

Is our existing housing stock fit for purpose?

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Executive summary

Everyone deserves a home that is fit for purpose but more than that, a home shouldn't negatively affect your health or hold back your opportunity to succeed in life. There is a clear connection between the quality of housing and the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of the people that live there¹.

This report provides an overview of the repair and maintenance of public and private housing across the UK, since 1997. It highlights areas where maintenance work is falling and examines the lack of security or protection that tenants face.

By analysing publicly available construction industry data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), we were able to establish that the value of the repair and maintenance of housing undertaken in Britain decreased by £434m between 1997 and 2018 despite housing stock increasing by 3.8m during this period. This means that construction output per dwelling is decreasing in real terms by £192 a year.

This decrease in repair and maintenance output could be perceived positively. If the amount of construction work being carried out to repair and maintain our housing is decreasing, does this imply we're delivering homes to a higher quality? Is the need for reactive repair and maintenance work decreasing?

However, the reality is that the quality of homes delivered by developers is coming under increased scrutiny. The April 2019, New Homes Review found that 91 per cent of new homes have snags and defects², ranging from chips, scratches and cracks on flooring and walls to leaking taps and unlevel surfaces. The Home Builders Federation's (HBF) latest satisfaction survey shows a rise in the number of customers reporting snags, from 93 per cent in 2015 to 99 per cent in 2018.

The latest HomeOwners Survey, conducted by The HomeOwners Alliance, has found that 63 per cent of us are now seriously concerned about the quality of homes in Britain3. This concern isn't misplaced - a fifth of dwellings (4.5m homes) are failing to meet the **Decent Homes Standard**. Introduced in 1997, the Decent Homes Standard sets out the requirements for a home to be considered 'decent' - it must meet the statutory minimum standard for housing⁴, provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, be in a reasonable state of repair and have reasonably modern facilities and services.

Homes must meet the statutory minimum standard for housing4, provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, be in a reasonable state of repair and have reasonably modern facilities and services.



While the Decent Homes Standard was introduced as a minimum standard for council and housing association homes, it has since been extended to apply to private housing. According to the latest English Housing Survey, 25 per cent of homes in the private rented sector, 19 per cent of owner-occupied homes and 13 per cent of dwellings in the social rented sector failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard

Shelter has estimated that more than one million children in England currently live in poor housing, which can increase the risk of severe ill-health or disability by up to 25 per cent during childhood and early adulthood6. Overcrowding, damp and mould can all impact on a child's health, their ability to attend school and their opportunity to learn, affecting their chances in life.

The devastating tragedy of Grenfell shone a light on the quality of our housing stock and was the starkest reminder of the need to make sure that people are safe in their own homes. It is clear that there is a significant requirement for reactive repairs and to ensure specification compliance in certain areas of the UK, yet this work is progressing too slowly. The public and private sectors need to push forward with ensuring that our housing stock is fit for purpose and the government must provide the funding where there continues to be a shortfall7.

More than one million children

in England currently live in poor housing

¹The impact of housing problems on mental health, Shelter, April 2017

²New Home Review's 2018 annual report. April 2019

³²² million people think Britain's homes are not "fit for purpose". HomeOwners Alliance, 25 March 2019

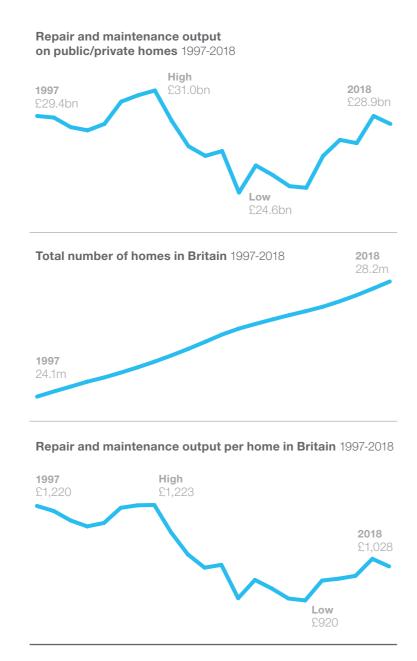
⁴Housing Health and Safety Rating System, DCLG, May 2006



Repair and maintenance of housing in Britain

The repair and maintenance of public and private housing in Britain has fluctuated from a high of around £30bn between 2002 and 2004 to a low of £24.6bn in 2009. Since this lowest point, repairs and maintenance activity has been steadily increasing with £28.9bn spent in the last year.

Year	Repair and maintenance output on public and private homes	Total number of homes in Britain	Repair and maintenance output per home in Britain
1997	£29.4bn	24.1m	£1,220
1998	£29.3bn	24.3m	£1,204
1999	£28.7bn	24.5m	£1,174
2000	£28.5bn	24.6m	£1,155
2001	£28.9bn	24.8m	£1,166
2002	£30.3bn	24.9m	£1,214
2003	£30.7bn	25.2m	£1,222
2004	£31.0bn	25.4m	£1,223
2005	£29.1bn	25.6m	£1,136
2006	£27.5bn	25.8m	£1,066
2007	£26.9bn	26.1m	£1,024
2008	£27.2bn	26.3m	£1,033
2009	£24.6bn	26.5m	£927
2010	£26.3bn	26.7m	£985
2011	£25.7bn	26.9m	£958
2012	£25.0bn	27.0m	£926
2013	£24.9bn	27.2m	£920
2014	£26.9bn	27.3m	£983
2015	£27.9bn	27.5m	£989
2016	£27.7bn	27.7m	£998
2017	£29.4bn	27.9m	£1,052
2018	£28.9bn	28.2m	£1,028



Repair and maintenance output



This analysis shows that the amount of output per home has fallen over time. From a high of £1,223 per property in 2004 to a low of £920 in 2013, when there were 27.2m dwellings in Britain and £24.9bn of repair and maintenance work was carried out.

to the number of homes in

Britain, dwelling stocks from 1997 to 2018 were analysed.



£1,223

The highest annual output per household (2004)



£920

The lowest annual output per household (2013)



A total of **28.2m**

homes in Britain in 2018 an increase of 4.1m since 1997



£28.9bn

the total repair and maintenance output on public and private homes (2018)



The split between public and private housing

Although the value of spend on repair and maintenance in Britain has started to increase in recent years, it is not evenly split across the public and private sector and is failing to respond to an urgent need to improve our existing housing stock.

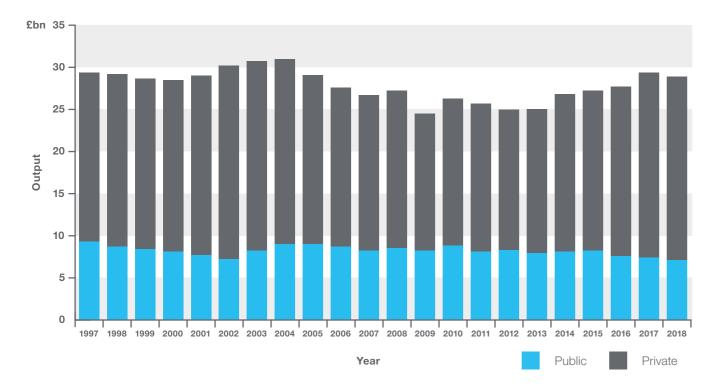
Public housing

The level of construction output repairing and maintaining public housing has been on a downward trajectory over the last two decades, hitting an all-time low in 2018 of just $\mathfrak{L}^{7.1}$ bn. In 1997, $\mathfrak{L}^{9.3}$ bn of repair and maintenance work was carried out on 5.5m social homes – the equivalent of $\mathfrak{L}^{1,683}$ per property.

Private housing

The amount of construction output on private housing has varied from a high of £23bn in 2002 to a low of £16.3bn in 2009. In recent years repair and maintenance on private housing has risen, and in 2018 sat at £21.8bn. Per property, this is the equivalent of £941.

Repair and maintenance output on public/private sector homes



When assessing the reduction in repair and maintenance work being carried out in the public sector, a key consideration is the age of our social housing stock. The peak of public sector housing delivery took place under the Conservative party during the 1950s, when Britain saw over 200,000 homes being delivered each year⁸. These homes, built nearly 70 years ago, often fail to meet today's energy efficiency standards and require attention to ensure that they meet modern standards of living. In 1997, when the *Decent Homes Standard* was first introduced, 2.2m homes were considered by the UK government to be non-decent⁹.

Since the standard was extended to cover all tenure types, an estimated **4.5m public and private homes currently have a negative impact on the emotional and physical wellbeing of the people that live in them.** Individuals and families living in social housing are able to request a Section 96 'Right to Repair' case against registered providers if they believe they are due a repair to their property that affects their health and safety¹⁰. However, tenants often have little flexibility in moving to a new property that will offer them a better standard of living.¹¹

The number of households in the private rented sector increased by 63 per cent between 2007 and 2017, driven largely by rising house prices. In 2007, 2.8m households were in private rented homes, rising to 4.5m by 2017.

Although tenants in the private sector can move on from a property more easily than those in social housing, they are not afforded the same level of protection. Whilst the *Decent Homes Standard* assesses how many homes in the private rented sector fall below the standard, private landlords do not have to take any action to bring these properties up to a 'decent standard'. Private tenants also cannot use the Section 96 legislation.

This means that, although the private rented sector currently has the highest proportion of non-decent homes, tenants have little power to improve their living standards. The government recently announced that the system for reviewing private sector housing will be updated. As part of the review, the housing, health and safety rating code will be overhauled to give local authorities the ability to uphold and enforce higher standards in the private sector. The government also recently unveiled plans to open up the Rogue Landlords Database, launched in 2018, to the public. Currently, only ten names are listed on it and it is only accessible to local authorities.

4.5m

public and private homes currently have a negative impact on the emotional and physical wellbeing of the people that live in them



63%

increase in number of households in the private rented sector between 2007 and 2017

0

⁸How did the crisis in UK social housing happen? The Guardian, 4 October 2017

⁹A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation, DCLG, June 2006

¹⁰Section 96 Housing Act 1985; Secure Tenants of

Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 SI 1994/133

¹¹UK private rented sector: 2018, ONS, 18 January 2019

¹²Council chiefs welcome move to 'modernise' housing inspection system, Local Gov, 12 July 2019

 $^{^{\}mbox{\tiny 13}}\mbox{Renters}$ may get access to rogue landlord database, BBC News, 21 July 2019

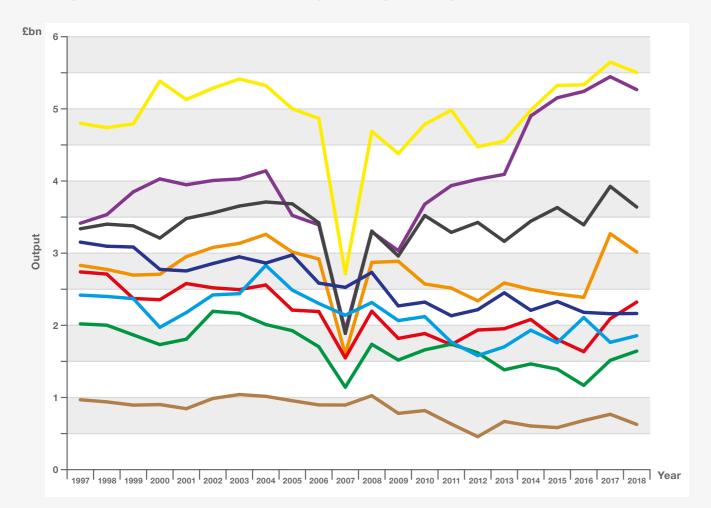


Repair and maintenance of housing in England's regions

Over the last two decades, spend on repair and maintenance work in London and the South East is higher than any other region, with 36 per cent of all repair and maintenance work taking place in these two regions alone.

In general, the southern regions of England are consistently delivering more repair and maintenance work than their northern Counterparts. The North East is delivering £900 less per property than the South East.

Repair and maintenance output on public/private sector homes

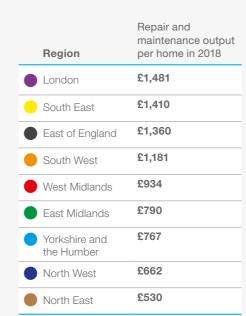


Region Key and total during period (1997 - 2018)

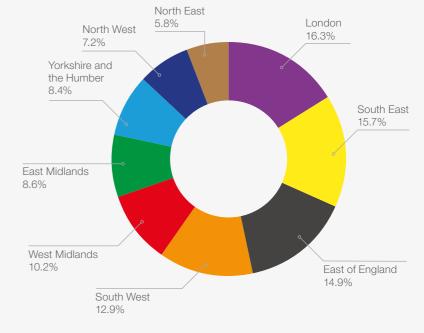


While there will be slight regional variations on the cost of labour and some materials, the North East is delivering £900 less per property than the South East. London and the into consideration the installation costs¹⁴. New windows South East are both densely populated areas of the UK, with cost from £3,500 to £7,00015 on a typical three-bedroom an estimated 7.6m homes spread across 8,000 sq. miles. Yet despite this, in 2018 the equivalent of £1,440 of repair and maintenance was delivered per home. In the North East, this figure was just £530.

This is not enough. A new boiler, either combi, system or heat only, costs between £500 and £2,000, before taking semi-detached house and damp proofing internal walls is estimated at £70 per metre or £280 per wall¹⁶.



Repair and maintenance output – per home in 2018



10

¹⁴The Heating Hub

¹⁵ Double Glazing Pricing Guide

¹⁶Mybuilder.com



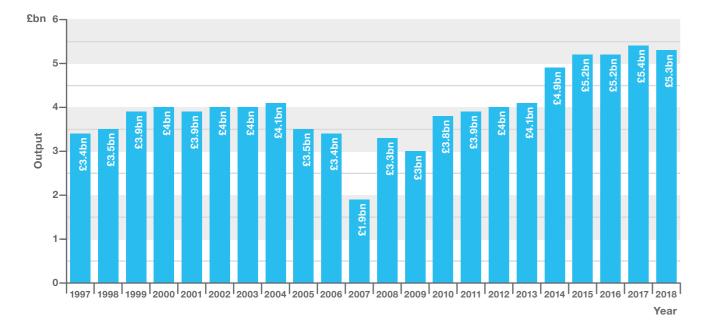
Spotlight on **London**

In the last ten years, the number of homes in the capital has increased by 248,000, but the population of London has grown by an estimated 1.1m people during the same period¹⁷.

Although there aren't enough homes across London, there has been an increase in spend on repairs and maintenance, from a 20-year low of $\mathfrak{L}1.9$ bn to $\mathfrak{L}5.3$ bn in 2018.

At the same time, the number of homes that are classified as "non-decent" has reduced more quickly than across the rest of the country, from 36 per cent in 2007 to just 16 per cent in 2018.

Repair and maintenance output on public/private homes in London



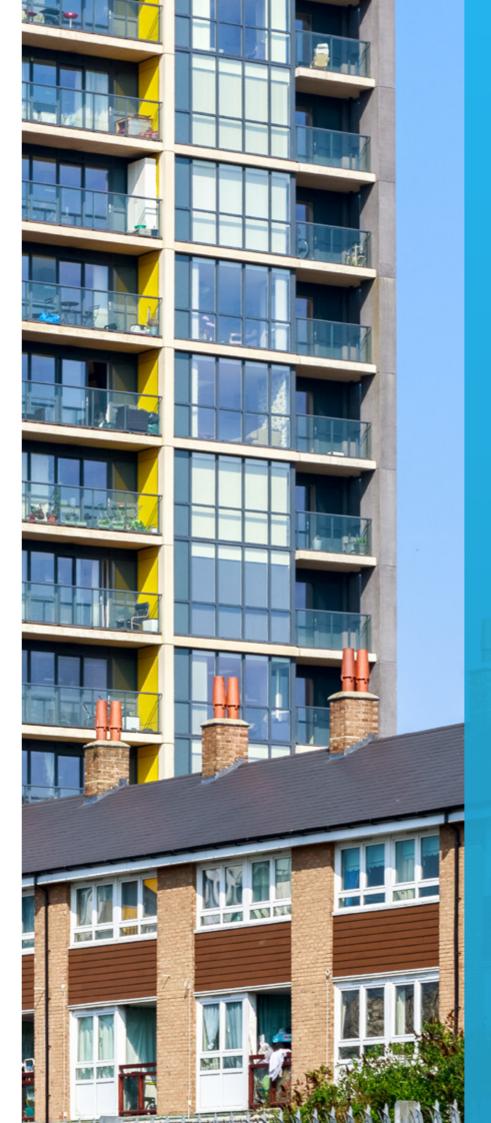
Since 2008:



An additional

1.1

people live in London



Affordability and quality of housing in London is a key issue. Recent research from *Shelter* reveals that private renting is unaffordable for working families on low wages in 67 per cent of the country. 18 of the top 20 areas classified as unaffordable are London boroughs¹⁸.

However, the situation is perhaps worse than just whether people can afford homes. 328 buildings across England have been identified as having the same ACM (aluminium composite material) cladding that was present on Grenfell tower and, as of May 2019, two years after the tragedy, only a third of these have had any action taken¹⁹. Subsequent tests have identified that other materials used across housing stock are flammable, including high-pressure laminate cladding.

The scale of this issue is huge; it is estimated that 196,000 people in 82,000 flats (68,000 of these privately owned) continue to be at risk. The cost to fix the problem is anticipated to be £1.4bn. £1.2bn of this in the private sector, six times the amount of funding the government has allocated²⁰. A significant proportion of these buildings are located in the capital, with Tower Hamlets having the highest proportion of ACM clad private buildings.²¹ Whilst the cost of repair work is high, it is essential that these works are delivered and these homes are brought to a safe standard – after all, you can't put a price on human life.



328

buildings across England have been identified as having the same ACM (aluminium composite material) cladding that was present on Grenfell tower

rivate renting unaffordable for working families on low wages in 7 per cent of the country, Shelter, 9 July 2019

¹⁹Grenfell Tower: Hundreds of buildings still have 'unsafe' cladding. BBC News, 14 June 2019

Grenfell two years on: the true scale of the cladding scandal revealed, The Sunday Times, 9 June 2019

²¹New burden assessment pro forma, MHCLG, December 201



Spotlight on Wales

In Wales, repair and maintenance work has steadily decreased since 1997, falling to below £1bn for eight out of the last ten years.

From 1997 to 2018, there was a significant 25 per cent reduction in output. At the same time, the number of homes in Wales increased by 254,056 – a 22 per cent increase.

This means the repair and maintenance output per property has fallen £451, from £1,138 in 1997 to £687 in 2018, a decrease of 40 per cent.

Year	Repair and maintenance output on public and private homes	Number of homes in Wales	Repair and maintenance output per home
1997	£1.3bn	1.17m	£1,138
1998	£1.3bn	1.18m	£1,094
1999	£1.2bn	1.19m	£1,010
2000	£1.1bn	1.20m	£909
2001	£1.0bn	1.21m	£850
2002	£1.1bn	1.22m	£968
2003	£1.2bn	1.22m	£954
2004	£1.2bn	1.23m	£983
2005	£1.1bn	1.24m	£922
2006	£1.1bn	1.25m	£862
2007	£0.75bn	1.26m	£595
2008	£1.0bn	1.27m	£799
2009	£0.92bn	1.28m	£715
2010	£0.8bn	1.29m	£622
2011	£0.93bn	1.30m	£714
2012	£0.85bn	1.31m	£652
2013	£0.86bn	1.31m	£655
2014	£1.1bn	1.32m	£864
2015	£0.96bn	1.33m	£720
2016	£1.0bn	1.34m	£783
2017	£0.84bn	1.35m	£620
2018	£0.98bn	1.42m	£687

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1.17m Repair and ma 1997 High	intenance output per home 19	
1.17m Repair and ma 1997 High	intenance output per home 19	2018



The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), introduced in 2002, requires all social landlords to make sure homes are in a good state of repair, safe and secure, well-managed, adequately heated (fuel efficient and well insulated) and contain modern kitchens and bathrooms²². The Welsh government's ambition is to bring all social homes up to the WHQS by 2020.²³

Although Wales has seen a decrease in overall repair and maintenance work, the amount of social housing that is compliant with the WHQS has increased. In March 2018, only 10 per cent of public sector housing was considered 'non-compliant'.

15 per cent of all homes in Wales are rented through the private sector; a percentage that has been steadily increasing as people struggle to purchase in the private sector or access social housing.²⁴ However these homes are not required to comply with the WHQS.

In 2014, the National Assembly for Wales introduced a new system of regulation for landlords and letting agents in the private rented sector. Yet, according to Shelter Cymru, nearly two-thirds of tenants have experienced damp, leaking roofs or windows, electrical hazards, mould, animal infestations or gas leaks in the last 12 months. Tenants in private rented homes in Wales are facing more issues than those living in England – with tenants in Wales being 19 per cent more likely to have experienced damp and 23 per cent more likely to have experienced leaking roofs and windows.

Since 1997

22%

increase in population



40%

decrease in maintenance output per property

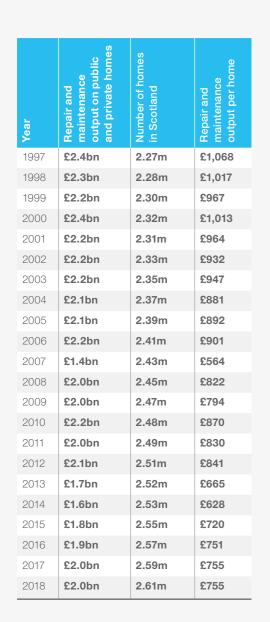
The weish Housing Quality Standard, Weish Assembly Government, July 2008
 Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) as at 31 March 2018-Revised,
 Welsh Government, 27 June 2019

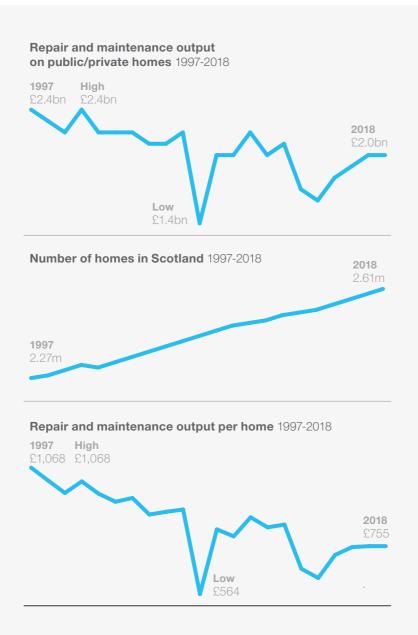
Private Sector Housing, Welsh Local Government Association

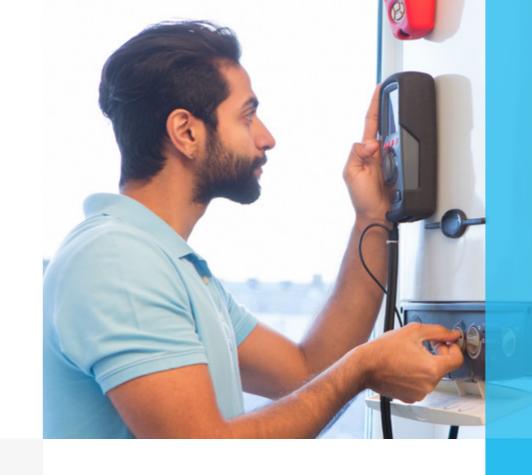
Spotlight on **Scotland**

Repair and maintenance output on public and private homes in Scotland decreased by £1bn between 1997 and 2007, from a high of £2.4bn, to a low of £1.4bn. Since this low point, output has increased, reaching £2bn for the past two years.

Although spend on repairs and maintenance has fluctuated, the number of homes in Scotland has increased by 341,650 since 1997, to 2.6m in 2018.







The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) was introduced in February 2014. It requires social housing landlords to make sure their homes are energy efficient, safe and secure, not seriously damaged and have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition²⁵. Scotland has recently put in place a programme to deliver more social homes, which has resulted in an increase of homes being built in the year up to September 2018 of 35 per cent by housing associations and 8 per cent by local authorities.²⁶

An increase in the number of homes being built for social rent can only be positive, but issues with existing housing stock remain. In the past three years, Scottish councils have dealt with 61,158 cases of pest infestations, ranging from woodlice and wasps to cockroaches and rats²⁷.

The number of people living in private rented homes in Scotland has increased rapidly since 2000, with most recent data estimating that there are **360,000 private rented homes in Scotland**²⁸. Private sector tenants do not currently have the same level of protection as those in public sector homes. Although the Scottish government did consult on the safety and condition of private rented housing in 2017, the policy outcomes are yet to be implemented.²⁹

In the past three years, Scottish councils have dealt with 61,158 cases of pest infestations, ranging from woodlice and wasps to cockroaches and rats²⁶.

The State of our Estates

part two: equality impact assessment, Scottish Government, 7 June 2017

²⁵Social Housing: Improving housing standards, Scottish Government

²⁶4 per cent rise in number of new build homes completed, Scottish Government. 12 March 2019

²⁷Scots councils deal with 60,000 pest infestation call-outs at council homes in last three years, Daily Record, 7 July 2019

²⁸Scottish household survey 2017: annual report, Scottish Government,

²⁹Energy efficiency and condition standards in private rented housing, part two: equality impact assessment. Scottish Government. 7 June 201:



Spotlight on Northern Ireland

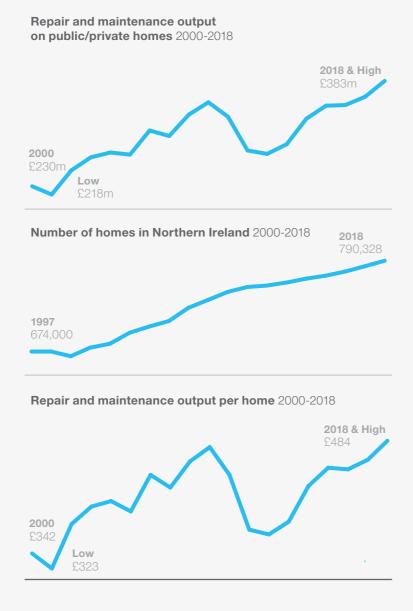
The number of homes in Northern Ireland has increased from 674,000 in 2000 to 790,328 in 2018. Repair and maintenance on public and private homes has also risen in real terms in this time period, but remains low compared to London and the rest of the UK.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), currently owns an estimated 86,000 social homes - a third of all social housing in the country. The NIHE receives around £209m a year through rent, but with ageing housing stock, outgoings are estimated to be around £300m³⁰. Facing a substantial funding crisis, the NIHE is having to make the difficult decision to stop investing in properties that have reached a certain physical condition³¹

The private rented sector in Northern Ireland is now the second largest housing tenure in the country, accounting for 17-20 per cent of the total housing stock – the equivalent of 125,000 properties.³² The rise in the number of households in private rented homes is linked to a lack of available social housing and people struggling to purchase their own home, due to affordability issues and deposit requirements.

According to the latest House Conditions Survey in Northern Ireland, 33 a quarter of private tenants were not satisfied with the repairs service being provided by their landlord or letting agent. People living in private rented homes saw the lowest investment, with just 19 per cent of homes undergoing repairs in the last five years, compared to 53 per cent of social housing³⁴.









Only 19%

of homes in the private rented sector have undergone repairs in the last five years, compared to 53 per cent of social housing



of private tenants were not satisfied with the repairs service being provided by their landlord

Making the Most of Northern Ireland's Private Rented Sector to Meet Housing Need, The Chartered Institute of Housing, The Department for Social Development and SmartMove NI,

³⁰ Endgame: what now for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive? Inside Housing, 23 March 2019



Recommendations

Following our analysis, we have made a series of recommendations which aim to improve the quality of our existing housing stock and consequently improve the living conditions of millions of people:

1

Turning policy initiatives into strategic outputs -

Most housing organisations now have a 30 year asset management plan, but we need action to turn the extensive policy guidelines in the sector into coherent and implementable strategies. Sitting under an umbrella asset management strategy, we need to see sub-strategies for repair and maintenance work, stock re-investment, compliance and legislative responsibilities. Organisations with existing asset management strategies need to demonstrate that they have a cohesive business approach to each sub-strategy, making sure that they are well-managed, flexible, detailed and life cycle costed.

2

The lifting of the restriction on Right to Buy receipts -

Right to Buy has seen better quality stock transferred into the private sector and local authorities have been unable to use the capital receipts to re-invest in improving existing stock or providing replacement housing. Restrictions on the use of Right to Buy receipts needs to be lifted and each local authority requires a forward strategy for reinvesting in stock.

3

Greater scrutiny of housing stock in the private rented sector –

The removal of benefits and tax advantages for private landlords is likely to have a negative effect on the sector as they have less money to put into stock improvements. Private landlords should be made to comply with decency legislation as currently there is no compulsion on the private sector to meet standards, either of housing quality or tenancy rights. It is essential that new mechanisms are introduced to monitor the quality of housing in the private rented sector and that financial mechanisms are developed to give local authorities the ability to enforce higher standards.

Summary





"A concerning number of people live in substandard homes, which is affecting not only their physical and mental wellbeing, but their quality of life. Local authorities continue to battle budget cuts and after a decade of austerity, councils are having to make difficult decisions about funding priorities.

The Spending Review – which should have set out how government funding would be distributed across departments for the next three years – has been delayed and could be reduced to a one-year programme as a result of ongoing Brexit uncertainty. Local authorities desperately need clarity on funding, with one in three fearing that they will run out of money by 2022/2335.

In England, 13 per cent of social homes still fail to meet the *Decent Homes Standard*, rising to 25 per cent in the private rented sector. We need to see a concerted effort to reduce these percentages, through increased repair and maintenance work across the public and private sector. The impact housing has on people's everyday lives cannot be underestimated. Poor housing contributes to stress, affects people's ability to have functional relationships and impacts on their opportunity to succeed in life.

The North-South divide in the repair and maintenance of property paints a stark picture of housing stock across the country. We need the government to provide the funding to make sure **all** social housing is of a decent standard. At the same time, we need better oversight and scrutiny of landlords in the private rented sector to provide tenants with more protection and the ability to hold landlords accountable through tighter regulations."





Methodology

Data for Britain was obtained through the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Output in the Construction Industry dataset and the Construction Output Subsector and Subnational dataset.

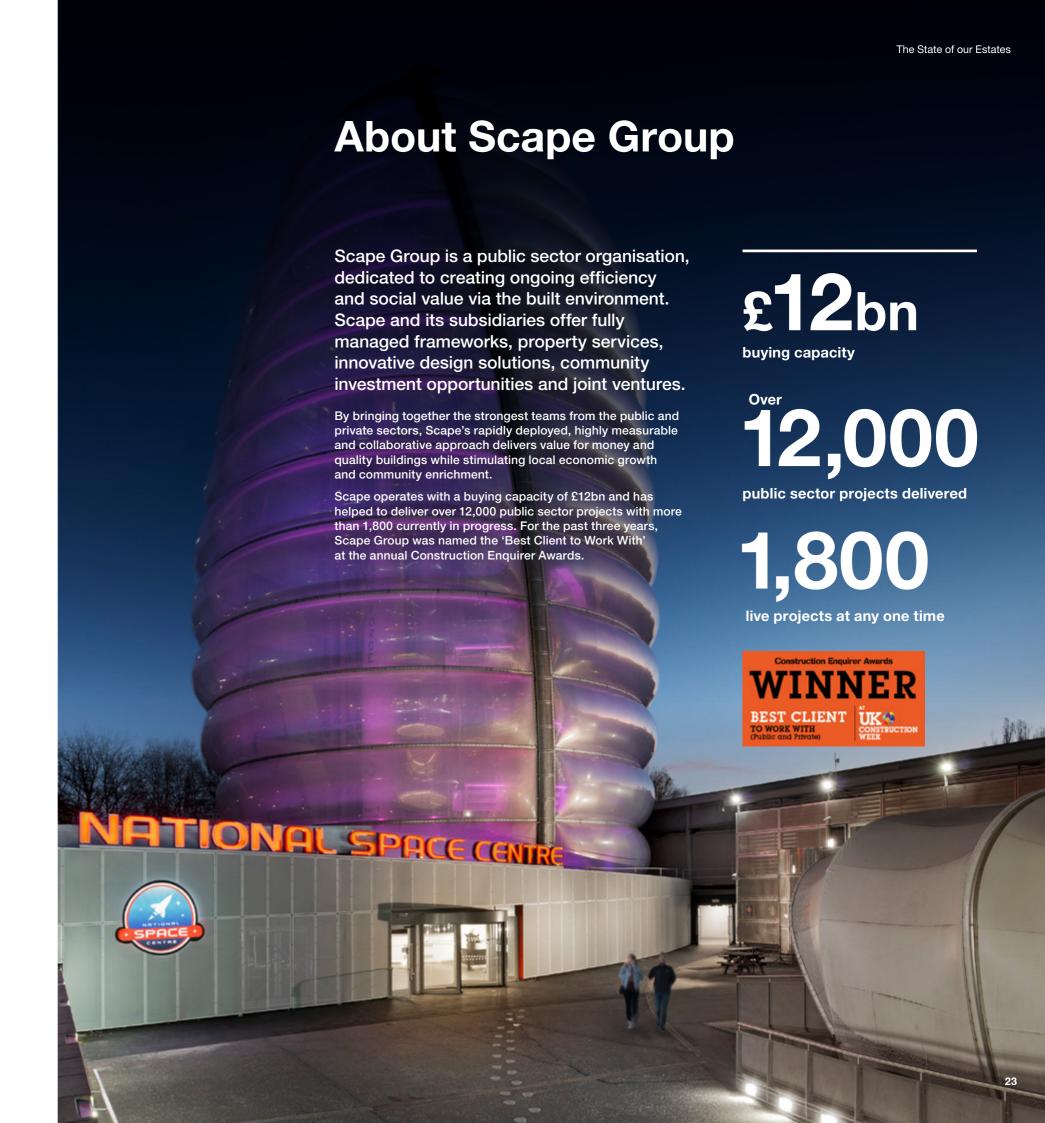
The datasets provide an overview of repair and maintenance construction output for public and private sector housing at current prices. The data for Northern Ireland was sourced via the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and is only available from 2000. Both sets of data were adjusted for inflation (2016=100) to enable a year on year comparison.

Office for National Statistic's Output in the Construction Industry dataset is correct as of 10 June 2019.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Output in the Construction Industry dataset is correct as of 11 April 2019.

Public housing refers to housing owned by local authorities and registered providers. Private sector housing refers to owner-occupied and privately rented homes.

Dwelling stock data was obtained via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Department for Communities NI.



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