

# Stigma and Social Housing in England

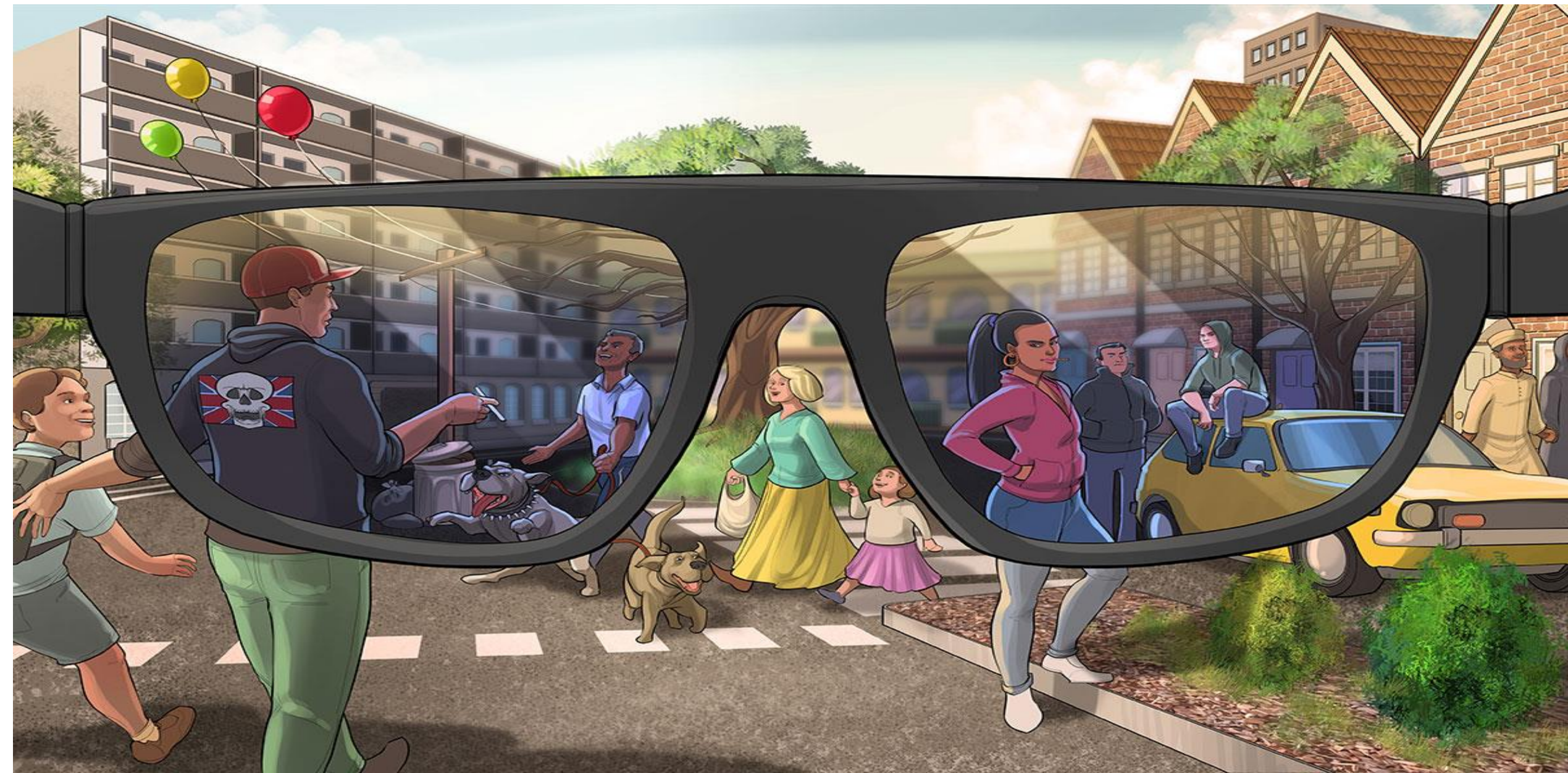
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# Stigma and Social Housing in England

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Source: Inside Housing

# Objectives

- To develop an in-depth understanding of how stigma is constructed, experienced and challenged in social housing in England.
  - ✓ **How actors in the social housing sector in England (tenants, politicians, registered providers etc) contribute to the construction of stigma.**
  - ✓ **How tenants (and other actors) have experienced stigma and its impacts on them.**
  - ✓ **How social housing stigma is being challenged**

# Methods

- Analysis of documentary archives, press archives and oral history (from interviews, audio and video archives)
- Exploring the social media campaigns of advocacy organisations, practitioners and professional bodies on Twitter and Facebook aimed at challenging stigma in social housing
- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups
  - 45 individual interviews and 29 focus groups with over 200 participants

# Constructing Stigma in Social Housing

- Pre 1970

## Social Housing History

The early history of social housing in Britain

[HOME](#)

[THE VICTORIAN AGE](#)

[THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL](#)

[POST WW1](#)

[LESSONS LEARNT](#)

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Homes Fit for Heroes

# Constructing Stigma in Social Housing

- **Pre 1979**

- By 1969, about 34% of the population lived in social housing
- View started to develop that social housing was subsidised and therefore residents were *'getting something on the cheap'*
- issues of anti-social behaviour started to emerge in social housing estates, which were linked to the planning and construction of the estates.

# Constructing Stigma in Social Housing

- **Post 1970**

- Politicians, Policies and Politics

- ✓ Promoting home ownership, right to buy, residualization

- ✓ Stigmatizing to justify policies e.g. welfare reforms

- Media

- Social Housing Providers

- Absence of Tenant Voice

# Complexity of Social Housing Stigma

- **Intersectionality**

- Drugs and Crime
- Mental Health and Disabilities
- Poverty, Benefits, Employment and Class
- Race and Immigration

- **Variations**

- Regional Variations
- Generational Variations





# Experiencing Social Housing Stigma

- Stigma has practical consequences for social housing tenants. It intrudes into their everyday lives, impacting their quality of life and life chances. We highlighted several aspects and examples of this:
  - Social Housing Providers & their Contractors
  - Police
  - GP
  - Council
  - Postcode stigma
  - Work
  - Education
  - Poor Doors
  - Homeowners and Neighbours

# Challenging Stigma

- Planning and Regeneration
- Staff Training and Tenant Engagement
- Protest and Arts
- Counter-Narrative

**SEE THE PERSON.**  
#BenefitToSociety

## A-side B-side Gallery

352 Mare Street, London, E8 1HR

### The Poor Door

Event



'Yellow Curtain' by Lee Maelzer

The Poor Door exhibition is an arena for debate and discussion surrounding the housing crisis, an opportunity to challenge the status quo and to campaign for change through visual language including painting, photography, sculpture and performance. The title is inspired by the furore over the development at One Commercial Street in Aldgate, which was built with two separate entrances. Luxury marble floors, chandeliers and concierge for the wealthy city workers, and a side-alley door for the 'affordable' housing tenants. The Poor Door is a growing trend in new housing developments in London, but this divisive phenomena seems reminiscent of the Victorian era.

"In a civilization frankly materialistic and based upon property, not soul, it is inevitable that property shall be exalted over soul" – Jack London *The People of the Abyss*

#### Artists

Alison Berry, Rebecca Byrne, Tinsel Edwards, Mars Gomes, Kin, Lee Maelzer, Reena Makwana, S.P.A.R (with Brian Guest courtesy of Calum F Kerr), Tom Rizutto, Julia Russell.

#### Curators

Tinsel Edwards

# Recommendations

## **Policy and political arena:**

- Government needs to adopt a rights based approach to housing which views access to affordable housing as a fundamental human right. Taking housing as a fundamental human right seriously would entail a complete rethink of the purpose of social housing and more particularly:
  - Moving away from policies of residualization of social housing and the promotion of home ownership as a more superior tenure than renting.
  - Acute shortage of safe and affordable housing has been used as a tool to stigmatize social housing residents. There is a need for investment in social housing to drive significant increase in social housing stock.
- Politicians need to stop their use of stigmatizing language and rhetoric in relation to social housing.
  - Recognize the intersection of social housing stigma with other stigmas and develop policy measures, which take a holistic approach to challenging stigma.
- **Social housing sector:**
  - Creation of a strong tenant voice at national, regional and local levels.
  - Redesigning the regulatory and governance arrangements of social housing providers to make social housing providers more accountable to tenants.
- **Media**
  - Balanced and fairer reporting of social housing

# Consultation Questions

- To achieve meaningful change, there needs to be honest and spirited engagement around these issues by all stakeholders in the social housing sector
  - What should the purpose of social housing be?
  - Should access to affordable housing be recognized as a fundamental human right and who should have access to it?
  - How can we encourage politicians to limit/stop their use of stigmatizing language and rhetoric in relation to social housing?
  - How can we encourage the media to be more balanced and fairer in their reporting of social housing?
  - How can we create a stronger and more effective tenant voice at the local and national levels?
  - How can we make social housing providers more accountable to tenants?
  - How can we build a sustainable and inclusive social housing system devoid of stigma?