Dissertation – *How can the stigma associated with social housing in the UK be overcome?*

Michael Guest

MSc. (Distinction) Housing Studies awarded by De Montfort University – February 2020

Abstract

Social housing plays an essential role in both the housing and social environment in the UK; however, there is an unwarranted stigma attached to this type of housing.

The aim of this research was to investigate ways in which to address this stigma. Its objectives were to understand the theoretical and conceptual aspects of stigma in the community, and to explore the role played by social housing in the UK, including the background to such housing and the impacts of government policy. This research also considers factors underpinning the stigma of social housing and compares this with stigma in another sector: mental health. The primary purpose of the study was to identify ways in which the stigma associated with this vital form of housing can be removed.

The research began with a critical and detailed review of pertinent literature encompassing academic studies and industry publications. Primary data were then collected from a survey conducted with participants in the social housing sector. Analysis of the data indicates that the stigma linked to social housing is underpinned by poor levels of investment and a belief that, as a form of accommodation, social housing is a last resort used largely by people who are perceived as workless. This perception is reinforced by the media. Drawing on lessons from mental health, the

solution is to change public perceptions through both government leadership and the media.

Word count = 12,535 (excluding Abstract, Acknowledgements, Key Words, Table of Contents, List of Figures and Tables, References, and Appendices)

Acknowledgements:

I very much appreciate the participation of the six interviewees who contributed to the primary research. Thank you for their time and thought.

Very many thanks to Dr. Tim Brown for his advice and feedback both as a module tutor and supervisor during the development of this dissertation. So much appreciated. Also to Rob Brown during the first part of the programme, together with Associate Professor Ros Lishman, Dr Yoric Irving-Clarke and Dr. Peter King as such good tutors in the second part. A great team.

Key words

Stigma, Social Housing, UK.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

1. Introduction

Housing is a basic human need: according to the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI, 2020), everyone has the right to a form of housing that provides secure, safe, affordable, and habitable shelter. NESRI further argues that it is the "government's obligation to guarantee that everyone can exercise this right to live in security, peace, and dignity", and that this right should be provided to all persons irrespective of income or economic resources. In the UK, there are three types of housing tenure: owner-occupation, renting in the private sector, and social housing, the latter of which consists of council housing and accommodation provided by housing associations (Power and Provan, 2016). Each form of tenure plays a role in providing shelter for households in the community; however, there is a stigma associated with social housing that has had negative impacts on social housing communities (Lund 2019).

According to the Local Government Association (LGA, 2019), the concept of social housing was first introduced in England in the 'Addison' Act 1919. Its aim was to

provide housing for all segments of the population and to ensure every person has access to housing. However, Lund (2019) argues that, over the past five decades, there has been a shift in political attitudes towards social housing that has resulted in a decline in the supply and quality of this type of housing. The social housing sector has also been adversely affected by government policy. For instance, since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government first assumed power in 2010, there have been significant changes to both the social welfare and housing systems: social welfare payments and housing allowances have been tightened, with restrictions placed on the accessibility of social housing. The result has been a growing crisis in social housing, with an estimated 130,000 families in England forced to live in overcrowded one-bedroom flats and converted office blocks. The new Conservative government has pledged its commitment to substantial spending on the National Health Service (NHS) and the Police; however, little has been said about the shortage of housing and the crisis in social housing. It is believed that the current government will continue to promote the idea of home ownership, focusing on the provision of affordable housing, and will ignore the affordability problem affecting lower-income households. Concern has also expressed about the safety of social housing and the rhetoric, accompanied by minimal action, regarding tenant involvement in the decision-making process (Dudman, 2019).

This research explores the stigma associated with social housing and seeks to identify methods in which this form of exclusion can be understood and addressed. It was chosen as the topic for this dissertation because of a) its concern for the researcher (who is engaged in the sector) and b) its topicality, particularly post-Grenfell and with a proposed Government White Paper, which has been further reinforced by events that occurred in 2019 to mark 100 years of Council Housing.

The purpose of this chapter is to set the research in context, establish a clear aim and set of objectives, and provide signposting for the research report. Throughout the research the terms England and the UK are used interchangeably. This is not uncommon, as illustrated by research conducted by the London School of Economics (LSE): for example, Scanlon et al.'s (2015) work on the buy-to-let sector in the UK. Focusing on social housing in England rather than the wider UK is justified by the fact that this form of tenure has greater government support in Scotland, as evidenced by the abolition of the right-to-buy scheme, higher levels of investment in social housing,

and a better track record with regard to intervening in social housing that does not meet the required operational or quality standards (Wheatley Group, n.d.). Consequently, there is less stigma surrounding social housing in Scotland than there is in England.

1.1. Housing in the UK

In a democratic country with a free market economy, it is difficult to ensure that every person can afford a property; that said, the government has a duty to provide suitable alternative accommodation for those in need of temporary housing, those who cannot afford market rates, and the most vulnerable in society (Van Bueren, 2016). The housing sector is, however, complicated with supply and demand linked to a range of factors, from the national economy and income levels to taxation, the availability of credit and debt financing, and population growth. This has created gaps between supply and demand and bubbles in the market whereby the cost of housing in the UK has outstripped affordability levels (Wilson and Barton, 2018).

To set this crisis in context, for the foreseeable future, an estimated 320,000 houses will be needed in England every year to meet the demands of a growing population and the changing ways in which people live (Wilson and Barton, 2018). The impacts of this shortage have been well-documented, with Van Bueren (2016) suggesting that a lack of affordable housing is increasing the level of homelessness in England. This assertion is supported by Shelter (2019), which estimates there are currently 320,000 homeless people in Great Britain, largely centred in major urban areas such as London and Manchester. Other effects of the housing crisis include the fact that numerous people who would have formerly lived in the private rental sector whilst saving for a property can no longer afford to do so. The only option available to them is social housing. At the same time, there is a limited quantity of such housing available, which increases the waiting lists for these properties (Wilson and Barton, 2018). Although this dire need for social housing is perceived as an important safety net for society, it has been residualised and is viewed in negative terms as a last resort (Tunstall and Pleace, 2018; Hastings, 2004). In short, the stigma associated with social housing has negatively affected the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of individuals and communities living in such housing (Watt, 2008).

1.2. Stigmatisation

Parker (2012) contends that to stigmatise someone is to treat them unfairly and with disapproval. He notes that there is a large body of research on the concept of stigma, most of which is health-related as stigmatisation can contribute to illness and adversely affect treatment. However, there is also a growing realisation that stigma may be associated with poverty, ethnicity, and sexual preferences. Such stigmatisation results in marginalisation and social disadvantage.

Stigma is often linked to a particular characteristic or attribute, such as cultural background, disability, or a mental illness. It can be detrimental to an individual's wellbeing. For example, in terms of mental health, stigmatisation can exacerbate such problems, leading to feelings of hopelessness and isolation, and reducing opportunities for social interaction or employment (Victoria State Government, 2019). Stigmatisation is generally viewed negatively by society and may be perceived as a form of racism or discrimination. In fact, there is a piece of legislation that prohibits such attitudes and practices in England (HM Government 2010). However, regardless of the exclusionary nature of stigmatisation, there also appears to be a tacit acceptance of this type of behaviour at all levels of society with respect to social housing (Watt, 2008; Raynor et al., 2020).

This thesis therefore argues that exclusionary behaviour is unacceptable in contemporary society, and that the problem warrants further investigation.

1.3. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research was to identify ways in which the stigma of social housing in the UK can be overcome. Its objectives were to:

- Understand the theoretical and conceptual aspects of stigma in the community
- Explore the role of social housing in the UK, including the background to such housing and the impacts of government policy
- Consider the factors underpinning the stigma associated with social housing
- Compare the stigma of social housing with stigma in other sectors, such as mental health
- Determine ways of removing the stigma of social housing

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

This research comprises six chapters, with Chapter 2 - Literature Review - presenting a critical review of pertinent literature to set this study in context and identify the gaps in current knowledge that need to be addressed. Chapter 3 – Methodology – presents the rationale for the research design, including a justification for each of the options selected in each stage of the research. The data are then presented and analysed in Chapter 4 - Results with analysis - and the findings are discussed in Chapter 5 - Discussion. Finally, Chapter 6 - Conclusions and Recommendations - revisits the findings of the study, draws overall conclusions, and proposes avenues for further research on this topic.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this critical review is to determine the level of existing knowledge on this subject in order to set the research in context.

2.1. Search Strategy

The literature reviewed in the following sections was identified through a strategic search of scientific and academic databases. The process began with a broad search of Google Scholar, using terms such as “stigma in social housing”, “stigma + social housing”, and “social and economic disadvantages of social housing tenants”. This led to the identification of several academic sources on this topic, such as the *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* and *Housing Studies.* A detailed search of each journal was then performed using similar search terms and by limiting the search to papers published in the last decade (2009 to 2019) and written in English. This returned a significant number of papers. Each abstract was then reviewed to identify the papers most relevant to this research. The final selection of papers and studies were then read and analysed thoroughly, the results of which are presented in the following sections.

2.2. Theoretical and Conceptual Aspects of Stigma in the Community

According to Goffman (1963), stigma is a process or situation that disqualifies an individual from social acceptance because they are different and thus perceived as tainted and discounted. Parker (2012), however, goes further, arguing that stigmatisation involves a process of devaluation and is inherently discriminatory, reinforcing social inequalities. Phelan et al. (2008) adopt a similar stance, equating stigmatisation with prejudice founded on exploitation and domination and the

enforcement of social norms. The purpose of stigmatisation is therefore that of "keeping people down, keeping people in, and keeping people away" (Phelan et al., 2008, p. 364).

The impacts of stigmatisation are manifested in the exclusion and devaluation of an individual or group of individuals because they are labelled/perceived as different. This can occur in domains such as mental health and in respect to social housing. Stigmatisation can operate at different levels, such as public stigma where society reinforces negative stereotypes through channels such as the media. There can also be self-stigma, where negative societal attitudes reinforce problems of low self-worth (Change Your Mind, 2019). Thus, stigma is underpinned by public perceptions of an individual, a location, or a community.

Goffman (1963) contends that stigma (primarily arising from health issues) can adversely affect mental wellbeing, and that stigmatised individuals can find it difficult to achieve social acceptance, even when the source of the stigma has been removed. In effect, stigmatisation can destroy an individual's identity. Thus, stigma is a social process underpinned by communication and perceived differences between that which is stigmatised and that which is considered normal or standard. Weiss et al. (2006) concur with this assertion, arguing that health-related stigma equates to the social disqualification of individuals, communities, and/or populations who are identified with particular forms of health, ethnicity, sexual preference, or socio-economic status. Notably, those living in social housing are typically in the latter group.

Kearns et al. (2013) interpret such claims as suggesting that stigma is underpinned and driven by social interactions that are based on attitudes founded on the symbolic and physical attributes of the target of such stigmatisation. Stigma is therefore a social interactive process with negative effects. Thus, while an individual can be instrumental in creating their reputation, and can try to change it, such change is dependent on wider socio-cultural change as the attributes of stigma, such as living in a high-rise estate, are harder to change (Kearns et al., 2013). Such theories can be applied directly to social housing, where households and individuals are stigmatised by the public's perception of lower-income groups living within a physically decayed environment.

According to Kearns et al. (2013, p. 579), “all places have identities, but some places also have reputations”, and it is the latter that can add to the stigmatisation of living in social housing. Indeed, most research on the concept of stigma appears to be in the area of public health and mental health. Wassenberg (2004) links image and reputation to stigma, arguing that the public image of a neighbourhood with respect to its popularity can affect its position in the local or regional neighbourhood hierarchy. Areas perceived to be in a state of urban decay have a poor image, and this can lead to stigmatisation of that neighbourhood. A negative image can then lead to a spiral of decay, within which stigma plays a key role by exacerbating the problems that already exist. The residualisation of social housing also creates deprived neighbourhoods with concentrations of socio-economically disadvantaged households, as a result of which residents are socially stigmatised simply for living in this type of area. Thus, stigma is entirely negative, whereas image and reputation can be either negative or positive. That said, a negative image and/or reputation can underpin the stigmatisation of residents and a community (Kearns et al., 2013). Hastings (2004) highlights the long-term implications of stigma, arguing that social housing stigmatisation can impede educational and economic aspirations as well as social opportunities.

Parker (2012, p. 164) concurs with this claim, adding that stigma is a form of prejudice and discrimination which reinforces social inequalities and “structural violence, highlighting relations of power and exclusion that reinforce vulnerability within a complex social and political process”. It is evident from this discourse that there are parallels between those stigmatised for health reasons and those for socio-economic reasons. This is largely because stigmatisation is the result of collective action by a group of people, which – at the same time – increases feelings of inadequacy within the individual, even though the stigma was attached to that individual/group by others.

2.3. Role of Social Housing in the UK

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH 2018a) states that social housing fulfils three different social functions in the UK: the provision of temporary housing for people with acute needs; a safety net providing long-term housing for low-income households who cannot afford market prices; and an affordable form of housing for a range of income groups unable to compete with private housing market prices. The social housing sector makes a positive contribution to community health and wellbeing, can be used to tackle poverty, and helps contribute to the creation of cohesive communities.

2.3.1. Social Housing Post-1945

However, Power and Provan (2016) argue that, despite the social importance of such housing, long-term policies in the UK have slowly eroded investment in this sector. They acknowledge that, from the 1940s to the 1960s, an estimated 2 million homes were demolished, primarily inner-city properties, and replaced with new buildings. At the same time, Housing Associations (HAs) were regulated and encouraged to become another provider of social housing. By the 1980s, subsided HAs had become major providers of new social housing, as shown in Figure 2.1.

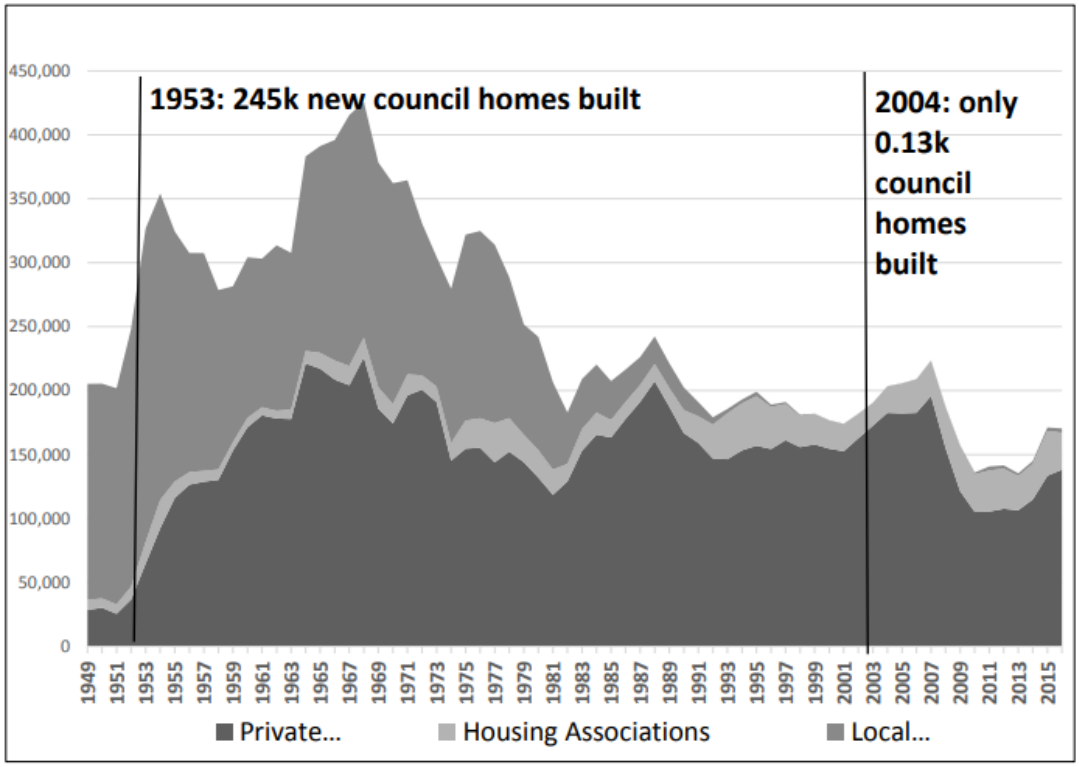

Figure 2.1. Council house building peaked in 1953, then declined to 2004. From 1974, Housing Associations took up some of the slack (Power and Provan, 2016, p. 6, Figure 2).

Around this time, there were also significant policy changes, resulting in legislation that adversely affected the supply and quality of social housing (MacEwen, 2002). By 2016, social housing was clearly in decline, with a corresponding rise in the private rental sector and owner-occupier forms of tenure, as illustrated in Figure 2.2 (Boughton, 2018).

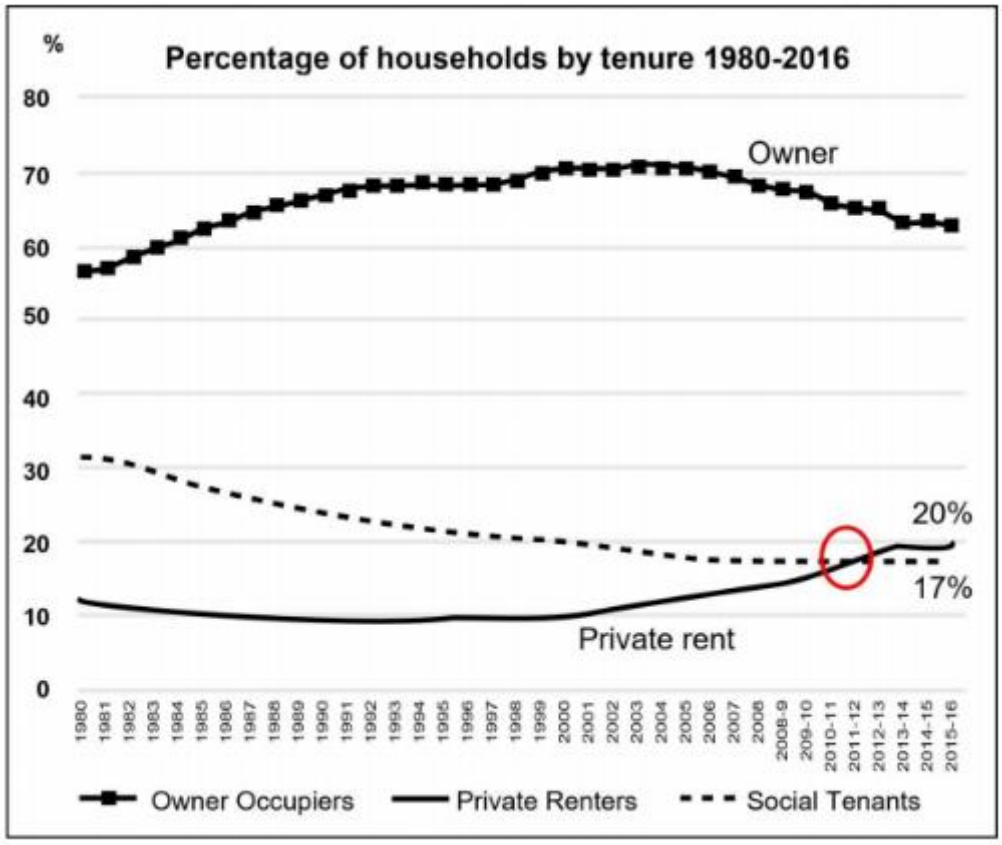

Figure 2.2. Social renting peaked in 1981 at 32%. The private renting market share increased from 1994 and surpassed social renting in 2012 (Power and Provan, 2016, p. 7, Figure 3).

John-Baptiste (2019) explained that in 1919, the concept of social housing was introduced to make Britain a fit country for returning war heroes to live in, with an emphasis on housing standards and the provision of a home for every household. However, there has been a marked change in social attitudes to this form of housing, largely driven by government policy and the belief that if one does not own their own home, this merits disapproval. This belief has also been reinforced by television programmes, such as “Shameless”, which convey an impression of worklessness, criminality, and violence among those living in social housing. This has created a sense of shame and unease in people who live in social housing, and a concern that others will find out.

Therefore, in less than half a century, social housing has moved from being a popular solution to post-war housing crises, providing accommodation for the working class population, to becoming a residualised tenure, perceived as a stigmatised form of

housing for the workless and most vulnerable households (Power and Provan, 2016, p. 15; Boughton, 2018). The introduction of the 1956 Housing Subsidies Act made funds available for slum clearance and provided housing for slum dwellers; at the same time, the rate at which social housing was constructed began to slow. This was further driven by the Housing Act and the Rent Act in 1957, which encouraged increases in rent and allowed local authorities to sell stock (National Archives, 2019).

2.3.2. Modernism, Functionalism, and Ronan Point

Feinstein et al. (2015) explain that the replacement housing reduced space standards and slums were rebuilt as high-density properties on urban sites. These high-rise buildings were founded on the Modernist concept of the functional unit, which sought to create an ordered functional space (Wassenberg, 2013) out of what was previously viewed as chaotic and disorganised slums. Examples of this style include Ronan Point, a high-rise prefabricated building. However, the subsequent collapse of this building following a gas explosion reinforced the view that social housing was poor-quality, thus reinforcing the stigma that to choose such housing was a last resort. The functional layout of these properties also reinforced the negative image of the social housing sector, leading to estates with a wider range of social problems, suggested to be at least partly due to a mass production of space that was consistent with the needs of the community (Harvey, 1989; Wassenberg, 2013). According to Perry and Stephens (2018, p. 31), the Ronan Point disaster catalysed the “debate about the desirability of system building and large, mono-tenure estates”. It had become apparent that funding cuts and a decline in building created forms of social housing that were difficult to let because of social issues. The term ‘sink estates’ emerged, which referred to social housing estates concentrated in areas of economic decline (Perry and Stephens 2018). This further reinforced the stigma associated with social housing.

2.4. Lack of Investment in Social Housing

At the same time, existing local authority housing was ageing and lacked investment, resulting in poor-quality properties that further increased the social stigma associated with social housing. The issue was not helped by an increasing level of government support for owner-occupier forms of housing tenure through policies such as Right to Buy and deregulation of the mortgage market. The clear message conveyed in this era was that everyone should aspire to home ownership (MacEwen, 2002). Feinstein et al. (2015) argue that these policies led to the residualisation of the social housing sector,

and increased tenure stigma. Thus, by the 1990s, the general view was that social housing was second-best (Gurney, 1999).

Inherent and perceived social and economic differences in the social housing sector, compared with other forms of housing tenure, provide a breeding ground for stigma as defined by Goffman (1963), Weiss et al., (2006), and Parker (2012). It can therefore be argued that such stigma has been and continues to be underpinned by policy and investment changes that have combined to reduce the volume, mix, and quality of social housing in the UK (Hastings, 2004; Salter, 2016). The process of stigmatisation is also driven by the media (Kearns et al., 2013; Arthurson et al., 2014).

Moreover, the social housing sector is now facing additional pressure, with CIH (2018a) maintaining that a lack of investment, coupled with an increasing population and stagnant rates of income, has created a gap between supply and demand in the social housing sector. This exerts greater financial pressure on low-income households, increases overcrowding in existing properties, and can adversely affect levels of homelessness. A key issue with social housing is that it is perceived as a last resort housing option (Hastings 2004, p. 233). Given the continued under-investment in social housing stock, the inference is that little will change in relation to the stigmatisation of social housing tenants.

A lack of investment in social housing has also resulted in poor management of this housing. Older social housing estates were designed and built in such a way that there was a concentration of the most disadvantaged communities; over time, a lack of investment has resulted in social polarisation and stigmatisation of these communities. Consequently, those in the “weakest position have ended up allocated to the least desirable housing”, and those with the means to do so have moved out of such areas. The situation is complicated by the lack of social housing; were this to increase, it would be easier to widen the range of economic groups living on these estates (Hills, 2007).

Hills (2007) supports the need for an increased supply of social housing while arguing that it is also imperative to invest in maintenance and upkeep regarding the quality of existing stock. For instance, even if there is an increase in the rate at which new housing in the social sector is built, the likelihood is that existing stock will constitute an estimated 90% of the stock in the next decade. However, the focus of policy debate is on new buildings, thus ignoring the plight of existing tenants. This imbalance reduces

investment in and consideration of existing social housing. The resultant failure to adequately maintain these properties can lead to a decline in neighbourhood conditions and impede the growth of an income mix within the community, increasing the risk of stigmatisation. It is important therefore to understand the extent of stigmatisation in social housing in the UK.

2.5. Factors underpinning the stigma associated with social housing

According to Webb (2018), both social housing tenants and the broader public believe that social housing is negatively stereotyped and stigmatised. However, it is also evident that within the social housing sector there are degrees of stigmatisation: for example, social tenants may take the view that a particular street or estate is full of problem neighbours: as such there is a reluctance to engage with or move to these areas. This links back to the view expressed by Kearns et al. (2013) that communities can build a reputation that then leads to stigmatisation, regardless of the individuals living within that community.

Jacobs et al. (2011) make a similar argument, pointing out that social housing neighbourhoods are viewed not in terms of social inequity but as a factor contributing to social disadvantage. These estates are also commonly perceived as “havens for crime” and “cultures of welfare dependency” (Jacobs et al., 2011, p. 1). Such perceptions can be related to government policies that have forced households into social housing, not out of choice but because they have no other options (Jacobs et al., 2011).

Turner (2018) argues that these views are reinforced by negative media coverage, which for decades has portrayed social housing estates as places characterised by high levels of crime and worklessness. This view is endorsed in various television dramas: for instance, Channel 4’s ‘Skint’ was set on the Westcliff Estate, the residents of whom were portrayed as benefit scroungers. The reality, however, is that these groups are a small minority, yet “TV concentrates on them and gives a false impression” (Turner 2018, p.1). Webb (2018) adds that there is also a perception across most economic groups that social housing is for the neediest in society. A report by Shelter (2018) confirms that low-income households prefer to pay the high costs of private rent due to a belief they will be stigmatised if they choose to live in social housing. Although it is acknowledged that social housing is for the most disadvantaged

in society; it should also be available to low-income households and vulnerable groups who would otherwise struggle to secure accommodation (Pattison, 2010) or are forced to spend a high proportion of income on private rent (Shelter 2018). The additional difficulty with this situation is that it impedes government spending on social housing, as a lack of demand from low-income households who seek affordable rather than social housing shifts focus away from the latter, thus reinforcing stigmatisation and residualisation (Webb, 2018).

The impacts of such stigmatisation include a reluctance by people on low-incomes to enter the social housing sector, despite the low rents and relative security of tenancies. This also reflects a lack of political will to consider social housing as a key tool for solving the wider housing crisis in the UK (Webb, 2018).

Lund (2019) maintains that the UK government reinforces stigmatisation in social housing, citing as an example the 2015 budget by the then Coalition government, which stated that social housing is subsidised because the logic of the free market dictates the real price of private rental stock. Although he introduced a funding package to regenerate social housing estates and acknowledged the State's failure to address the challenges of social housing, the Prime Minister reinforced the perception that such housing estates restricted opportunity, and associated these estates with poor parenting and mental health problems as well as substance addiction. This process of stigmatisation continued in the post-Grenfell "A new Deal for Social Housing" published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG 2018), which describes the system as broken and asserts the need to provide a policy that will enable social tenants to climb the housing ladder.

Lund (2019, p. 1) acknowledges that the Green Paper seeks to address the issue of stigma in this sector; however, he argues that the "patronising tone" of proposals such as providing the best neighbourhood for tenants, and emphasising the use of social housing as a springboard for owner-occupier tenures, reinforces the stigmatisation of social tenants. The implication continues to be that social housing is for the most disadvantaged, and that everyone else, regardless of socio-economic circumstances, should be aiming for home ownership. Shelter (2018) makes the compelling argument that, in modern society, the stigmatisation of social housing needs to be eradicated.

This raises the question as to how to remove what Lund (2019, p.1) describes as the "deeply embedded" problem of stigma in the UK.

2.6. Removing the Stigma of Social Housing

The recent winner of the Stirling prize prestige architectural award for an innovatively designed council housing estate, Goldsmith Street in Norwich, illustrates the possibilities for social housing (Royal Institute of British Architects, 2019). However, the issue of stigmatisation is likely to be a more difficult issue to resolve. Lund (2019) argues that to eliminate the stigma of social housing, it is vital to build good-quality, not-for-profit housing. This is endorsed by Doron and Tinker (2014) and Webb (2018,) who argue that a greater volume of well-designed housing will reduce stigma. However, there is also a risk that focusing investment on new buildings means there will be little investment in existing social housing, which, as previously noted by Hills (2007), would simply reinforce stigmatisation outside and within the social housing sector. Thus, the way forward is to increase investment in existing and new social housing.

Jacobs and Flanagan (2013) contend that the stigmatisation of social housing and its public reputation as a failure has consequences for tenants and for agencies seeking to change these negative perceptions. The solution is a fundamental change in policy, increased public investment, and strong leadership in order to change the public perception of this sector.

Taylor (2018) takes a slightly different view. Agreeing that stigma is reinforced by public and political perceptions, he sees the proposed solution as a form of paternalism characterised by a belief that outside agencies (landlords, professionals, the government) can change the system and then impose these changes on social tenants. The reality is that practical solutions to improve the quality and management of social housing require communication with, and the involvement of, social housing tenants.

Kearns et al. (2013) point out that stigmatisation can be underpinned by the media, and, as mentioned earlier, Lund (2019) suggests that negative perceptions of social housing can be reinforced by government policies. The CIH (2018a) agree, arguing that stigma is underpinned by negative representations in all forms of media including broadcast, print, and social media. Such representations portray social housing

tenants as workless, anti-social, and in some cases fraudulent. The CIH (2018a, p. 25) make a similar point, arguing that language such as ‘sink estates’ and ‘under class’ reinforce the wider public perception of social housing tenants.

According to Jacobs et al. (2011) the media play a key role in stigmatisation and should therefore try to alter the negative perceptions of housing by seeking to publish more positive accounts of this sector. Dean and Hastings (2000) view the solution from the perspective of the social tenants, arguing that if tenants take a proactive stance in publishing positive news stories about social housing, they will be able to challenge this stigma.

2.7. Summary

In summary, this review of literature has confirmed the existence of stigma relating to social housing. Such stigmatisation is based on perceived differences in society, which can be related to health, race, and/or socio-economic groups. Those living in social housing are stigmatised because the public view of such housing is that it is a last resort. This is reinforced by a government policy that implies the goal for all households should be home ownership. However, there is also stigmatisation within the social housing sector in that some tenants will not move to an area perceived to have a poor reputation. Thus, stigma is linked both to reputation and residualisation. The review indicates that public perceptions of social housing as poor-quality housing used by the workless is reinforced by successive government policies that have failed to invest in this housing, and by government rhetoric. Stigmatisation is also reinforced by the media, which shapes public perceptions. The solution is complex and will require investment in new, good-quality social housing, and in existing stock. These solutions may address the physical stigma of social housing, while alternative policy rhetoric and media discourse will be needed to change the inherent mind-set regarding the stigma of social housing.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the existing bank of research on the stigma of social housing. It was therefore essential for it to progress in a logical and transparent manner, with every stage of the methodology explained and justified (Bell et al., 2018). To achieve this, the research onion process developed by Saunders et al., (2019) was utilised, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

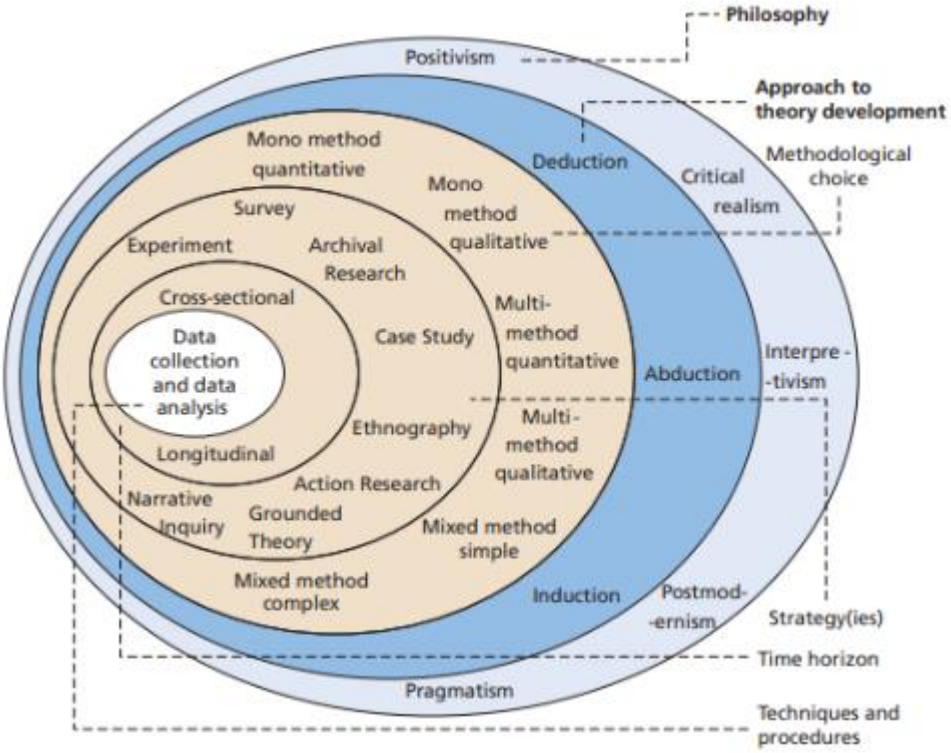

Figure 3.1. Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 130, Figure 4.1).

As shown in Figure 3.1, the research design begins with confirmation of the research philosophy, followed by the approach and strategy. The choices made in these early stages influence the choices made with respect to the collection and analysis of the data (Biggam, 2015). This chapter thus sets out the options available for each stage of the research design and justifies the selections that were made to optimise the reliability and validity of the research outcomes.

3.1. Research Philosophy

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), it is important to explain the research philosophy, as the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality and the existence of knowledge can influence their approach to the research, the type of data collected, and the interpretation of such data, as shown in Figure 3.2.

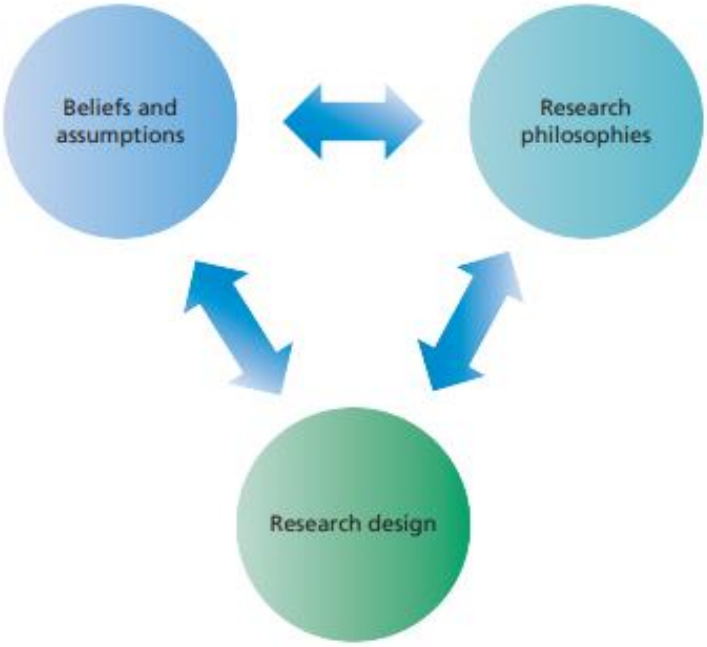

Figure 3.2. Relationship between Research Philosophy, Beliefs, and Research Design (Saunders et al. 2019, p.131, Figure 4.2).

As shown in Figure 3.1, Saunders et al. (2019) contend that there are five philosophical schools of thought: Positivism, Critical Realism, Interpretivism, Post-Modernism, and Pragmatism. They assert that a positivist researcher perceives reality as independent of social mechanisms. This is linked to scientific studies, which assume that reality can be measured and explained using quantitative methods of reasoning and analysis. Thus, a positivist researcher may employ statistical analyses to study and identify relationships between key variables, and mathematical analyses to explain trends in the data.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) explain that Interpretivism is the opposite to Positivism, as interpretivist researchers hold the view that reality is not an independent entity - rather it is dependent on social mechanisms such as human behaviour. This means that research founded on this philosophy is based on qualitative reasoning and analysis.

Creswell and Clark (2017) argue that Realists assume that reality is an independent entity and agree that quantitative reasoning is required, yet they also see reality as influenced by social mechanisms and as therefore requiring a degree of qualitative reasoning. Saunders et al. (2019) add that the philosophy of critical realism focuses

on explaining what can be seen and experienced with respect to the underlying structures that shape events.

According to Saunders et al., (2019), Postmodernism is philosophically similar to Interpretivism, focusing on the role of language and power relations in questioning accepted ways of thinking to reveal marginalised views. Thus, the postmodernist assumes there is no order in reality, as such a reality is shaped by fluid social mechanisms. Reality must therefore be defined as a collective decision that takes account of the power relations that exist within a society at a specific point in time. As such, a postmodernist researcher challenges organisational concepts and theories using qualitative reasoning and analysis.

The fifth and final philosophy is Pragmatism, which, as Saunders and Tosey (2013, p. 58) explain, assumes that “no single viewpoint can ever give the entire picture and that there may be multiple realities”. Consequently, the pragmatist researcher may employ a variety of analytical processes and methods of data collection depending on the research topic.

Having reviewed each of the different philosophical positions, this specific study was founded on the critical realist belief that reality is an independent entity influenced by social mechanisms. It was therefore underpinned by both qualitative and quantitative reasoning, which influenced the analysis of the data collected and the approach to the research strategy.

3.2. Approach to Theory Development

The second stage of the research design, as shown in Figure 3.1, is that of deciding upon the approach to the study, of which there are three options: deductive, abductive, and inductive (Saunders et al., 2019). The main similarities and differences between these approaches are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Research Approach (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 153, Table 4.4).

	Deduction	Induction	Abduction
Logic	In a deductive inference, when the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true	In an inductive inference, known premises are used to generate untested conclusions	In an abductive inference, known premises are used to generate testable conclusions
Generalisability	Generalising from the general to the specific	Generalising from the specific to the general	Generalising from the interactions between the specific and the general
Use of data	Data collection is used to evaluate propositions or hypotheses related to an existing theory	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, locate these in a conceptual framework and test this through subsequent data collection and so forth
Theory	Theory falsification or verification	Theory generation and building	Theory generation or modification; incorporating existing theory where appropriate, to build new theory or modify existing theory

Based on this table, this research was therefore deductive as it tested a hypothesis relating to stigma in social housing.

Indeed, the bulk of research on social housing is founded on quantitative reasoning and analysis. This assertion is supported by reference to the annual Housing Review, which describes the state of the housing sector in terms of quantitative measures such as housing tenure, trends versus the macro economy, or changes in the housing stock, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Changes in the stock of dwellings by tenure, region, and country (CIH 2018b, Table 21).

Country/region	Stock of dwellings (000s)								Percentage change in stock			
	31 March 1991				1 April 2016				1991-2016			
	Owner-occupied	Private rented	Social sector	Total	Owner-occupied	Private rented	Social sector	Total	Owner-occupied	Private rented	Social sector	Total
North East	646	59	367	1,072	908		270	1,178	29		- 27	10
Yorkshire & The Humber	1,326	170	525	2,021	1,952		431	2,383	31		- 18	18
North West	1,898	189	706	2,792	2,703		602	3,304	29		- 15	18
West Midlands	1,399	143	537	2,079	1,936		454	2,391	26		- 15	15
East Midlands	1,158	134	342	1,634	1,719		321	2,040	33		- 6	25
East	1,498	191	404	2,093	2,211		414	2,625	31		2	25
London	1,691	369	851	2,912	2,672		813	3,485	30		- 5	20
South East	2,336	299	464	3,099	3,305		522	3,826	25		12	23
South West	1,446	212	310	1,968	2,162		339	2,501	30		9	27
England	13,397	1,767	4,507	19,671	19,569		4,164	23,733	29		- 8	21
+ Wales	837	97	250	1,184	986	202	224	1,413	18	108	- 10	19
+ Scotland	1,101	153	891	2,145	1,558	414	595	2,567	41	171	- 33	20
= Great Britain	15,175	2,177	5,648	23,000	22,729		4,983	27,713	31		- 12	20
+ Northern Ireland	348	20	169	537	505	140	132	777	45	600	- 22	45
= United Kingdom	15,523	2,197	5,817	23,537	23,374		5,115	28,490	32		- 12	21

Sources: Housing Statistics, Department for Communities and Local Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive.
Note: Social sector comprises local authority, housing association, new town and Northern Ireland Housing Executive dwellings. Separate data for owner-occupation and private renting in England were not available for 2016 at the time of compilation.

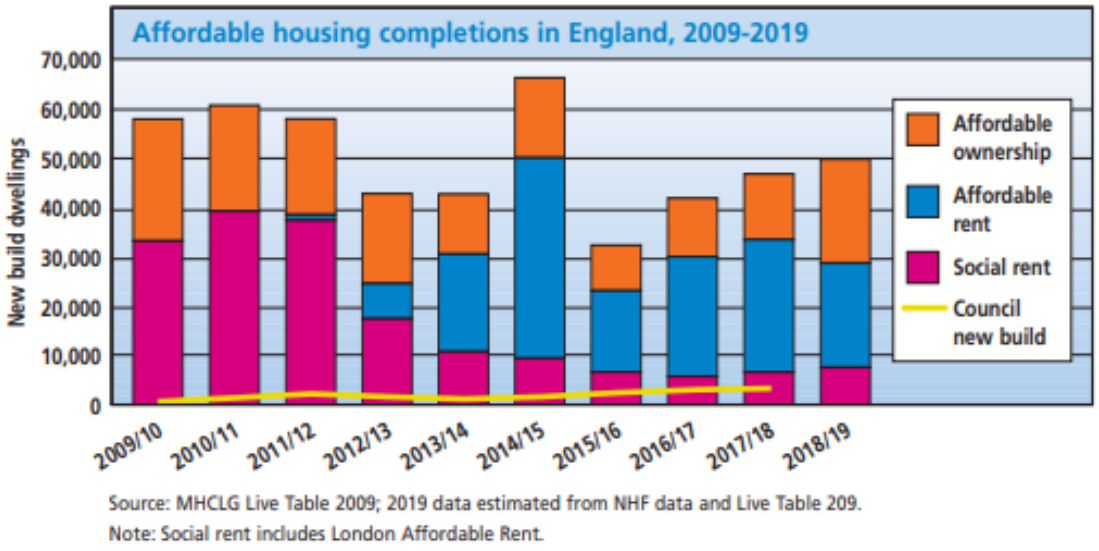

Figure 3.3. Affordable housing completions in England 2009-2019 (CIH 2019, p9)

However, a focus on social housing that is largely quantitative in nature does little to elucidate the problem of stigmatisation in the sector and the human costs this incurs. This research therefore firstly reviewed existing literature to determine the logic of the arguments produced by existing studies. Appropriate data to measure and analyse the concepts identified in the review were then collected and analysed using qualitative methods, the results of which will be used to answer the research question posed in this study (Saunders et al., 2019; Hart, 2004).

3.3. Methodological Choice

This research design stage is important as it determines the methods employed in the study. As previously noted, this research was underpinned by realist beliefs and was therefore founded on a combination of quantitative and qualitative reasoning (Creswell and Clarke, 2017). Saunders and Tosey (2013) note that a researcher can choose to start with a simple mixed methods design such as qualitative data collection and analysis. This could involve the use of focus groups to determine the breadth of possible factors to consider and then following this with quantitative data collection and analysis; for example, by using a questionnaire to ascertain the frequency of these factors. Alternatively, a more complex approach can be employed, incorporating "quantitative analysis techniques to analyse qualitative data quantitatively or vice versa" (Saunders and Tosey 2013, p. 59). For this study, a simple mixed methods design was used as follows:

- The data collected in the literature review was used to identify the key factors underpinning the stigma associated with social housing
- This was followed by a single form of data collection; following which the data were analysed using qualitative methods as set out in the next section

3.4. Strategies

There are a number of strategies that can be employed in research, including surveys, case studies, and archival studies (Bell et al., 2018). Hart (2004) and Biggam (2015) contend that the reliability of the research findings will be dependent on choosing a strategy that facilitates sufficient analysis and discussion of the data. Each of the potential strategies was therefore reviewed. This revealed that case studies allow the researcher to choose from a range of studies, including descriptive studies, analytical studies, and explanatory studies (Bell et al., 2018). Additionally, it provides an opportunity to investigate the issue of stigma in social housing from different perspectives, such as that of the social housing provider, the wider public, or the social housing tenant. There are, however, drawbacks associated with case studies, including the need to choose a study that is representative of the wider social housing sector to optimise the reliability of the findings (Thomas and Brubaker, 2000; Willis et al., 2010).

Coles et al. (2013) describe archival research as a process that investigates the past to predict future outcomes. For example, the literature review revealed that during the post-war years, social housing was viewed as an acceptable form of housing for a wide range of people. However, this changed over time, particularly from the 1980s onward with the deregulation of the financial markets and government policies increasingly focused on home ownership (Pattison, 2010). Thus, archival research could be used to investigate historic (1940 to 1980) views on social housing and the policies that subsequently changed those views. However, whilst this would have been useful in providing a background in which to situate current opinion, the difficulty is that, as shown in the literature review and confirmed by Hastings (2004), there is a dearth of research specifically focusing on stigma and social housing, which would have limited the value of this study.

The third strategy considered for this research was a survey, which Fowler (2013) suggests is useful for gathering detailed data on specific topics. Groves et al. (2010) agree, adding that it is necessary to select a sample that is representative of the social housing sector and public opinion on social housing. Biggam (2015) is an advocate for survey research on the grounds that it enables the researcher to choose a sample and ask questions that address the specific objectives of the study.

Having considered all three strategies, a survey was chosen for this study on the basis that it would enable the objectives of the dissertation to be addressed and would help fill existing gaps in the current body of knowledge on the topic of stigma in social housing.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

Survey data can be gathered using questionnaires, observations, and/or interviews (Saunders et al., 2019). For this research, questionnaires and interviews offered practical forms of collection.

Questionnaires enable a researcher to gather a large volume of data from a large sample in a relatively short time. Online survey facilities are also available that can aid the collection of this data (Fowler, 2013). The benefits of this form of collection are that it is less time-consuming than carrying out interviews, and the data can be collected face-to-face or remotely. The quality of the data collected is dependent on the experiences of the sample and the clarity/accuracy of the questions posed. Therefore,

it is essential to ensure that the questions are focused on the research objectives and that the responses add value to the study (Groves et al., 2010; Biggam, 2015).

Bell et al. (2018) argue that interviews are also a useful form of data collection, adding that they can be conducted face-to-face or using remote processes (such as Skype). There are different formats for interviews, ranging from a structured format where the questions are prepared in advance to an unstructured format where the researcher draws on a list of topics rather than prepared questions. The choice depends on the researcher's knowledge of the topic being explored and their experience in conducting interviews. Whilst interviews can provide more detailed information than questionnaires, the quality of the data is dependent on the rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee and the process can also be time-consuming (Groves et al., 2010). Additionally, the researcher is also reliant on the interviewees participating as agreed, otherwise there may be an inadequate amount of data available for analysis and discussion (Biggam, 2015; Saunders et al., 2019).

After due consideration, this study employed an interview strategy, using a semi-structured interview format to optimise the volume and quality of the data collected and to gather opinions from interviewees based on their experience of stigma in the social housing sector (Bell et al., 2018).

3.5.1. Survey Sample

As pointed out in the previous section, a key factor in ensuring the quality of the data collected is the sample and the extent to which this represents social housing in the UK. To that end, the interviewees were selected using the researcher's contacts in the social housing sector. The aim was to access a broad sample of experienced participants in this sector as well as tenants currently living in social housing. The sample included the following:

- A social housing tenant involved in the operation and management of social housing as Chair of a Tenant Council
- Chair of a national social housing tenant body
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a Social Housing Landlord Organisation
- Senior Housing Academic
- Senior Social Housing Professional Body Adviser
- Lead participant in a local authority investigation into social housing stigma.

3.5.2. Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed during the literature review, and initially comprised a long list of 43 questions. Each question was then tested against the research objectives to determine whether the responses would add value to this discussion, as shown in Appendix B. This process resulted in 10 questions being selected. A second review was then carried out, ensuring there was a mixture of closed and open styles to optimise the volume of data collected and to draw on the experience of each of the interviewees. The interviews were carried out in person at a time and place that suited the interviewee. The interviews were recorded by the researcher and later transcribed.

3.5.3. Analysis

In keeping with the realist approach to this study, the data were analysed using a mixture of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (coding and thematic) analyses. However, to understand the opinions expressed by the participants in the survey, the bulk of the data required qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis was used to analyse the responses to the closed questions and to assess the weight of opinion expressed in the responses to the open style questions. Thus, closed questions that required a definitive response were analysed using statistical analysis while open style questions were analysed using coding and thematic analysis. To facilitate this process, the transcripts of the interviews were read and re-read to understand the context of the responses and ascertain key words/phrases used in response to each question. These were then developed into a series of codes from which key themes in the responses to each question were determined (Guest et al., 2011). The interpretation of the data therefore involved qualitative reasoning in relation to the coding supported by quantitative analysis where the key variables were identified by the number of times each was mentioned by participants.

3.5.4. Ethical Considerations

Because this research gathered data from non-vulnerable humans, the researcher adhered to the commonly accepted ethical standards employed in academic studies. For instance, prior to starting each interview the researcher explained the purpose of the study. They did not collect personal or any commercially sensitive information and details on the interviewees remained confidential (Bell et al., 2018).

3.6. Summary

In summary, this research was founded on the realist approach, using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Several strategies were considered, of which the survey strategy was deemed best suited to answering the research question posed and providing reliable research outcomes. The researcher adhered to ethical standards throughout the research process. The data was collected using a series of interviews with a selected sample and analysed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, as set out in the next chapter.

4. Results, Analysis, and Discussion

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected in the interviews, followed by a discussion of the results in relation to the research objectives.

4.1. Data Collection and Analysis

This section provides an analysis of the responses to the interview questions.

4.1.1. Survey Sample Demographics - Questions 1 & 2

Six interviews were conducted for this research. Given the importance of obtaining a sample that was representative of the wider social housing sector, the first question asked the participants for a brief resume of their relevant experience. In line with ethical requirements, personal details of the participants remained confidential. The responses to this question can be summarised as follows:

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO1) of a Social Housing Landlord Organisation
    - responsible for business development and strategy
    - worked as a Professional in housing for 30+ years, as both an executive and board member
- Chair of a national social housing tenant body (CSH)
    - worked in social housing for more than 50 years, with 39 years at a senior level in both local authority housing and in a Housing Association, including serving as chair on two HA boards.
- Senior Housing Academic (SHA)
    - Professor of Housing Policy with experience as Regional Policy and Information Manager for the former Housing Corporation
- Lead participant in a local authority investigation into social housing stigma (LP), supported by a Policy Officer (PO).

    - LP has 25 years' experience as a Housing Service Improvement Manager in Local Authority and Housing Association housing
    - Oversaw the stigma research
    - PO closely involved in stigma research
- A social housing tenant involved in the operation and management of social housing as Chair of a Tenant Council (CTC)
    - 11 years as a tenant in social housing
    - 9 years involvement in Tenant Scrutiny
- CEO of a Social Housing Sector Professional Body (CEO2)
    - Extensive experience in social housing
    - Senior management in national housing body
    - Sociologist by background

Because the focus of this research was on the stigma associated with social housing, Question 2 asked the participants to define stigma in society. This was to ensure that the participants had a consistent understanding of stigma in the context of this study. The responses indicated that the participants associate stigma with negative disadvantage in the community and tenure in the social housing sector. Stigma was also described as an unfair process driven by external elements such as the media as well as within communities. It was described as a form of prejudice founded on a lack of knowledge and incorrect assumptions about a community or group of people within that community. These descriptions closely align with the findings of the literature review, where Goffman (1963) links stigmatisation with a form of disqualification and lack of acceptance within society. Similarly, Parker (2012) and Phelan et al. (2008) linked stigmatisation with a devaluation process and the reinforcement of social inequalities.

Although the sample was small, the wide and diverse range of their experience provided a rich source of data. The participants also exhibited a detailed understanding of the notion of stigma in relation to social housing and could therefore add value to this study.

4.1.2. Existence and Drivers of the Stigma Associated with Social Housing - Questions 3 to 5

Question 3 asked participants whether there is stigmatisation of social housing in the UK and if this is based solely on public perceptions or includes stigma within the social

housing sector. To establish key themes within the data, the responses were compared and coded as shown in Table C1, Appendix C. The key themes were as follows:

- Yes, stigma exists
- Stigma can be a public perception of workless people seeking free accommodation and unable to manage their money
- Stigma also exists within the social housing sector, typically alongside socio-economic dividers
- Stigma is reinforced by media (television and press) as well as political policies.

Question 5 was included to probe the responses to the previous question and asked participants about the drivers of stigmatisation in social housing. There was a strong correlation between the responses to this question and the responses given to Question 3. The consensus was that stigma is underpinned by a lack of knowledge about social housing, with public opinion being shaped by both politics and media. For instance, CEO1 stated there is a lack of clarity regarding the purpose of social housing due to:

> "*Changes in allocations policies, leading to a victim attitude. Concentrating challenging people in areas. An imbalance between tenants and landlord's rights - not easy to 'get rid of' unsatisfactory tenants. Sense of entitlement leading to an erosion of values. How good or bad are our services? Because lower rent is paid, it can lead to a lifestyle being pursued that is disproportionate, it becomes 'normal' but can contrast with people in more expensive housing*." (CEO1).

The CSH expressed a strong view, arguing that the media is at fault in stigmatising social housing:

> *"It is also a case of stereotyping all because of the behaviour of some. Scroungers; skivers; benefit cheats and other such terminology all contribute to the generalisation of all social tenants being one or more of these*" (CSH).

CEO2 agreed, pointing out that the media stereotypes people in social housing in terms of the deserving and undeserving poor, thus fuelling the belief that "*people are personally responsible for their own success and so those who are not successful must have not tried hard enough*."

Question 5 explored the role of policy in stigmatisation, asking participants whether government social, housing, and fiscal policies have contributed to the problem of stigma in this sector. The responses to this question were coded as indicated in Table C2, Appendix C. Notably, all participants held the view that government policies have underpinned public attitudes to social housing and reinforced stigma in this sector. The relevant themes are as follows:

- Key policies such as those favouring home-ownership and policies that cap welfare benefits reinforce the notion that social housing is a second-best choice
- Reinforces the economic divides in modern society.

4.1.3. Impacts of Stigmatisation - Questions 6 to 8

Question 6 elicited participants' views on the impacts of social housing stigma on individuals, households, and social housing communities. The responses to this question generated consistent themes, with the impacts suggested to include a lack of aspirations and self-esteem. The knock-on effect of these impacts are difficulties in securing work and a good education. This can have an adverse effect on mental health, increase levels of desperation, and induce a feeling of worthlessness. This can result in anti-social behaviour and crime, thus creating unsafe communities. The CSH summarised the views of the sample by stating that:

> "*The impact of stigma can be huge and cross generational. It will affect people's self-worth and can lead to some 'living down' to the view of others. In households it can be similar in impact to the caste system in India with children having no expectations above that of their parents or grandparents. For whole communities it can lead to a sense that the place where they live cannot be of value because of the public perception of it, 'so why should I invest in a place like this*?" (CSH)

The responses also revealed that participants felt stigma can result in a lack of pride in neighbourhoods and can impede mixed communities. LP provided a realistic insight into the impacts of stigmatisation, stating that when someone lives in social housing there is a sense in which they have to:

> "*apologise every time someone visits because of the condition of the entry and communal areas", this in turn can affect everyday activities such as taxi rides restrictions, credit availability, deliveries*" (LP).

Given these impacts, Question 7 revisited the issue of the drivers of stigma in social housing, asking the participants if they felt the media (TV, radio, virtual media) contribute to the stigmatisation of social housing and to provide examples of this. The responses were consistent with the views expressed in earlier questions, with all participants agreeing that reality and fictional programmes on TV provide a distorted view of social housing. This is reinforced by media coverage from 'red top' papers such as the Daily Mail. They argued that such a distorted view fuels opinion on social housing without giving the public a balanced view of the realities of this form of housing tenure.

4.1.4. Solution to the Stigma of Social Housing - Questions 8 to 10

Question 8 asked participants whether the solution to the stigma of social housing is to build more social housing and invest in existing social housing stock. There were mixed responses to this question. For example, CEO1 was adamant that the solution does not lie in building more social housing, rather it would be better to:

> "*stop talking about 'social' housing. Talk more about the market, its mix and breaking up 'mono tenure' communities. Having rents at different levels available, more mixed*" (CEO1).

This participant added that the quality of housing was important with a focus, with other key requirements including mixed tenure developments.

The CSH, however, expressed a different view, arguing the need to build more homes while at the same time moving away from the perception that these are "last resort" properties for those in need. The CSH also supported the need for investment in existing stock, otherwise there would be a risk that social housing policies will set up the *"most vulnerable to fail if we fail to provide the support necessary to help some of those who live on social housing estates*" (CSH). That said, both the CSH and LP agreed that to date regeneration schemes had essentially failed in their fundamental purpose, as they had resulted in gentrification which had effectively priced social housing tenants out of an area rather than regenerating their living spaces.

The SHA agreed with the CSH, adding the caveat that there is a need for bespoke solutions that address the needs of a community rather than applying universal solutions *"across all towns and cities"*. They felt that increasing the supply of social housing would relieve pressure on allocations provided that such development focuses

on mixed communities, otherwise there is a risk of *"monolithic social housing estates"* (SHA).

LP felt strongly that the solution should include investing more in social housing whilst simultaneously addressing stigma issues by promoting a positive social conversation. This view was shared by CTC who submitted that investment alone is not the solution to the stigma of social housing, adding that such investment could increase public resentment regarding the perceived perks given to social housing tenants.

CEO2 agreed with the consensus view that there is a need to increase the supply of social housing, as this would support the *"idea that social housing can be for everyone and access is open"*. They felt that the issue of regeneration can be more complex, as there can be a mistaken belief in planning and development that regeneration is a form of social cleansing that reinforces the belief that *"social housing and its residents are not valued"* (CEO2).

Question 9 was prompted by Taylor's (2018) view that any solution to the stigma of social housing must include the involvement of tenants in the decision-making process. Participants were asked whether social housing tenants have a role to play in determining the solution to stigmatisation in this sector. There were similar responses to this question, with CEO1 expressing the controversial view that tenants should not be included because the *"sector is not sufficiently homogenous to achieve that"* (CEO1).

Both the CSH and CEO2 expressed the opposite view, stating that tenants should be included in the decision-making process, with CEO2 arguing that it is essential to communicate with those directly affected by stigmatisation to:

> "*properly understand how it works, their sense of the processes involved and what can be done to address them*" (CEO2).

CSH added that it is a mistake to believe that "professionals" in housing know best. They stated that because the solution has to satisfy the needs of the social housing tenants, it is sensible to include these communities in the process. That said, they felt this path may be difficult, as there can be:

> "*uncomfortable discord as different individuals will have different views but that shouldn't stop anyone from doing so. It would be a classic (and monumental)*

mistake to think 'we' can solve stigmatisation and not include those being stigmatised in the process" (CSH).

The CTC, unsurprisingly, also championed tenant involvement on the premise that this can improve housing management and landlord - tenant relationships.

The SHA concurred with these views, stating that involving tenants in the development process can enhance their pride in the community and build self-esteem. The SHA also agreed with the CSH that this can be difficult as stigmatisation has in some cases created apathy in the community, which impedes the willingness of people to participate in the process. LP reiterated this point, stating that there is a need for balance and to ensure that the process is not too prescriptive as this simply facilitates paternalism.

The final question aimed to fill potential gaps in the previous questions, drawing on the wider experience of the participants by asking them whether there is an optimal solution to the problem of stigmatisation. The responses to this question are coded in Table C4 in Appendix C. The main themes derived from the analysis indicate that the problem is complex; as such there is no simple, optimal solution. Nevertheless, there was agreement on the need to rebrand social housing and the public's perception of the sector. Participants felt this can be achieved through positive media and a greater control over media content of relating to this sector. It can also be shaped by better education of the public to ensure that views on social housing are based on fact rather than the distorted views of the media. The CTC made an important point, stating that the social housing sector could learn from the mental health sector as the latter has shifted away from stigmatisation towards a greater understanding of the issues associated with mental health. This in part has been achieved through more positive media coverage.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the objectives of the study.

The data provided insightful views on social housing based on the experiences of the respondents. It is important to reiterate that the objectives of this research were to understand the theoretical and conceptual aspects of stigma in the community whilst exploring the role of social housing in the UK, including the background to social housing and the impacts of government policy. These objectives were addressed in

the literature review. This section will therefore integrate and discuss the findings of both the data analysis and the literature review, focusing on the factors that underpin the stigma of social housing and ways to potentially eradicate this problem.

5.1.1. Factors Underpinning the Stigma of Social Housing

The responses to the interviews convey the clear message that there is stigmatisation in social housing, and that the key factors that underpin this problem are distorted media attention, political rhetoric, and policies that increase the socio-economic divides within society, between social tenants and owner-occupiers, and between social tenants. This strongly correlates with the findings of the literature review, with Jacobs et al. (2011) suggesting that stigmatisation is related to a perception of social inequity fuelled by the media that suggests social housing communities are crime-ridden areas, and that government financing creates communities that are dependent on the State. These views are constantly reinforced by the media, which portrays all social housing as workless, feeding the public an inaccurate view because, although there are pockets of worklessness in social housing, these people are in the minority (Turner 2018; Webb 2018).

A persistent theme in the data was concern over the perceived bias in media such as TV and ‘red top’ newspapers, which distort views of social housing. Such views encourage the general public to perceive all social housing tenants as workless, lazy, and reinforce the view that social housing is crime ridden and that residents expect the government to fund their lifestyles while all others have to work for a living. These views are reflected in research carried out by Hastings et al. (2004), who suggest that stigma could be reduced if people understood the complex causal factors that lead to the degradation of social housing. The implication is that there is a need for greater accountability for the problems arising in this sector. Arthurson et al. (2014) make a similar observation, suggesting that the general public typically form an opinion on social housing based on TV dramas rather than hard facts. Similarly, Jacobs et al. (2011) argue that wider society needs to understand the factors that underpin inequality and discrimination in social housing and adopt a holistic view of the policies that create stigmatisation and shape the role of the media.

5.1.2. Ways of Removing the Stigma of Social Housing

Wasserberg (2004) highlights the extent of the problem, implying that in some cases the only way to remove the stigma associated with an area is through the demolition and regeneration of the properties. However, the responses to the interviews suggest that such a process can exacerbate the social issues, as regeneration may lead to gentrification which simply reinforces the social and economic divides in these communities.

It is clear from the data that there is a desire to end stigma in social housing; however, there are varying levels of agreement on the ways to achieve this shift. It is conceded by many that necessary solutions include rebranding of the sector, better education of the masses to ensure they understand the importance of this type of housing, and the need for honest media coverage of the sector. Jacobs et al. (2011) acknowledges the benefits of practical steps, particularly with respect to media reporting, in changing public perceptions of social housing. Additionally, social housing organisations can improve the situation by demanding greater positive coverage and engaging in social media processes to change public opinion.

One of the participants commented that the provision of mixed communities could reduce the problem of stigmatisation. Arthurson (2012) and Raynor et al. (2020) make a similar assertion, suggesting that mixed-tenure communities can be useful in educating both sides of the housing tenure. Thus, people can experience living in or close to social housing and these experiences should encourage them to develop open minds about such housing, challenging the myths perpetuated by the media. Morris et al. (2012) and Busch-Geertsema (2014) express similar views, arguing that policy-makers should view a social mix as a key mechanism for addressing the stigma in social housing estates. This can be achieved by dissipating the concentration of poverty, unemployment, and low esteem, and by integrating social housing tenants with owner-occupiers. Although this process does not guarantee the amelioration of social stigma; it can improve the urban fabric and quality of housing stock, which in turn improves the socio-economic and physical environment of these estates. Whilst this is not an instant solution, it does offer opportunities for a long-term organic solution to the crisis in social housing.

5.1.3. Learning from Mental Health

According to Bentley et al., (2018), the stigmatisation of people living in social housing can result in a higher instance of mental health issues, compared with those not living in social housing. Notably, however, although there is continued stigma associated with social housing, the levels of stigma associated with mental health issues is reducing. This begs the question as to how this has been achieved in the mental health sector and whether there are lessons to be leant with respect to social housing.

Strikingly, only one of the participants suggested that the social housing sector could learn how to deal with stigmatisation by turning to the mental health sector. Spagnolo et al. (2008) make the point that the shift away from stigma in mental health has been driven by public education. As such, it is now unacceptable for the media to stigmatise people suffering with mental health issues, and this has been achieved through a combination of traditional (TV, press) and modern (Facebook, Twitter, social media) media and political policies. This reinforces the views expressed by the participants that a key element in reducing stigma is holding the media to account for distortions in reporting (Taylor, 2018).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Social housing plays a central role in UK society in the provision of temporary housing. It provides a safety net in the form of long-term housing for households in the lower economic bracket and the provision of affordable housing for households unable to compete in the private market. It is clear that social housing contributes to a sustainable society, particularly the social wellbeing of low-income communities and those who are vulnerable in such communities. However, the reality is that low levels of investment in social housing have been coupled with a societal aspiration towards home ownership. This research therefore aimed to identify ways in which the stigma of social housing in the UK could be overcome. To this end, its objectives were to understand the theoretical and conceptual aspects of stigma in the community and explore the role of social housing in contemporary society. It also considered the factors underpinning stigma in this sector and sought to draw parallels with stigma in other sectors such as mental health. Finally, it sought to identify ways in which the stigma associated with social housing could be eradicated. The purpose of this final chapter is to reiterate the findings of the research and the conclusions drawn from these.

6.1. Findings of this Research

The key findings of this research are as follows.

6.1.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Aspects of Stigma in the Community

The findings suggest that stigma is a process of disqualification whereby society decides that an individual or a community should be excluded because they are different from the norm. This exclusion is generally based on economics, perceived social status, or for reasons should as disability or mental health. Essentially stigma is a negative process, associated with the devaluation of an individual and/or community. Stigmatisation is also a form of prejudice, exploitation, and domination, whereby wider society seeks to impose its social norms on all people and excludes those that do not fit these requirements. Stigmatisation is unfair and unjust, yet it prevails in modern society, creating social and economic divides, reinforcing differences, and making it harder for those who are stigmatised to cross the divide into what is considered the norm.

It is therefore unsurprising that significant impacts are associated with stigmatisation, including adverse mental wellbeing and the destruction of an individual's confidence and sense of identity. Stigmatisation can also impede personal development and education. Such negative impacts can create a spiral of decay within a community and this in turn reinforces the negative perceptions of wider society, thus forming a viscous circle of exclusion and social deprivation. This research also found that wider societal divides and the tacit acceptance that those in social housing are different to the norm gives governments a mandate to make fiscal, social, and economic decisions that adversely affect this group. That is not to say that such policies deliberately target social housing; rather, it suggests that governments are confident that the wider population will not reject or object to policies such as a lack of investment in social housing.

6.1.2. Role of Social Housing in the UK

This research has shown how the role of social housing has changed in the past century. In the mid-twentieth century, following two world wars, this form of housing was essential and valued in the UK, providing housing for all sections of the community. It was acceptable to live in social housing and each community comprised a mix of different ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds. A sense of

community and value could be found within the social housing sector. However, this sense of pride diminished over time as government investment in the sector decreased. At the same time, there was a concerted effort by successive governments to reduce the cost burden of social housing and welfare, reinforced by policies that encouraged home ownership. Such policies ultimately created the perception that social housing was only suitable for the desperate and those who wanted to live off the state. This perception was and indeed continues to be reinforced by the media.

6.1.3. Factors Underpinning the Stigma of Social Housing

There is a degree of overlap between the changing role of social housing in the UK and the factors that underpin and drive stigmatisation. Social housing was first established as a safety net for those struggling to find accommodation so that, as the economy grew, it was able to safeguard low-income households and the most vulnerable in society. However, the transition from housing that was valued to that which is assumed to be a last resort form of accommodation has been driven by social media, including television dramas that depict those in social housing as criminals and workless. This image has not been enhanced by the poor quality of social housing, in which extremes of poverty can be found. This combination results in pockets of deprivation, where social exclusion occasionally overspills into social disruption. Such events are seized on by the media and the masses to justify their perception of social housing. Such negative perceptions of social housing are not confined to wider society, as there are social strata within the social housing sector where residents refuse to move to certain areas because of their poor reputation.

6.1.4. Lessons from Mental Health

Social housing is not the only sector to be adversely affected by stigma; sectors such as mental health have also been stigmatised for centuries, possibly because of fear and also because those suffering from mental health problems live outside the norms of society. However, the media are finally addressing some of the stigma associated with mental health and this has created a widespread rejection of stigmatisation in this sector. The lesson for the social housing sector is to therefore educate the public and government about social housing, and to demonstrate the impacts such stigma can have on communities. The social sector requires champions to raise its profile and to educate the masses as to the importance and benefits of social housing. However, in

the digital age, this requires cooperation from all forms of media, including government, television, and social media

6.1.5. Ways of Removing the Stigma of Social Housing

There are several ways to remove the stigma associated with social housing, including the regeneration and refurbishment of existing housing and the provision of new, good-quality properties in mixed tenure developments. However, such measures can be destructive to existing social housing communities and can also reinforce their belief that they need to change to fit in with social norms. This is unsurprising as these measures focus on changing social housing rather than tackling the root of the problem, which is the societal perception of social housing residents.

The way forward, as mentioned in the previous section, is to therefore change the mind-set of society. This requires a more positive coverage of social housing communities and an open, honest discussion about the needs of lower-income households and the vulnerable in society. This can only be achieved if the government takes the lead and the media changes its current practices when reporting on this sector.

6.2. Conclusion

This research concludes that stigma is a form of collective prejudice and discrimination. It has no place in modern society as it simply reinforces social inequalities and results in the exclusion of a group of people for no other reason than the perceptions of the place in which they live. The entire process of stigmatisation initiates a chain of events in an individual's life that adversely affects their sense of self, identity, and belonging in society. This in turn can affect educational outcomes and community harmony. Stigma is underpinned by a lack of investment in social housing, and poor planning and design. This is then reinforced by biased and often inaccurate media coverage. This creates a viscous circle of social and economic deprivation that is itself used to justify the negative beliefs underpinning stigmatisation. The way forward is to change societal perceptions which, as noted, requires government leadership and a change in media practices.

6.3. Recommendations

The findings of this study are founded on a detailed and critical review of secondary data from academic and professional publications and the analysis of primary data

from a series of interviews with participants active in the social housing sector. Although they contribute to existing knowledge on this topic, it is recommended that they be enhanced through further study. For instance, it would be beneficial to examine stigma from the perspective of those living in social housing. This could comprise a survey of a range of social housing residents from various parts of the UK, which would elucidate their experiences of stigmatisation. Such data would be valuable in confirming the long-term impacts of this problem in contemporary society. It would also provide an insight into the solutions that people in social housing believe are needed to address stigma.

This research covers a broad range of issues underpinning and reinforcing stigma in social housing, a recurrent issue of which is the role played by the media in reinforcing stereotypes in this sector. It would therefore be useful to examine this role in greater detail; for example, by analysing daily newspaper coverage of the sector as well as its portrayal in television dramas.

7. References

Arthurson, K., 2012. *Social mix and the city: Challenging the mixed communities consensus in housing and urban planning policies*. Collingwood, VC: CSIRO publishing.

Arthurson, K., Darcy, M. and Rogers, D., 2014. Televised territorial stigma: how social housing tenants experience the fictional media representation of estates in Australia. *Environment and Planning A*, *46*(6), pp. 1334-1350.

Bell, E., Bryman, A. and Harley, B., 2018. *Business research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bentley, R., Baker, E., Simons, K., Simpson, J.A. and Blakely, T., 2018. The impact of social housing on mental health: longitudinal analyses using marginal structural models and machine learning-generated weights. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *47*(5), pp. 1414-1422.

Biggam, J., 2015. *Succeeding with your master's dissertation: a step-by-step handbook*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

Boughton, J., 2018. *Municipal Dreams – The Rise and Fall of Council Housing*, London: Verso.

Busch-Geertsema, V., 2014. Housing first Europe–results of a European social experimentation project. *European Journal of Homelessness*, *8*(1), pp.13-28.

Change Your Mind, 2019. *Challenging Stigma.* [online]. Available at <https://www.changeyourmindni.org/challenging-stigma> [accessed 19th October 2019].

Chartered Institute of Housing, 2018a. *Rethinking Social Housing*. [online]. Available at <http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Final%20Rethinking%20social%20housing%20report.pdf> [accessed 13th September 2019].

Chartered Institute of Housing, 2018b. *Housing Review.* [online]. Available at https://www.ukhousingreview.org.uk/ukhr18/compendium.html> [accessed 3rd February 2020].

Chartered Institute of Housing, 2019. *Housing Review: Briefing Paper*. [online]. Available at < https://www.ukhousingreview.org.uk/ukhr19/docs/UK-Housing-Review-Briefing-Paper-2019.pdf> [accessed 11th February 2020].

Coles, T., Duval, D.T. and Shaw, G., 2013. *Student's Guide to Writing Dissertations and Theses in Tourism Studies and Related Disciplines*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Creswell, J.W. and Clark, V.L.P., 2017. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. London: Sage publications.

Dean, J. and Hastings, A., 2000. *Challenging Images: Housing Estates, Stigma and Regeneration*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Doron, N. and Tinker, R., 2014. *Silent majority How the public will support a new wave of social housing.* [online]. Available at <http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SilentMajority_web1.pdf> [accessed 14th September 2019].

Dudman, J., 2019. The Guardian, 25th September 2019 "*Social housing crisis builds as government passes the buck"*. [online]. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/sep/25/social-housing-crisis-builds-government-passes-buck> [accessed 19th January 2020].

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P.R., 2012. *Management research*. London: Sage.

Feinstein, L., Lupton, R., Hammond, C., Mujtaba, T., Salter, E. and Sorhaindo, A., 2015. *The public value of social housing: a longitudinal analysis of the relationship between housing and life chances*. [online]. Available at <http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/PublicValueofSocialHousing.pdf> [accessed 13th November 2019].

Fowler Jr, F.J., 2013. *Survey research methods*. London: Sage publications.

Goffman, E. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. [online]. Available at <https://www.freelists.org/archives/sig-dsu/11-2012/pdfKhTzvDIi8n.pdf> [accessed 18th October 2019].

Grindrod, J., 2013.*Concretopia – A journey around the rebuilding of post-war Britain*, Brecon: Old Street Publishing.

Groves, R.M., Fowler Jr, F.J., Couper, M.P., Lepkowski, J.M., Singer, E. and Tourangeau, R., 2010. *Survey methodology* (Vol. 561). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M. and Namey, E.E., 2011. *Applied thematic analysis*. London: Sage Publications.

Gurney, C.M., 1999. Pride and prejudice: Discourses of normalisation in public and private accounts of home ownership. *Housing studies*, *14*(2), pp.163-183.

Hart, C., 2004. *Doing your masters dissertation*. London: Sage.

Harvey, D., 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Hastings, A., 2004. Stigma and social housing estates: Beyond pathological explanations. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, *19*(3), pp. 233-254.

Hills, J., 2007. *Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England*. [online]. Available at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/5568/1/Ends_and_Means_The_future_roles_of_social_housing_in_England_1.pdf> [accessed 14th September 2019].

HM Government, 2010. *Equality Act Guidance*. [online]. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance> [accessed 11th January 2020].

Jacobs, K. and Flanagan, K., 2013. Public housing and the politics of stigma. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *48*(3), pp. 319-337.

Jacobs, K., Arthurson, K., Cica, N., Greenwood, A. and Hastings, A., 2011. *The stigmatisation of social housing: findings from a panel investigation*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

John-Baptiste, A.M, 2019. BBC online "*When council estates were a dream*". [online]. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/extra/iZKMPd0wjP/council_housing> [accessed 19th January 2020].

Jones, C. and Murie, A., 2008. *The right to buy: Analysis and evaluation of a housing policy* (Vol. 18). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Kearns, A., Kearns, O. and Lawson, L., 2013. Notorious places: Image, reputation, stigma. The role of newspapers in area reputations for social housing estates. *Housing Studies*, *28*(4), pp. 579-598.

Local Government Association, 2019. *100 years of social housing*. [online]. Available at <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning/council-housing-100> [accessed 19th January 2020].

Lund, B., 2019. Inside Housing "*The stigma of social housing tenants must end*" [online]. Available at <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/comment/comment/the-stigma-of-social-housing-tenants-must-end-62227> [accessed 21st October 2019].

MacEwen, M., 2002. *Housing, Race and Law: The British Experience*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018. *A new deal for social housing.* [online]. Available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733605/A_new_deal_for_social_housing_web_accessible.pdf> [accessed 13th September 2019].

Morris, A., Jamieson, M. and Patulny, R., 2012. Is social mixing of tenures a solution for public housing estates? *Evidence Base*, *1*(1), pp.1-20.

National Archives, 2019. *Conservative and Labour Legislation*.[online]. Available at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/conservative-labour-legislation.htm> [accessed 12th November 2019].

National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, 2020. *What is the Human Right to Housing?* [online]. Available at <https://www.nesri.org/programs/what-is-the-human-right-to-housing> [accessed 13th January 2020].

Parker, R., 2012. Stigma, prejudice and discrimination in global public health. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, *28*, pp. 164-169.

Pattison, B., 2010. *Tenure Trends in the UK Housing System: Will the Private Rented Sector Continue to Grow?* London: Building and Social Housing Foundation.

Perry, J. and Stephens, M., 2018. How the purpose of social housing has changed and is changing. *UK Housing Review*, pp. 29-39.

Phelan, J.C., Link, B.G. and Dovidio, J.F., 2008. Stigma and prejudice: One animal or two? *Social Science & Medicine*, *67*(3), pp. 358-367.

Power, A. and Provan, B., 2016. *Overcoming the Stigma of Social Housing Can Social Housing rebuild its reputation?* [online]. Available at <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/casereport116.pdf> [accessed 19th October 2019].

Raynor, K., Panza, L., Ordóñez, C., Adamovic, M. and Wheeler, M.A., 2020. Does social mix reduce stigma in public housing? A comparative analysis of two housing estates in Melbourne. *Cities*, *96*, p. 102458.

Royal Institute of British Architects, 2019. *Norwich council estate named UK's best new building – 2019 RIBA Stirling Prize WINNER.* [online]. Available at <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/norwich-council-estate-named-uks-best-new-building-2019-riba-stirling-prize-winner#> [accessed 19th January 2020].

Saunders, M. and Tosey, P., 2013. *The Layers of Research Design*. [online]. Available at <https://anlp.org/files/research-onion-layers_42_357.pdf> [accessed 22nd October 2019].

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. *Research methods for business students*, 8th Edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Scanlon, K., Whitehead, C. and Williams, P.,2015. *Taking stock. Understanding the effects of recent policy measures on the private rented sector and Buy-to-Let*. London: LSE.

Shelter, 2018. *A vision for social housing. The final report of Shelter's commission on the future of social housing*. London: Shelter.

Shelter, 2019. *Homelessness.* [online]. Available at <https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_releases/articles/320,000_people_in_britain_are_now_homeless,_as_numbers_keep_rising> [accessed 10th January 2020].

Slater, T., 2016. Revanchism, stigma, and the production of ignorance: Housing struggles in austerity Britain. In *Risking Capitalism* (pp. 23-48). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Spagnolo, A.B., Murphy, A.A. and Librera, L.A., 2008. Reducing stigma by meeting and learning from people with mental illness. *Psychiatric rehabilitation journal*, *31*(3), p. 186.

Tunstall, R. and Pleace, N., 2018. *Social Housing Evidence Review*. York: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.

Turner, A., 2018. Inside Housing 26th April. "*A tinted view: negative media portrayals of social housing*". [online]. Available at <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/a-tinted-view-negative-media-portrayals-of-social-housing-55950> [accessed 12th November 2019].

Van Bueren, G., 2016, The Guardian 1st March "*A right to housing should be part of UK law*". [online]. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/mar/01/right-to-housing-uk-law-homelessness> [accessed 10th January 2020].

Victoria State Government, 2019. *Stigma, discrimination and mental illness*. [online]. Available at <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/stigma-discrimination-and-mental-illness> [accessed 11th January 2020].

Wassenberg, F., 2004. Large social housing estates: from stigma to demolition? *Journal of housing and the built environment*, *19*(3), pp. 223-232.

Wassenberg, F., 2013. *Large Housing Estates: Ideas, Rise, Fall and Recovery: The Bijlmermeer and Beyond.* Amsterdam: IOS Press.

Watt, P., 2008. "Underclass' and 'ordinary people' discourses: Representing/re-presenting council tenants in a housing campaign. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 5(4), pp. 345-357.

Webb, K., 2018. Shelter Blog "*Pride versus stigma in social housing as the Big Conversation gets underway*". [online]. Available at <https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2018/05/pride-versus-stigma-in-social-housing-as-the-big-conversation-gets-underway/> [accessed 21st October 2019].

Weiss, M.G., Ramakrishna, J. and Somma, D., 2006. Health-related stigma: rethinking concepts and interventions. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, *11*(3), pp. 277-287.

Wilson, W. and Barton, C., 2018. *Briefing Paper Number 07671, Tackling the under-supply of housing in England*. London: House of Commons Library.

Appendix A: - Interview Questions

Question 1

Could you please give a brief resume of your background and experience in social housing?

Question 2

In your opinion, how would you define stigma in society? This does not have to be confined to social housing.

Question 3

I have conducted a literature review as part of this research and it appears that stigmatisation is inherent in relation to social housing. Would you agree that there is stigmatisation of social housing in the UK? Is this purely external (public perceptions) or is there stigma within the social housing sector among tenants?

Question 4

In your experience, what are the drivers for stigmatisation in social housing?

Question 5

In your opinion, do you think that government social, housing, and fiscal policies have contributed to the problem of stigma in social housing?

Question 6

In your experience, what are the impacts of social housing stigma on individuals, households, and social housing communities?

Question 7

Do you think that the media (TV, radio, virtual media) contribute to the stigmatisation of social housing? Can you give any examples?

Question 8

Do you think that the solution is to build more social housing? Should there also be investment in existing social housing stock? Can you please explain your response?

Question 9

Should social housing tenants have a role in determining the solution to the stigmatisation of this sector?

Question 10

This issue appears to be a complex problem involving not only social housing tenants, but the public, the media, and the government. In your opinion, is there an optimal solution to this problem? If yes, what is it? If no, where does this leave social housing in the UK?

Appendix B - Developing Questions for Interviews

Initial Questions	Final Question	Reference from Literature Review
What is your role in social housing?	Could you please give a brief resume of your background and experience in social housing?	Fowler (2013)
Are you a developer/local authority/social housing provider?		
How many years have you worked in social housing?		
Do you think that social housing provides a good service for society?	How would you define stigma in society? This does not have to be confined to social housing.	CIH (2018)
What is the purpose of social housing?		
Would you say that there is a stigma associated with social housing?		
What is stigma?		
What is stigma in social housing?		
In your experience, is there stigma associated with social housing in England?	I have conducted a literature review as part of this research and it appears that stigmatisation is inherent in relation to social housing. Would you agree that there is stigmatisation associated with social housing in the	Webb (2018) CIH (2018) Turner (2018) Jacobs et al. (2011)
Does the public view social housing as second-best?		
Is there a belief that social housing is only for poor people or the disadvantaged in society?		

Is there a feeling that a person is workless if they live in social housing?	UK? Is this purely external (public perceptions) or is there stigma within the social housing sector among tenants?	
Is social housing seen as something in which nobody wants to live? Why?		
Is stigma about social housing confined to the general public who view this sector from the outside?		
Is there stigma within the social housing community?		
Do some social housing tenants stigmatise other tenants in what are viewed as lesser quality properties or crime ridden areas?		
Do you think that stigma is a new concept in social housing?	In your experience, what are the drivers for stigmatisation in social housing?	Kearns et al. (2013) Turner (2018) Arthurson et al. (2014)
Is the stigma of social housing underpinned by economic divides?		
Is stigma based on income, work opportunities, or the type of work that a tenant does? For example, those in work and those on unemployment benefit?		

Does the media have a role to play in stigmatisation? For example, TV, newspaper, social media?		
Do you think that government policy since the 1950s has affected the level of stigma associated with social housing?	In your opinion do you think that government social, housing, and fiscal policies have contributed to the stigma associated with social housing?	Feinstein et al. (2015) Power and Provan (2016) Pattison (2010)
What policies (social and political) have influenced the stigma associated with social housing?		
After WWII, social housing was viewed as good-quality housing available for all sections of the community. However, over time this has changed to a more stigmatised form of housing. How has this occurred?		
Is government or political ideology to blame for the stigma associated with social housing?		
How does such stigma affect the social housing community?	In your experience, what are the impacts of social housing stigma on	Feinstein et al. (2015) Hastings (2004)

Do you think that social housing communities are bothered by wider public opinion regarding their form of tenure?	individuals, households, and social housing communities?	
Is stigma endemic in modern society?		
Do you think that social housing tenants are disadvantaged because of housing tenure?		
Is stigma a location issue; for example, where some estates are viewed as no-go areas due to crime?		
Can a social housing tenant be successful in education/work despite the stigma of social housing?		
There are several dramas and documentaries on TV that depict social tenants as workless and living off the state. Do you think this affects the public view of housing?	Do you think that the media (TV, radio, virtual media) contribute to the stigmatisation of social housing? Can you give any examples?	Turner (2018) Arthurson et al. (2014)
Do TV dramas provide an accurate picture of social housing in England?		
Do media outlets such as TV and news add to the stigma of social housing?		

Is there a solution to the stigma associated with social housing?	Do you think that the solution is to build more social housing? Should there also be more investment in existing social housing stock? Can you please explain your response?	Lund (2019) Doron and Tinker (2014) Webb (2018) Kearns (2013)
Would such stigma be reduced if there was a policy to build new high-quality social housing in better locations?		
Is stigma associated with the quality and location of social housing?		
If social housing was designed to be the same as owner-occupier housing, would this reduce stigma?		
Who should decide the way forward for social housing?	Should social housing tenants play a role in determining the solution to stigmatisation in this sector?	Taylor (2018) CIH (2018)
Should tenants have a say in finding a solution to the problem of stigmatisation in social housing?	This issue appears to be a complex problem involving not only social housing tenants but the public, the media, and the government. In your opinion, is there an optimal solution to this problem? If	Taylor (2018)
Is there a solution to this problem? If yes, what is it?		
Would it help if social tenants were given the		

power and the funding to develop a solution that suits their needs?	yes, what is it? If no, where does this leave social housing in the UK?	
Would you agree that the solution requires collaboration between all stakeholders in this sector?		
In your opinion, what is the perfect solution to this problem?		

Appendix C - Analysis of Responses to Interviews

Note: in this coding process, common issues repeated by the participants are highlighted and definitive responses to questions are highlighted in green.

Table C1 Responses to Question 3

Responses	Coding
Yes, I agree with all that. Including among tenants, e.g., attitude of some longstanding tenants towards those they consider as not acting 'tenant-like'. Question is, what created stigmatisation of social housing? In the earlier days of what we now call Social Housing, this wasn't the case. There is a Scottish Play called *'Steamy'* that is based around a public wash house, with people expressing happiness at getting out of the tenements and into 'social housing'. Allocations systems might have been more helpful in the earlier days too, with some homes allocated to lower 'professionals' and others considered 'lower' socio-economically. Stigma is reinforced by media attention, e.g., series like *'Feckless'*. This can affect the views of others living in social housing, which affects the expectations of tenants more generally. There might be a parallel with the attitude of and comments about slum dwellers by the Victorians. It is not helpful that there now seems to be a lack of clarity as to the purpose of social housing. It has moved from 'decent and affordable' to 'welfare housing'. People now have to be in quite difficult circumstances to get into social housing. This may have created a 'victim persona' among social housing households. With it, a sense of 'entitlement'. Layered onto housing are other social issues as well, with social housing becoming wrongly linked with the welfare bill.	Yes Stigma is underpinned by public opinion and longstanding tenants Created by television and media Due to a lack of clarity over the purpose of social housing Seen as housing for those in most difficult situations – victim persona Public perception that there is a sense of entitlement Contrary to the social norm of aspirations of home ownership

This is all compounded by the promotion of home ownership as being ‘good and desirable’	

There clearly is stigmatisation in social housing. This occurs both in terms of the way tenants are perceived/portrayed by the press and media; by the way they are perceived by the general public; by some who work in or around social housing, and indeed by some tenants' perception of other tenants.	Yes Caused by media and the press Can be public perception and/or from within the social housing sector
It is a real problem rather than imagined. Partly to do with how social housing is constructed, plus the availability of other tenure options, particularly from Thatcher onward. It is different in different countries, e.g., Vienna, where there is little stigma. Design issues, such as for mass housing, even though not all social housing stock is like that.	Yes Public perception reinforced by public policy and design issues
It is both external and among tenants. Evidence of both can be found in the local *Pride or Prejudice* report. Example of within is non-benefit recipients towards benefit recipients. "Those ones." People are fed the story, e.g., through the media. Can be among tenant issues as well; for example, upkeep of property issues. But is not as stark as wider public perception might suggest. It can also be generational. For example, older people towards younger people. Nothing came out of the project to suggest it could be geographical.	Yes It is public and within housing sector perceptions Benefits/non-benefits Media

	Tenants' perceptions of the behaviour of others
Yes. External includes labelling. Assuming that social housing occupants do not go to work. Referred to as "those people". No hopers. Families given large houses, which are a mess. Internal stigma can be that of shared owners and leaseholders towards tenants. Leaseholders: "we pay for everything we receive." – Partly understandable, but do not appreciate how tenants pay for services. Internal can also include a lack of awareness. For example, within members of the Tenant Council, a lack of awareness/disbelief that families are not eating properly; they must be mis-spending their money. Hearing the example of East Homes and children going to school without breakfast. Disbelief.	Yes It is an external issue -public perception that people are handed large houses which they fail to keep in order Internal stigma is from shared owners towards tenants – socio-economic grounds Lack of awareness Assumption that tenants misspend their money rather than consideration that they may not have any

Both. External stigma appears present in media and political discourse and narratives as well as wider public discourse. But I think social housing tenants and residents recognise it themselves and while not necessarily ascribing it to themselves, family, or friends, they may ascribe it to other social housing tenants.	Yes Both public and internally driven Media involvement

Table C Coded Responses to Question 5

Response	Coding
Yes. Fiscal policy has favoured home ownership. Tax breaks and the Right to Buy for example. Only emphasis seems to be on home ownership. Allocations of social housing are based on need. Defined and required by Government Guidance. There seems to be no acknowledgement of the role of social housing. Yet its contribution to Public Health and Educational Attainment is acknowledged. The past success of social housing has contributed to today's middle class. Today, however, it might be said that aspirations are capped by social housing. Planning policy needs to be considered as well, with the creation of mixed communities and the emergence of *'poor doors'* depending on who is paying for what. Also, there is an impact on people buying next to social housing developments.	Yes Emphasis of policy is on home ownership No public acknowledgement of the role of social housing in society
Absolutely. Past governments have actually coined the phrases that have come to epitomise the very concept of social housing tenants being unworthy or second class. The obsession with home ownership and the aspiration to 'own your own home' being something that sets one person's worth above another has set the tone of such stigmatisation.	Yes Policy drives the conceptualisation of social housing tenants as unworthy or second class

The idea that it is somehow ok to avoid paying tax but cheating on benefits is criminal adds to this sense.	Policy supports home ownership
Yes. In a very big way. Also, how politicians talk about housing. This can vary. After Grenfell there were some quite sensitive political comments. But politics is where the votes are. Social Housing has sometimes been seen politically as providing a 'leg up'. A second-best option, implying a negative label. Associated with the scroungers debate	Yes Policy suggests that social housing is a second-best option; negative labelling
Yes. Although people are not always as resistant to the development of social housing as may be thought. But association with welfare benefit does not help nor does pushing owner occupation as a desired tenure. Cultural, strive to achieve. Memories are short, there is a perception as to who social housing is for. Some people assumed they could not access social housing when in fact they could. Lack of social housing development has not helped. Therefore, it is often let only to those most in need. At best, social housing is seen as a 'springboard' to 'something better'	Yes Policy pushes owner-occupier Social housing viewed as a springboard to better housing
Possibly. But stigma has been highlighted in the Green Paper at least. Government has definitely contributed in the past.	Yes Government policies contribute to stigma

For example, the continuous push that you have to buy your own home. A cultural aspect pushed by Government policy. Other policies that have contributed are imposing benefit caps and child limits on welfare benefit.	Focus on home ownership Not helped by social welfare caps
Yes, all of them. Housing and social policy has sometimes reinforced notions of stereotyping and deserving/non-deserving poverty, inadvertently becoming direct political aims. The fiscal policies that created austerity have supported and underwritten these processes – if only by making rationing and allocation debates more difficult	Yes Fiscal policy Stereotyping of deserving/non-deserving

Table C3 Coding of Responses to Question 7

Responses	Coding
Yes. *'Benefit Street.'* Channel 4. *'Social Housing or Social Cleansing'* Channel 5. Role of the Daily Mail. Local radio taking up the causes of tenants unhappy with their social landlord but based upon misconceptions. For example, BBC Three Counties Radio regarding the maintenance of a back garden tree that the social landlord would not deal with . . . because it was the tenant's responsibility. Unfair presentation leading to distorted perception. A media angle that social housing is not good for anyone generates sector stigma. Media focus on *'poor doors'*, but a lack of explanation as to why such arrangements exist. For example, BBC Radio London on play areas separated by tenure in the redeveloped former Highbury Stadium.	Yes *'Benefit Street.'* Channel 4. *'Social Housing or Social Cleansing'* Channel 5. Role of the Daily Mail Local Radio
Absolutely. TV programmes like *Shameless* create a sense that what they portray is real and not drama. As long ago as *Till Death Us Do Part*, some felt that the Alf Garnett character was somehow supporting their views on race and did not see that the reverse was the case. Reality TV shows rarely show a positive image of those in social housing and, similarly, the red top press will focus on negative stories rather than positive ones. Politicians have fuelled this image and recent comments by Jacob Rees Mogg show this continues to be the case even after the Grenfell tragedy. See also my answer/comments to question 4 above	Shameless Till Death Us Do Part Reality shows Politicians

Yes. Associated with crime and violence. The impression is that it is worse than it is. Distorted. Also, coverage given to harsher penalties being given to social tenants than others, e.g., rioting. 'Red top' newspapers promote stigmatised view. Example of programme: *'Benefits Street'*. This represents a default position.	Yes Distorted view from Benefits Street
Perhaps it has changed a bit for the better since the Grenfell disaster. But still an attitude towards "only being tenants". Social housing is labelled by the media, e.g., in interviews. Example of unhelpful programme: Coronation Street. Closely related to the way the media speaks about people that live in social housing	Media interviews distorted Coronation street
Yes. Consciously in the case of programmes such as Benefits Street, but also unconsciously in the default portrayal of social housing and its residents and communities in fictional as well as factual programming.	Yes Benefits Street

Table C4 Coding of Responses to Question 10

Responses	Coding
That there might just be a market. That we are not stuck in a sector-based approach and thinking. More on appropriate pricing (as under question 9). Social Housing continues to be a political football.	Need to think outside the box
Sadly I do not believe there is a single solution to what is, as you say, a complex problem. As a profession, housing must admit that there is a problem and not everyone is blameless when it comes to creating or fanning the issue. We must help champion actions that enable our residents and communities to demonstrate that the stigma is no more warranted than claiming that ultra-rich people abusing the tax system means all rich people are crooks. Parliament must also own this problem and accept that they have in part created a climate where it not only exists but flourishes. Perhaps they could pass legislation that stops the press and media from publishing such a one-sided view of society or are properly and proportionally punished when they do. There should be proper regulation of the press to stop this type of sensational and sloppy journalism. I do not believe the press will do this for themselves. The public view will in part be informed or more appropriately misinformed by all of the above	No single solution Social housing sector and politicians need to take ownership of the problems Legislation to prevent distorted reporting

Work needs doing on the image. Also on combating negative news stories. Sometimes as a part of regeneration projects. Even renaming locations. Rebadging. Promoting regeneration stories where things have really improved. Image creation	Need for image enhancement and rebranding
It is multi-faceted. But it can't be 'put at the door' of social housing. Would take wider societal change. Difficult to address with one solution. Human nature will out. It is about people's differences	Complex problem requiring multi-faceted solution Image issues
People need to be educated. For example, the casual conversation members of the Tenant Scrutiny Team had with people they met who had numerous preconceived ideas about social housing and social housing tenants. Lot to learn from mental health. People are listening to mental health issues more. People talk about it more openly. Much more explaining going on. Ruth Fox on Twitter is very open and honest about her own mental health situation. The responses are generally good. No trolls have been seen.	Need to educate people about the truth of social housing. Lessons to be learned from mental health and how stigma is being eradicated in relation to this issue.
I don't think there is a single, simple optimal solution. Rather, it will take effort and a variety of different measures to fully address stigma. But I also believe that addressing, challenging, and removing stigma is possible with a determined, conscious, and organised effort.	Complex problem Requires determined, organised solution