

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: The University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh Strategic Alliance)		
Unit of Assessment: UoA13 Architecture, Built Environment and Planning		
Title of case study: Reviving Social Housing		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Suzanne Fitzpatrick	Professor of Housing and Social Policy and Director of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE)	2010 – Present
Glen Bramley	Professor of Urban Studies	1994 – Present
Beth Watts	Senior Research Fellow	2011 – Present
Hal Pawson	Professor	1995 – 2011
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) research has influenced a policy shift towards restoring social housing as a central, long term element in housing provision across the UK. I-SPHERE researchers' findings influenced parliamentary debates on the UK Government's unsuccessful attempts to impose short-term tenancies on the social housing sector, contributing to the subsequent formal discontinuance of that policy. Research also helped to develop new measures of core homelessness and projections of homelessness into the future, while related research demonstrated the requirement to build up to 100,000 social housing units per year. They have also published a Green Paper on the need to change the quality, reputation, and status of social housing. A large number of organisations and a Select Committee have endorsed a social housing target based on I-SPHERE research.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Three strands of research underpin influence of I-SPHERE on the changes in policy-makers' attitude towards social housing, one concerned with the nature of social housing tenure and the key significance of tenure security, another with modelling the housing market as a sub-regional system influenced by planning and social housing development, and a third with measuring and projecting homelessness and housing needs. These strands have been carried through major projects funded by the ESRC [P1], the Government Agency (NHPAU, P2) and Local Government [P3], the charities the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF, P4) and Crisis [P5, P6], and the National Housing Federation (NHF, P6). The first strand is led by Fitzpatrick (2010-) [co-I Pawson (1995-2011), Watts 2012-] and the other two by Bramley (1994-) [co-I Leishman (2012-17)].</p>		

Tenure security in social housing. Initial exploration of future options and challenges facing social housing were reviewed [3.1] but crystallised in an international comparative article responding to Coalition government proposals [3.2]. Fixed term tenancies were one of the key examples examined critically in the ESRC Major Grant research on 'Welfare Conditionality' [P1], examined from first principles and international literature review and crucially through direct primary qualitative evidence obtained from social renting tenants and landlords. This research [3.3], which found little support for the case for restricting tenure security or making it conditional, was directly quoted by several key parliamentary speakers (Kerslake, Beecham, Lister).

Modelling the housing market as a sub-regional system. This strand started with a feasibility study for a spatial economics model commissioned by the government agency NHPAU in 2009-10 [P2] leading to a first implementation of such a model to estimate housing affordability and need across England [P3], subsequently elaborated in work for JRF [P4] and published [3.4]. This model is innovative in its treatment of the spatial dimension of the housing system and its integration of economic models, not only for market variables (prices, rents, supply) but also for household demographics, poverty and needs. It represents a unique tool for policy simulations to test different policy options (as confirmed in recent Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MoHCLG) and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Scoping study, Alma Economics 2019a/b). Such options include the scale, location, and tenure of new housing provision. The model generates a wide range of outcome indicators relating to housing affordability, need and poverty which enable it to provide a new and innovative outcome-based approach to assessing overall housing requirements, as demonstrated in Projects P4 and P6.

Homelessness and housing need definition, measurement, and projection. This strand grew out of the researchers' long-standing relationship with Crisis in producing the *Homelessness Monitors* series, which crystallised in P5, which sought to develop a new framework for defining core and wider homelessness, measuring levels and trends of such homelessness and housing needs so as to be able to project these numbers forward over 25 years subject to socio-economic and policy assumptions. This showed that without further action core homelessness would grow at an accelerating rate, whereas through a combination of measures, including provision of more social rented housing, homelessness could be contained and reduced. While using the researchers' sub-regional housing market model developed as above, this work also provided critical evidence to P6 on exactly how much social housing provision would be needed to deal appropriately with homelessness as well as providing equitable and appropriate outcomes for broader groups in housing need.

3. References to the research

[3.1] Fitzpatrick, S & Stephens, M 2008, *The Future of Social Housing*. Shelter.

[3.2] Fitzpatrick, S & Pawson, H 2014, 'Ending security of tenure for social renters: Transitioning to 'ambulance service' social housing?', *Housing Studies*, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 597-615.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2013.803043>

[3.3.] Fitzpatrick, S & Watts, B 2017, 'Competing visions: security of tenure and the welfarisation of English social housing', *Housing Studies*, vol. 32, no. 8, pp. 1021-1038.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2017.1291916>

[3.4] Bramley, G & Watkins, D 2016, 'Housebuilding, demographic change and affordability as outcomes of local planning decisions: exploring interactions using a sub-regional model of

housing markets in England", *Progress in Planning*, vol. 104, pp. 1-35.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2014.10.002>

[3.5] Bramley, G 2016, 'Housing need outcomes in England through changing times: demographic, market and policy drivers of change', *Housing Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 243-268.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2015.1080817>

[3.6] Bramley, G 2019, *Housing supply requirements across Great Britain for low-income households and homeless people: Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation; Main Technical Report*. Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.

<https://doi.org/10.17861/bramley.2019.04>

Project Grants:

[P1] "Sanctions, support and behaviour change: understanding the role and impact of welfare conditionality". Awarded to: Suzanne Fitzpatrick (CI; PI Prof Pete Dwyer, York) Sponsor: ESRC Period: 2013-2018 Value: GBP2,042,098 (ES/K002163/1)

[P2] 'Sub-regional and cross-regional market models feasibility study'. Awarded to: Glen Bramley (PI) Sponsor: National Housing and Planning Advice Unit Period: 2009-2010 Value: GBP70,000

[P3] 'Gloucestershire Housing Affordability Model' Awarded to: Glen Bramley (PI) Sponsor: Gloucestershire County & Districts Councils Period: 2011-12 Value: GBP55,000

[P4] Policy Modelling for JRF Anti-Poverty Strategy'. Awarded to: Glen Bramley (PI) Sponsor: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Period: October 2014-July 2016. Value: GBP78,600

[P5] 'Homelessness projections'. Awarded to: Glen Bramley (PI) Sponsor: Crisis. Period: January 2017-Dec 2018. Value: GBP51,600

[P6] 'Housing supply requirements across Great Britain for low income households and homeless people'. Awarded to: Glen Bramley (PI) Sponsor: Crisis and National Housing Federation. Period: January 2018-Dec 2018. Value: GBP45,000

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of the research on fixed term tenancies in social housing was seen most clearly in the debates on the Housing and Planning Bill in 2016, as documented in Wilson (2018) HOCL Briefing Paper 7173. The Coalition Government in the *Localism Act* of 2011 gave local authorities and housing associations powers to offer so-called 'flexible tenancies' (essentially flexible FTTs), ostensibly to enable them to manage their housing stock and ensure it went to those in most need. In practice take-up was very limited, so the government in 2015 included clauses in the *Housing and Planning Bill* aimed at preventing local authorities from offering 'lifetime' (secure) tenancies [5.1]. During the Lords debate on this Bill on 18 April 2016 several distinguished members (Kerlake, Beecham, Lister) spoke against these measures, directly citing the Fitzpatrick and Watt research, for example the evidence that social landlords were sceptical of or disillusioned with the measure, that tenants affected were often unaware of their situation, but could be made more anxious by the change, particularly in the case of more dependent groups. Lord Kerlake said: *'I commend this research to every Member of this House because it gives a very clear understanding of the practical impact of this policy, which creates uncertainty and not value in the way that was originally envisaged'* International acknowledgement of the significance of this evidence and argument are found in a recent OECD Report on Social Housing [5.2].

At the time, these arguments were not accepted by the Government, but subsequently, partly influenced by the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, a new more positive approach to social housing was adopted, as set out in the Green Paper *A new deal for social housing* and other associated policy announcements. Since that time there has been a notable trend by major independent social landlords to abandon FTTs and return to more secure tenancies [5.2a].

The Green Paper also signalled a marked change of approach in relation to new housebuilding, again quoting Prime Minister May: *'This Government is committed to getting more of the right homes built in the right places, sold or rented at prices local people can afford – and that includes building a new generation of council home to help fix our broken housing market'*. Important parallel or subsequent announcements included enabling social housing to be funded through the expanded 'affordable homes programme' in England, *modifying planning policy* and lifting the cap on council borrowing to fund council house building. The second and third strands of research fed into this process of policy shift, alongside inputs from other quarters [5.8]. For example, at the Crisis 50th anniversary conference in 2017 Bramley presented his homelessness projections research on the same platform as the Secretary of State who spoke about the need to tackle homelessness. Both this research and the 'Housing Requirements' study were then extensively referred to in the Crisis (2018) 'manifesto' *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*, including in particular the 160,000 core homeless estimates and the 100,000 pa new social rented housing supply requirements, discussion of a 'predict & prevent' approach, and a costing of the programme by PWC which used Bramley's projected numbers as a key input. Both research reports and the Crisis 'Plan' received extensive media coverage [5.3, 5.4].

The social housebuilding targets (100,000 pa) proposed by P6 have been endorsed by a range of organisations (NHF, Crisis, CloH, Centre for Social Justice, Welsh Government, the independent Affordable Housing Commission, Shelter, Local Government Association, London Councils, District Councils Network, Homeless Link, Centrepoint, St Mungos) [5.8].

David Orr CBE, recently retired CEO, National Housing Federation said: *"The work which I-SPHERE has produced on assessing the need for new homes has been an absolute game-changer. It fills a massive gap in the evidence base, forming an absolutely indispensable part of the nation's understanding not only of how many homes we need to be building, but of the positive economic and social impacts of building those homes"*. The Federation reinforced the message by publishing work evidence based on further analysis by Bramley (building on project 6) that there were 3,800,000 people in 1,600,000 households in need and for whom social housing was the most appropriate tenure in terms of affordability, 500,000 more than the number on official waiting lists [5.5], that received extensive media coverage [5.5a]. Following publication of this report Bramley was also invited to give an internal seminar on this to analysts and policy staff in the MoHCLG on 10 November 2020.

In July 2020 the cross-party House of Common Select Committee on Housing, Communities and Local Government produced a report (HC173) on *'Building more Social Housing'* [5.6]. A key section of this report highlights and quotes extensively from Bramley's NHF/Crisis study and endorses it as its recommended target basis, quoting support from independent academics as well as the Affordable Housing Commission and other organisations mentioned above. It's key recommendation (para 53) is to assert in bold that *'There is compelling evidence that England needs at least 90,000 net additional social rent homes a year'* (quoting Bramley's figure) and that the government should have published targets for each affordable tenure. Although ministers are

quoted as supporting the need for more affordable homes including social rented homes, and officials have shown interest in the research, they have been reluctant to commit to numerical targets, a situation the Committee labelled 'disappointing' (paras 51, 54).

The Government in England adopted targets in relation to the drastic reduction in rough sleeping in England as an election commitment (Conservatives Manifesto, 2017, p58). They also in 2018 set up and consulted on a research programme with the Department of Work & Pensions to model the causes/drivers of homelessness, quoting Bramley's research extensively, and the Scoping/Feasibility studies commissioned from consultants Alma Economics (2019a & b) makes clear that the Bramley model is the leading relevant example of a policy simulation tool in the British case [5.7].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Wilson, W. (2018) 'Social housing: flexible and fixed-term tenancies (England)', *Briefing Paper 7173*, 02 Sept 2018, House of Commons Library.

[5.2] Adema, W., Fluchtman, J., Plouin, M. OECD (2020), "Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy", Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Brief. See esp p.17 for reference to Fitzpatrick et al research and argument.

[5.2a] 'Major housing associations to scrap fixed term tenancies', report and editorial, Inside Housing, 2019.

[5.3] *Homeless Projections* research published in August 2017 had significant media coverage on its release in August 2017 including - The Guardian, 'Number of homeless in Britain expected to double by 2041, Crisis warns' August 2017; BBC Scotland 'Scots homeless numbers predicted to soar over next 25 years, 10TH August 2017, and features and interviews on BBC New and One and Six, Channel 4 News, BBC Scotland and Wales radio and TV news, morning chat programmes on BBC2, ITV Britain and Wales, Sky News.

[5.4] Crisis (2018) 'manifesto' *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*, highlighting the numerous references to outputs from these key pieces of research, notably Chapter 5, 11 Chapter 15.

[5.5] National Housing Federation report, *People in Housing Need: a comprehensive analysis of the scale and shape of housing need in England today*, 2020.

[5.5a] The Times, 'Rise in adults forced to live with their parents', 21st September 2020; 'Tory MPs are pressing for another U-Turn, 15th September 2020

[5.6] House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, *Building more social housing*. Third Report of Session 2019-21, HC 173. 27 July 2020. See especially s.4, pp. 24-27.

[5.7] Alma Economics (March 2019) report on Homelessness: Causes of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. Review of models of homelessness for MoHCLG and DWP spent 7 of its 15 pages on 'Model Assessment' reviewing Bramley's models as the (only) exemplar of 'Complex economic-based simulation models applied in UK context'.

[5.8] Letter from Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Housing confirming aspects of policy impacts outlined.