



Care & Repair England
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NEWS RELEASE

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Time to Tackle Poor Private Housing

Select Committee Recommendations Strongly Supported by Care & Repair England

National housing charity Care & Repair England has welcomed the recommendation of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry into housing standards, *Beyond Decent Homes (4)*, to set a target to bring all private sector housing up to a decent standard.

The Committee concludes that the £40 billion investment in social rented housing has resulted in major improvements for tenants, but calls for a fresh impetus to address non-decency in the private sector.

"We are growing increasingly concerned about the number of older home owners who are struggling to repair and maintain their properties," said Sue Adams, Director of Care & Repair England, and who gave evidence to the committee on this subject (3). *"Disadvantage straddles tenure; there are now more low income home owners than low income social rented tenants, but they get little or no housing help"*.

There are 5.3 million owner occupied non-decent homes compared with 1.1 million social rented and 0.8m private rented (5). People over 75 years, older single women, black and minority ethnic elders and those who have lived in the same home for more than 25 years are the worst affected. For these groups their home is also more likely to fail the decent homes standard on the grounds of requiring urgent repairs (6).

"National funding for private sector housing improvement and adaptation is being switched across to new build," said Adams. *"As a result, local budgets from this April are falling by around 25%, even 40% in some places. This could wipe out what little housing help is left for the most vulnerable older people and add to health and social care costs."*

Ctd overleaf.....

Many common chronic health conditions linked to early death and inequality, particularly for older people, have a causal link to housing. These include heart disease, strokes, mental health, respiratory conditions, arthritis and rheumatism.

A recent report by the Building Research Establishment and Warwick Law School estimates that poor housing in England is costing the National Health Service in excess of £600 million a year (7).

The majority of related health and social care policies emphasise enabling older and disabled people to live independently in their own homes and to deliver care and health services at or closer to home.

Improving private sector, non-decent housing amongst the older population would therefore help to address health inequality, enable independent living and reduce demands on health and social care services.

“We very much welcome the focus of the Select Committee report on the need to address disrepair in the private sector”, said committee chair of Care & Repair England, Peter Archer. “However, we are somewhat perplexed by the subsequent recommendation to focus on area based improvement. This flies in the face of the majority view that resources should be targeting on households most at risk of health decline and injury due to the poor state of their home. We hope that in responding to the report any future government will take on this issue.”

ENDS

Editor’s notes

1. Care & Repair England is a national charity set up in 1986 by Shelter and the Housing Associations’ Charitable Trust (hact) to improve the housing and living conditions of older and disabled people, particularly for those living in poor quality private sector housing, thereby enabling them to ‘stay put’ in their own homes in greater comfort and security.
2. Care & Repair England’s written submission to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry, *Beyond Decent Homes*, is available here http://www.careandrepair-england.org.uk/pdf/beyond_decent_homes.pdf
3. Sue Adams, Director of Care & Repair England gave verbal evidence to the Inquiry on 10th November 2009, quoted on Page 60, Clause 162, of the Select Committee report, *Beyond Decent Homes*.
4. *Beyond Decent Homes* is available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcomloc/60/6002.htm>
5. CLG (2009) *2007 English House Conditions Survey* London, CLG

6. In the Decent Homes Standard 'Urgent Repairs' refers to building defects which pose a threat to the health, safety, security and comfort of the occupant or are necessary to forestall further rapid deterioration of the building.
7. Warwick Law School and the Building Research Establishment (2010) *Linking Housing Conditions and Health*
http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/healthatwarwick/aboutus/ormandy/linking_housing_conditions_and_health_2010-02-24.pdf

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