

Tackling Social Housing Stigma Journey Planner: Pioneer Travellers' Case Studies and Learning Points

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Ending
Social
Housing
Stigma
Together...

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Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the funding support received from Durham University through its Research Impact Fund (RIF) for this project.

We acknowledge and thank those who have participated in the research - we appreciate the support received from the respondents to the survey, and participants at the various focus groups - tenants, housing professionals and contractors for their insightful and critical comments in shaping this stigma journey planner, and the support received from those who participated in the filming sessions. We appreciate the participants, and the comments received on the presentation of the earliest draft of this stigma journey planner at the Tackling Stigma in Social Housing Working Group, Social Housing Roundtable, and at the Stop Social Housing Stigma webinar and at other conferences and workshops.

We acknowledge the support and contributions we have received from the 11 landlords who volunteered to be our "Pioneer Travellers" to pilot the stigma journey planner, the contributors of the case studies as well as their tenants, staff, contractors and others who participated in the workshops.

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The Pioneer Travellers were:

Colchester Borough Homes, Greatwell Homes, The London Borough of Croydon, London & Quadrant, Medway Council, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils, Newcastle City Council, Progress Housing, Thirteen Housing, Trident Housing.

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The Pioneer Traveller Case Studies:



Introduction

A set of 11 Tackling Stigma Journey Planner Pioneer Traveller sessions were held from November 2024 to March 2025 – five with housing associations and six with local authorities (one an ALMO). Each session brought together a range of tenants and staff from across the organisations, and several also included operatives (either directly employed or employed through contractors).

Methodology used with the Pioneer Travellers

The methodology we used with the Pioneer Travellers is set out below together with lessons learnt from that methodology. This methodology could be replicated by other landlords, but there may be other methodologies. The key intention is that:

- a) there is consideration of the tickets and questions set out in the Journey Planner
- b) the more that tenants are part of that consideration, the more likely that outcomes from using the Journey Planner will result in tackling stigma. There are also potential benefits from involving staff, operatives, contractors, board members/councillors and others in consideration of the Journey Planner.



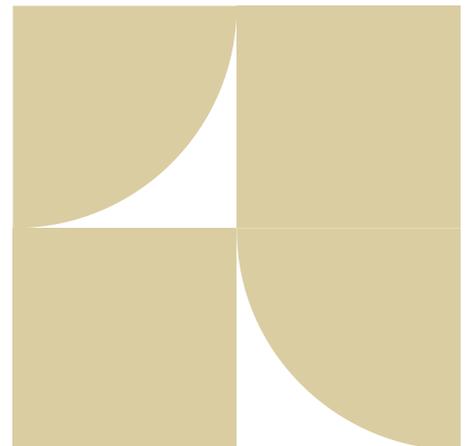
Methodology used with the Pioneer Travellers

1. Tenants, the landlord (through staff from various departments), operatives, contractors and other stakeholders were asked to come together in a workshop to consider tickets in the Journey Planner. The original Journey Planner included twelve tickets aimed at ensuring manageable discussions. We learnt from our work with the Pioneer Travellers that there was repetition in some of the tickets and the large number of tickets made the Journey Planner overly complex. Hence, we have refined the tickets down to six.
2. The Pioneer Traveller landlords picked out the tickets in the Journey Planner that they wished to prioritise to start their tackling stigma journey, in most cases having asked their tenants what was most important to them.
3. Following introductory discussions explaining the process, workshop attendees were asked to consider the questions in the Journey Planner and use them to help identify action points to tackle issues of concern. We suggested that action points should be "blue sky" - meaning that tenants and others in the workshop could raise any issues they considered important regardless of potential restrictions.
4. We then assembled the consequent "blue sky" action points to enable each Pioneer Traveller to determine which action points were already being done; which could be taken forward, either in the short, medium or long term; and which could not be taken forward and why.
5. Pioneer Travellers were invited to use their own action planning and review processes to take action plans forward.
6. We asked the Pioneer Travellers to complete a questionnaire which helped us to draft the case studies; we met with each Pioneer Traveller to discuss various issues; we drafted the case studies; the Pioneer Travellers signed them off.

The methodology generally worked well. Feedback from the Pioneer Traveller workshops was positive, and generally each of the Pioneer Travellers has reported progress in tackling stigma as a result of them.

However, there were some learning points identified by the Pioneer Travellers:

- Whilst nearly all tenants participated in the discussions at workshops, it was reported that some tenants found the Journey Planner unclear. Whilst some documentation was sent to the Pioneer Travellers for circulation to attendees prior to each session, it was suggested that there is a need for more structured pre-briefing of tenants about what to expect and setting out what is meant by social housing stigma.
- Concern was expressed that workshop discussions did not necessarily follow all the questions in the tickets. It is important for some people in each landlord do consider all the questions, but some may or may not be applicable in each landlord's circumstances. The questions are intended as a prompt for discussion, but the Journey Planner is intended to be flexible to enable workshop participants to raise and discuss the issues that are important to them.



- Some concern was expressed that tenants sometimes raised action points that were being done through already existing programmes because they were not aware that this was the case. We were concerned that introducing discussions about existing programmes could have limited free-flowing discussion, and our thinking was that discussions about relationships to existing programmes could take place in subsequent meetings with tenants. However, there could have been a different approach.
- Similarly, some concern was also raised that there was not an opportunity for workshop attendees to prioritise the action points they had raised. The workshop discussions generated several flipchart pages of action points and there would have been little time to prioritise them in the workshop. Our intention was that staff would work with their tenant frameworks after the workshops to develop manageable and prioritised action points. Again, there could have been a different approach to this.
- Concern was expressed that most of the Pioneer Traveller sessions were held during working hours meaning that tenants in work could not participate. This is a valid criticism which landlords wishing to use this methodology would need to consider. Whilst we did use one available Saturday for one of the Pioneer Traveller workshops, sadly for us there were not enough available Saturdays during our programme.
- Some concern was expressed that some discussions got wrapped up in operational issues and delivery. This is a challenge. It can be difficult to distinguish the cultural aspects of operational delivery that result in tenants feeling stigma from problems with the delivery of the service.
- Some asked for methods to measure or assess social housing stigma. Measuring progress in relation to stigma is challenging, but SSHS is considering how it could be done.
- Some asked for the sessions to be shorter and some longer. It is for each landlord and their tenants to work out the right length of any discussion about cultural issues. Some asked if the sessions could be held online. Our general view is that it would be challenging to have the quality of the cutting-edge debates that took place at the Pioneer Traveller sessions online, but it is for each landlord and their tenants to work out what works for them.

The feedback we had from our Pioneer Travellers on the workshops was extremely helpful and we have made use of the feedback to design a revised workshop process we will use with landlords who wish to work with us on the Journey Planner in the future. We have shared the points set out above to assist future landlords who may wish to make use of the Journey Planner to consider how best to do it.

For tenants, it can be that the problems with service delivery can give rise to the stigma they feel.



Action points

Discussions groups in the sessions yielded a considerable number of “blue sky” action points which the respective landlords have refined into manageable action plans.

Overall conclusions - some overall conclusions to the sessions/action points include:

- the discussions themselves were overwhelmingly positive (166 out of the 168 attendees at all sessions saying that tackling social housing stigma is important – the other two saying maybe – and an average of 98% ticking yes (75%) or maybe (23%) to all the other value-based questions - the detailed results from the feedback forms are shown below).
- participants generally placed considerable value to the dialogue created in the sessions between tenants, staff, operatives, contractors and others

Some sessions highlighted the importance of:

- landlords taking a strategic approach to tackling stigma led by Boards or relevant Councillors
- ensuring wide-ranging tackling stigma related interactions and training with front-facing and back-office staff, operatives and contractors
- believing and trusting tenants - landlord systems are designed to safeguard the landlord in respect of a small minority of tenants. This stigmatises the majority of other tenants
- listening to tenants and recognising that they know their homes better than the landlords. The need for meaningful and inclusive consultation with tenants about their homes. Not taking decisions without appropriate engagement with tenants
- establishing an effective accountability culture that tenants can recognise beyond ticking a box to comply with regulatory frameworks
- maintaining or developing tenant involvement and demonstrating to tenants its value in leading to change as a result of tenant requests/recommendations
- a “one team” approach which brings together tenants, staff from all sections, operatives, contractors and others
- co-creation with tenants of a “start to finish” accountability and a culture of “ownership” and responsibility to ensure that issues raised by tenants are followed through from start to finish
- enduring face-to-face relationships between tenants and staff
- involving tenants in staff recruitment and enabling tenants to apply for staff posts
- treating tenants who report repairs as part of a team approach to get repairs done

Results from the feedback forms at the Pioneer Traveller sessions

Of the 168 people who returned feedback forms at the 11 sessions, all but 2 said that tackling social housing stigma is important (the other 2 said maybe)

127 (76%)

said that actions suggested at the session would help tackle stigma – 38 said maybe; 2 said they wouldn't

123 (73%)

said that there were things that they could do personally which would help to tackle stigma – 39 said maybe; 7 said there weren't

123 (73%)

said that the Journey Planner approach would help tenants and landlords work together to tackle stigma – 43 said maybe; 2 said that it wouldn't

130 (77%)

said that the session achieved its aims – 37 said maybe; 1 said it didn't

128 (76%)

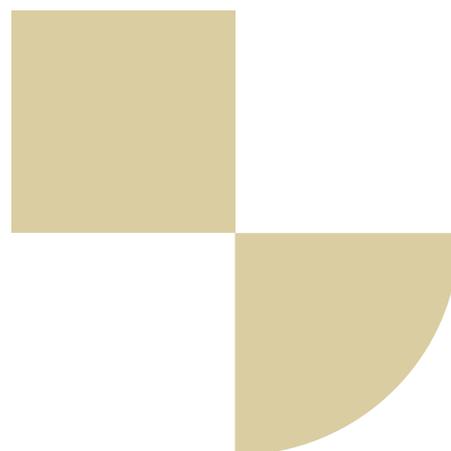
said that the methods used in the session worked effectively – 38 said maybe; 1 said they didn't.

- involving tenants in and explaining asset management, major works, improvements and compliance led by the relevant lead staff member
- flexible appointments arrangements and a corresponding, customised repair culture
- ensuring that tenancy sign-ups are welcoming and set the right tone at the start of the tenancy with tenants provided with adequate face-to-face practical start up support after sign ups
- getting “getting to know you” programmes right – using all contacts to gather information – and explaining to tenants why the information is needed
- taking a neighbourhood-based approach to build cross tenure civic engagement
- establishing an effective neighbourhood engagement system and culture through ensuring an effective neighbourhood visits and tenants forum.

The Pioneer Traveller sessions

All sessions were attended and facilitated by Nic Bliss (SSHS Campaign Director) and by either Dr Mercy Denedo (University of Durham) or Professor Amanze Ejiogu (Sheffield Hallam University) and by either Fiona Brown, Yaw Boateng or Sally Trueman (SSHS Committee members).

Pioneer Traveller	Date	Location	Tickets considered
Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils	5/11/24	Ipswich	Culture; First class staff
Trident Housing	8/11/24	Birmingham	Tenants leading change; First class staff
London & Quadrant	23/11/24	London	Repairs; Culture
Progress Housing	25/11/24	Leyland	Service delivery; Repairs
Colchester Borough Homes	26/11/24	Colchester	Culture; Repairs
Medway Borough Council	29/11/24	Kent	Culture; First class staff
Thirteen Housing Group	5/12/24	Middlesbrough	Service delivery; Governance
Greatwell Homes	6/12/24	Wellingborough	Tenants Leading Change; Repairs
Newcastle City Council	10/12/24	Newcastle	Trust
London Borough of Croydon	27/3/25	Croydon	Hearing every voice



The Pioneer Traveller Case Studies:

Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils
Trident Housing
London & Quadrant
Progress Housing Group
Colchester Borough Homes
Medway Borough Council
Thirteen Housing Group
Greatwell Homes
Newcastle City Council
London Borough of Croydon

Sadly, one of the Pioneer Travellers, for their own internal reasons, whilst they were able to arrange and participate in a workshop and receive an outline action plan, were unable to complete a case study with us.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils

Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council are two local authorities operating across Suffolk market towns and surrounding rural and semi-rural areas in East Anglia. Their only material differences are their financial positions and their elected leadership and issues that arise and performance across the two districts being similar, they came together in 2014 to develop a single management and staffing structure using the same systems, policies and procedures for managing services to their residents.

Both districts own and/or provide housing services to about 3,500 homes each, mostly for secure tenants, with a small number of leaseholders and shared owners. The previous modest development programme has stalled recently due to the need to prioritise investment in existing homes and a lack of land. Most of the two districts' communities and tenants have similar population demographics, most tenants describing themselves as white British with an average age of 56.

Recent years have seen the two councils come on a journey of service improvement. A previously failing repairs service is in transformation – with repairs complaints reducing and repairs satisfaction statistics close to sectoral averages. As the Councils improved their tenant engagement and with a strategic push to encourage complaints, the number of complaints has risen, but so did complaints response times (rising meteorically from only 15% of complaints responded to within targets expected by the Ombudsman in the 2023/2024 Tenant Satisfaction Measures to 85%).

Work was done with tenants to co-design a new tenant engagement strategy, leading to the development of a 6 member Tenant Board whose primary roles are to direct scrutiny and to monitor performance. Tenants involved in the co-design had intimated that they felt that the reason behind the then poor services was due to perception of them as council tenants who were not worthy of good services. The council leadership wanted to change that perception, and this led to participation in the Pioneer Traveller programme. Head of Housing, Transformation and Regulation David White said, “our leadership and councillors were passionate about change and saw it as an opportunity to contribute to cultural change and to empower residents to feel proud of where they live”. David felt that involvement in the Pioneer Traveller programme would add to the “web of evidence” behind demonstrating compliance with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

Councillors and staff recognised a need for ongoing improvement. With overall satisfaction ratings of 64% and 51% of tenants recognising that their landlord listens to their views and acts on them being close to sectoral averages, the poor repairs responses times meant that more had to be done to engage with tenants to improve the service.



Held on 5th November 2024 in Ipswich, the Pioneer Traveller workshop brought together tenants from the Tenant Board and other tenants, one of the Portfolio Holders for Housing (herself a tenant) with a wide range of staff – the Director of Housing, staff drawn from tenant engagement, housing and customer services, repairs (both repairs managers and operatives), complaints, sheltered housing and home ownership teams.

The Councils chose to look at **Culture** and **First-Class Staff** Journey Planner tickets. Group discussions yielded wide-ranging blue sky action points, subsequently grouped under staffing issues, staff recruitment and induction, staff and culture, communications, engagement with tenants, complaints, new tenancies and repairs and maintenance headings.

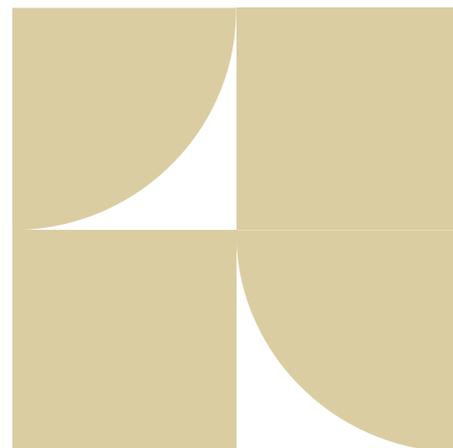
David and his team subsequently worked through the action points, identifying them as in hand; in place already but under review; planned; planned for longer term; an ongoing action; a fill-in to another action point; part of a wider service review. Of the 43 potential action points, 32 were identified as either already happening or planned; seven as “maybes”; and four were considered as requiring high effort but producing low potential impact.

The resulting action plan was presented to the Tenant Board and to the Portfolio Holders. All have been positive. The Tenant Board commented that “we didn’t expect so much to come out of the session”. An update on progress against the action plan will be presented to the Tenant Board and Portfolio holders on a quarterly basis. David considers Tenant Board and Portfolio holder support to be vital because “otherwise other things will take priority” and sees that follow up and reporting on progress at those levels will help to keep everyone focussed.

David commented “it’s an ambitious programme. Some of the things we were already hoping to achieve anyway in some form or another, but the Pioneer Traveller session helped us to rework some of those ideas. Some things were quite straightforward and have already been done – giving us some quick wins”.

He went on to say that “we learnt from the session was that we have passionate people working across the Councils. A challenge for us was that many of the action points were corporate level and we want to make tackling stigma part of everyone’s day to day jobs”. But he highlighted that the Pioneer Traveller programme generated conversations and awareness of stigma across the organisation, referring to potentially stigmatising language and being called out particularly in respect of complaints handling. He identified that the Pioneer Traveller programme will amplify tenant voice – making officers and tenants more cognisant of the existence of stigma and stereotypes. David anticipates that this will improve Council/tenant relationships and help demonstrate that tenants are front and centre of decision making.

Involvement in the Pioneer Traveller programme would add to the “web of evidence” behind demonstrating compliance with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.



A particular challenge for the Councils lies in the local authorities' many competing priorities and consistent corporate approaches which may not always fit with the housing service's need to comply with its regulatory requirements as a Registered Provider landlord. For example, getting management information about complaints, managed corporately across the Council, for the Ombudsman for Tenant Satisfaction Measures provided some challenges. David commented that "sometimes council housing is seen as just another council department and not a landlord that is required by regulation to be formally accountable to its tenants for the services we provide".

Despite these competing priorities sometimes slowing progress, David considers that the Council can achieve what they have set out to do in their Tackling Stigma Action Plan. For the future, David considers that tackling stigma will be part of their reviewed Tenant Engagement Strategy. More tenants will be helped to share their views through different means and tackling stigma will become more embedded. Over time, David particularly aims to measure the impact of change through improved satisfaction around being treated fairly and with respect.

"Sometimes council housing is seen as just another council department and not a landlord that is required by regulation to be formally accountable to its tenants for the services we provide."

David White,
Head of Housing,
Transformation and Regulation,
Mid Suffolk and Babergh
District Councils

Key learning points from the case study

- **Ensuring strategic support for tackling stigma** - from the landlord's governance and management leadership and the tenant leadership will be vital for ensuring that tackling stigma programmes can compete with other priorities
- **Embedding stigma actions alongside existing programmes** - developing actions to tackle stigma can sit comfortably alongside other landlord programmes and ensuring that they do will contribute to tackling stigma being embedded throughout the organisation
- **There are many staff who are passionate about tackling stigma** - every housing organisation is likely to employ people who are "passionate" about tackling stigma working for it in roles that may not traditionally be considered to be tenant facing
- **Stigma and the relationship between local authority housing and corporate teams** - tackling stigma in local authority housing services also relies on an appropriate relationship on a relationship with the local authority corporately which recognises the distinct regulatory framework for Registered Provider landlords

Trident Housing

Set up in the 1960s, Trident Housing owns and manages approximately 3,500 homes across Birmingham, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Sandwell. As well as providing general needs homes, Trident provides specialist care and support services, homeless hostels and new build shared ownership homes. Trident particularly provides support to a proportionately high number of homeless people, people living with disabilities and mental health issues, and those subject to domestic abuse.

The Customer Voice Group (CVG), consisting of 6 tenants who meet bi-monthly, provides resident led oversight of the work that Trident does and enables residents to input into policy development. CVG feeds into the Board's Homes & Communities Sub-Committee, which includes two residents. This sub-committee feeds into the Board which has one recently appointed tenant board member (with four applicants to the post). Customer Engagement Manager Steve Martin referred to a golden thread linking residents into the Board and stated that "Trident wants to ensure that the impact of customer voice can be demonstrated to our customers and to the regulator in a robust, measurable way". Trident also facilitates a Homes and Communities Panel; a Procurement Panel; a Task and Finish Group; a Recruitment Panel; a Building Safety Panel; a Complaints Panel; and a Communications Panel – all of which are attended by an average of 8 residents.

2023 Tenant Satisfaction Measures of **58%** for overall satisfaction; **48%** for satisfaction that tenants felt their views were listened to and acted upon; and 65% of tenants who feel that they are treated well and with respect formed the backdrop to Trident's participation as a Pioneer Traveller.

Trident stated as their objectives as a Pioneer Traveller to promote equality and inclusion and to ensure that social housing tenants are treated with the same respect as homeowners and people renting privately; to change perceptions and challenge stereotypes; to enhance tenant wellbeing by removing the shame and discrimination social housing tenants may face; and to provide a good quality service to all tenants, ensuring that the resident voice is used to do so.

Customer Engagement Manager Steve Martin commented that "by breaking down the stigma in Social Housing, we can ensure colleagues and customers appreciate the value in each other's viewpoints, listen and engage effectively".

Held on 8th November 2024, Trident's Pioneer Traveller workshop considered the **Tenants Leading Change** and **First-Class Staff** Journey

"In a sector that will inevitably become more not less important over the coming years as the need for social housing grows, the stigma attached to people living in social housing needs to be tackled and addressed."

Mike Crump
Trident Housing resident



Planner tickets. The workshop was attended by seven residents and a range of housing, repairs, involvement and communication staff.

The workshop delivered action points to:

- develop Trident's resident involvement architecture
- communicate with tenants about how involvement is changing how Trident operates
- review start to finish transparency regarding how decisions are taken
- review how Trident's front desk can be made more user friendly and welcoming
- deliver stigma related training
- reduce barriers to front facing staff and the executive team
- review Trident's recruitment, line management and staff handbook with tenants

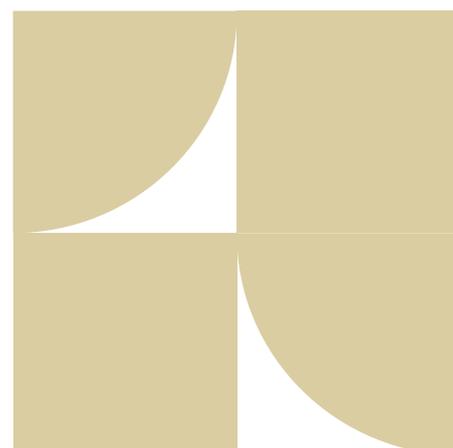
Whilst Trident was already planning changes in resident involvement arrangements before the Pioneer Traveller workshop, since the workshop, a resident board member has been recruited, and a scrutiny panel is being set up in Trident. The front desk and reception area has been made more welcoming and improvements have been made to other office spaces, improving accessibility, providing more face-to-face spaces to speak with residents, and moving teams so that they are working under one roof to promote problem solving and communication. Work has been done with residents to improve communications through the website.

Challenges in implementing the action points include changing HR personnel delaying progress on staff related action points as well as other staffing changes and Trident going through a regulatory inspection. Nonetheless Trident's February 2025 staff conference included a theme of culture, ownership and communication; it is intended that tackling social housing stigma will be part of new staff inductions; there will be greater stigma awareness raising through internal communications; there will be discussions about stigma in team meetings and in supervision; and poor practices will be challenged.

Steve Martin went on to say "the Pioneer Traveller programme has been a catalyst to awareness raising through Trident's internal and external communications. We see the initiative as a whole not only having an impact on how we comply with the consumer standards but on how we take a "Compliance Plus" approach - not just stopping at what satisfies the regulator but by actively demonstrating the steps we are taking to treat all of our residents with fairness and respect".

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Steve Martin,
Customer Engagement Manager,
Trident Group



Key learning points from the case study

- **The Journey Planner in a smaller landlord** - using the Journey Planner is relevant and important in a comparatively smaller housing association.
- **Stigma in a landlord with a proportionately high number of tenants with support needs** - developing approaches to tackle social housing stigma is particularly important in an association that has a proportionately high number of homeless people, people living with disabilities and mental health issues, and those subject to domestic abuse.
- **A catalyst for new awareness raising about stigma** - the Journey Planner can work in sync with a landlord's existing change programme, but being a Pioneer Traveller has been a catalyst in Trident for new awareness raising about stigma and specific changes to Trident's physical office spaces and how its resident involvement functions.



London & Quadrant

L&Q owns and manages more than 105,000 homes, primarily across London, the south-east and north-west of England. The social landlord began as Quadrant Housing Association in the London Borough of Greenwich in 1963. Significant milestones include mergers with London Housing Trust in 1973; East Thames Housing Group in 2016, and most recently, Trafford Housing Trust in 2019.

L&Q's Strategic Research Analyst Isobelle Connor said that "L&Q has held a commitment to meaningful resident involvement since 2020. This programme laid the foundations for the organisation's broader cultural transformation work. In 2023, we published a landlord report – a Partnership of Equals, which recognised the need to move beyond transactional models of service delivery and toward relationships built on respect, equality and shared agency. It drew on insights from the resident involvement programme, highlighted the importance of co-production, and made the case for tackling stigma and paternalism as barriers to trust and fairness".

Following the publication of A Partnership of Equals, L&Q began a deeper internal reflection on tone of voice, language, and the dynamics of its relationships with residents. Staff and contractor guidance was developed to help eradicate paternalistic attitudes and ensure communication was respectful, inclusive, and clear. This work was one of the early steps in a wider cultural overhaul aimed at shifting organisational mindset and behaviour.

As part of this ongoing shift, L&Q led stigma research within the G15 – a group of major London housing associations – to understand the experience of residents across the country. The research revealed that 45% of G15 residents felt stigmatised for living in social housing, and of those, 43% felt stigmatised when interacting with their landlord. These findings, taken alongside L&Qs most recent Tenant Satisfaction Measures, which showed 53% overall tenant satisfaction with services; 46% satisfaction that L&Q listens to tenants' views and acts upon them, and 70% agreement that L&Q treats tenants fairly and with respect, demonstrated the importance of the cultural work L&Q had already begun and reinforced the need for practical tools to embed change.

L&Q's involvement in the Pioneer Traveller programme in late 2024 built directly on this series of developments. L&Q decided that the Journey Planner was the "most suited and comprehensive tool developed to address the issue of stigma". According to Isobelle "our aim was to improve our service, but specifically we wanted to ensure that we were not acting in any way that was stigmatising to residents". She noted that the Journey Planner has been "a really useful tool to start the

"Our aim was to improve our service, but specifically we wanted to ensure that we were not acting in any way that was stigmatising to residents."

Isobelle Connor,
Strategic Research Analyst,
London & Quadrant



conversation and give clear and meaningful outcomes to work towards, whilst still remaining flexible enough to operate within a large and complex organisation like L&Q”.

Held at L&Q’s London office on 23rd November 2024, the Pioneer Traveller workshop brought together Directors of Governance and Maintenance Services, senior members of their teams, along with a range of L&Q residents, including a resident Board member. Residents chose to explore the **Culture** and **Repairs** Journey Planner tickets. One resident said that they attended the workshop “to hear both sides.

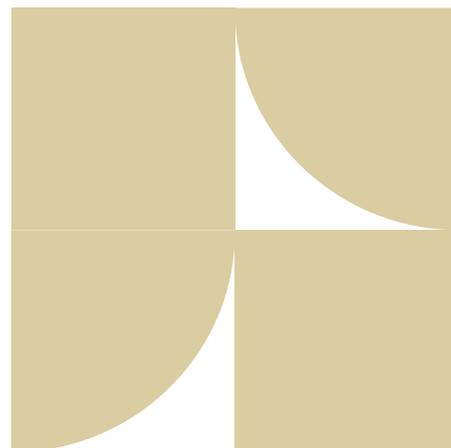
The workshop was a significant step forward, enabling residents and staff to co-create solutions and engage in blue sky thinking, within operational considerations. A resident commented that “not everyone’s experience is the same and there are different ways of combating stigma, but we all have a part to play.”

Staff left the day with a long list of action points, ranging from concerns around L&Q using paternalistic language, creating a staff stigma champion network, and delivering training to repairs operatives on the impact of stigma for residents. The first step was to understand where these actions fit into existing programmes of work, or where they were already considered ‘business as usual’, and to understand why residents weren’t feeling the benefits. A clear action plan was then drawn up with key tasks to take forward, and departmental accountabilities were clearly assigned.

Isobelle reflected that the Pioneer Traveller session gave L&Q a valuable opportunity to show residents that L&Q “really care about addressing the stigma they may face – and more importantly – addressing it”. Isobelle referred to some “straightforward actions” emerging from the workshop, such as reviewing training materials for front-line colleagues or updating the code of conduct agreements with contractors to specifically address stigma. More significantly, Isobelle added that the Pioneer Traveller session had prompted “a deeper conversation about our culture, what drives us and ultimately, how we can become resident-centred organisations”.

Resident Involvement Manager Rosie Ward outlined L&Q’s three-strand approach to resident involvement, emphasising that L&Q wants involvement to be “enjoyable, meaningful and impactful. We want to value the time that our volunteers give”. The first strand operates at a local level where Neighbourhood Housing Leads work with Neighbourhood Champions and Tenants and Residents Associations to identify and take ownership of local issues. The second, the Business Improvement strand, focuses on creating partnerships between residents and relevant staff to develop solutions “on an equal basis” where change is needed. Recent reviews of the complaints process and repairs journey mapping were cited as examples of this collaborative approach. The third strand, Strategic Involvement, involves hosting three assemblies each year, open to all involved tenants. These events bring residents closer to L&Q’s Board and senior leadership, with the aim of enabling the Board to hold the Executive team accountable on matters that are important to tenants.

“As a resident I have pride in where I live, but I understand that L&Q can’t do it all without our help. I wanted to find out how L&Q are going to take forward our suggestions.”



Isobelle also acknowledged the challenges involved in cultural transformation within a large organisation – particularly the need to align new initiatives with major ongoing change programmes. Crucially, L&Q is developing ways to distinguish whether issues raised are rooted in stigma or are simply examples of poor service delivery. “Understanding whether challenges stem from attitudinal issues or from structural and procedural deficiencies will inform targeted and effective interventions,” said Isobelle.

Isobelle also noted that while these challenges may slow progress, they do not prevent positive change. She also highlighted that, although some action points are specific to individual teams, the cultural themes from the Pioneer Traveller session are cross-cutting. These themes have been shared across teams, including resident involvement, repairs, business improvement, estate services and major works. L&Q’s research team continues to keep stigma on the agenda by running workshops and interactive sessions across the organisation, driving awareness and meaningful action.

Isobelle also pointed to a further challenge – how to measure progress in relation to tackling stigma: “it’s great that we are starting to take actions that we think will tackle stigma. But the important question is: will these actions mean that tenants feel a change, and if so, how long will that take?”.

Change proposals must be assessed to ensure they are purposeful, feasible, align with key missions, and do not unintentionally impact other areas of the business.

Key learning points from the case study

- **Organisational scale doesn’t limit progress.** L&Q, as a large and complex housing association, have recognised the need to tackle social housing stigma. While they have made meaningful progress in reducing stigma, they recognise that further work is needed. A key takeaway is that, regardless of how large and complex an organisation is, progress in tackling stigma is possible.
- **Stigma reduction must be aligned with wider change.** Efforts to tackle stigma should not be treated as a standalone initiative. They need to be “aligned” – and ideally underpin – other change programmes across the organisation. Integration is essential for meaningful, sustained impact.
- **Distinguishing culture from service delivery is important.** Conversations around stigma often raise both cultural themes and service delivery issues. It is important to separate these: cultural themes should cut across all programmes as overarching principles, whilst practical action points should be embedded within the most relevant operational areas.
- **Measuring progress remains a challenge.** More discussion is needed around how best to assess and evidence progress in tackling stigma. Developing meaningful metrics will be key to tracking success and driving improvement.

Progress Housing Group

Formed in 1994 when tenants of South Ribble Borough Council voted to transfer its 3,500 homes to the newly formed New Progress Housing Association, Progress Housing Group now owns and manages approximately 12,000 homes across the UK. Progress Living is the Group's keyworker accommodation project. It has over 500 apartments and homes and is located at each main hospital site of United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust. Key Unlocking Futures, the Group's charitable arm, supports over 7,000 individuals and families each year, including providing support at homelessness schemes and refuges for women and children who need to escape domestic abuse. The Group's supported living business stream, RWP, has landlord responsibilities for over 4,000 supported living properties for people with a learning disability, autistic people and those with a mental health condition.

From its inception due to a tenant vote, Progress Housing Group has always operated with a high degree of tenant involvement. That involvement is now shaped by Customer Voice Manager, Diane Nash and her team. This includes a customer voice officer who supports community building activities for families and young people; activities coordinators who work on socially-based activities in independent living schemes, with an aim to break down isolation through health and wellbeing activities; and two more customer voice officers who work with RWP tenants, engaging in a variety of innovative and creative interventions, such as crafts and cook-and-eat projects. The aim is to create a comfortable and safe environment and building trust, leading to qualitative engagement about services provided.

All of Progress Housing Group's tenant involvement activities are open to any tenants. They include:

- Tenant Forum: held quarterly, upcoming themes include equality and diversity, health and safety, value for money, and social value
- Tenant Voice Improving Services: a scrutiny group which runs 2 to 3 scrutiny programmes each year. The last one focused on complaints and compliments, which ran alongside an internal audit into complaints. The next one, chosen by tenants, will focus on engagement with RWP tenants
- RWP Virtual Hub: aimed at encouraging tenant involvement
- Tenant Talks: ad hoc monthly sessions, where tenants and employees can suggest topics, and where policy and strategy reviews are consulted on
- Community Investment Fund: community groups can access funds
- Community Support Group: developing projects in communities



- Soup Dragons Den: up to 6 community groups can pitch for access to funds, all subject to votes by members of the community
- Your Voice sessions: held every 6 months. Recent sessions including complaints, the lettable standard, new developments, and repairs (this session followed the Pioneer Traveller workshop, which resulted in the inclusion of a question in repairs surveys about social housing stigma).

This wide array of engagement with tenants has yielded positive Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The 2024/25 TSM report stated overall satisfaction at 76%; satisfaction that Progress listens and acts on tenants' views at 64%; and those considering that Progress treats them fairly and with respect at 79%. Even satisfaction with complaint handling is comparatively high at 46%.

Progress Housing Group tenant Fiona Brown supported these positive results: "It has been a privilege to be a tenant of an organisation which is not afraid to say that it has got something wrong. It apologises and works with tenants to put it right and ensure it is done right in the future."

With this backdrop to the Pioneer Traveller session, Customer Voice Manager, Diane Nash identified that the Group has supported the tenant-led Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign since its post-Grenfell inception: "The campaign and the Pioneer Traveller programme aligns with the Group's core values and supports our continuous improvement journey as determined by tenants and our Board through our Strategic Plan."

Progress Housing Group's support for tackling stigma has been further demonstrated by its "see the person"/person-centred approach (See the Person was one of the former names of the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign). It has developed case studies of how some of their tenants have faced stigma previously but feel that their lives have been enriched and improved by their engagement with Progress Housing Group: "Progress wanted to raise awareness of social housing stigma with tenants, colleagues and external contractors, and to reduce the risk of stigma and challenge occasions where it is identified."

Held on 25 November 2024, the Pioneer Traveller session was attended by 15 employees representing Continuous Improvement, Community Safety, Customer Contact, Digital Services, Property Services, Customer Voice, Executive Leadership, Customer Experience, Progress Futures, Marketing and Communications, and Development Teams. They were joined by four external contractors, and three tenants who represented general needs, independent living and RWP.

The Group chose to look at Service delivery and Repairs tickets – these were divided into two tickets in the prototype Journey Planner. This led to some repetition in the discussions, but nonetheless, a broad range of blue-sky action points were identified, including the following areas:

- Updating stigma training for employees and for contractors, considering how to involve back-office teams with tenants and stigma-related induction for new employees
- Exploring how to review contractor performance with tenant input

"It has been a privilege to be a tenant of an organisation which is not afraid to say that it has got something wrong. It apologises and works with tenants to put it right and ensure it is done right in the future."

Fiona Brown
Progress Housing Group tenant



- Reviewing communications with tenants – a “we are listening” programme
- Reviewing how Progress is gathering information about tenants and their homes
- Developing tenant and employee discussions about asset management
- Publicity of success stories and discussions with schools and colleges

All the action points align closely with activity already taking place, meaning that working the action points into existing programmes has been comparatively straightforward. However, a specific action plan has been developed to track progress in respect of the points raised in the workshop, with timescales and action leads identified. Diane identified that this will “complement and support” existing activities “rather than create additional pressure”. An internal working party bringing a range of employees together will review progress on the action plan monthly.

Diane concluded that having the Journey Planner framework is “very helpful and it supports discussion to establish a benchmark of what is acceptable. It has highlighted examples of social housing stigma; quite shocking for some of our employees. The framework supports challenging conversations about established processes to enable open and honest discussion about where stigma could inadvertently creep in. And it also provides the opportunity to challenge contractors and their performance.”

“Very helpful and it supports discussion to establish a benchmark of what is acceptable. It has highlighted examples of social housing stigma; quite shocking for some of our employees.”

Diane Nash
Customer Voice Manager,
Progress Housing Group

Key learning points from the case study

- Where a landlord is already performing well in its engagement with tenants, and where its ethos exists to challenge social housing stigma, it is likely that action points developed through consideration of the Journey Planner will fit in with current programmes without creating undue resource pressures.
- Engaging with the Journey Planner, where Tenant Satisfaction Measures are already comparatively high, demonstrates a commitment to ongoing continuous development in developing a positive culture.
- An anti-stigma culture can include a personalised approach to sharing individual tenant stories (obviously with their consent!)

Colchester Borough Homes

Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) is an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up by Colchester City Council in 2003. It provides management and maintenance services to around 7,000 residential, commercial and public buildings in the local area on behalf of the Council. This includes the Council's homes and associated services. Most are in urban areas but some are in rural villages. CBH has a new development programme aimed at meeting Colchester City Council's target of delivering 350 affordable homes (72 having been built so far).

Nearly all CBH's Tenant Satisfaction Measures have improved in 2024/25 from the previous year. Overall satisfaction was recorded this year as 73%; 53% were satisfied that CBH listens to views and acts on them. 74% were satisfied that CBH treats their tenants fairly and with respect.

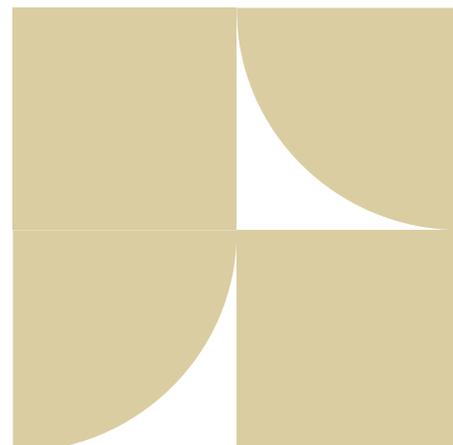
Resident input into CBH's engagement opportunities is led by Resident Voice – the main tenant panel – consisting of between nine and twelve tenants. Chaired by CBH's Resident Board Member (the remaining Board consisting of Councillors and independents) Resident Voice meets bi-monthly. The group is enabled to determine its own work programme, but CBH consults Resident Voice on strategic issues; it monitors an action tracker and engagement impact assessments. The smaller policy changes are agreed through the panel. Any concerns raised by tenants on Resident Voice are fed back to the Board.

A team of more operational QAAs (Quality Assurance Assessors) monitor two or three storey blocks; sheltered schemes; monitoring maintenance and cleaning within the block/scheme and surrounding grounds, meetings are held bimonthly with all external contractors.

Greenstead Housing Panel operates in a similar way to a resident's association, on what was once the largest housing estate in the UK, including community and local housing issues and agreeing proposals on Estate improvements.

An online tenant Reading Panel scrutinises the contents of letters and correspondence. All feedback is recorded and considered, and changes are fed back to wider residents and Board.

Tenant inspectors' scrutiny panel carry out up to two deep dive reviews each year on subject matter chosen by residents (in November 24 a large review of lettings was carried out; and a smaller review is now being carried out on the website content relating to damp and mould).



CBH already wanted to raise awareness, educate and address challenges relating to social housing stigma when they met SSHS representatives at the 2024 TPAS conference. CBH's keenness to support the campaign and learn together led to them signing up to the Pioneer Traveller programme. Service Improvement Manager Nikki Williams commented that "we felt that the Pioneer Traveller programme would highlight, guide and raise areas for landlords to consider. Knowing the issues and gaps is one thing, but solutions will be another thing".

CBH's Pioneer Traveller workshop was held on 26th November 2024 bringing involved tenants (including Tenant Inspectors and QAAs) together with a range of CBH staff (from repairs and maintenance, housing and involvement teams), and several representatives from contractors and their operatives. CBH chose that the workshop considered **Culture** and **Repairs** Journey Planner tickets.

Notable action points that developed from the workshop centred around developing a CBH "One Team" approach with their tenants, staff and contractors; considering how stigma consideration might be built into CBH Behaviours - a CBH staff training and development programme focussed on respect and accountability; expanding work on CBH's Knowing your tenants programme; and a range of suggestions relating to how tenants are involved. Most of the action points are developments to existing CBH programmes. Some more specific action points included working with local schools on stigma in social housing; developing links between tenants and leaseholders; and considering physical building access at CBH's head office.

The focus on repairs in the second ticket led to some discussions of an operational nature which led to some of the action points not being considered appropriate in respect of tackling stigma. Nikki commented that "we wanted to start with educational and cultural issues relating to stigma - the operational issues were deep embedded things and too broad, and by and large our repairs staff are fully supportive of tackling stigma".

Nikki added that the Pioneer Traveller workshop had "started us on our journey, introducing it to the organisation and getting professionals and ambassadors involved from outside the organisation. We have created an ongoing workplan to embed tackling stigma within the organisation over a period of time". Nikki also highlighted that CBH are looking to get stigma ambassadors in service areas and contractors to sign up to tackling stigma.

Nikki further discussed how CBH plans to work with its tenants on an ongoing stigma campaign - "we see it as a priority and are fully committed so we will make it happen, but it may be over a period of time. We want to leave things in place that have longevity and are embedded in the culture of the organisation".

Tenant Inspector Tony Simons said "it was really empowering to be in a room with staff, contractors, and other tenants all having open conversations about stigma. You don't always feel your voice is listened to, but this felt really engaging as a one team approach, where everyone genuinely wanted to participate and air their views. It gave tenants hope that things will improve, and Colchester Borough Homes cocreating their customer commitments to include addressing stigma is really positive, not just words but actions".

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Tony Simons,
Tenant Inspector,
Progress Housing Group



Key learning points from the case study

- **A One Team approach** - the CBH workshop particularly highlighted the benefits and value of a One Team approach – enabling tenants, staff from different departments, contractors and others to discuss issues together.
- **Stigma as a cultural issue and its overlap with operational issues** - social housing stigma is primarily a cultural problem, but it can be manifested in repairs and other service delivery. When assembling tenants, staff, contractors and others to discuss stigma, there is sometimes a fine line between identifying cultural stigma in service delivery and operational service delivery issues for which there are other channels to deal with.
- **Adding to existing cultural programmes** - in an already improving landlord, discussions about stigma are likely to be primarily about adding to already existing cultural programmes, albeit from a tackling stigma for tenants' perspective.



Medway Council

A Kent unitary Council 40 minutes train ride from central London, Medway Council owns and manages 3,229 homes – the tenure consisting of general needs, sheltered housing and leaseholder homes. Medway is the largest urban area in the South-East outside London and its council housing is located primarily in Brompton, Gillingham, Twydall and Rainham.

Some describe Medway as having the challenges of a London Borough without London resources, and whilst some areas of Medway feature highly on deprivation indices, particularly with some significant mental health issues and transient populations, two miles down the road in more affluent areas life expectancy is ten years higher. Reference was made to the 132-bus service that winds its way from the more affluent Hempstead, through Rainham, past Twydall, and past the deprived area of Luton before reaching Chatham Bus Station.

However, Resident Engagement Officer Hannah Rourke commented that “there is a lot of positivity in the area – a lot of nice community vibes. People come from different backgrounds – some people live in social housing, some people have bought through Right to Buy, but people generally get along as neighbours”. The comparatively small number of homes owned by the Council and its localised nature (most of the homes are within less than a ten-mile radius) lends itself to fostering that local community spirit and a personalised service. The relationship between the housing department and other council departments is also positive, with the housing department able to rely on support from other teams such as Culture & Heritage, Public Health and Adult Education.

Medway’s housing services have been gradually improving over recent years. Their 2024 Tenant Satisfaction Measures are an improvement from 2023 – with overall satisfaction increasing from 69% to 71%; tenants feeling that the Council treats them fairly and with respect increasing from 68% to 74%; and with satisfaction that the Council listens to tenants’ views and acts on them leaping up from 51% to 65%. This latter 14% increase is ascribed to the Council carrying out monthly “Big Door knock” events meaning a lot of face-to-face contact with tenants and staff ability to respond to housing issues or refer them to the correct Council team (for example, housing staff were able to get an issue raised by some tenants resolved about disabled access to parks through the relevant Council team).

Medway is also currently designing improvements to its resident involvement approach. Whilst an 8-member Resident Panel (including the tenant Chair of the Homes for Independent Living Board) enables direct access to Medway’s housing governance, a new menu is being developed that will mean that tenants do not have to sit on the Resident

There is a lot of positivity in the area – a lot of nice community vibes. People come from different backgrounds – some people live in social housing, some people have bought through Right to Buy, but people generally get along as neighbours.

Hannah Rourke,
Resident Engagement Officer,
Medway Council



Panel to be able to express their views. Hannah described the new menu as being everything from “light bites; takeaways you can undertake at home; to all you can eat”.

Medway’s interest in being a Pioneer Traveller grew out of their desire to identify how stigma influences the relationship between Medway’s housing services and tenants; what barriers it creates; what attitudes or communications could be stigmatising; and to generally develop a wider understanding of the complex, subjective and emotive nature of stigma. Hannah suggested that “the Pioneer Traveller programme would assist the Council to explore with staff, tenants and contractors the issues that stigma has not only on our relationship with tenants, the wider implications to housing services and the community, and the connection between stigma and reluctance to engage in wider services”.

Medway’s Pioneer Traveller session was held on 29th November 2024. The Council chose to explore the **Culture** and **First-Class Staff** Journey Planner tickets. Attendees included five residents (three from the Resident Panel and two from Homes for Independent Living) and the Head of Tenant Services with five members of her team.

With a comprehensive set of action points emerging from the workshop, Hannah and her team, working with the tenant panel, have developed a Social Stigma Action Plan, with the following key issues identified:

- Building face to face relationships between tenants and staff
- Involving tenants in staff recruitment and enabling tenants to apply
- Involving tenants in asset management, improvements and compliance led by the relevant lead staff member
- Flexible appointments and a corresponding, customised repair culture
- Tenancy sign-ups welcoming and setting the right tone
- Getting the “getting to know you” programme right – using all contacts to gather information and explaining to tenants why the information is needed
- The need to be respectful of tenant’s routines – don’t assume
- Addressing communication issues – how people wish to be contacted
- Providing more information about building and repairs in the area
- Developing a Jargon Buster and Cultural Guide
- Demonstrating commitment to residents with a focus on establishing greater accountability, resident engagement and resident oversight.

The consequent action plan will be monitored regularly by staff but also with the Tenant Panel. It contains many “green” actions – actions that Medway was already taking or which were quick wins, but which require ongoing monitoring; “amber” actions which are in the pipeline, but which will take longer to achieve; and “red” actions which rely on other parties and may take even longer to implement. Highlights from the day and a commitment to delivering key actions has also been published to all tenants in Medway’s Housing Matters magazine, and there is a regular post promoting the SSHS campaign on housing services Facebook page.

“The Pioneer Traveller programme would assist the Council to explore with staff, tenants and contractors the issues that stigma has not only on our relationship with tenants, the wider implications to housing services and the community, and the connection between stigma and reluctance to engage in wider services.”



Whilst time, resources, funding and competing priorities are challenges, Housing and Homelessness Portfolio Holder since July 2024, Councillor Louwella Prenter, is supportive of the Social Housing Stigma action plan and wants progress regularly reported to her.

Key learning points from the case study

- **Stigma in a smaller more community focussed area** - the comparatively smaller scale and more focussed geographical scale, the community nature of the area and the Council's links to the community, means that social housing stigma occurs and impacts in different ways than it might do elsewhere.
- **Areas particularly affected by stigma** - there are areas that are potentially particularly affected by social housing stigma and housing services are using "heat maps" where complaints and other issues are arising to drive a particular attention in those areas.
- **Linking stigma to existing programmes** - despite time, resources and competing agenda challenges, housing services are confident that they can address issues raised in the action plan by linking them to existing programmes.



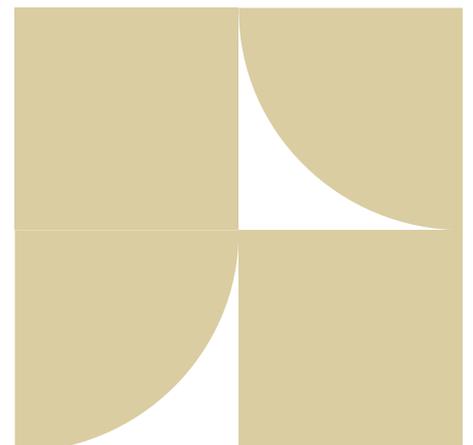
Thirteen Housing Group

Thirteen Housing Group own and manage over 36,000 homes in the North-East, Yorkshire and Humber regions. With most of their homes being available for rent by low-income people, Thirteen also has an ongoing development programme of new homes (650 in 2024/25 and 550 anticipated in 2025/26) that includes shared ownership homes. Thirteen also provides homes and services for older people or for others to live independently, including extra care schemes for older people, support for young people to live independently, homes for people with learning disabilities, support for children leaving care and people leaving prison. Thirteen also supports its residents and communities by helping people into work, supporting people affected by domestic abuse and providing a refugee resettlement service.

Thirteen enjoys comparatively good Tenant Satisfaction Measures, recording an overall satisfaction rating of 77% in 2023/24 rising to 78% in 2024/25; satisfaction that Thirteen listens to its tenants' views and acts on them rising from 67% in 2023/24 to 68% in 2024/25; with tenants considering that Thirteen treats tenants fairly and with respect dipping from 80% in 2023/24 to 79% in 2024/25 (although still both percentages are high). Thirteen have also recently been awarded the highest ratings possible from the Regulator of Social Housing including in respect of tenant services (a C1 judgement). In celebrating this achievement, Chief executive Matt Forrest particularly notes Thirteen's commitment to ensuring that residents "have a real voice in helping us to shape our services."

Head of Touchpoints (Thirteen's resident services team) Adele McLaren explained that Thirteen's residents shape service through five Streams:

- 1 Consumer standards compliance
- 2 Performance/complaints/recommendations
- 3 Repairs/investment
- 4 A Community fund
- 5 Young persons



Each stream has a tenant chair, elected for one year, with the chair of the Consumer Standards Compliance stream recently changing following a tenant election. Stream led meetings are task and finish with a philosophy that “everything is scrutiny”. All streams are open to all residents, but there is a database of 300 of whom approximately 35 regularly participate. There is a Customer Committee (a sub-committee to the Board), which includes three or four residents, whose primary function is resident involvement. As well as this, Tenant Board Member Val Scollen has oversight of all resident involvement activities – having regular dialogue with staff about activities and feeding any relevant issues into the Board.

Adele identified that Thirteen wished to participate in the Pioneer Traveller programme to work alongside SSHS and other landlords, residents and stakeholders – “the programme aligns to our business strategy, priorities and objectives. We want to continue to tackle stigma changing perceptions internally and externally. We want to champion Social Housing Pride and are looking to develop a campaign on Restoring Pride in social housing working with customers and others and our Culture Working Group throughout 2025.”

Thirteen’s Pioneer Traveller workshop, held on 5th December 2024, brought together 10 residents (including Val Scollen and four of the five stream Chairs), 11 Thirteen staff members (including the Executive Director of Customer Service, Director of Experience, Heads of Touchpoint and Experience, Regeneration and Communities, Housing and Investment Planning with members of their teams), and representatives from various partner organisations (including Hartlepool Borough Council and a number of Contractors).

The workshop considered the Journey Planner tickets **Service Delivery** and **Governance**; a range of blue-sky action points were identified in the workshop with Thirteen staff identifying seven strands of activity to take forward:

- Reviewing Thirteen’s “Knowing Tenants” programme
- Ensuring Thirteen are not providing residents with “drivel & promises”
- Developing a “would your mam & gran be proud of you” culture
- Ensuring that the information we capture is shared with residents and is consistent
- Reviewing complaints handling and information annually with residents with a view to building confidence amongst residents to make complaints
- Involving tenants generally, and specifically those who have made complaints, in discussions about lessons learnt
- Using and embedding a remedy recommendation tracker

Adele identified that Thirteen colleagues will meet with residents and other staff every four weeks to discuss and review actions under the agreed strands with residents ranking priorities for each action “our aim is to fully embed these actions over the next nine months before moving on and agreeing the next set of actions with our customers”.

The programme aligns to our business strategy, priorities and objectives. We want to continue to tackle stigma changing perceptions internally and externally. We want to champion Social Housing Pride and are looking to develop a campaign on Restoring Pride in social housing working with customers and others and our Culture Working Group throughout 2025.

Adele McLaren,
Head of Touchpoints,
Thirteen Housing



Adele initially identified the challenges of developing long term cultural shift “which can be slow and difficult to measure”, Government policy inconsistencies, resource constraints, and difficulties in assessing and measuring success in tackling stigma. However, as well as this, senior level changes at Thirteen since the Pioneer Traveller workshop – three Executive Directors leaving, including the Executive Director of Customer Services, who had particularly championed the involvement of tenants and this particular project - had meant that some action points had had to be held in abeyance as the new leadership team bedded in.

Nonetheless, Adele highlighted that the Pioneer Traveller workshop had increased awareness and understanding of stigma; had further empowered residents - “the session and subsequent actions have ensured that customers can be heard, their opinions valued, and has provided a safe platform for individuals to share lived experiences”; had encouraged new residents to participate in shaping services as well as talking about stigma; had challenged stereotypes amongst staff and contractors attending leading to ongoing constructive conversations; had led to an ongoing commitment to change through training, community outreach or policy reviews; and Executive level commitment to attending SSHS’s Parliamentary launch – demonstrating “a company-wide commitment to tackling stigma and not just sitting within front line or customer experience teams”.

Tenant and an attendee at the Pioneer Traveller workshop Jacqui Sunley concluded that “being a part of Thirteen’s journey as a Pioneer Traveller has highlighted even further the value in listening to customers and acting on their concerns. That’s why it’s so important to ensure there’s a simple, accessible way to provide feedback and I’m pleased to be supporting a piece of work to help build trust and give people the confidence to speak up. All customer feedback is incredibly valuable to continually make things better for everyone.”

***“Being a part of Thirteen’s journey as a Pioneer Traveller has highlighted even further the value in listening to customers and acting on their concerns. That’s why it’s so important to ensure there’s a simple, accessible way to provide feedback and I’m pleased to be supporting a piece of work to help build trust and give people the confidence to speak up.*”**

Jacqui Sunley
Tenant and an attendee



Key learning points from the case study

- **Using the Journey Planner where performance and satisfaction ratings are high** - even where performance is acknowledged as good and where satisfaction ratings are comparatively high, the use of the Journey Planner can enhance and further develop already effective resident involvement structures and can help to generate an anti-stigma culture. In fact, satisfaction ratings may be high because Thirteen chose not to be complacent and rest on their laurels of good performance.
- **The Journey Planner, Consumer Standards and meaningful relationships** - the Journey Planner can provide a “firm foundation in creating the right environment for meeting the Regulatory Consumer Standards and more meaningful customer relationships, better services and a stronger culture of accountability”
- **Progressing stigma actions where there is significant change in landlord staff** - following the Pioneer Traveller workshop, Thirteen’s leadership team is going through significant change. The flexibility of the Journey Planner approach means that significant landlord change does not mean that the core of the anti-stigma ethos developed before and during the Pioneer Traveller workshop will not be progressed despite the changes.
- **Progressing meaningful and manageable action points** - Thirteen have agreed with their residents to develop a practical set of meaningful and manageable action points and to develop further action points when circumstances permit.



Greatwell Homes

Established through the transfer of Wellingborough Borough Council's homes in 2007, Greatwell Homes owns approximately 5,000 homes in Wellingborough, Northampton and surrounding villages. Primarily providing urban rented social housing, including some independent living schemes for over 55s and some homes in rural areas, the association also provides some market rent, shared ownership, Rent Plus and Rent to Buy homes. With a small development programme, the association caters to an 82% white British tenant base with small numbers of Black or Black British diversities and tenants of a broad age spectrum.

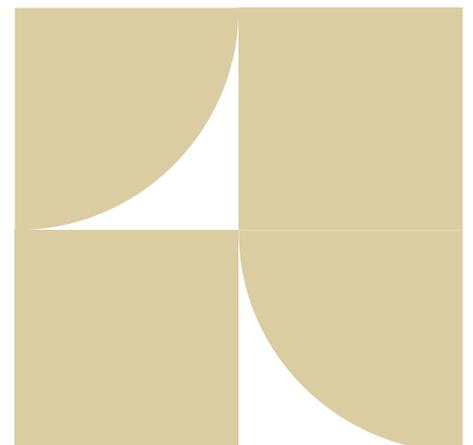
Greatwell's 2024/2025 TSMs show steadily increasing and comparatively high tenant satisfaction in all areas measured, with an overall satisfaction rating of 80%; 71% satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenants' views and acts on them; and 84% considering that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect.

The greatest increases were in repairs and other service delivery. Customer Involvement Manager Lizzie Brown said that this was in part due to a new Head of Property Services who had been "really pushing customer engagement and generating adult conversations". She had been seeking also to introduce more flexibility and proactivity to the repairs service, albeit alongside budgetary challenges.

A new Customer Assurance Committee, a sub-committee to the Board, with places for four tenants to sit alongside two Board members spearheads Greatwell's tenant engagement. It receives assurance reports from the Customer Assembly, which tracks scrutiny, complaints and compliance with the Consumer Standards. The ten tenants on the Assembly consider a community grants fund and monitor actions and work customer involvement programmes. More tenants are involved through one or two annual task and finish scrutiny programmes. Finally, Together Greatwell was set up two years ago as a different more organic way to engage tenants and to celebrate diversity.

Greatwell's involvement as a Pioneer Traveller came from a Board discussion led by the chair of the Customer Assembly. Recognising the challenge of defining stigma, Greatwell were keen to participate in the Pioneer Traveller programme to help them identify potential stigma in the organisation and to de-stigmatise policies and procedures and the culture of the organisation as necessary.

Recognising the challenge of defining stigma, Greatwell were keen to participate in the Pioneer Traveller programme to help them identify potential stigma in the organisation and to de-stigmatise policies and procedures and the culture of the organisation as necessary.



Attended by the Executive Director, the Community Involvement Manager and her team, the Customer Experience Manager, the Head of Property Service and Compliance, the Gas Safety Manager, the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, two tenants involved in scrutiny and co-creation projects and one tenant from the Customer Assembly, the Pioneer Traveller workshop was held on 6th December 2024 and focussed on the **Tenants Leading Change** and **Repairs** tickets.

The Tenants Leading Change discussion led to blue sky action points focussing on developing strategic involvement in customer involvement, training for customers and staff, and communications. Some action points refocussed or reinforced existing Greatwell programmes, with some new activities developed alongside those programmes. The repairs discussion identified several action points, including flexible appointments, alongside actions to support Greatwell's 'What Makes and Excellent Repairs Service' Co-Creation project and the development of a new Customer Involvement Policy. Most of these action points will become part of the second phase Repairs Co-Creation programme already under development.

Action points that were not developed further were ones that were either included as part of other action points or already being implemented (such as involving tenants in recruitment). The action plan was presented to customer and staff at an awayday where those participating said it "looks good". Customer Assembly Chair Pete Allington said "I am so pleased to see that at long last the stigma attached to being a social tenant is being recognised and tackled in such a positive way. The action plan is a positive step towards raising awareness regarding such a divisive and unfair situation. Greatwell Homes are setting a fine example to other organisations by getting involved in the efforts towards eradicating this ridiculous prejudice".

Lizzie Brown commented - "Having the time to discuss repairs and tenants leading change with customers and staff enabled us to identify what stigma meant to us and how customers feel during different interactions. We have created an action plan that links to other projects we are delivering to ensure the actions are not treated as separate actions to be ticked off but are considered alongside other service improvements with customers. We will now have a wider customer involvement tracker so that staff and customers can review, challenge and recognise the impact of this work".

Lizzie went on to identify available resources as a challenge, but she considered that delivering actions alongside other existing or planned projects "means the pull-on resources will be minimised". She further recognised that changes to culture and engrained attitudes will take time - "what we have agreed to do so far will take a year to implement. We will look at further Journey Planner tickets - stigma has built up over years and years and will take a long time to fully understand and break down".

Customer Assembly member Lilian Emokpae said, "it's fantastic to see Greatwell Homes taking a stand against the stigma surrounding social housing tenants, this is such an important step forward". Customer Assembly member Gareth Webb added "the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign is a real positive move. It's inclusion really opens doors to make anyone from all backgrounds feel heard and valued, giving a better understanding to the organisation about the real concerns and obstacles faced by people in social housing, as well as breaking the narrative and stigma of social housing. It's a project and organisation I'm proud to be involved with".

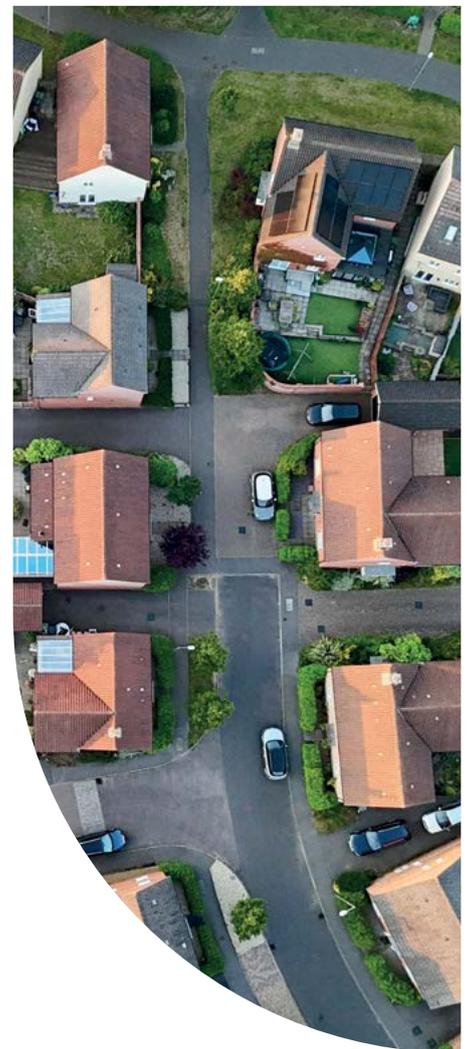
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Lilian Emokpae,
Customer Assembly member



Key learning points from the case study

- **The Journey Planner in a landlord with strong resident involvement**
- using the Journey Planner in a landlord which is already performing well in terms of tenant involvement helps to build tackling stigma into existing or planned tenant involvement and other service improvement programmes
- **Developing stigma action points into existing or planned programmes** - Developing tackling stigma action points into existing or planned programmes provides the potential that action points will become more embedded into the culture and operations of the organisation, and that resources used to tackle stigma may be minimised
- **It is necessary to revisit stigma discussions over and over again**
- stigma has been built into social housing over many decades. Tackling engrained attitudes and culture is a long journey. Journey Planner type discussions will need to be revisited repeatedly with different tenants, staff and others.



London Borough of Croydon

London's southernmost borough, the London Borough of Croydon owns 16,000 homes (13,500 rented; 2,300 leased). Croydon faces significant challenges housing the 8,000 applicants on their housing register, many of them vulnerable. In 2021, Croydon was the most populous borough in London with approximately 390,800 residents, but it has fewer social housing homes than many other London boroughs, resulting in some residents living in emergency, or temporary accommodation for many years in some cases.

A significant proportion of the population are from a black, asian or other minority ethnic background, a higher percentage are aged 65 or over than the London average, and nearly a quarter of the population are aged 17 or under, suggesting that demand for housing is likely to increase in the future.

In 2025, following housing service improvements, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has recently lifted a breach notice it had previously served on Croydon. In 2021, following Croydon referring itself to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) as a result of an independent report into conditions at Regina Road, a high-rise council owned block, the RSH found the council to be in breach of regulatory standards in respect of home conditions and listening to and engaging with its tenants. As a result, Croydon's independent Housing Improvement Board (HIB) was established to provide feedback to the leadership on the Council's progress in delivering the Housing Improvement Plan the Council committed to following their regulatory judgement.

The Housing Improvement Plan has a strong emphasis on resident engagement, service quality, governance, and regulatory compliance. A new Customer Influence and Assurance Panel (CIAP), consisting of 10 tenants and 2 leaseholders was established and is responsible for providing oversight, challenge, and assurance on how the Housing service listens to and acts on resident feedback. They help shape policies, scrutinise service delivery, and ensure that residents' voices are at the heart of decision-making. There are several ways for residents to shape the housing service including an array of task and finish groups, mystery shopping, resident associations and panels, and specific programmes to engage with those residents with lived experience of a particular service. This has led to various changes – including complaints handling up to review stage and grounds maintenance now being delivered through Croydon's housing services (rather than through the Council's generic services), better liaison with tenants generally, improved services, alongside resident-led regeneration work on Regina Road, including fire safety upgrades, energy efficiency improvements, and refurbishments of communal spaces.



This is starting to improve tenant perceptions. As a result of a complaints review involving many tenants, satisfaction with complaints handling has improved from 18% to 33%. A year ago, it was challenging to get tenants to engage at all but now 300 applicants have joined the CIAP. The improvements made through the Housing Improvements Plan have now resulted in the RSH lifting the breach notice for Croydon.

However, Croydon has yet to tackle decades of mistrust, with the perspective of many being “what’s the point – you never listen anyway”. It will take time to improve Croydon’s 2024, 53% overall satisfaction rating; its 43% satisfaction with listening to tenants and acting on their views; and 58% of residents who consider that they are treated fairly and with respect.

Against this backdrop, Resident Involvement Manager, Sue Edgerley told us that “we wanted to participate as a Pioneer Traveller to better understand the lived experience of our tenants, particularly how they feel they are seen and heard by housing services. The aim was to identify ways to improve how we listen, engage and respond, with a specific focus on stigma, service access, and communication. The programme offered a valuable opportunity to reflect on how we can challenge and change attitudes, both culturally and operationally”.

Held on 27th March 2025, the Pioneer Traveller workshop focussed on the **Hearing Every Voice** Journey Planner ticket and brought residents (one of them CIAP’s Vice Chair) together with the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes, the Director of Housing Management, Heads of Repairs and Estates, contract managers, the Resident Involvement team, and representatives from Croydon’s four contractors.

With the session being held late in the Journey Planner programme, Croydon have acted quickly to consider the resulting action points from the session, which include:

- more visible participation from senior staff, directors, and political leaders
- improving how tenants’ rights are explained and how the Residents’ Charter is promoted
- reviewing how appointments are made and monitored, especially with contractors
- increasing presence on estates, including exploring resident ambassador roles
- developing anti-stigma training for staff and embedding it in induction
- improving how tenant issues are responded to and followed through

Sue Edgerley commented that she feels “the programme has laid the groundwork for us to understand what is required to begin to tackle stigma. It sparked honest conversations, challenged assumptions, and provided resident-led insight that we can now build into practical improvements. There are many actions that will take time to implement but are important and will be made priorities. The session helped uncover specific areas where tenants feel unheard or stereotyped, and where services unintentionally create barriers. It has created a stronger sense of shared ownership between staff and residents, with clear areas for service improvement being acknowledged more openly”.

Stigma is a mark of disgrace – and for those of us in social housing, it often means being seen and treated negatively.

Les Parry,
Tenant



Tenant Les Parry commented “Stigma is a mark of disgrace — and for those of us in social housing, it often means being seen and treated negatively. That was the case in Croydon five to ten years ago. But things have changed. Now, we are treated with respect and our voices are heard but still stigma continues. The Stop Social Housing Stigma’s trailblazer session shows a way forward in educating the wider community. It was delivered to a professional and meaningful standard”. Tenant Ramona Beckford stated that it was “an informative and engaging session enabling Croydon residents to work with officers and contractors to look at the root causes for stigmatisation of social housing tenants and ways of tackling it. The session allowed contribution from residents affected by stigma as well those who are able to influence changes to improve the morale of tenants. We look forward to seeing the real results of the session”.

They highlighted that while the workshop was well-delivered, the presence of more staff and contractors than tenants suggested a lack of balance, and they strongly advocated for greater tenant-only spaces to ensure authentic voices are heard. They considered that more focus groups led by and for residents are needed to tackle issues like stigma and ensure authentic engagement.

Residents generally felt the action plan was promising and included important areas of focus, it emphasised the need for genuine resident-led initiatives, particularly from those with lived experience in social housing and temporary accommodation.

Key learning points from the case study

- **The Journey Planner and long-term mistrust** - Journey Planner sessions can be catalysts for change where a landlord is tackling long term mistrust. They are intended to initiate an ongoing collaboration, a cultural dialogue that needs to be taken forward in ways that work for tenants.
- **Compliance with Regulatory Standards** - Engaging with the Journey Planner can be part of a landlord’s approach to compliance with Regulatory Standards. For tenants, it delivers more than fairness and respect and enables coproduction in defining and delivering organisation culture which will lead to actions to build trust and respect between tenants, landlords, contractors and others.
- **Continued leadership visibility and endorsement is vital**—without it, tackling stigma risks being seen as a one-off initiative rather than a strategic priority.
- **Embedding anti-stigma work** into governance discussions, performance reviews and contractor partnerships helps to maintain momentum and support long-term cultural change with other tickets to be reviewed and actions plans to be made in the future, to maintain the anti-stigma journey.

Appendix One

Partners to the project

a. The partners to this project:

i. **the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign**

The SSHS committee:

Lynne Brosnan - **Chair**

Yaw Boetang - **Vice Chair**

Sally Trueman - **Secretary**

Fiona Brown - **Treasurer**

Nigel Bowness

Joseph Deville

Pam Hankinson

Pauline Hardmann

Nigel Hickmott

Nasir Hussain

Becci James

Colin Lincoln

Jim Martin

Keith Playell

Barbara Seacombe

Sarah Simmonds

Nic Bliss - **SSHS Campaign Director**

ii. **Chartered Institute of Housing**

Sarah Davis - **Senior Policy & Practice Officer**

iii. **Durham University Business School**

Dr Mercy Denedo - **Associate Professor in Accounting**

iv. **Sheffield Hallam University**

Professor Amanze Ejiogu - **Professor of Accounting, Society and Accountability**

v. **TPAS**

Jenny Osbourne MBE - **Chief Executive Director**

Caritas Charles - **Policy and Insight Manager**

vi. **YD Consultants**

Yvonne Davies





Stigma and Social Housing in England: Feedback on the consultation responses

Marcy Denodo & Amanze Ejiogu



<https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/research/centres/centre-for-organisations-and-society/research-profile/case-studies/stigma-and-social-housing-consultation-report/>

The ending social housing stigma journey planner

The ending social housing stigma journey planner is an attempt to capture the growing body of thinking about ending housing stigma in public housing and landlords everywhere to think carefully about how to address the problem.

The journey planner is a framework for tenants and landlords to use to plan out a journey to tackle stigma. It aims to help landlords comply with various parts of the new Customer Regulatory Standards for Registered Provider landlords. The journey planner will particularly assist tenants and landlords to work together to define what it means to comply with the standards to best tenants' business and respect. It is also anticipated that the journey planner could contribute positively to:

- i) Improving the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that Registered Provider landlords are required to collect
- ii) The shared intention of the forthcoming Competence and Conduct Standard of achieving significant cultural change to tackle social housing stigma.

What is social housing stigma?

Stigma in Social Housing takes on various forms. Various earlier research has set out how social housing tenants are affected by stigma. It is important that experiences and what can be done about it. Our current research has too added to the growing body of knowledge.

Below are some of the things said by tenants, assembled during this research (out of many interviews). They illustrate what social housing stigma is (experiences in tenancy are comments that tenants have said they have heard staff or contractors say):

- It's a culture of superiority
- They're only tenants... what do they know that for?
- We know what's best for you.
- We are the professional partner... it's a culture of disrespect and distrust.
- It's a hostile environment... it's a pretend engagement... it's not meaningful.
- There's a lack of accountability... a dismissive culture.
- Landlords find ways to not talk to you seriously.
- You're getting the respect... what are you complaining about?
- What about if another tenant has a repair appointment? They're just tenants - they haven't got anything better to do than wait for us.

* "Housing professionals and agents" (Ejiogu and Denodo, 2019). "It is the idea of Stigma in Housing: Stigma in Social Housing" (Denodo and Ejiogu, 2019) and "Social Housing Stigma: A Review of the Evidence" (Denodo and Ejiogu, 2019).
 * A survey, which gathered responses from 268 social housing tenants, 63 housing professionals and 6 contractors, on 14 housing issues with social housing tenants, housing professionals and contractors.

<https://stopsocialhousingstigma.org/journeyplanner/>