

# **Housing conditions and standards and the impact on health and wellbeing**

**Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

*31<sup>st</sup> January 2023*



# Marmot review

- Focus around fuel poverty, cold homes and inequalities highlighted that thousand will die and millions of children will suffer from 'humanitarian crisis' of fuel poverty with thousands of lives lost and millions of children's development blighted'
- The review highlighted that 'Warm homes, nutritious food and a stable job are vital building blocks for health
- Also, the effect of cold homes on mental and physical illness, living on a low income does much damage. If we are constantly worrying about making ends meet it puts a strain on our bodies, resulting in increased stress, with effects on the heart and blood vessels and a disordered immune system.
- This type of living environment will mean thousands of people will die earlier than they should, and, in addition to lung damage in children, the toxic stress can permanently affect their brain development.

**Marmot Review report – 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'** - The Marmot Review into health inequalities in England was published on 11 February 2010.

It proposes an evidence based strategy to address the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and which can lead to health inequalities



# The English Housing Survey

- Commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
- Found that almost a quarter of private rented properties, or almost 1m homes, fall short on standards around cold, damp, disrepair, noise, or lack of basic amenities
- Similar poor standards were recorded for around 2m owner-occupied homes, representing 13% of the total, and 380,000 social rented homes, around 10% of the total
- Housing Secretary Michael Gove said landlords must "get a grip" and make improvements
- Shadow housing secretary Lisa Nandy said that the "scale of the crisis has been obvious for years, and yet ministers failed to take the urgent action required".



# 2021 Census

## **“More than 700,000 people in England and Wales lack central heating, says ONS”**

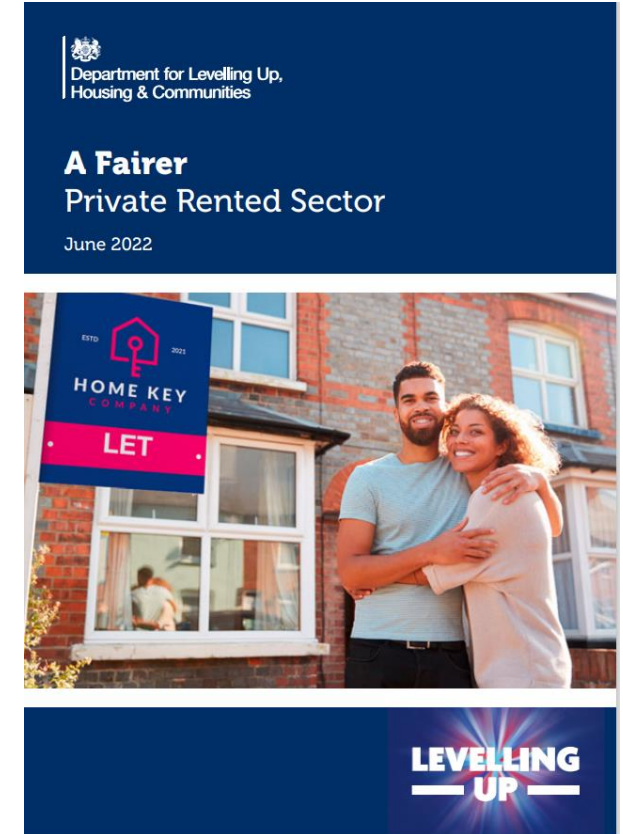
- One in 10 are elderly and ill - the ONS reports that among those living without central heating in England, 68,100 are aged 65 and over with long-term health conditions
- Official data highlights the conditions being suffered by those who live in 4m homes that the government rates as “non-decent” for failing to meet basic standards
- Charities lobbying for the rights of elderly people have warned that cold homes could cause 10,000 unnecessary deaths this winter
- London has the largest number of households without central heating (76,190), followed by the rest of the south-east (49,875), the south-west (42,550) and the north-west (47,710). There are a further 15,496 homes in Wales without central heating
- One in five (21.5%) of excess deaths in England are related to cold homes, with the UK as a whole said to have among the oldest and poorest quality housing stock in western Europe





# A Fairer Private Rented Sector – White Paper

- Most private landlords take their responsibilities seriously, provide housing of a reasonable standard, and treat their tenants fairly
- However, it is wrong that a fifth of private tenants in England are spending a third of their income on housing that is non-decent.
- Category 1 hazards – those that present the highest risk of serious harm or death – exist in 12% of properties, posing an immediate risk to tenants' health and safety.
- This means some 1.6 million people are living in dangerously low-quality homes, in a state of disrepair, with cold, damp, and mould, and without functioning bathrooms and kitchens.
- Yet private landlords who rent out non-decent properties will receive an estimated £3 billion from the state in housing related welfare



# A Fairer Private Rented Sector – White Paper

- Poor-quality housing hold people back and prevent neighbourhoods from thriving
- Damp, and cold homes can make people ill, and cause respiratory conditions.
- Children in cold homes are twice as likely to suffer from respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis.
- Homes that overheat in hot summers similarly affect people's health. In the PRS alone, this costs the NHS around £340 million a year.
- Illness, caused or exacerbated by living in a non-decent home, makes it harder for children to engage and achieve well in school, and adults are less productive at work
- There is geographical disparity with the highest rates of non-decent homes in Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and the North West.
- Visibly dilapidated houses undermine pride in place and create the conditions for crime, drug use, and antisocial behaviour

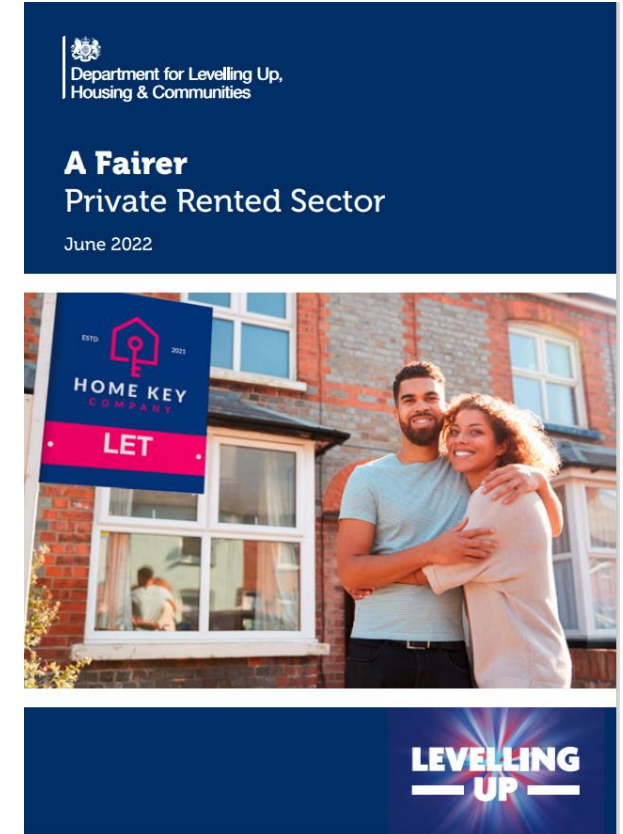


# A Fairer Private Rented Sector – White Paper

## The ambition within the White Paper

Committed to delivering a fairer, more secure, and higher quality Private Rented Sector. By;

1. All tenants should have access to a good quality, safe and secure home
2. All tenants should be able to treat their house as their home and be empowered to challenge poor practice.
3. All landlords should have information on how to comply with their responsibilities and be able to repossess their properties when necessary.
4. Landlords and tenants should be supported by a system that enables effective resolution of issues.
5. Local councils should have strong and effective enforcement tools to crack down on poor practice



# A Fairer Private Rented Sector – White Paper

## 12-point plan of action developed

### key aspects affecting property standards and health include:

- To halve the number of non-decent rented homes by 2030 and require privately rented homes to meet the Decent Homes Standard for the first time
- To accelerate quality improvements in the areas that need it most. To run pilot schemes with a selection of local councils to explore different ways of enforcing standards and work with landlords to speed up adoption of the Decent Homes Standard
- Introduce a new Property Portal to make sure that tenants, landlords and local councils have the information they need. The portal will provide a single ‘front door’ for landlords to understand their responsibilities, tenants will be able to access information about their landlord’s compliance, and local councils will have access to better data to crack down on criminal landlords
- Strengthen local councils’ enforcement powers and ability to crack down on criminal landlords by seeking to increase investigative powers and strengthening the fine regime for serious offences

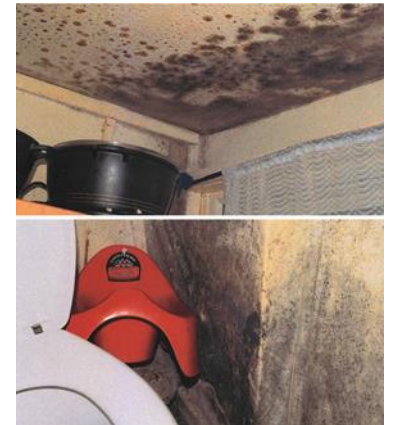




# Awaab Ishak

“Mould in Rochdale flat caused boy's death”, coroner rules

- Awaab died from a respiratory condition caused by exposure to mould in his home
- Awaab's father repeatedly raised the issue with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) but no action was taken
- Coroner said landlord were not "proactive" and asked:
  - "How in the UK in 2020 does a two-year-old child die as a result of exposure to mould?"





# SUNDERLAND TESTBED



**Graham Scanlon** Assistant Director of Housing & Communities  
**Dave Young** - Senior Business Manager





# FIVE TESTBEDS ACROSS THE UK

- **Sunderland:** Addressing cold and damp housing conditions.
- **Northern Ireland:** Reducing social isolation and loneliness.
- **Essex:** Improving efficiencies and communication in care provision.
- **Leeds:** Tackling root causes of loss of independence in ageing communities.
- **Brighton:** Reducing health inequalities and building resilience in carers.





# SUNDERLAND TESTBED OVERVIEW

Sunderland's 'Homes for Healthy Ageing Programme' was commissioned and ran on behalf of the **City's Ageing Well Board** which is made up of health, housing, social care and voluntary sector providers.

The programme:

- Created seven **testbeds** opportunities for SME's to think about the Sunderland Challenge **and demonstrate innovative approaches** to how the challenge may be met.
- Focused its efforts on **delivering replicable, impactful solutions** to move forward Sunderland's healthy ageing agenda and share any successful findings with other local authorities experiencing the same challenge as Sunderland.







# SUNDERLAND'S CHALLENGE

Sunderland organisations took on a challenge that **spans the boundaries of health, housing, social care and community.**

Putting homes at the heart of the healthy ageing challenge.

Sunderland focusing on **cold, poor air quality in the home environment & fuel poverty**





# ASSOCIATING FACTORS

Changing demographics and population forecasts predict an ageing population will increase demand upon the city's services.



It is predicted that the number of residents aged 65 and over will increase by more than 22% to 66,300 by 2030. That equates to nearly a quarter of the city's residents being 65 plus.



Households in Sunderland headed by someone aged 60 and over is expected to increase by 27.6%. The proportion aged 75 and over is expected to increase by 43.3% and the proportion aged 85 and over is expected to increase by 55.5%



In the Northeast overall, one in five excess winter deaths can be attributed to cold homes.



# SUNDERLAND'S TESTBED



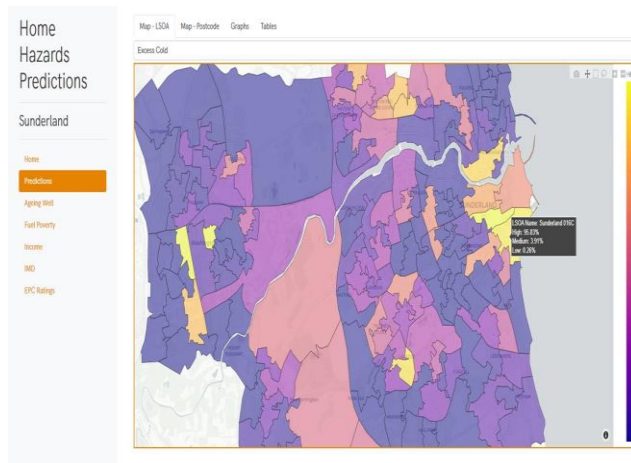
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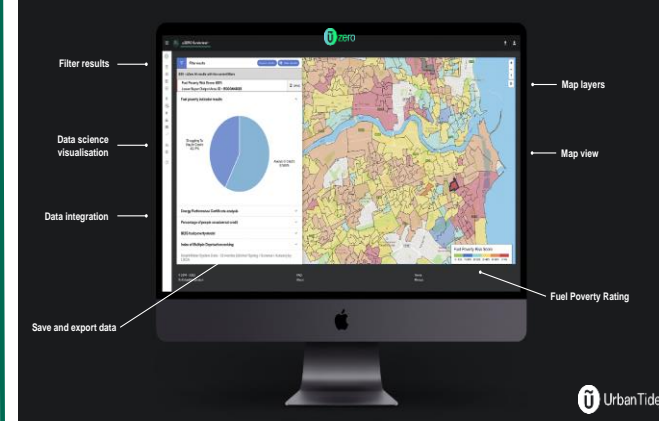
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AIREX



The solution: uZero





# SUNDERLAND'S TESTBED

Sunderland focused on cold, poor air quality in the home environment & fuel poverty and shared its outcome at its final showcase event in City Hall



Sunderland will deliver a final showcase in London on 9<sup>th</sup> February on the testbed process and its findings to promote healthy homes for all

This will include a panel session which will include by Graham Scanlon Assistant Director of Housing & Communities with an audience that will consist of other Local Authorities, Housing Providers and Ministers



The significant links between cold, mould, fuel poverty and health outcomes emphasises the need for this topic to be treated as a priority by all

# Mould and Damp Homes – Sunderland response

- Letter received from DLUHC requesting details on the Private Sector and associated activity and actions in relation to poor quality private sector stock in the city
  - Environmental Health Team responded to DLUHC
- Letter received from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) regarding the Council stock and asking for clarification
  - All Council stock is in good condition and exceeds decent Homes
  - All RP's have to respond to the RSH and this includes RPs active in the city
- Letter to all Registered Providers operating within the City from Director of Public Health and Chair of Health and Well Being Board
  - 10 responses received
  - All explain their position and approaches to their stock with regards to managing and dealing with mould and damp
  - Council action plan developed

## Responses Received

RP
Gentoo
Believe Housing
North Star
Sanctuary
Thirteen
Bernicia
Karbon
Accent
Changing Lives
Anchor



# Mould and Damp Homes – Sunderland response

## Action Plan – key activity

- Housing Ombudsman Service – 12 Key Recommendations to be implemented actions within Council service
- Checklist to be issued to all RP partners to complete quarterly confirming compliance against each area
- All RPs to discuss regularly issues within the RP Strategic Network Group meetings
- Development of a Comms Plan to target Private Landlords – provision of advice and support
- Development and publish of checklist for Private Landlords and Accredited Landlord to support understanding of Decent Homes standards and wider compliance areas
- Development of a “reporting in” process for private sector tenants or other concerned service professionals in relation to property conditions (MECC / SPOC)
- Wider awareness programme for owner occupiers and points of advice and support



# Wider initiatives and programmes in Sunderland

- ECO Flex 4
- Creation of hardship fund - £100,000 to plug the gap where criteria on ECO Flex 4 fails to support residents
- Partnership with Utilita
- Household Support Fund
- Welfare Advice Services
- Warm Spaces
- Cost of Living Team and Action Plan
- Council Housing specification – High quality homes





# Council tackling poor quality properties

## Standards before



Sunderland  
City Council





# Council refurbishment standards

Standards after



# QUESTIONS

**Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

*31<sup>st</sup> January 2023*

