London Tenants Federation

Housing, Health & Wellbeing Conference Report

Conference held on: 
Wednesday 8th July 2015
@ Ampthill Square TRA Hall
Barnby Street, NW1 2RS
LTF housing, health and wellbeing event - 8th August 2015

LTFs half-day housing, health and wellbeing event was one of a series of events held by Just Space members prior to its two day conference focused on a beginning to develop alternative policy for a community-based London Plan.

There were presentations at the LTF event from the Building Research Establishment and the National Centre for Social Research.

Workshops, facilitated by LTF members and contacts, focused on

- Empowering groups at the grass-roots level on housing health and wellbeing issues
- Overcrowding and short-term tenancies
- Fuel poverty, retrofitting and refurbishment
- Housing density, lifetime neighbourhoods and the Lord Adonis issue (his proposals to demolish council estates and build new homes at higher densities)
- Equalities issues in housing, health and wellbeing.

This reports includes speakers presentations and comment made in the workshop discussion.
The cost of poor housing in London
Presentation by Ian Watson, Building Research Establishment

1. About BRE
   All profits from the BRE Group are used by the BRE Trust to fund research and education programmes that will help to meet its goal of "building a better world together".

2. Purpose of the Real Cost of Poor Housing Research
   - To quantify poor housing and estimate how much money could be saved by tackling the worst housing conditions in London
   - Special emphasis on impact of hazard of excess cold and relationship with fuel poverty

3. Excess winter deaths (England and Wales)
   An estimated 31,100 excess winter deaths occurred in England and Wales in 2012/13 (ONS)

4. EWD index by Borough (2006-2009)

5. Accidents - breakdown of injuries by location

6. The English housing stock
   - 22.7 million homes
   - 92 million people
   - 50%+ of homes over 50 years old
   - 20%+ over 100 years old
   - 100,000 new homes provided each year
   - Only 20,000 demolished
   - Homes will have to last 1,000 years
   - At current rates of clearance
   - 99.9% remain from one year to the next

We are stuck with the housing stock we have got so we had better make the best of it!
9. Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
   Category 1 hazard = "Poor Housing"

   Physiological Requirements
   - Dust and dust in Materials
   - Excessive heat
   - Asbestos etc.
   - Soots
   - CO and fuel combustion products
   - Lead
   - Uncompromised fuel gas
   - Visible organic compounds

   Psychological Requirements
   - Damaged and decay
   - Entry by vermin
   - Lighting

10. Protection Against Infection

   - Outdoor, hygiene, and instant
   - Fecal contamination
   - Personal hygiene, sanitation, and disposal
   - Water supply

11. Protection Against Accidents

   - Falls associated with baths etc.
   - Falling on even surfaces
   - Falling from stairs
   - Falling between levels
   - Electrical hazards
   - Fire
   - Flammable, hot surfaces etc.
   - Collapsing and entrapment
   - Explosions
   - Position and susceptibility of assets etc.

   Structural collapse and falling elements

12. Applying the formula gives a numerical hazard rating

13. Falls between levels

   Same likelihood of suffering ill health, but harm outcomes very different

14. HHSRS Category 1 hazards (EHS 2011)

   3.4 million (15%) of English homes have a Category 1 HHSRS hazard

15. London Incidence of Category 1 hazards (2009)

   - 462,000 (15%) of London's 3.2 million homes had at least one Cat 1 hazard
   - Excess cold - second highest incidence after falls on stairs
   - EHS 2009 Excess Cold
     - England 7.2%
     - London 4.7%

16. Age bands containing Category 1 hazards (2009)

   More likely than other London dwellings to be:
   - Standard tariff (peak) electricity
   - Owner occupied
   - Detached or converted flats
   - Pre-1919
**Fuel poverty in London**

- 17% England, 12% London (2009 10% of income on fuel)
- As with rest of England fuel poor more likely to live in houses and older dwellings
- London – lower fuel costs
- Purpose built flats London 20% England 16%
- Smaller floor areas and less exposed envelope
- London - Higher incomes
- Higher average incomes in London
- No account taken of housing costs
- Hills Review only just published at time of report - Low income
- High Cost definition not calculable at time
- Taking account of housing costs fuel poverty –
- same impact as rest of England
- In the private rented stock increases far more than owner occupied and RP stock

**Excess cold and fuel poverty**

- 25 x more households in London that are fuel poor compared to homes with Cat 1 Excess Cold Hazards (390,000 compared 140,000)
- Only 50,000 overlap in London
- In London 14% of fuel poor live in Cat 1 excess cold home, England 21%
- Very little overlap in London when take account of housing costs
- Highlights use of SAP-35 proxy for excess cold
- SAP 35 proxy dates back to 2001 and fuel prices risen faster than incomes since then
- Hills review has introduced very different approach to fuel poverty

**Costs of dealing with all poor housing in London**

- Average cost for mitigating Cat 1 hazard is £3,100
- Total cost of dealing with Cat 1 Hazards in London £1.7 billion
- Over half of costs associated with excess cold
Health, mental health and housing conditions in England
Presentation by Steve Shaman, National Centre for Social Research

1. Health, mental health and housing conditions
A multidimensional approach to fuel related poverty and associated mental health problems.

Dr. Steve Shaman

3. Excess winter mortality, England and Wales

4. Monthly percentage variation in mortality compared to yearly average

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Ian Watson
watsoni@bre.co.uk
5. Effect of indoor temperature on health

- 21°C – recommended
- 18°C – minimum without health risk
- 16°C – respiratory disease risk
- 12°C – blood pressure increases
- 5°C – high risk of hypothermia

6. Why is fuel poverty a health issue?

- Excess mortality
- Physical health
- Mental health?
  - Measuring psychological wellbeing, one of the "central political issues of our time" (David Cameron)
  - Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (APMS) 2007
  - Clinical Interview Schedule Revised (CIS-R)

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9. Official definition of fuel poverty

‘needing to spend more than 10% of household income to maintain adequate warmth in the home (and meet other fuel use)’

- Hard to operationalise in social research...

10. Many factors influence whether a home is in fuel poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Energy efficiency</th>
<th>Central heating, double glazing</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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11. APMS measures

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13. Mould in the home

14. Disconnected or in fuel debt in past year

15. Used less fuel than needed due to cost

16. Perceived the home to be cold

17. But are associations between aspects of fuel related poverty and mental health explained by other factors?

Logistic regression to generate odds of poor mental health, controlling for:
- Non-fuel debt
- Housing tenure
- Household income
- Employment status
- Borrowing money
- Neighbourhood deprivation
- Sex, age, marital status

18. Odds of mental disorder after adjustment...

19. Odds of mental disorder after adjustment...

20. Odds of mental disorder after adjustment...
21. Cold

- Living room most likely to be cold
- One in four reluctant to invite others home as a result
- Social isolation

22. Mould

- Image of mould

23. Cold and mould could impact on mental health...

- Social isolation
- Physiological
- Poor mental health
- Stress
- Lack of control over environment

24. Or, is the direction of influence more complex...

- Less likely to maintain property
- More likely to suffer cold
- More likely to suffer respiratory

25. Key aspects of fuel related poverty - vary with tenure and dwelling type

- People who rent are worse off than owner occupiers...
- Social renters – financial aspects (reduced fuel use, cold home)
- Private renters – housing characteristics (neither double glazing nor central heating, mould)

26. Key aspects of fuel related poverty - vary with household composition

- Families with children - mould
- Lone parent households – get into fuel debt
- Lone person households – use less fuel and get cold

27. After controlling for all variables

- Cold remains associated with poor mental health
- Income maximisation is not enough
- Must tackle heating and insulation efficiency
- Mould also independently associated with mental health
- So need both insulation and ventilation
- Tackling poor housing - recognise multiple aspects

Steve Shaman

Stephen.shaman@natcen.ac.uk
Workshop 1. Empowering groups at the grass roots level on housing, health and wellbeing issues. Facilitated by Wilfried Rimensburger, Westminster Residents Panel with contribution from John Wilkinson, UCL research student.

- Comparative analysis relating to the wellbeing of residents from Ferrier tower block in Newham (which was refurbished 5 years ago) with that of residents of tower blocks on the Carpenters Estate (where residents are still being decanted) has been carried out in a study by John Wilkinson, a UCL research student. Both estates were built at similar times (late 1960’s / 70’s). Issues on the Carpenters tower blocks include individual homes of remaining tenants not being colder - as a result of neighbouring flats being empty. Ferrier tower has had new bathrooms and kitchens and insulation. Community spirit is good although they don’t have a tenants and residents association. Residents of the Carpenters’ tower blocks are more isolated, worried about who might be coming into their blocks and miss the residents who have been moved off the estate. However, they have a Tenant Management Organisation and have worked to establish a Neighbourhood Forum with surrounding blocks of flats. Evidence of the impact on health & well-being on estates that are planned to be demolished compared to those that have been demolished is essential.

- There are issues about the quality and reliability of the evidence provided by of so called ‘experts’ around estimated costs of refurbishment v demolition. Can the council be trusted?

- Tenants and leaseholders should have access to independent technical expertise to assist them in drawing up their own, alternatives plans for their estates.

- The local authorities’ record keeping around construction, repair and maintenance and stock evaluation of estates is very poor.

- They have masses of data that should be accessible to the community and any independent bodies supporting them and should be open / transparent around the data they hold.

- While the presentation today showed that pre-war homes are more difficult to heat and to insulate, but some are also sturdy and of good quality and many do just need to be refurbished. Lot of estates have very strong communities.

- Councils may not have enough money at present to properly maintain homes or refurbish homes; there have been public spending cuts, However the HRA is ring-fenced and there is much they financial mismanagement and money wasting.

- There have been about 30% public sector cuts since 2010.

- Where boroughs are looking at regeneration they should provide options with comparative long-term costings on environmental (embodied energy), social and economic issues. Tenant options / alternatives should be included.

- Some streets and estates were saved in the 1960’s and 70’s by squatters and co-ops doing the homes up themselves.

- TMOs are generally considered, by their tenants, to manage their homes better than council.

- Might establishing a TMO provide safeguards against developers or estates threatened with demolition?

- There is a huge lack of trust about local authority management of homes in Newham and its lack of support for establishing TRAs.

- Legislation has changed so that it is easier for tenants to turn an estate into a TMO,

- TRAs and borough-wide tenant groups should focus less about venting anger and stating the obvious and more on trying to get what they want / what might be achieved. They need either to take over the control of managing their homes themselves or to focus their energies on effectively challenging, with evidence to support this.
• Neighbourhood planning could be a way of bringing in more people and of attracting in expertise from universities such as UCL. This is another way of gaining more community power.

• There are broken relationship between the council and tenants in some boroughs (as already noted) but worse still is having no relationship.

• Tenants have to compete with developers. Councils want to sell of land and homes to developers to build new homes that existing tenants can’t afford.

• New build is also so expensive that even when new council homes are built, they are almost immediately sold.

• Existing social rented homes should be safeguarded especially when there are no new social rented homes being developed.

• How do we genuinely turn top down into bottom up policy making? How can we empower tenants, who might have two jobs and three children and are running short of time, to contribute to policy making? How do we go forward?

• The problem is that even when there is consultation and involvement it is often ineffective and we just get ignored.

• We need to demand effective consultation and involvement.

• We should be pushing hard to get social landlords to do their jobs properly and where necessary, around disrepair, to take them to the courts. We shouldn’t have to do their jobs for them. They take our money in our rents and service charges but they don’t deliver the services. They need to be accountable and do their job.

• So is it that we need better scrutiny?

• In the good old days, in Lambeth, if there was a problem on an estate the TRA would pass a resolution and then contact the council to do something about it. With the setting up of the ALMO, things changed a lot. They would write individually to tenants and then say we have talked to or engaged x number of people. The side effect has been to reduce the effectiveness of the collective voice of tenants. TRAs have been bypassed and not involved in the decision-making. Should the council go to each tenant directly or go to elected tenant representatives? Where there is a meeting that is focused on making a decision, there is a good turnout. People feel that their voices are being heard and matter. How do we reassert our collective strength within our own communities?

• In the past the council used to involve the TRAs in inspections – they no longer do this

• LTF should produce a briefing on why it is important to have a collective voice, how TRAs might be more effective and what effective consultation is.

• We need statements that LTF take this forward into policy at the regional level. It is easy for us to disagree, but more difficult to say what it is we want in terms of change in policy. The challenge for us is to come up with real proposals.

• One of the things about this government is that they agree policy with insufficient evidence of the impact.

• We need to take over the funding – where the council is failing in its duties to us. The problem is that they milk the benefits from the lowest paid people.

• Residents need to be put first and given the tools they need to do the job. This is at the strategic policy level but also at the practical local level. For example social enterprises – such as food growing. On our estate and on neighbouring ones, food growing plays an increasingly important role. Not only does it provide good food, but it creates an informal market place. If people don’t have space on their estates, there are allotments and you can also grow food on balcony areas. There is also potentially a social and community element
in people doing this together.

- There is a blind woman on our estate that grows food in pots in front of her house. It not only gives her something to do and she produces something.
- Existing food growing areas should be safeguarded and new encouraged – both to provide healthy food and to encourage healthy interaction on housing estates. For the same reason green roofs and walls should be encouraged.

**Workshop 2. Overcrowding and short-term tenancies.** Facilitated by Robert Taylor, Camden Federation of Private Tenants

Introduction: Levels of overcrowding in London are far greater than elsewhere in the country. One in four children (391,000) is now estimated to live in an overcrowded home. The number of overcrowded homes has risen in London since the 1990’s. Overcrowding can have a serious impact on health, wellbeing and on children’s educational prospects. It makes finding a quiet space to study impossible and infectious diseases spread more readily in overcrowded homes. There is evidence (including that commissioned by DCLG) available on this issue, but, while numbers of new homes to address overcrowding is noted in GLA evidence, the London Plan fails to highlight the serious impact this has on health and wellbeing. Evidence shows there is a relationship between overcrowding and - respiratory conditions, meningitis and TB; children’s mental health and social and emotional development; slow growth rate and maltreatment of children.

Overcrowding is higher in the social-rented sector than in the private rented sector. While the chart below shows some decline in the social rented sector there has though been a rapid increase in the private rented sector.

[GLA analysis from the English housing survey date 2009/10 -2011/12]

**Workshop discussion:**

- Few private tenants get a tenancy for more than a year, so transience is also a big issue.
- There is some relatively recent evidence from the medical profession about the impact on health and wellbeing of people who live in short-term accommodation and being constantly moved on. This should be highlighted in the London Plan.
- This is increasingly an issue in the social-rented sector as well as in the private-rented sector. While flexible tenancies of 5 years are better than 6 months to a year, this is still not
• Conducive to creating sustainable communities and lifetime neighbourhoods.
• Increasing numbers of private tenants are living in buy-to-let homes on council estates. The issue here is assured shorthold tenancies, which are just 6 – 12 months on average. Camden Council says that 30% of its population changes every year, so this is very difficult. Council tenants are relatively stable in comparison, as they have secure tenancies. The only exception is older regulated tenant. Only about 8% of private tenants in Camden are (older) regulated, rent controlled.
• Every time I renew my one year tenancy I have to pay out £120 to the lettings agency.
• If you are a council tenant you tend to carry the identity (of being a council tenant) with you, but private tenants don’t really self-identify as ‘private-tenants’.
• That’s why Camden Federation of Private Tenants has started to refer to private tenants simply as ‘renter’s’. The simple reality is that most private tenants want to get out of the private-rented sector. It is something that they want to escape from and hope that it is short term. However, more and more people are not going to escape from it.
• Many homeless households now find themselves in private-rented housing because of the shortage of social housing.
• Buy-to-let landlords on council estates are not interested in their tenants and often don’t repair their homes. Since the tenants are short-term, they often don’t care about other people on the estate. Anti-social behaviour is sometimes a problem.
• What are local authorities doing about this? Could they do more?
• Could TRAs on council / social housing estates try to include private-tenants a bit more? Some say that council TRAs won’t let them engage in or to vote at their meetings.
• A couple of tenants might sign a tenancy agreement and then move in another 4-6 people as they are unable to afford the rent. Private landlords don’t care as long as the rent is paid.
• On Radio 4’s You and Yours there was an interview with a private-tenant who had put them into an overcrowded by their local authority. They had 4 children, the council said this was just temporary - for 2/3 weeks. However, once there they were just forgotten.
• There is concern that the extension of RTB to housing association tenants could result in a loss of family sized homes - as has occurred in council housing.

Figure 2: Overcrowding in the PRS by borough

From Future of London website - data from the English Housing Survey (2011)

• Is there really a direct relationship between short-term tenancies and overcrowding?
• Do we think licensing is a good thing?
• Licensing was not introduced to address overcrowding.
• Brent has mandatory, additional and selective licensing. They have done selective licensing in three wards with the highest proportion of private rented homes (and also levels of housing benefit). The landlords in those areas must licence their properties. The mandatory system applies to three storey HMOs.
• Camden currently licences 300 HMOs and are going for additional licensing across the borough – using HMOs of all types including conversions of properties from the 1970s. So the hope is that they will go from licensing 300 to 8,000 properties.
• Newham has a mandatory licensing scheme. They are aiming for 100% sign up. Newham had huge problems of beds in sheds and in garages.
• Croydon has a full borough scheme.
• In Brent there is low level of awareness and the spread-sheet that the borough has provided to show everyone about the scheme, is a bit misleading. It’s not a downloadable document that would be useful for organisations like private tenants’ rights groups. I would say ordinary renters are completely oblivious to this.
• Haven’t they leafleted the homes in those three wards? Camden says they will identify the 8000 properties and will do an amount of door knocking.
• There are about eight to 12 boroughs that are running selective licensing schemes.
• We need a central (or London) database of licenced homes.
• Licensing sounds great, but we need a bit more than that.
• If there was a law about slum landlords and if their homes could be handed over the local authority to convert into council homes, that would be a fantastic policy.
• There have been examples where councils have taken over properties through a management order. The boroughs do actually have a lot of powers to do this, but they seem reluctant to do this (other than for a short time period). But I agree the boroughs should be using the powers they do have, much more.
• If we were to remind councils of this, that would be positive thing.
• Some of the council tenants might disagree, but if Camden is already managing 20,000 properties, why couldn’t it take on managing a few more?
• As soon as a borough takes over a property (perhaps through compulsory purchase), they are then responsible for bringing homes up to a decent homes standard.
• One way to boost the number of council homes is to confiscate from rogue landlords.
• Westminster confiscated each church housing associations home that came up on the market and handed it to Genesis. In Camden they are doing the same with One Housing. The church properties were handed over to the council for virtually nothing.
• The high cost of private renting has a potential detrimental impact on mental health.

Workshop 3. Fuel Poverty, retrofitting and refurbishing Facilitated by Sophie Neuberg, Friends of the Earth with Richard Lee, Just Space

**Issues in London** Sophie highlighted the following points:
• Over 10% of households live in fuel poverty in London, according to government definition, and many more struggle to pay their bills. This is quite shocking in a city that is as wealthy as London. Around 730 people die each year in London because they live in a cold home. The most vulnerable are elderly and very young people. Living in a cold home can lead to all sorts of health and well-being problems. Existing health conditions such as asthma can be made worse by cold homes and psychological problems can develop because of the stress
of living in poverty. This can damage children’s attainment at school. These are serious
issues and it’s not enough to say people should put on an extra jumper.

- Generally social housing is a lot better on this issue than private rented housing.
- The London Mayor doesn’t really have any big plans to deal with fuel poverty. There have
been some small schemes such as RE:NEW, but this is inadequate given the scale of the
problem. The Mayor did, however, respond to the government’s fuel poverty strategy
consultation calling for it to be stronger. He wants at least to be seen to be concerned about
the issue and did call for standards that are higher than those set out by the government.
We might at least hold him to account on this.
- Fuel poverty is one of FOE’s priority issues. FOE is worried about the proposals for watering
down low carbon housing standards. New homes could be built will be no better insulated
than old homes.

**Refurbishment:** Some issues mentioned by Richard Lee

- The drive is very much around demolition in major regeneration areas – that means mostly
council estates but other social housing.
- There should be policy saying that full refurbishment studies should be carried out before
decision is taken on any estate. These should be done independently. There have been
studies carried out by councils that are very poor. They just say these things have been
done, but the demolition proposal always wins out.
- Just Space and LTF, with engineers from UCL, have produced a lot of guidance on how you
can do a full refurbishment study, how tenants and residents can demand this, what should
we asking for and who to turn to, to get help.

**Workshop debate:**

- I live in a Peabody property, I see my landlord as a private landlord. We need to think
carefully around whether we refer to housing associations as social housing.
- We need to take steps to deal with this very big problem and be realistic about what can be
achieved to make homes energy efficient. We need first to identify the most vulnerable,
through working with the boroughs across London. The National Institute Clinical Excellence
has set some recommendations around reducing the risk of death and ill health associated
with living in cold homes. This very much brings together housing and health. Health
problems associated with cold homes are experienced during normal winter temperatures,
not just in extremely cold weather, and that year-round action is needed to combat these
problems. The recommendations suggests prioritising homes to be tackled and shaping and
influencing the decisions on how homes are improved and developing the research agenda.
- This is really important. One proposals was that anyone regularly going into peoples homes
(for example to fix a boiler) should be given the task of assessing whether the household is
generally at risk of / or experiencing fuel poverty. If you extend this health visitors and social
service workers this could help in identifying which households are living in fuel poverty.
- Social landlords in Sunderland are taking doctors’ referrals for new household boilers. This is
taking place and some studies are being carried out on the effectiveness of this.
- Do we want a boiler on prescription programme here in London?
- Yes perhaps that ought to happen – to help get good standards in place especially in homes
with mould and damp. But most GPs won’t be aware of the conditions of people’s homes –
unless they make a home visit.
- There are some doctors who have health assistants that do ‘MOT’ assessments (including
blood pressure and more) with over 65’s. These people perhaps could assist with this. These
kinds of people can go out to people’s homes where they feel they are particularly vulnerable. The GPs gets money for this for each over-65’s MOT they do.

- We need a bit more integrated health care service at the local level. Could the Mayor require this of the boroughs? We have Healthwatch England and a Healthwatch in each borough which has powers to ensure the voice of the patient is heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services. Should we link with or suggest some of these issues with them? They have statutory powers.

- GP services are really overstretched. A lot of people are in fuel poverty for a long time without a doctor, local authority or health care worker going to their homes. Some people just don’t go to their GP and/or don’t have a good relationship with them. Most councils should have some sort of knowledge of who is vulnerable and who is not.

- Some councils may have some information about their own stock - although this is generally a sample of their whole stock - rather than being a comprehensive study.

- The homes and communities agency’s National Register of Social Housing has a database with details of social housing properties in England, with a range of details captured for each property. It’s set out in a map. This would be a good to add things to.

- Fuel Poverty Action holds energy rights workshops which are based on everyone having a basic set of rights with their social housing landlord or with an energy company. They try to outline those rights and help groups of people to challenge their landlord or energy provider, or to carry out some direct action around fuel poverty and energy. They try to take a more community-based approach.

- One of the challenges is to try to get people to engage in self-help ways of working rather than depending on the council doing something. Maybe we demand that the Mayor promote energy rights initiatives. The local authority should provide the funding to commission groups like FPA.

- Repowering London’s community based energy is good and should be encouraged.

- There are a fair number of social landlords that do have money to respond to this problem – some of them making record surpluses of more than a quarter of a million pounds.

- The Mayor should put pressure on social landlords to spend more on insulating homes. Too many are syphoning off cash to spend on new developments.

- Peabody’s retrofitting / decent homes work on my estate was of poor quality. Peabody inspectors are inadequate in identifying what needs to be done to people’s homes, they fail to take seriously what tenants say, waste time and money and send out inaccurate information relating to the properties. We also have problems conservation areas. Housing association homes are also being sold off at auction.

- Re finance - there are billions of pounds wrapped up in pensions. We should be encouraging such money to be used to fund retrofit / insulation schemes.

- Accountability in housing associations is very poor. Should the Mayor have greater oversight of them?

- Where does BRE stands on the use of Nano paint which can be used on any material – including lead and glass? It reduces the porosity of bricks and so increases insulation properties.

- BRE rep said he didn’t really feel this was very relevant to this debate.

- Cladding buildings should occur more.

- Should the mayor being used some his own budget to support retrofitting?

- I want to see green building materials used. Hemp for example, which is cheap to produce. Hemp block construction produces a negative carbon footprint. It can be used for new
buildings, for loft insulation, cladding of existing buildings and keeping the wall breathable, thus avoiding mould growth and dampness. This would benefit the air quality in houses. It is also cheap to produce.

- New buildings are not being built to a good standard and perhaps should be required to meet passivhaus standards. The benefits of passive house are that you should only need to turn on heating during the winter months.

- The problem with passivhaus buildings is that they are often not breathable. They are designed like traditional buildings of Spain – so you build a block that is insulated to such an extent that no air goes in and out – you end up with higher condensation.

- The Mayor should demand higher standards in London.

- Islington assessed that it would cost £7,000 a unit to get up to 80% efficiency. This should be encouraged – refurbish as many existing council homes as possible.

- A lot of people who are live in fuel poverty use pre-payment cards. These are an expensive way of paying fuel. More needs to be done about this. Smart meters are being introduced over the next four years. These should be a priority for the most vulnerable. People on low incomes should be charged no more than others.

**Workshop 4 Housing density, lifetime neighbourhoods and the Lord Adonis issue.** Facilitated by Sharon Hayward, London Tenants Federation

Introduction: The Mayor’s London Plan density matrix sets out densities that are appropriate to different parts of London and access to public transport. Around half the developments approved in London are at above the density matrix levels. Increased densities are expected (through the London Plan) in areas of large scale development to increase housing delivery.

Lord Adonis has argued for demolition of council estates to build new homes at much higher densities (presumably without social-rented homes – since there is no longer grant funding to deliver new social-rented homes).

The London Plan policy on Lifetime Neighbourhoods – a section of which derived from the LTF’s tenant’s definition of a lifetime neighbourhood is quite a good policy and a sensible alternative to the developer led model.

- If the money is spent on good quality green, play and community spaces then even super density can make for comfortable living – but it requires extra resources.

- If you have more space inside your property, also you can probably cope with larger density; but not if you have a cramped home.

- The London Plan provides space standards and recently introduced national space standards are pretty much equal to these. The RIBA has suggested they should be 10% higher.

- If you build higher density, who will ensure that the infrastructure needed will be provided?

- There is concern that developments are being approved without London Plan required levels green and play spaces being included. Wouldn’t a matrix that includes the amounts of infrastructure we need be better?

- The Mayor’s office argues against this saying that the London Plan has separate policies on social and community infrastructure and that these should be adhered to.

- One argument being put forward to support higher densities here is that other European Cities have higher densities. They are being used to double numbers of homes on council estates. The new additional homes being built are expensive homes for sale; supporting property developers. Because council estates that were planned with a relatively high number of dwellings they had big spaces around them to compensate for this.
• The whole question of density relating to public transport availability levels is a nonsense. So we don’t develop something somewhere because it is a nice place to live, but rather that it has good transport availability to take you somewhere else. There is no relationship the desirability to deliver lifetime and walkable neighbourhoods with less need for transport.

• I live in Gospel Oak. Hampstead Heath / Parliament Hill was as early as 1829 being described as the lungs of the metropolis. They are building all around here in higher density. All Camden roads of three of four lanes have been shrunk, roads are often blocked and public transport can’t move. Transport is costly. They are closing community centres, pubs and post-offices. The streets are narrower and the public spaces where you used to just sit on a bench to watch people go by, have been wiped out. It is a dehumanising. I don’t know why they are not building on the green belt.

• If you build on the green belt we will have one massive conurbation. You won’t be able to go for a walk in the woods or anything else.

• They will soon be charging us to use spaces like Hampstead Heath. They already want to charge people to go for a swim and to take a dog for a walk. They want to fence it up.

• One key issue is the lack of social housing. We must have properly affordable homes to have a genuine mix of incomes and households; perhaps more important than the density issue.

• Picking up on an earlier point about the Mayor assuming we can build at higher density because of provision of public transport to take us elsewhere, there is also the issue of household income and cost of travel. Many low income households don’t have the money to take their children out to green spaces on the edges of London or to expensive local leisure facilities. We need financially accessible play, community and green spaces locally.

• As we get more global warming we will have more summer deaths with longish periods of hot weather. There are ways of compensating for this, which the density matrix should take into account. In Freiberg in Germany they measure the transpiration rates of an area (which is what you get from having trees, green space and fountains) and that evaporating helps to cool the area down. When they build anew they have to put back the same levels of transpiration that they have removed. This is something else that should be included in the matrix.

• We have a particular issue here (in Camden) with infrastructure coming in the form of HS2. This will result in the loss of several hundred homes. Camden has been good in making sure that people will stay together as communities. The net result though is that we are losing pockets of green space and play areas that were designed into estates and are desperately needed for peoples’ wellbeing. Camden talks about delivering ‘affordable housing’ – but that won’t be housing who live round here can afford.

• People who have lived in my area for 20 or 30 years have been through hell and high water to improve the area – dealing with issues such as gangs and getting money into local schools. We now find that ordinary people are being forced out for wealthier people to move in. So money made from selling council property in Gospel Oak has gone to repair schools which are now being flooded by very rich kids. They enjoy the benefits through having public land and homes being sold. Socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor.

• The new housing minister, the previous government and Adonis consistently refer to the ‘very valuable land’ that council housing sits on and that the density on this public land is not high enough.

• Are these Adonis proposals practical?

• It is already occurring. For example on Woodberry Down, which was a sparsely populated, they have built more homes there - private homes at the expense of delivering social-rented homes. This is also happening on smaller estates. There are plans to demolish the 400
homes on the Colville Estate. Phase 2 proposals are for two tower blocks of 16 and 20 storeys – all private homes for sale.

- This is the privatisation of open space. Canary Wharf was the most extreme example of this where working class people were forced out for some of the wealthiest to move in.
- We have an elephant in the room. This is public land. Selling land to the developer is where the money is – but this doesn’t address the needs of the existing community or new households that need social-rented homes. Ordinary people are not on the radar. Existing tenants won’t be able to afford to stay. We should still talk about council homes. Housing association housing is more expensive and ‘affordable homes’ are almost market rents.
- This is all about money and all about moving us out of London.
- This is also making it more much more difficult to have stable or cohesive communities. It is taking away our ability to operate or negotiate collectively.
- Very rich French people have moved in to our area. The consume the library area, the green and play spaces but zero pennies go in. They only buy in very expensive shops and provide no benefit to the locality.
- Some people from Earls Court met with Adonis. IPPR who published his paper have said his proposals must happen in full consultation with tenants - whatever that means. We were being told that 7500 homes and 12,000 new jobs are to be developed at the 77 acres of the Earls Court development area. 1,276 on the site of the Earls Court Centre and the 760 home on the Gibbs Green and West Kensington Estates are planned to go. They say the densities London Plan density matrix levels.
- It is a nonsense to demolish homes that have just been brought up to the decent homes standard. They spent about £3b in London on this up to 2012 and three years on we are talking about throwing that money down the drain.
- By 2018 we will have a new London Plan (which the Mayor’s team has already started on). The London Assembly is allowed to challenge any policy put forward by the Mayor’s office but they need a 2/3 majority to do so.
- One of the big issues we have is the population increase in London which is much higher than the Mayor’s office had previously proposed.
- So is there evidence that working class households are being displaced?
- Yes there is some evidence of this. Homes could be built in lower density and wealthier areas where targets are currently very low – rather than on council estates.
- The London Plan also encourages loss of social housing through its policy on mixed and balanced communities. Where social rented homes are demolished the authorities are not required to replace like for like.
- There is no analysis on actually how mixed these communities already were.
- Very few people get involved in these planning processes so we should do is write our alternative London Plan and start to distribute this on our estates and get people interested.
- We should note that we have attended Examinations in Public of the London Plan before, we have had some successes and achieved some changes to policy text.
- There is also an appetite for campaigning – e.g. the Aylesbury, New Era and E15 Focus. These have changed some of the debate and are getting some media attention.
- I would question how effective these have been. In a number of these ‘campaigns’ main activists who are not estate residents have created divisions.
- I agree these have to be locally led. Wasn’t Focus E15 a locally led campaign?
- People have assumed that they were former residents of the Carpenters Estate; they were not. Many residents of the estate were sympathetic to the situation of these young mums,
but there had been no discussion with residents about their plans to squat the estate and whether or not this might be helpful to residents own campaign to prevent their estate being demolished. Residents had to put up with constant media attention and noise, loud speakers and music going on until the early hour of the morning when people had to get up for work or had children to get to school in the morning. So there was insensitivity towards existing residents and appropriation of their campaigning space.

- They were drawing attention to issues. Could they not be drawn into these discussions?
- To be honest they are having their own discussions within their own organisations.
- One could argue that they were riding on the back of the hard work that had been done by the residents of the Carpenters estate for some years and failed to respect that.
- People who are incensed about what’s going on and perhaps they could be of help to us.
- There is a difference between supporting tenant groups who ask for help and individuals or groups just descending on estates to support their own needs or views. On several London estates tenants have been alienated and divisions created by campaigns like this.
- Where are those being shoved out of London going to? Will we have favelas at its edges?
- The London Plan talks about lifetime neighbourhoods – this means people staying and having a commitment to their community long-term.
- Getting rid of lifetime tenancies means that tenancies are under review every five years.
- CPRE worked with LTF around the LLDC Local Plan. They are talking about lifetime neighbourhoods in a pretty narrow sense. Lifetime neighbourhoods is different to having lifetime homes; it means having good social and community facilities and empowered communities. This really should mean also having the possibility of people being able to downsize to smaller properties. CRPE came away thinking it is better to speak about sustainable neighbourhoods, because the planners tend to bog you down in technical definitions.
- Lifetime neighbourhoods should be somewhere where people should be able to stay throughout their lives. This is simple I was born here and I want to die here.
- Yes, they should consider more the communities than just the bricks and mortar. It is an alternative to the ideal of viability assessments being primary to development.
- Perhaps we should pull together a diagram of a walkable neighbourhood – the things you have to do each day and can walk to, the things you have to do once a week that you might cycle or take a bus to and the things you do one a month that you need a train to access.
- A new ‘alternative London Plan needs to something that is concise because people in TRAs will not want to read those massive documents.
- To have lifetime neighbourhoods in London requires investment in the north of the country so that people don’t all want to come to London.
- You can buy homes for £20,000 in the north of the country but not get work.
- Some of our problem is how strong or not our own organisations are and how we get information out there.
- Perhaps we also need to get the right Mayor in City Hall and London Assembly members.
- People in the Labour Party locally are not contradicting Lord Adonis. You can’t even get local support. IPPR the think tank that published his article on this has apparently shifted its position - but Lord Adonis hasn’t shifted.
- Invite him to an event.
- We need to do cartoons.
- Buy to leave is an issue of concern. This is contrary to developing Lifetime Neighbourhoods.
- NB Duncan Bowie who wrote the first London Plan has carried out a critical analysis of the Lord Adonis paper. This might be useful to us.
**Workshop 5. Equalities issues in housing, health and wellbeing.** Facilitated by Samir Jeraj, Better Housing, Race Equality Foundation

Introduction: One of the reasons that it is useful to talk about equality and inequality in housing is that the effect that housing has on life chances and on their ability to lead a healthy life.

We know from data that that is differentiated between different groups in society. This is about intersectionality - not just for example whether someone is from an ethnic minority but also if they have a disability and or are LGBT.

When we talk about equalities we are talking about how address intersections, as well as for about specific groups that might require specific interventions. To give a few examples – on the cold home thing – fuel poverty, sickle cell anaemia is something that is most common in those with African and Asian descent and attacks can be triggered by extreme cold. This is a situation where their housing condition needs to be of a quality to avoid such an attack.

Also we find groups that are discriminated against end up in the worst types of housing. The most extreme of this is the ‘beds in sheds’ – which is not just literally living in sheds, but also in garages and industrial buildings.

- Large developers are gentrifying areas – this is about housing and the environment. Universities are doing the same thing. In Southwark they’ve been given public buildings, like our Town Hall, for student accommodation. It wouldn’t really matter if the young people in our area were engaged, but they are excluded. You have to have money to get to St Martins. We have a market that was predominantly Caribbean, but you wouldn’t recognise it now, Afro-Caribbean people have been driven out by high rents. The demographics are changing with upwardly mobile cutting-edge artists being given 6-weeks free rent for their market stalls. We have economic deprivation, economic racism and gentrified apartheid – people being driven out of their communities. When you get a big Tesco’s come in, they give the council dollars, where is that money going? Existing communities get no investment; they are being driven out. People have stopped going to community councils. People are fed up with being consulted. You have the conversation, what you say gathers dust somewhere and you get no feedback. People don’t trust the politicians – they are all the same.

- My particular experience is of working with Gypsy and Travellers. Someone earlier said they felt people were being turned into nomads – its a really important point about people being made rootless. With travellers, their predicament is that they are ultimately powerless, they are moved around and are subject to the same sort of racism that other groups are and are like a litmus paper / indicator of what’s happening.

- This is also achieved by stigmatisation – council tenants and travellers are both constantly stigmatised. When council housing was first built after the war, the homes of whole communities that lived together on streets were demolished to build new estates, and as the years have gone on obviously they have changed a lot but you still have a lot of people on large estates who were the original tenants. Stigmatisation of tenants is realised through the word ‘subsidised’ - used by the media and controlled by government. This helps to push people out. We have this new idea recently announced by NHS chief executive, Simon Stevens of building private sector (not public sector) homes on public (NHS) land. They talk about mixed communities. This existed with the old communities, but doesn’t now!

- On behalf of disabled people, I agree. Currently there is the rhetoric around benefit scroungers, which affects the general public’s view of disabled people. Disabled people are twice as likely to be living in poor housing as those who are not disabled. The need for low
cost and secure social housing is high. I am concerned about the extension of RTB and past failures to reinvest capital receipts into building new council homes. Something else is the need for lifetime homes. People really don’t want to move from their homes in older age, but we often become mobility impaired in older age. There is a survey by Leonard Cheshire Disability (https://www.leonardcheshire.org/) highlighting that thousands of people are having to wash in their kitchen sink and sleep in their lounge because of mobility and access problems. The majority of homes don’t even have an accessible front door. When you get severely mobility impaired you are either forced to move or there is an increased risk of falls, more hospital visits and costs to the NHS. This could be avoided with longer-term thinking. When you are disabled your community and support structure are really important. If forced to move you have to rebuild that support structure, you may have to move into an inaccessible home if you can’t afford to stay in your existing home and become isolated.

- The government is trying to weaken the equalities act – so what can we do about this? Those in control are the few, yet we are the many.

- Loss of local forums is an issue. Decision-making at the local level is in the hands of a just a few councillors, cabinets and/or mayors; many career politicians, with resultant inadequate debate and consultation. This is not democracy. We are disenfranchised.

- Urban parishes are a possibility. Resources and support are available through Locality.

- Picking up on one of the slides from the presentation re the cost to the NHS and money given to improve housing. Perhaps this is another route – to emphasise the possible reduction costs / benefits to the NHS if money goes into housing.

- We need to be careful about the moving of money around to different budgets; the development of Healthwatch at the national and local level and the greater role of the local authorities in public health.

- According to the statistics, most people living in fuel poverty are not older people but most people who have experience of deaths from cold are older people. In terms of housing and housing types this is a really key issue. Homes should be easier to heat and policy needs to be focused on adaptations to people’s homes - having rails fitted and accessible bathrooms.

- Regarding older people, fuel poverty and deaths from cold, we know is that those renting in the private rented sector are generally living in poorer conditions and are very vulnerable.

- There is also a problem that we are dealing a lot more with things online and with call centres – this is difficult particularly for older people.

- Councils are depending much more on the voluntary sector for service delivery, because it is cheaper - people are not being paid properly.

- Asian shops are selling chemicals as skin bleaches. This is causing cancers. Even when presented with the evidence, council officers only give a fine and then the same shop keepers go back to doing the same thing again in a short period of time. This has no long-term beneficial impact. Lobbying the local authority doesn’t always work.

- There is a similar situation regarding landlords who fail to properly maintain their properties. They may get fined but the fines are easily covered by the rents they charge.

- There is then an issue then about giving teeth to enforcement.

- Activism, doing stunts to gain media interest had given disabled people some media coverage which at times has been effective.

- Residents associations can be key in mobilising people in terms of health and wellbeing issues. Taking up on other community rights might be helpful.

- Regarding the media and stigmatisation of sections of the community, there is a need to develop alternative stories.
As a cautionary note on Neighbourhood Planning. You still have to be in general conformity with the boroughs Local Plan. We should be wary of 'right's' handed down by government. At times people might be better off knocking on a few doors and engaging people in their own community to lobby / campaign.

I was interested in the bit of the presentation about the work being done on housing to reduce hazards and how they pay back to the public purse. I don't know how aware and active the public health authorities, PCGs and health structures are in this agenda. Local authorities are aware of these schemes although their funding is constantly being cut. There are potential avenues for improving public housing – but don't really know how this would work. This could have impact around equalities issue.

Making contact with local authority officers whose responsibility is around health and asking if they are aware of research on how improving housing will improve health would be a good idea. My experience of public health is that it ends up going down the route of producing behaviour change – encouraging people to eat well or exercise more. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it doesn’t address the reasons why people don’t do these things anyway – things such as poverty, vulnerability and isolation. Better housing could impact more positively on poverty and health.

Paying back thousands of pounds in a few years is significant – presumably just on health costs but would have a whole lot of other benefits - (which is what the evidence showed).

There was some discussion on clinical commissioning groups. Do they allocate funds – isn’t this a conflict of interest?

I think there is room for people to bring in some results / evidence to show that once the public funding thing turns round there would be greater opportunity around this.

We should find about existing programmes on insulating home and tackling fuel poverty.

It would be good if the Federation could provide information on the different organisations in different areas with contact details so that people can keep in touch with one another. Getting a snapshot of everyone who is here today would be good.

The case needs to be made of the benefits of good quality housing in respect of health.

Private Eye was particularly influential around the issue of Atos.

We need to be involving and including young people – so this work is continued.

We need alternative stories, such as tax avoidance in money terms compared to benefit fraud. Perhaps LTF should consider producing an updated ‘Cathy come home’.

Youtube has positive potential in terms of being able to upload narratives without any form of censorship or control by the Rupert Murdoch’s of the world.
Event Attendees:
Victor Adegbiyu, Newham Union of Tenants
Musiliu Bakare, Waltham Forest Tenants Council
Constantine Bchayer, G Meene, John Morris and Robert Taylor, Camden Federation of Private Tenants
Richard Beville, Wilfried Rimensberger, and Peter Denton, Westminster Residents Panel
Jagrati Bhatia and Katherine advice4renters
Helena Brice, Crisis
Robin Brown, Just Space
Steve Butters CPRE
Helen Cagnoni, Islington Leaseholders
Richard Chute, K&C resident
Gordon Deuchars, Age UK London
Henrietta Doyle, Inclusion London
M Evers, Kensington and Chelsea TRA
Gerry Fitzgerald, Westminster tenant
Chris Graham, Islington PFI Panel tenant
Sharon Hayward, LTF coordinator
Gary Hayes, HGEN
Fran Heron, Camden TRA representative
Chris Hickman, Westminster tenant
Ron Hollis, Lambeth Tenants Council
Martin Ikediashi, Lewisham tenant representative
Francis Jacob, Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum
Samir Jeraj, Better Housing, Race Equality Foundation
Shula Kahon; Redbridge tenant representative
Steve Kerr, Trust for London
Frank King and Susie Wilson, Greenwich Housing Panel
Richard Lee, Just Space
Jock Lewis, Dolly Mace and David McClean, Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations
John McCormack, University of Hertforshire
George Mendrala, Newham TRA representative
Simone Menken, Islington tenant
Clare Moore, Streatham Society and Lambeth tenant
Alastair Murray, Housing Justice
Sophie Neuburg, Friends of the Earth
Mick O’Sullivan and Michel Prigent, London Federation of Housing Co-ops
Eva Psychrani, LTF project worker
Sean Risdale, People of the Road
Phil Sedler and Kate Scannell, Tower Hamlets Federation of Tenants
Steve Shaman, National Centre for Social Research
Kenyasue Smart, Southwark tenant
Henry Talman, HAFFTRA
Pat Turnbull, Hackney Residents Liaison Group
Ian Watson, Building Research Establishment
John Williamson, UCL student