

# What's New?

## Policy Summary



**The Rt Hon Michael Gove has been appointed Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced in cabinet reshuffle.**

He will also take on "cross-government responsibility for levelling up" and retains his ministerial responsibility for the Union and elections, according to a tweet from the official 10 Downing Street account.

Mr Gove, a one-time journalist, has some experience of housing, having been shadow housing minister between 2005 and 2007. (Inside Housing).

### NHF Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy

The government has committed to providing a safe home for **Afghan Locally Employed Staff under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance policy (ARAP)**.

The ARAP supports the local staff who have worked for the UK government – Locally Employed Staff – in Afghanistan over the past 20 years. MHCLG is finding homes for the Afghan families being relocated to the UK urgently following NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Whilst many housing associations and local authorities have come forward to date, the government is now asking for urgent help finding accommodation for families due to the severity of the situation. MHCLG is looking especially for support from organisations who can provide or source larger homes of four bedrooms or more, to suit the needs of those arriving in large family groups. If you are able to help, please contact Will Jeffwitz, Head of Policy (NHF) or MHCLG directly.



### Savills Housing Market Update

Recent housing market data shows that the market has **remained relatively buoyant** over the summer months, despite the distortions created by pre-announced stamp duty measures. In a large part of the market, it's clear that the biggest challenge is the shortage of stock available to meet demand. This, in itself, is likely to support prices over the remainder of the year.

- Nationwide released its house price index for August, which showed a return of monthly house price growth after a small fall in July. This leaves annual house price growth at +11.0%, a figure which we expect to moderate to +9.0% at the end of the year.
- HMRC reported that completed transactions were 74% of normal levels in July having been double pre-pandemic levels in June.
- With such a surge in activity from those looking to beat stamp duty deadlines before the mid-year point, the July numbers indicate there remains a strong core of unmet demand that will sustain the market into the autumn; even if some of the exceptional market conditions from the first half of the year dissipate over the remainder of 2021.

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## The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has announced that local authorities and housing associations across England can bid for a share of **£160m through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund**. Through this first wave of funding, up to 38,000 of the country's worst energy-performing social housing homes (with EPC certificates of D or below) will be able to receive energy efficiency upgrades, including the installation of insulation and more energy efficient doors, windows and heating systems.

## New £4 million fund launched to increase community led affordable housing

A new grant programme gives community-led housing groups better access to high quality, affordable housing that meets the needs of local communities. The money will help community groups meet a range of costs incurred in trying to develop housing. This could include paying for searches, administration costs or legal advice, design work and planning applications. It will be managed by **Community Led Homes partnership (CLH)**. The CLH is a partnership of four community - led housing associations: Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Locality, National Community Land Trust Network and UK Cohousing Network. Applications will open on 23 August 2021 and will remain open until all funds are allocated or until **31 December 2021**, whichever occurs first. The programme will close in **March 2022** - all work funding by the grant must be completed by this date.

## New National Disability Strategy launches

The Government has launched its National Disability Strategy, which sets out policies on adapting housing, including raising the accessibility requirements for new homes and adapt existing homes using the **£573m Disabled Facilities Grant**; and mandating that 10% of homes built through the **£11.5bn Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26** will be for supported housing. Improving accessibility of homes, **£300m investment** in support for children with special educational needs and disabilities in schools and an online work passport to help disabled students move seamlessly from education to work. Plans to consult on disability workforce reporting for businesses **with more than 250 staff**. The strategy sets out **100 immediate commitments** supported by £1.6bn of funding alongside an ambitious agenda for future reform.

## First "First Homes" now available in County Durham

First Homes, the new government housing scheme, has come onto the market in **Newton Aycliffe, County Durham** to support local people who struggle to afford market prices in their area.

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## Fiona MacGregor's Speech: CIH Housing - 8 September 2021

Fiona acknowledged there is a lot happening in the sector: Government's spending review in the autumn, the review of the Decent Homes Standard, decarbonisation and long-term trajectory to net zero, the Building Safety Bill working its way through parliament and achieving the aims set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

She reiterated the central aim for the Social Housing White Paper is to **reset and rebalance the relationship between landlords and tenants**. Fiona also explained the new approach to consumer regulation will

take time and require new legislation. She referred to their **don't wait** message. In advance of legislation, the regulator expects providers to take action to deliver the aims of the White Paper: ensuring that residents live in good quality homes and are listened to when things go wrong. Don't wait for the regulator to have the powers to enforce this. **"Don't wait" means focussing now (demonstrably) on the "3 Rs" – repairs, redress and respect.** And transparency. All essential to building, or re-building, trust.

In addition, they have recently published their annual **Consumer Regulation Review** and are now working towards the revised consumer regulation framework. BuildEast have an opportunity to be involved in their tenant satisfaction measures sounding board.

She also acknowledged the many economic challenges and financial pressures facing the sector: grappling with investing in its existing stock, whilst building more homes (at a time of increasing cost pressures and labour shortages). And over the longer term, how to deliver the zero-carbon agenda and to ensure that we can continue to build new homes through the economic cycle.

Nonetheless, the sector's fundamentals – cashflow, asset base, demand – remain strong. The sector remains an attractive place for private capital – especially **capital seeking strong ESG performance** – and we are seeing that reflected in the pricing of debt for traditional housing associations. Total new finance agreed in 2020-21 amounted to **£15.1 billion**, the highest ever recorded.

She concluded the backdrop is complex, but there is a lot we can all do get on the front foot – to find issues and ensure tenants have confidence that it is worth reporting repairs; triangulate where possible through identification of themes and trends – and fixing issues promptly and effectively wherever possible. And be transparent about complexities, pressures, delays or where things go wrong. But find them before others do it for you. And fix, wherever possible, issues before they escalate, which leads to trust breaking down and established routes to redress being circumvented.

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fiona-macgregors-speech-cih-housing-2021-8-september-2021>

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## **The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping (Chaired by Lord Bob Kerslake, President of the Local Government Association, Chair of Peabody Housing Group and Former Head of Civil Service) has examined the lessons from the emergency response which supported people sleeping rough during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their learnings aim to help all agencies involved in supporting those who are rough sleeping, or homeless and at risk of rough sleeping, to understand what worked during the pandemic and what is now needed to embed the good practice that was shown during the past year. There are lessons for government at national, regional and local levels, and public health agencies, as well as the homelessness sector and providers.



The Commission's final report, "A new way of working: ending rough sleeping together" can be read [here](#).

## **Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government is now called Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities supports communities across the UK to thrive, making them great places to live and work.



## **Clarion publishes report on the lessons learned and next steps, for their Eastfields Estate in Merton.**

Clarion's CEO Claire Millier and Chairs David Avery and David Orr issued a report apologising to their residents, accepting full responsibility for their actions, and to determine why conditions in some of their homes had deteriorated and why they had not engaged with their residents as frequently as they should have. A major £1.3bn regeneration programme is underway and is set to transform the estate. You can read the full report [here](#).

## **"No Place Left Behind – Commission into prosperity and community Placemaking" facilitated by Placeshapers, for the Create Streets Foundation.**

The report includes a number of policy proposals exploring: levelling up our left behind places, connecting our communities, greening our towns, giving communities the Right to Buy and the power to regenerate their towns, renewing homes place by place and the importance of social infrastructure and much more. You can read the full report [here](#).

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