

UNIVERSITY OF
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Newsletter

Autumn 2016



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Editorial



**Richard
Lang**

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter. Going into the new academic year, we are still energised by the successful 'Future of Social Housing-Conference' on June 6 which our group co-organised with Housing & Care 21. In this newsletter, Lisa Birchall, External Affairs Lead at H&C21, looks back at the main themes that emerged from this conference which took place at the ICC Birmingham. Over 100 academics, policy makers and practitioners contributed to exciting and productive plenaries, workshops and informal discussions on the challenges and opportunities facing the sector.

Also, in this newsletter, we are delighted to present you another of our student features. This time Verity Sayers writes about the experiences she has gained from the Housing and Communities Pathway as well as from placements and internships with Birmingham City Council and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Jon Stevens introduces another interesting research piece on collaborative models of housing and care for older people on which he collaborated with David Mullins exploring transfer of management to residents at Ashfields (cover picture). For our publications' section, we managed to find two excellent reviewers who give us an external practice perspective on two recent works by Housing and Communities Research Group members. Peter Hobbs from Birmingham City Council offers thought-provoking comments on a new publication on Housing and Health by Chris Watson, Alan Murie and others in the 'Housing Practitioner Partnership'. John McPeake from Helm Housing presents his review of 'Housing in Northern Ireland', a book edited by Peter Shanks and David Mullins.

Our news section features the group's continuous involvement in the European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) which had its annual conference in Belfast at the end of June. And finally, we welcome Academic Visiting Professor Man-Hee Han, Dean of the International School of Urban Sciences (ISUS) at the University of Seoul in the Republic of

Korea. Professor Han is with us from August 2016 to March 2017 to research the housing of low income people in the housing market.

Richard Lang, Marie Curie Research Fellow and Acting Head of Housing and Communities Research Group

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Special Feature

Impressions from the 'Future of Social Housing-Conference'



Lisa
Birchall

The housing sector is currently sailing in stormy waters. There appears to have been a purposeful erosion of some of the assumptions and principles that have guided the provision of social housing. Yet we are also facing a 'housing crisis' which has led to a refocus on the classifications of homelessness, and the emergence of a 'generation rent', whilst narrowing the focus of housing provision onto options for home ownership. As social housing is pushed, pulled and squeezed by political, economic and social concerns new options are being considered by housing providers and policy makers to find solutions to develop and sustain the housing and support people need and desire.

In this uncertain environment, the University of Birmingham's Housing and Communities Research Group and Housing & Care 21, a leading provider of housing and care for older people of modest means, hosted a conference at Birmingham's International Convention Centre on the 6th June to consider the Future of Social Housing. The conference sought to bring together academics and practitioners to discuss and explore the challenges and opportunities facing the sector. Over 100 academics, policy makers and practitioners attended and contributed to a range of fascinating and productive discussions.

One of the themes of the conference was the growing significance of hybridity and the introduction of commercial activities and market forces alongside public and community aims in the social housing sector in the UK. Hybridity is playing an ever more significant role in the funding of the social housing sector, but speakers warned of the need for strong governance and accountability. The Dutch housing expert and key speaker, Rudy de Jong, drew on experiences from the Netherlands,



Audience at the 'Future of Social Housing Conference' at the ICC Birmingham

where increased commercialisation led to loss of accountability and financial losses. This suggested that housing associations in the UK needed to be accountable to the communities and tenants that they serve, with strong regulation to support this.

A positive case study of hybridity was presented by Steve Stride of Poplar Harca, who explained how estate regeneration – driven by hybridity – has made a significant impact on some of the communities in London by building social enterprise and social value. Poplar Harca have invested £4 million a year on infrastructure and community projects to ensure the social housing provided remains connected to an ambitious and aspiring community agenda.

The need to involve and be accountable to communities was another key theme of the conference. Professor David Mullins, introducing the conference, stated that *'if we had had a genuine tenant-led housing association sector, it would have been much harder to undermine social housing.'* There were strong calls from some speakers for more tenant involvement in all aspects of their housing, looking at how innovative ways of doing things – from Community Land Trusts to self-help housing, co-operatives and co-

housing – could and should be filling the void left by traditional housing associations. In order to achieve this, it was concluded, that individual initiatives needed pump-priming as well as technical and day-to-day support.

The number of low income households renting privately has doubled from one to two million in the past 10 years (2001–2011), and a session concentrated on how private rented housing was becoming the 'new social housing' and what this might mean. There is limited regulation in the private sector and little information is available about private landlords. Opinions were divided (as they were on many topics) about whether private renting was part of the solution or a part of the problem.

The situation in Ireland was showcased as an example of how the private rented sector could be regulated and more security given to tenants. Opportunities for tenants to gain security of occupation for up to four years, and rent certainty for two years, backed by a register of private landlords and a statutory authority to regulate, gave more security to tenants, and accountability of landlords. It was suggested that a similar regime could be used in the UK to support the private rented sector to fill the gaps left by the social rented sector.

Special Feature *continued*



Left: Plenary Speaker Professor David Mullins, University of Birmingham with other plenary speakers Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Heriot-Watt University and Jeremy Porteus, Housing LIN. Above: Jean Templeton, Chief Executive of St Basils, speaks in a conference workshop

In another workshop there was discussion of community-led alternative models of housing, including Jean Templeton's introduction of the innovative 'Live Work' model for formerly homeless young people in former nurses accommodation brought back into use at Sandwell Hospital.

In another workshop specifically focused on the West Midlands, Councillor John Cotton presented on how devolution is vital to tackling social and housing issues. Birmingham City Council is looking at how devolution will support local authorities to manage the private rental sector further in terms of letting opportunities, and also providing better controls and regulations.

With the erosion of social housing provision and the ageing population, there were questions raised as to whether 'social housing' is becoming synonymous with 'older people's housing', and if this is the case, whether there are better ways of delivering housing options

for older people. Professor Rose Gilroy advocated looking at the whole community where older people live, demonstrating the links between the deprivation of neighbourhood and the health inequalities of older age. This demonstrated that the 'hollowing-out' of the state could have a particularly severe impact on the most vulnerable and was a reminder that housing cannot exist independent of the communities and services where it is located.

In the same session, Dr Robin Miller presented on the challenges and necessity of integrating the health, social care and housing sectors, reminding us that housing services also do not exist independent of the other services individuals receive. So although 'housing' is often seen as a poor relation versus the NHS and social care, Dr. Miller made the point that the housing sector brings an enormous amount to the table in supporting people to have a better later life, and this must not be ignored or forgotten.

This is just a flavour of some of the many fascinating presentations and discussions which were taking place at the conference.

As anticipated, a key success of the conference was in bringing together representatives from the academic community with practitioners from the wider sector. This 'pracademic' mixing simply does not happen often enough. Academics have research methods and models to frame what is happening, while practitioners have the day-to-day experience to add colour and depth to the understanding. Stronger partnerships between these two perspectives are going to be needed for the future to help chart the stormy waters ahead.

**Lisa Birchall, External Affairs Lead,
Housing & Care 21**

Student Feature

Verity Sayers on the links between her H&C pathway studies and practical experiences



As I approach the beginning of my third and final year of studying on the Housing and Communities Pathway, it is surprising to reflect upon how much I have both learned and achieved since beginning University. My decision to study the topic centred on my desire to help individuals with one of their most basic needs: which is, of course, housing. My passion extends from an understanding that housing is an integral part of a person's life; and that it should be a fundamental right. It is so significant in fact, that it is a prerequisite for good health, good mental health and the safety of every single occupant.

Since joining the Housing and Communities Pathway, I have been able to explore issues within housing policy and practice; in which I have been able to explore the private rented sector, homelessness and social housing. As well as this, I have been inundated with further opportunities to learn: including gaining a student placement, having access to publications and events within the Housing and Communities Research Network, and having tutors and teaching staff that provide helpful support and advice.

My student placement took place within Birmingham City Council's Private Rented Sector Services and Research and Strategy Team.



Verity with colleagues during her internship at Sandwell Council

I found that the practical, real life experience I gained during my 40 hour placement assisted my understanding of legislation and enforcement: particularly when I was able to assist in inspecting properties and read previous case studies. Most notably, I was presented with the task of assisting the Houses in Multiple Occupation Team to formulate a business case in support of Selective Licensing in the Selly Oak area of the city. This enabled me to gain extensive experience with liaising with other statutory bodies, businesses and community groups, as well as gaining information and statistics about the local area in order to create supportive evidence for the business case. I was tasked with carrying out considerable primary research, including the use of questionnaires, interviews and meetings.

As a student, I found the team's ability to influence policy at a local level very fascinating. I think it is essential for local authorities to make the important policy decisions; because they have a greater understanding of the challenges the local area faces. Moreover, I find the involvement of a considerable number of statutory organisations, businesses and community groups and citizens further enhanced the teams understanding of the challenges faced in the area and created a more democratic decision making process. Overall, the knowledge and experience I gained from my placement, as well as the Housing and Communities Pathway, inspired me to continue my journey into a career within housing.

These particular experiences underpinned the skills I needed to gain my current internship, working in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's Private Rented Sector Housing Quality Team. Working within Sandwell has not only further developed my understanding around private rented sector housing policy and enforcement, but it has extended my knowledge beyond simple housing issues. It has opened my eyes to the wider challenges tenants are faced with, including a vast range of vulnerabilities, the existence of Modern Day Slavery and exploitation, and problems with social cohesion. Interestingly, I have been able to form relationships with a range of different services, including council departments, such as Revenues and Benefits, and other



Verity in front of Sandwell Council House

statutory services, such as the West Midlands Police and Fire Service. Because of this, I have a better overview of the duties other organisations and departments may have. Moreover, the internship enabled me to develop relationships with businesses, such as estate agents and third sector organisations, such as homeless charities.

Having the opportunity to work within both councils through a period of uncertainty and change within both national policy and economic conditions has undoubtedly increased my understanding around the ongoing challenges that local authorities face. With an ever decreasing amount of resources, councils are forced to make efficiency cuts; and it is interesting to observe how the different councils react. This has included a wealth of innovation and strategies in order to save and generate money, as well as operate effectively.

As I go on to pursue my final year of studies; I hope that the knowledge and experiences I have gained within my Housing and Communities Pathway, my Birmingham City Council placement and my Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council internship will benefit me greatly both within my future academic progress and my future career development and success.

Verity Sayers is a third year undergraduate on the BA Social Policy (Housing Pathway) Programme

Research Report

HCRG leads the way in exploring new collaborative forms of housing for older people



Over the last year, Jon Stevens and David Mullins from the Housing and Communities Research Group have been involved in a series of projects examining *collaborative models of housing and care for older people*. Underpinning this work is the proposition that collaborative ways of doing things are becoming more and more important for many older people.

In their work, Jon and David argue that that these changes in how older people will choose to live their lives in future and in how society will provide for them are dependent on several factors. Firstly – as many commentators have noted – the rapid growth in the older population and the concomitant reduction in the size of the working population (sometimes known as the dependency ratio) will inevitably reduce the resources available to the state to provide for older people (and other need groups) whatever new policy measures are taken. Secondly – and alongside of this – there will be a continuing reduction in the ability of families to care for their older relatives; given the changing balance of the population and increasing family dispersion. These demographic realities necessitate radical new approaches in the shape and direction of service provision for older people and in many other areas.

‘Nowadays (older) people are more willing to think for themselves...we didn’t have any examples to follow but we made it work... we learned a lot including how high (older people’s) expectations can be...’

Extracts from remarks made by the resident directors of Ashfields Resident Management Company

Older people want greater choice and control

In addition and importantly there is growing evidence that the majority of people want greater choice and control over how they ‘grow older’ and they are increasingly resistant to standardised services and institutional solutions. Older people want to shape and influence – ‘collaborate in’ – the ways in which they provide for themselves and the ways in which they are provided for over time even in their later years.

Secondly (and more radically), they are about older people organising themselves and engaging with providers and commissioners to develop transformative forms of provision that have self-determination and mutuality at their core.

Housing of this kind is a catalyst

Jon Stevens’ and David Mullins’ work is predominately about collaborative forms of housing for older people but it also recognises that housing of this kind is often a catalyst/platform for collaborative forms of primary care. Jon has independently been looking at resident-led and community-based housing for older people and its wider implications for several years. In October of last year, he was commissioned by the Housing and Learning Improvement Network (a network of organisations and people involved in older people’s housing) to produce an overview piece that looked at a wide range of case examples.

Taken all together (following the health and care sectors) he termed these collaborative housing for older people.

Later in the year, David was approached by Housing and Care 21 to undertake baseline research into the establishment of a resident management company in one of their leasehold retirement homes, Ashfields near Telford. He worked with Jon (who had recently joined the Housing and Communities Research Group) over the following three months on a baseline evaluation of the transfer of management to the residents.

In March 2016, Jon published his overview report for Housing LIN called ‘Growing Older Together: An Overview of Collaborative Housing for Older People.’ This report summarised various reports on the subject, before presenting a cross section of case examples and he ended arguing that there was a clear case for providing much more housing of this kind. Reference was made to the Ashfields example, although at that point the report had not been finalised. The overview report is available on: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingOlderPeople/UserInvolvement/?&msg=0&parent=3667&child=10064

‘What will the future look like? A new relationship with patients and communities... (we need to) fully harness the renewable energy represented by patients and communities... involving them directly in decisions about the future of health and care services...’

Chapter heading and text from ‘NHS: Five Year Forward View’ published in 2014

Research Report *continued*

The overview report was published in advance of the annual conference of Housing LIN held on March 11th. At the conference, Jon appeared on a panel discussing the idea of 'people powered change', which was the overall theme of the conference. Later, David and James McCarthy (Director of Retirement Housing from HC21) ran a workshop on the preliminary findings from the Ashfields research and on its wider implications for providers of housing for older people.

Input to the HAPPI enquiry

At the end of March, two of the resident directors from Ashfields Resident Management Company gave evidence to an inquiry being run by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older people. The residents explained to the panel why it was they had decided to take on the management of their housing and they set out the benefits they felt were flowing from this.

A report of the enquiry was published in June 2016. The report called 'Housing Our Ageing Population: Positive Ideas' was the third in a series of such reports; the first HAPPI report was published in 2009 and the second in 2013. The enquiry panel had received a range of submissions on how the supply of housing tailored to meet the needs of older people might be increased, including an earlier submission from Jon Stevens. In Chapter 6, it focussed on forms of provision shaped by older people themselves, including the Ashfields example. The HAPPI 3 report can be found at: www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design_building/HAPPI/?parent=8649&child=10165



Top: Members of Still Green Cohousing

Bottom: Woodchester Valley Village: Three generations meeting

Research Report *continued*



Retirement home Ashfields near Telford

The Ashfields report

The full report on the Ashfields research 'Square Pegs and Round Holes: forming a Resident Management Company at Ashfields' was published in August 2016. The report provides a detailed account of the issues and difficulties that led to Housing and Care 21 (HC21) proposing self-management to the residents of Ashfields as a way forward; it explains why and how a form on voluntary Right to Manage was used to effect the transfer of management responsibilities; it describes how the residents created a new model for running their housing collectively; it sets out the initial benefits experienced by residents; and it draws a number of important conclusions for the development of a 'choice agenda' across all of HC21's leasehold and rented retirement housing and for future developments. See the final report at:

www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/SPSW/Housing/working-paper-series/HCR-WP-4-2016-baseline-report.pdf

Work in progress

David and Jon are continuing to undertake work on collaborative housing for older people. They have recently made a submission to the Centre for Ageing Better proposing that 'collaborative ways of living' should be a distinct strand in their Homes and Neighbourhoods programme. Jon is currently drafting an evaluation for Housing LIN of the first mutually owned retirement village in the country, Woodchester Valley Village near Stroud. This was one of the case examples in the overview report and Jon has followed this up by undertaking a series of interviews with the resident directors of WVV and with resident members and staff. The intention is to look at the advantages and disadvantages of resident ownership and to draw lessons for promoting similar developments owned and managed by their members.

Links are also being developed with the UK Cohousing Network, who are currently looking at how forms of senior cohousing

'The arrangements at Ashfields demonstrate just how positive handing over control to residents can be... we were keen to support (the handing of responsibility) to a management company set up by the residents...we are (now) consulting with all residents to introduce a 'choice framework'...'

Extract from comments on Ashfields by Richard McCarthy, Director of Retirement Housing, Housing and Care 21

(another of the overview case examples) can be made more widely available. The Ashfield experience and the role of HC21 in supporting it are of direct relevance here and it is hoped to produce a joint guidenote on ways of transforming existing housing developments for older people drawing on cohousing/mutual principles. This will be followed by a series of workshops run probably to be run in partnership with Housing LIN and HACT, an agency that promotes ideas and innovation in housing and a previous partner of HCRG.

**Jon Stevens, Honorary Research Fellow,
Housing and Communities Research Group**

Book Review

Housing in Northern Ireland. Practice Studies



**Shanks, P. and D. Mullins, Eds. (2016).
Housing in Northern Ireland. Practice
Studies. Coventry, CIH.
ISBN: 978-1-905018-99-4**

In UK terms, housing is a devolved matter. It is therefore to be expected that, whilst many of the housing challenges may be shared across the UK as a whole, distinctive approaches and policy responses will be apparent in the different jurisdictions. Against this background, policy making under devolution has emerged as an increasingly rich vein of academic study. However, with a few notable exceptions, comparatively little such work has been undertaken in Northern Ireland. This edited collection by Shanks and Mullins is one such exception and is an important and timely one at that.

The book contains 14 chapters, drawing heavily on academics at the two local universities and non-academic expert practitioners working in housing in Northern Ireland, together with contributions from a smattering of national and international scholars. It is a rather eclectic mix, but the diversity, particularly from non-academics, adds to the value and authenticity of the book. Its origins lay in a desire to mark the hosting of the European Network for Housing Research 2016 Conference in Belfast. This is the second CIH published volume on housing in Northern Ireland, the first published in 2001 (Paris, 2001). One of the sometimes uplifting (sometimes deflating) feelings from reading this book is to see how much (or how little) things have moved on in the intervening period.

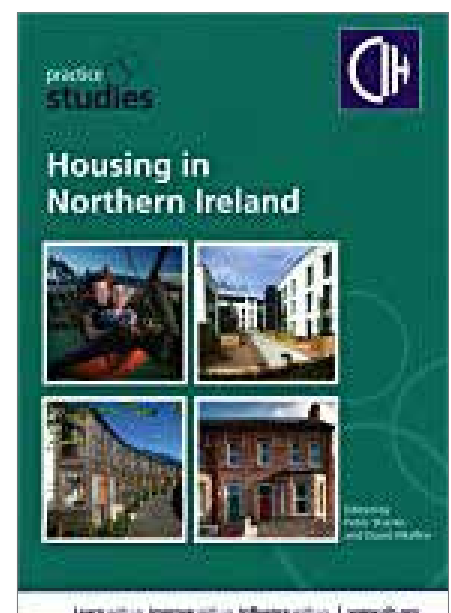
In the Preface to the book, Lord Best, who in 2010 chaired an Independent Commission on the Future for Housing in Northern Ireland, describes the region as having a 'very distinct housing market' (p. xii). And this is true, but is only part of the picture; Northern Ireland's

housing system is truly distinctive, formed and shaped by the interplay of British and Irish influences, and liberally sprinkled with good intentions and hard cash from the US and the EU, particularly post the signing of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

We see ample signs of the unique nature of the Northern Ireland context. Muir's chapter (chapter 2) is especially interesting. She makes the point that devolution in Northern Ireland has been inextricably linked with the peace process 'by which society is moving away from violence towards governance solely by democratic means' (p. 20). Interestingly, she argues that one of the most significant developments in policy making under devolution has been the emergence of a revitalised social policy network with a specific interest in social housing. This is a democratisation of policy making that will challenge the previously dominant technocratic mode of policy making and is something to be welcomed.

A number of chapters make reference to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), the regional comprehensive housing authority – comprehensive in the sense that it has powers of a strategic nature and is, at the same time, Northern Ireland's largest social landlord. Gray and Porter note that the NIHE, with a 'virtually unparalleled' range of powers and responsibilities (p. 35), has made a significant contribution to Northern Ireland society over its 45-year existence. But it has not been without its difficulties, and some of these are reviewed with a refreshing honesty. Looking back, the NIHE was very much a child of its time; set up to take politics out of housing Gray and Porter rightly suggest that it must now adapt to the increased level of legitimate 'political challenge and scrutiny associated with devolved government' (p. 49).

The NIHE's future is uncertain, as several contributors to this book have suggested (Gray & Porter; Muir; Murtagh). The government is pursuing a reform programme that could see a separation of the strategic and landlord functions. Murtagh is concerned about this possibility. He reminds us that whilst much progress has been made in normalising Northern Ireland society (for example, levels of religious residential segregation have actually reduced, contrary to popular belief), the job is not complete. He notes that in Northern Ireland '*...housing professionals have increasingly moved to the centre of peacebuilding practices, not at the elite political level but in the places where its effects have been limited*' (p. 175). And on the future of the NIHE he concludes that '*...the Housing Executive has always been an instrument of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and remains central to embedding it in meaningful and transformative ways, now and in the future*' (p. 176).



Book Review *continued*

Housing in Northern Ireland. Practice Studies

The NIHE is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of Northern Ireland's distinctive housing system (together with the fact that local authorities have no significant housing role), but it would be wrong to suggest that the Northern Ireland system is unique. Other key components of the system are common with other jurisdictions, namely the presence of a growing housing association sector and large and diverse private rented sector, both of which receive attention in this book (chapters 4 and 5).

The chapter on housing associations is very relevant (chapter 4). Shanks and Mullins use the now familiar hybridity framework to chart how housing associations in Northern Ireland have mirrored the trajectory of change of their counterparts in GB in shifting from their community roots to state-driven and more market-orientated identities. The housing association sector in Northern Ireland remains small, but has punched above its weight in terms of mainstream housing delivery, and a gradual process of rationalisation through merger means that the stock, and thus the power and influence, is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of associations. One of the most interesting elements of this chapter is the charting, through a series of case studies, of how associations have sought to address governance issues identified in the early part of this decade. Of particular relevance is the power and influence of the 'absent member' (p.63), an oblique reference to the DSD (the regulator) and the observation that board debates often revolved around concerns over what the regulator might think.

This is particularly apposite in the context of the Office for National Statistics's on-going work regarding the potential re-classification of the sector.

In my assessment, Perry's chapter on race and housing is one of the most important contributions in the book (chapter 12). For many of us living and working in Northern Ireland it is a challenging read, highlighting, as it does, the religious bigotry, that has been the hall mark of our society for too long, is matched by an increased tendency towards racism, or at best an indifference to its consequences; not a happy combination. Notwithstanding the good work being done by some statutory bodies, the NIHE and community organisations, this is a challenge that requires a much stronger and more coherent policy response. The issues raised and the insights offered by Perry make this chapter an essential read for anyone about to embark on a career in housing in Northern Ireland.

There are a number of other chapters worthy of detailed comment. Frey and Brown's analysis (Chapter 7) of the wholesale transformation of the Northern Ireland housing stock is worth a read, as is Wallace's chapter on housing inequalities in Northern Ireland (chapter 12). In terms of the former, the authors note that *'poor housing conditions were a significant element of the complex web of factors which brought about the violent political conflict'* for which Northern Ireland is well known; that these conditions have been so radically transformed they suggest *'has played an important role in facilitating the overall peace process'* (p.125). In terms of the latter, Wallace's analysis of housing inequality

through the rubric of Northern Ireland's particularly strong and distinctive equality legislation, which provides protected status on the basis of gender, age, religious belief, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and marital status, illustrates both how far Northern Ireland has come and how far it still has to go.

Overall, in the concluding chapter, the editors (with support from Alan Murie and Derek Birrell, arguably the pioneers of housing studies in Northern Ireland) have sought to answer the question about what is unique about housing and housing policy in Northern Ireland. And like many things in life they suggest that the answer is both simple and complex. In summary, this book will appeal to readers with a specific interest in housing in Northern Ireland, together with those whose interests are more broadly housing orientated, because as is indicated in the concluding chapter, despite the unique administrative structure for housing delivery, Northern Ireland housing has much in common with developments elsewhere in the UK and Ireland.

Reference

Paris, C. (ed.) (2001), *Housing in Northern Ireland – and comparisons with the Republic of Ireland*. Coventry, CIH.

John McPeake, Interim CEO Helm Housing, Belfast and Honorary Professor in Planning, Queens University, Belfast

Research Paper Review

The Academic – Practitioner Partnership (2016). Good Housing: Better Health, Housing and Communities Research Group, School of Social Policy, University of Birmingham



I welcome this paper, which provides a timely analysis of the link between housing and the health of citizens in the UK. Environmental Health practitioners have long understood that poor housing impacts on the well-being of those who live in it. Although there have been significant improvements in the quality of construction of dwellings much of the housing stock in the major urban areas, such as cities like Birmingham, is pre 1919 and gives rise to challenges to bring them up to the modern standards needed to tackle health and to address problems arising from climate change.

The paper highlights the particular issues of excess cold and the challenges for many on low incomes to afford to heat their homes. In responding to complaints from private tenants in Birmingham, my service considers this aspect as probably the greatest cause of requests for help, with poor insulation, high heating costs and inadequate ventilation, often in overcrowded accommodation, leading to damp and mould growth and associated poor health. A significant number of tenants approach the Council for re-housing as a result of poor conditions in the private rented sector (PRS).

The report is right to seek a more integrated approach. Local authorities and other statutory agencies, in particular the NHS, need to work more effectively to address these issues but this has to be done in partnership with the private sector, in particular the PRS. The PRS in Birmingham has grown significantly in the last 10 years: it is now second in size to owner occupation and at 68,000 properties is greater than Council housing in the city. Government policy needs to enable and incentivise the PRS to provide decent, affordable homes. The PRS in Birmingham is critical of Government policy and has not benefitted in the same way as social housing, for instance under Government's Green Deal.

The paper is right to recommend a better enforcement approach across agencies to drive up standards. Unfortunately, the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is not the benchmark standard that can be easily used across the housing sectors. A more straightforward standard is needed for key elements such as heating and preventing excessive cold. No enforcement standard is of any use without adequate resources to ensure compliance: something that is not in place in many authorities. Licensing of parts of the private rented sector is not an effective approach and is not consistent. The majority of private landlords in Birmingham are independent landlords owning one or 2 properties. There are not the large institutional landlords as in other parts of Europe. This means that investment in and professionalism of the sector is poor at the most vulnerable level. Recent changes to taxation relief for landlords show that a significant number of landlords are at risk from relatively small changes in margins which puts at risk tenants' security and future investment.

Birmingham has a proud history of intervention in housing and I was part of the Urban Renewal programme in the 1980s. The paper is right to identify that local solutions need to be encouraged and in this, innovation will be important. There is a need to find financial investment models for home owners, landlords and other agencies to encourage repair and replacement. Where possible clearance and new build may be the answer. Industry and commerce have a part to play in this as they need employees not only with skills but also in good health and in successful neighbourhoods so that cities and towns don't face outward migration of people with earning potential.



Overcrowding and the demand for larger family housing in Birmingham has increased in some communities whilst under-occupation is a factor for many older person households. A more integrated approach to this issue is needed and avenues to make transition from large family housing to smaller accommodation need to be improved, whether for renting or for home owners.

The paper is published on the HCR website: www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/social-policy/housing-communities/publications

Peter Hobbs, Service Head – Private Rented Sector and Tenant Engagement, Birmingham City Council

News



**Christopher
Watson**

Welcome to Academic Visitor Professor Man-Hee Han from Korea

Housing and Communities Research is pleased to welcome as an Academic Visitor Professor Man-Hee Han, Dean of the International School of Urban Sciences (ISUS) at the University of Seoul, Republic of Korea. Professor Han is with us from August 2016 to March 2017 to research the housing of low income people in the housing market with a particular focus on the policy measures introduced by governments to alleviate the financial burden of low income people, especially in the private rented sector. There will be an international comparative element to the research. Professor Han will be working with David Mullins, Chris Watson and Alan Murie. Although based in the School of Social Policy, Professor Han also has an academic affiliation with the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Professor Han, a former Vice Minister in the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs of the Government of Korea is an alumnus of Yonsei University and of the University of Birmingham, where he gained his PhD in Urban and Regional Studies in 1992.

In a collaboration between CURS, the International School of Urban Sciences (ISUS) and Seoul Metropolitan Government, a group of graduate students from the University of Birmingham will visit Seoul each year for the 'Seoul Case Study Programme' – part of a module on International Urban Planning for the MSc in Urban and Regional Planning.

**Christopher Watson,
Honorary Senior Lecturer, Housing and
Communities Research Group**



News *continued*



David Mullins

ENHR Conference Belfast

The Housing and Communities Research Group was well represented at the European Network for Housing Research Conference in Belfast in June 2016 with six of the group attending and paper presentations by PhD candidates Bingzi He and Bruce Moore and by Marie Curie Fellows Richard Lang (2 papers) and Anita Blessing. David Mullins was re-elected to the Coordination Committee while Anita Blessing and David Mullins continue to coordinate the working group on Social Housing Institutions and Governance (with Nicky Morrison and Gerard van Bortel). Richard Lang joined the Coordination Team of the newly created working group on Collaborative Housing. Bingzi and David also attended the new researchers conference in Dublin where Bingzi received expert comments on her PhD proposal and David acted as mentor to three other new researchers.

Research Projects Update

We are currently working on ten research projects. Both Marie Curie Fellows have been in post this year – Dr Richard Lang (Cooperative Capital) Jan 2015 – Jan 2017 and Dr Anita Blessing (Reinvest) October 2016 – February 2018). Dr James Gregory has continued to work on the Webb Memorial Trust project on the Purpose and Future of Social Housing and secured funding from L&Q for a new project on mixed communities. Dr Halima Sacranie was appointed as a part time research associate and has worked on five group research and consultancy projects, leading on a governance audit for a local housing association. Two new honorary fellows, Jon Stevens and Jon Fitzmaurice OBE were appointed and have worked

with David Mullins on projects on resident management in retirement housing (for HC21) and an impact acceleration project on the legacy of empty homes community grants (for ESRC, Nationwide, Tudor and Unity Trust). Chris Watson (Hon Fellow) and Alan Murie (Emeritus Prof) have completed a report with an 'Academic-Practitioner Partnership' on Good Housing, Better Health. Further focus on housing in Northern Ireland was achieved by a new project for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on resident involvement in governance, a new edited book on Housing in Northern Ireland for the Chartered Institute of Housing (Shanks and Mullins) was launched at the ENHR conference in Belfast in June 2016 and a successful ESRC studentship award for Peter Shanks (2016–20) to undertake research on housing association governance in Northern Ireland.

Over the year, David Mullins spoke at 15 events impacting on policy and practice including the HCRG Conference, ICC Birmingham, Empty Homes Network Conference, Birmingham, National CLT Conference London, Housing Learning and Improvement (LIN) Network London, Housing Rights Conference Belfast, Intentional Communities Symposium Cardiff, Tees Valley self-help housing network,

Middlesbrough, Leeds, Yorkshire and Humberside self-help housing network, Scottish Empty Homes Conference, Edinburgh and practice facing events at Salford University, Cardiff University, Amsterdam University and Ulster University. David has also been invited to speak at the Community Housing Cymru Conference in Llanidrod Wells on October 6th and the SOHA Housing Association AGM on September 30th in Oxford.

Richard Lang presented results from his Marie Curie Project on Cooperative and Community-led Housing at the following research, policy and practice events in 2016: Regional Studies Association (RSA) Annual Conference in Graz, Austria, and ESRC-Seminar on 'Ways of Neighbourhood Knowing and Working' at the University of Bristol, both in April; Plenary speech at the 22nd Annual Conference of the Confederation of Co-operative Housing in Loughborough in May; 'Future of Social Housing Conference' at ICC Birmingham in June. He also presented a paper at the 18th International Conference on Cooperative Studies (IGT/ICCS) in Lucerne, Switzerland, in September.

David Mullins, Professor of Housing Policy, Housing and Communities Research Group

National Youth Homeless Parliament

Following up on Alex Robinson's Student Feature in our last Newsletter (Spring 2016), we are delighted to let you know that the National Youth Homeless Parliament Report 2016 has now been published and is available as a download under the following link:

<http://youthhomelessparliament.co.uk/files/2016-08-32/12MBYouthHomelessParliament2016.pdf>



Upcoming Events

Seminar Series

The aims of our research network and seminar series are to improve links and build an active research community; improve awareness of interests of researchers on housing and communities across the University and partners in West Midlands, and provide a stimulus for new research partnerships, collaborative writing and joint funding proposals.

We will kick off our Housing and Communities Research Network Seminar Series 16/17 with three autumn seminars with excellent speakers from the Netherlands, Leeds and Birmingham:

3 October 2016

Gerard Van Bortel: 'Networks and Fault Lines: the role of housing associations in supporting vulnerable places and people; a way forward in the 'Participation Society'?'

Dr Gerard van Bortel is assistant professor of Housing Management at Delft University of Technology, and coordinates the Housing Team within the Architecture Faculty's Management in the Built Environment (MBE) Department. He is also chair of the board of a mid-sized Dutch housing and also chairs the Audit Board for Flemish Housing Associations in Belgium, and is involved in the performance assessments of Dutch housing associations.

30 November 2016

Paul Chatterton: 'The (re)emergence of community-led housing in the UK: a unified response to market dysfunction?'

Paul Chatterton is Professor of Urban Futures in the School of Geography where he co-founded the 'Cities and Social Justice' Research Cluster and is currently Director of the University's Sustainable Cities Group. Paul is also co-founder, first secretary and resident of the pioneering and award winning Leeds based low impact housing co-operative Lilac (www.lilac.coop).

For more information and to book your place online please see our events page:

www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/social-policy/housing-communities/events/index.aspx

Alternatively you can e-mail Helen Harris (h.m.a.harris@bham.ac.uk) to confirm your place at any of the above seminars.



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