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What I'm going to talk about



- A bit of wider context:
 - A 'watershed moment' for the sector
 - How we are challenging ourselves
 - Political context
- Current thinking on direction of travel:
 - Our own research
 - Housing sector commissions
 - The green paper
- Some issues for discussion



Challenges for the sector

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- Housing crisis:
 - Long term undersupply of new homes
 - Ongoing loss of social rented homes
 - Worsening affordability crisis
 - Welfare cuts
 - Rising homelessness
- Track record of delivery – but not enough
- The sector challenging itself:
 - Too reactive to government policy?
 - Have we moved too far from our social purpose?
 - Are we delivering the right housing (truly affordable)?
 - Too much focus on supply?
- A new social contract for housing?



Political context



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The Grenfell fire placed social housing in the spotlight:

- Politicians are now in ‘listening mode’ – eg: ministerial roadshows
- There is greater appreciation that ‘social housing’ & its residents are misunderstood
- There has been a significant change in the government’s language on social housing
- It’s the right time to ask some fundamental questions about the future of the sector
- But Brexit.....



Rethinking – what did we ask?

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We wanted to stimulate a debate about the very fundamentals of social housing:

- What is social housing?
- What does it do?
- Who is it for?
- What should its role and purpose be?

We wanted this debate to be led by the sector – we should take responsibility for our own future



Rethinking - headline findings

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- Social housing is valued by those who live in it:
 - Affordability (mentioned in the feedback from 80% of our workshops)
 - Security (60%)
 - Quality (around half)
- And the public are broadly supportive too:
 - 80% agree it is important because it helps people on lower incomes
 - 68% agree plays an important role in tackling poverty
 - 63% support more of it in their area



Rethinking - headline findings

But there is a stigma attached to social housing/those who live in it:

- 86% would prefer to buy, if given a choice
- Only 28% think it is higher quality than the PRS
- 21% think it is a better place to raise children
- 12% think it is more likely to offer privacy and peace from neighbours



Rethinking - conclusions



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We need:

- To reclaim the role of social housing as a pillar of our society – alongside the NHS and free education
- To place it at the centre of any plan to solve the housing crisis - the right homes, in the right places, at prices people can afford
- To recognise different areas need different solutions
- To move it away from only a 'safety net' service - creating an ambitious vision where it offers affordable choice and opportunity to all who want to live there



Rethinking - recommendations



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- Adopt a common definition and understanding of the role and purpose of social housing
- Make sure that tenants have a voice
- Increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes
- Make sure everyone can afford a place to call home
- Make sure that existing homes and neighbourhoods are of good quality and well managed
- Challenge the stigma and stereotyping attached to social housing

Our definition

“Social housing is decent, secure housing which is affordable to people on low incomes, wherever they may live in the country, provided by not-for-profit organisations.”

Future shape of the sector



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Report published by Network Homes, L&Q & Clarion. Focused on how housing associations should evolve over the next decade. Four major themes:

- Social purpose:
 - Must be preserved and protected as a 'guiding star' for the sector
 - Re-examine approaches to customer service
 - Work to regain tenants' trust
- High quality services:
 - 'Remake the contract' with residents
 - With tenants, fundamentally redesign services for a digital age
 - Respond to the concerns raised by Grenfell



Future shape of the sector



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- Delivering in the market:
 - Double housebuilding to 80-100k homes per year, ensuring a majority are affordable
 - Operate as long term investors in communities
 - Utilise the potential of offsite construction
 - Improve partnership working (within the sector and with external partners, eg: NHS)
- Strategic direction and governance:
 - Make more use of innovative financial arrangements (eg: joint ventures, special purpose vehicles)
 - Governance structures must evolve and a greater diversity of skills and experience will be needed
 - Become more open and transparent



Shelter Housing Commission



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- Revised cross housing regulation
 - Including consumer regulator
- A new national tenants organisation
- Reforms to the legal framework for private renting
- Major 20-year housebuilding programme, including:
- 1.27 million homes for those in greatest housing need
 - homeless households, those living with a disability or long-term illness, or living in very poor conditions
- 1.17 million homes for 'trapped renters'
 - younger families who cannot afford to buy and face a lifetime in expensive and insecure private renting.
- 690,000 homes for older private renters
 - people over 55 struggling with high housing costs and insecurity beyond retirement



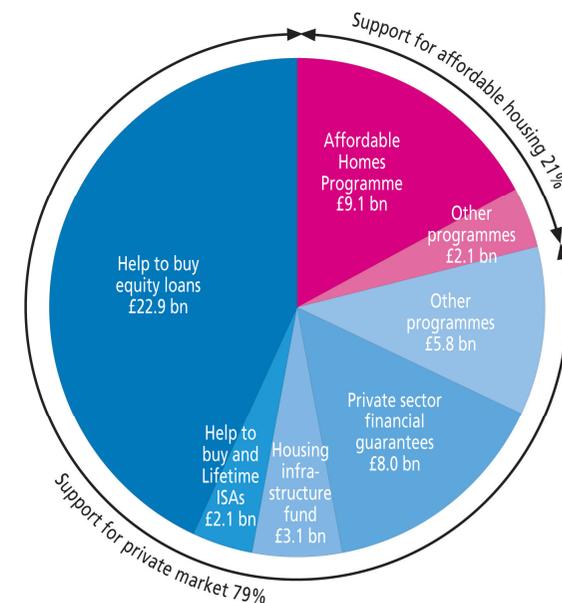
What does government think?



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Government's approach to social housing has changed considerably in the last 18 months:

- Significant change in tone and language
- Welcome recognition of important issues – eg: stigma and loss of supply
- Some additional funding for social housing (though most funding still supports home ownership)
- Some positive measures in the green paper, however overall:
 - It fails to provide a clear vision of what social housing is for – ambulance service or long term home?
 - Measures to increase supply are not bold enough

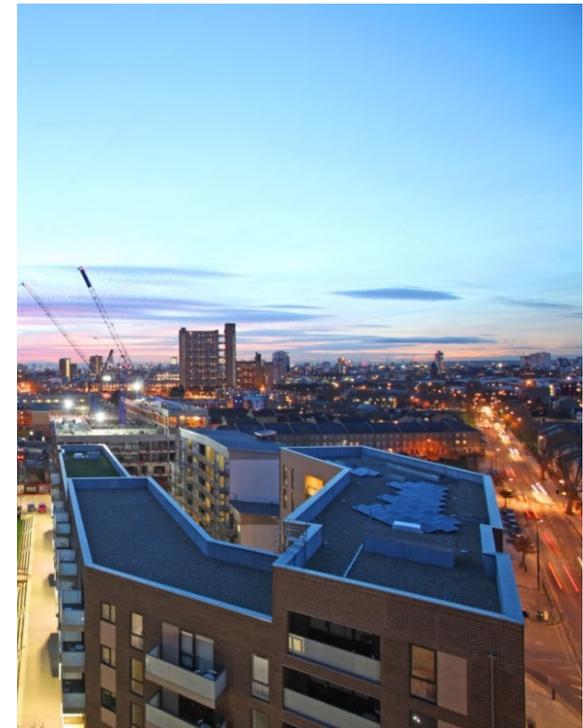


The green paper



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- Strong commitment to improving/upholding standards:
 - Return to some form of proactive consumer regulation
 - Implement Hackitt recommendations on fire safety
 - Review Decent Homes Standard
 - Promote professional standards within the sector
- Some welcome recognition that social housing plays a vital role and that social tenants are unfairly stigmatised



The green paper



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But...

- Mixed messages about the role and purpose of social housing – ambulance service or long term home?
- Rhetoric on social housing as a ‘springboard’ to ownership at odds with desire to reduce stigma
- Role of welfare policy in causing affordability problems ignored
- Not ambitious enough on new supply and an overall housing strategy
 - Missed opportunity to review funding priorities
 - Good news on borrowing caps, but questions re: right to buy receipts
- League tables are a contentious issue that needs proper consideration
 - Will they be a ‘blunt instrument’?
 - Could they end up driving the wrong behaviours?

Where next?



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Areas for further work/discussion:

- **Stigma** - how do we challenge this and change perceptions of social housing?
- **Regulation** - what should a renewed focus on consumer regulation look like?
- **Tenant empowerment** - how do we better empower tenants to hold their landlords to account? How do we regain tenants' trust?
- **Governance** – how do we make sure this is fit for the future?
- **Rent setting** - how do we balance affordability with development potential?
- **Allocations** – how do we ensure our approach reflects our role and purpose?
- **Housing management** - do we need to modernise our approach?
- **Professionalism** - how do we better equip housing professionals to deliver quality services, and ensure they act ethically?
- **For Government** - what does a thought through, joined up approach look like?

And finally...



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Thank you listening

Any questions?