the housing sector – a tenant is a tenant whether they live in an ALMO, council or housing association property. We don't all need to go off doing separate things.

If I could talk to all the UK's housing managers about what tenants want or need, I would tell them just one thing – always communicate. Tenants are real people with real problems and real lives. They deserve good housing conditions; and when things get difficult, landlords should be working with them, not evicting them. All housing managers need to have a feeling for what is happening on the ground, be seen out and about in their communities and not just be a faceless person in an office.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Eamon McGoldrick
NFA Managing Director

As I consider what the year ahead might hold for NFA members, it strikes me that pretty much everyone in Britain would be glad of a functioning crystal ball just now. Certainties seem to be thin on the ground – but our members' resilience is the one thing I am sure of as I attempt to peer into the future.

This resilience has informed our coherent and constructive responses to policy debates throughout the last 12 months around increased regulation of the social rental sector and how we can build genuine tenant involvement that shapes services.

Among the many things we can't predict about what 2019 might hold, there are a few safe bets, for our members at least. Regulation on consumer standards and building safety seem inevitable and we will welcome it; but the NFA and its partners across the sector will be working hard to argue for a ratings regime that judges our work in a way that prompts positive change rather than vilifying and stigmatising organisations and their tenants.

It also seems likely that government will think hard about improving the Decent Homes Standard and may even ask private landlords for the first time to meet that standard too. We'll be ready should this happen; while raised standards can only be good, we'll want to know where the money to comply will come from for the council stock-based sector whose rent receipts have been cut by central government for four years in succession.

These potential changes will, of course, be among the first sector-transforming responses to the Grenfell tragedy, emerging as they do from last year's consultation on the Social Housing Green Paper. While it's clear now that the public enquiry will take much longer than first thought – it seems likely that Phase 2 may be delayed until early 2020 – we expect to see detail very soon on how new regulation will change safety management of some high rise and complex buildings. I'm anticipating steps to make sure tenants' voices and concerns are heard, particularly during refurbishments and on day to day fire safety arrangements.

The continued roll-out of Universal Credit is a crucially important issue to NFA members. Helping our tenants cope with the transition is both an imperative of the social responsibility that has always been part of ALMO DNA, and a pragmatic necessity. Without consistent rent receipts and residents who can successfully sustain their tenancies, everything else that we aim to do falls apart.

I am encouraged by invitations reaching well into the coming spring and summer that ask the NFA to contribute to a range of policy events and debates around the reform. It's clear that government continues to show interest in what we have to say, and I don't doubt that the data members will supply for our 2019 Welfare Reform Survey will give us more evidence-based fire power in those discussions.

It's a hazy picture, however, when we try to predict what effect the government's decision to lift the HRA borrowing cap will have on ALMOs' work over the next few years. Wherever we can, we'll be helping members remind parent councils that many ALMOs have new-build experience on tap.

ALMOs have continued to build steadily, adding more than 7,000 homes to UK stock over the last five years and, in their data for this year's Annual Survey, estimating that they will build the same number over the next five years. Given how hard it is to find affordable building land anywhere in the UK, we'll also be drawing attention to the ALMO speciality, the building of small numbers of high quality homes on parcels of brownfield and infill land that bigger developers would consider unprofitable.

So much for the crystal ball; now for the wish-list that we've put together based on what we've heard during the rolling conversation our members have throughout the annual sequence of board, executive steering group and regional NFA meetings.

While raised standards can only be good, we'll want to know where the money to comply will come from for the council stock-based sector whose rent receipts have been cut by central government for four years in succession.

We'll be arguing hard for a long-term rent policy for the sector, for at least 10 years, to make effective and realistic business planning possible for ALMOs and their parent councils.

The current give-away of social rented homes happening in some areas has to stop, particularly if the policy makers are serious about wanting to improve the supply of affordable housing. We'll be putting the case for regional caps on Right to Buy discounts as a way of helping councils retain more receipts.

And finally, a government decree that councils should build more homes will not solve problems such as shortages of land, skilled construction workers and vocational training. Councils can only do the job if they're given the right tools.

That said, the many achievements of the last 12 months have brought us to the centenary of the birth of Britain's council housing sector in a much more hopeful frame of mind. With our partners at ARCH, we'll be supporting local and national celebrations to commemorate the 1919 Addison Act - and planning for the next 100 years of council housing.

Highlights 2018-19

Sharing best practice across the sector, drawing on expertise from the wider housing sector, building networks, engaging influencers – the wide range of NFA work is illustrated in this selection of key events and outputs from the last 12 months.



POLICY + LOBBYING WORK

NFA Monthly Policy Update for members
(1st working day of every month)

NFA response to Strengthening Consumer Redress in the Housing Market (April 2018)

NFA Positioning Paper – Pre-Social Housing Green Paper (April 2018)

Support to DAHA consultation response to Domestic Abuse and Violence Bill (June 2018)

NFA response to the consultation on Banning Combustible Materials (August 2018)

NFA response to the consultation on the migration of existing benefit claimants to UC (August 2018)

NFA response to the Right to Buy Consultation (October 2018)

NFA response to the EPC Consultation (October 2018)

NFA response to the Social Housing Green Paper (November 2018)

NFA response to the Call for Evidence on Regulation (November 2018)

NFA response to Rents for social housing from 2020-21 government consultation paper (November 2018)

Support to National Housing and Domestic Abuse Working Group response to Social Housing Green Paper (November 2018)



EVENTS

NFA Annual Conference and Photography Competition (April 2018)

Joint NFA/ARCH Drinks Reception at CIH conference (June 2018)

Webinar with Altair – Rollout of Universal Credit (July 2018)

Joint NFA/ARCH New build seminar (July 2018)

Webinar with Altair – Stock Safety (September 2018)

Roundtable discussion on the EnergieSprong project (September 2018)

Social Housing Green paper event with MHCLG and the Social Housing Regulator (September 2018)

NFA Board Member one-day event (November 2018)

Roundtable discussion on Performance Indicators (November 2018)

NFA contribution to the Give us a Chance Webinar (January 2019)

Conservative Parliamentary Roundtable (February 2019)

NFA/ARCH/CWAG New Build Network (February 2019)



PUBLICATIONS + BRIEFINGS

NFA Annual Review (May 2018)

NFA Annual Survey, Firm Foundations (May 2018)

Every Voice Counts, a good practice briefing on tenant engagement (May 2018)

Celebrating Community Champions, NFA Photography Exhibition Brochure (May 2018)

Carrying the Debt, NFA and ARCH Universal Credit Survey (July 2018)

Member Briefings - the Social Housing Green Paper (April and August 2018)

Health Creating Practices, Shining a spotlight on housing initiatives, with PlaceShapers and the New NHS Alliance (September 2018)

Member briefing - EnergieSprong update (October 2018)

Member briefing - Regulation for Tenants (October 2018)



**Championing
better homes and
communities**

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