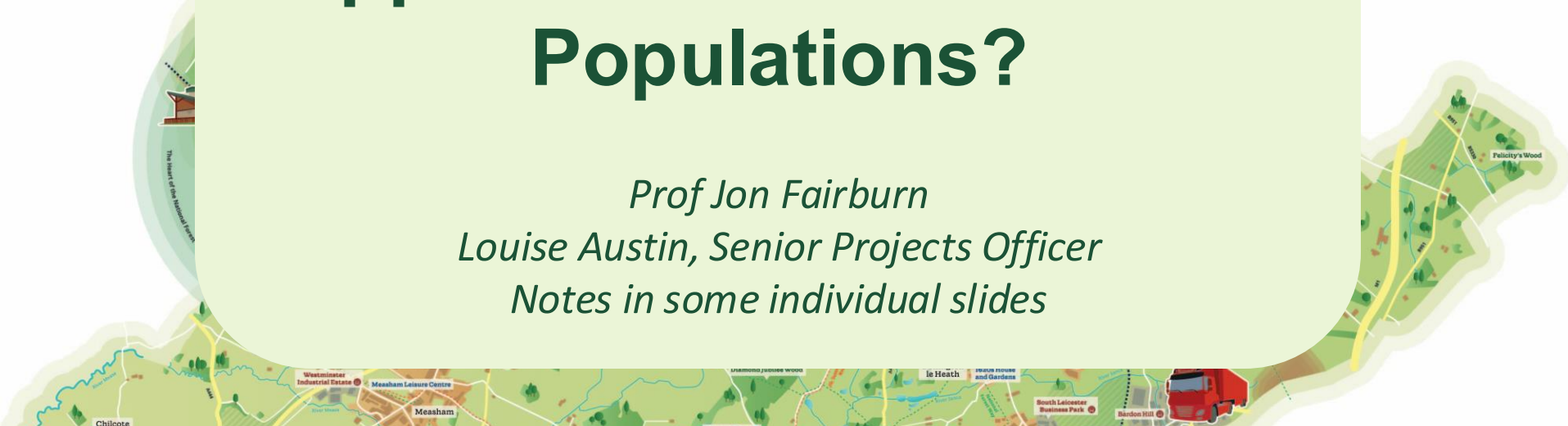# Trends and Policy Changes in Social Housing: Opportunities for Healthier Populations?

*Prof Jon Fairburn*
*Louise Austin, Senior Projects Officer*
*Notes in some individual slides*

## Jon Fairburn
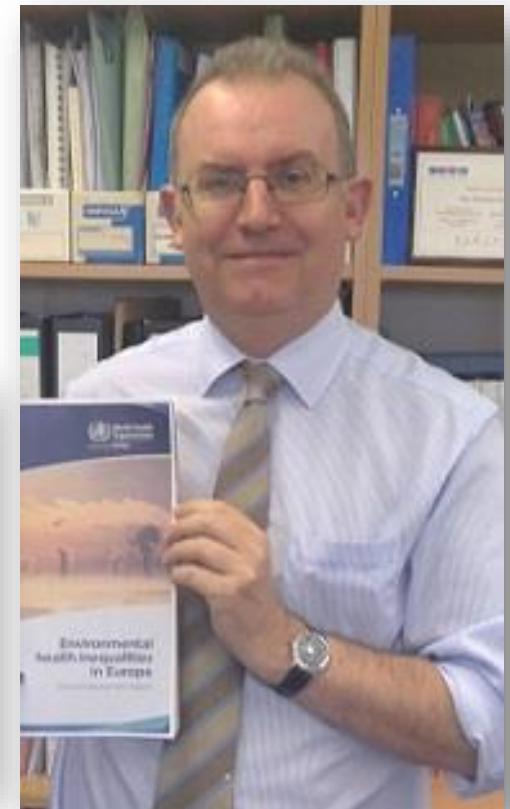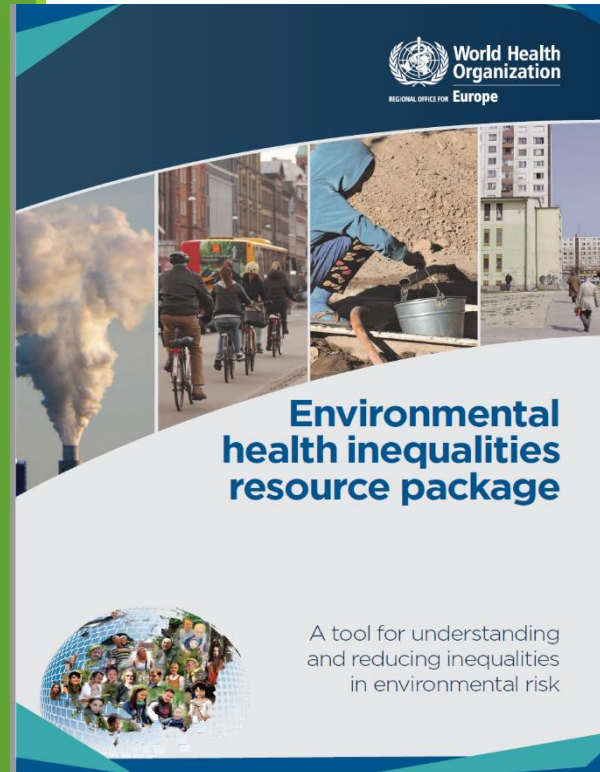*Business Project Manager and Emeritus Professor*

Led the Business and Management UoA for REF2021 at Staffordshire University, achieving joint 51st overall and 17th for Impact. Jon also authored a 4* Impact Case Study on environmental justice and has worked with the WHO on environmental inequalities since 2009

## Louise Austin
*Senior Projects and Performance Officer*

Progressed through housing to her current role, gaining deep knowledge of NWLDC's stock and residents. Currently pursuing a degree in Business and Leadership, with growing interests in AI and its applications in housing.
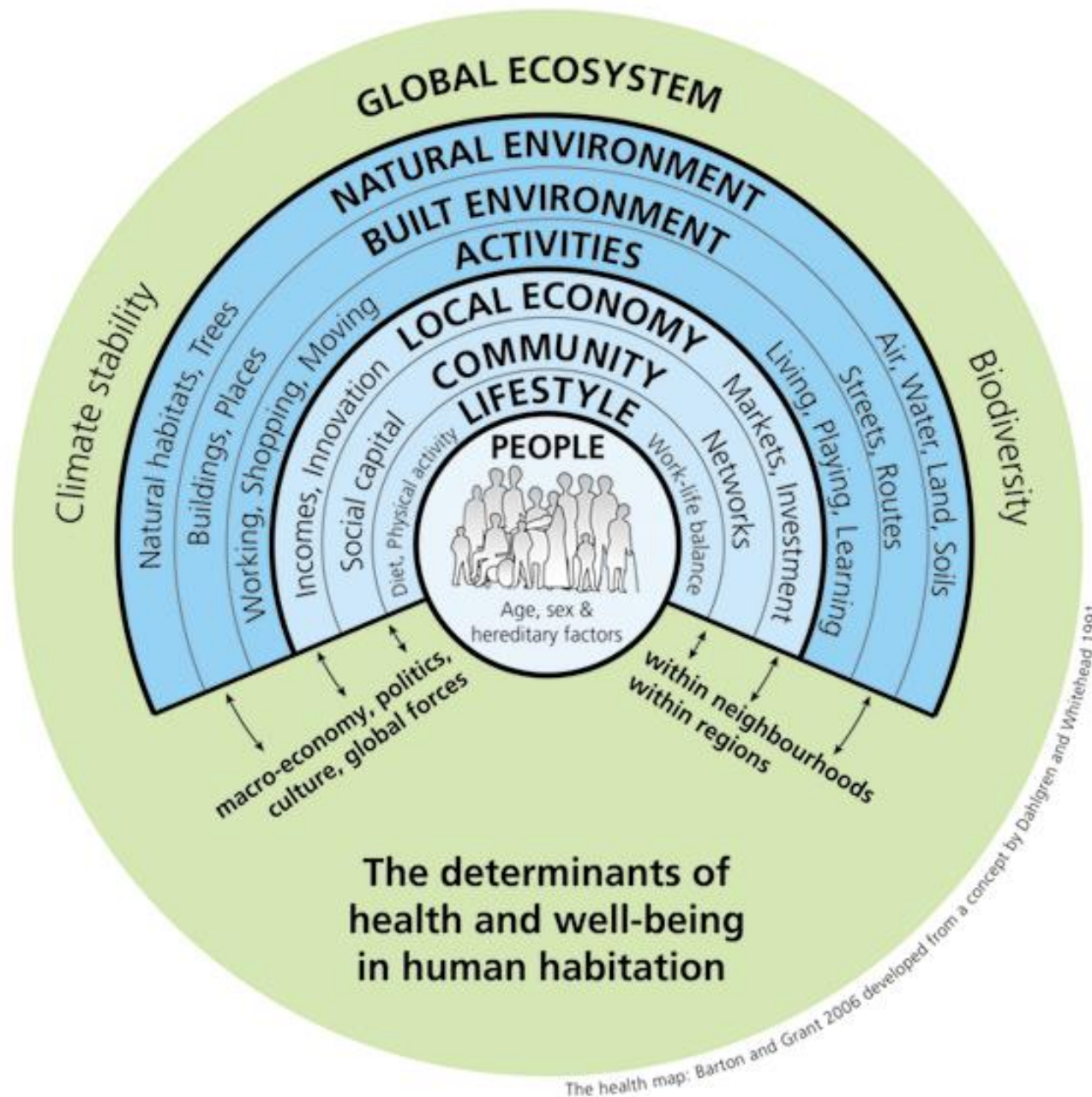
World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe

**Environmental health inequalities resource package**

A tool for understanding and reducing inequalities in environmental risk

**Environmental health inequalities in Europe**
Second assessment report

## Social Inequalities in Exposure to Ambient Air Pollution: A Systematic Review in the WHO European Region

by Jonathan Fairburn [1,*] ✉ iD, Steffen Andreas Schüle [2,3] iD, Stefanie Dreger [2,3], Lisa Karla Hilz [2,3] iD and Gabriele Bolte [2,3] iD

[1] Staffordshire Business School, Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent ST4 2DF, UK
[2] Department of Social Epidemiology, Institute of Public Health and Nursing Research, University of Bremen, 28359 Bremen, Germany

The determinants of
health and well-being
in human habitation

The health map: Barton and Grant 2006 developed from a concept by Dahlgren and Whitehead 1991

# Social housing: *The last 15 years*

**Lack of inspections**

**Lack of transparency and accountability**

**Austerity**

**Problem buildings – safety, management, resident composition, level of demand**

**High profile cases – Damp and Mould - Awaab's Law, Grenfell - Building Safety Act 2022**

# Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, introduced Consumer Standards which came into effect from 1 April 2024

*The four new standards under which the sector works are:*

- Safety and Quality Standard – outcomes about the safety and quality of tenants' homes

- Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – outcomes about how landlords provide information, listen to tenants, and act on their views

- Neighbourhood and Community Standard – outcomes about how landlords work with other organisations to help ensure tenants live in safe neighbourhoods

- Tenancy Standard – outcomes about how landlords allocate and let homes and manage tenancies

# Regulator of social housing

Four consumer grades: C1, C2, C3, C4

C1 and C2 pass

Large number of housing providers are failing these "Reasons for non-compliance include safety compliance failures, poor data on homes, failure to collect data on the tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) from tenants, and thousands of outstanding repairs. "

# Drivers for change

Four new standards will require much greater collection, use and analysis of data

Housing stock data should be at most 5 years old

'Co-regulation' means more data and reports to councillors and tenants

"Data underpins everything" HQN

North West Leicestershire
District Council

# Neighbourhood and community standard (April 2024)

CO-OPERATE WITH LOCAL PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS AND THE STRATEGIC HOUSING FUNCTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES WHERE THEY ARE ABLE TO ASSIST LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ACHIEVING THEIR OBJECTIVES

IDENTIFY AND COMMUNICATE TO TENANTS THE ROLES REGISTERED PROVIDERS PLAY IN PROMOTING SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING AND HOW THOSE ROLES WILL BE DELIVERED *(CURIOUS PHRASING)*

# Why should Universities be key local partners?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Assist in creating or providing new and better data analysis | Provide expertise where we don't have it e.g. health, artificial intelligence | Create a new pipeline of staffing |
| Help deliver and inform strategic projects | Assist in delivering sustainable development | Provide courses for the 'fifth' consumer standard – Housing qualifications for senior mangers |

Approximately 4,000 accommodations across NWLDC

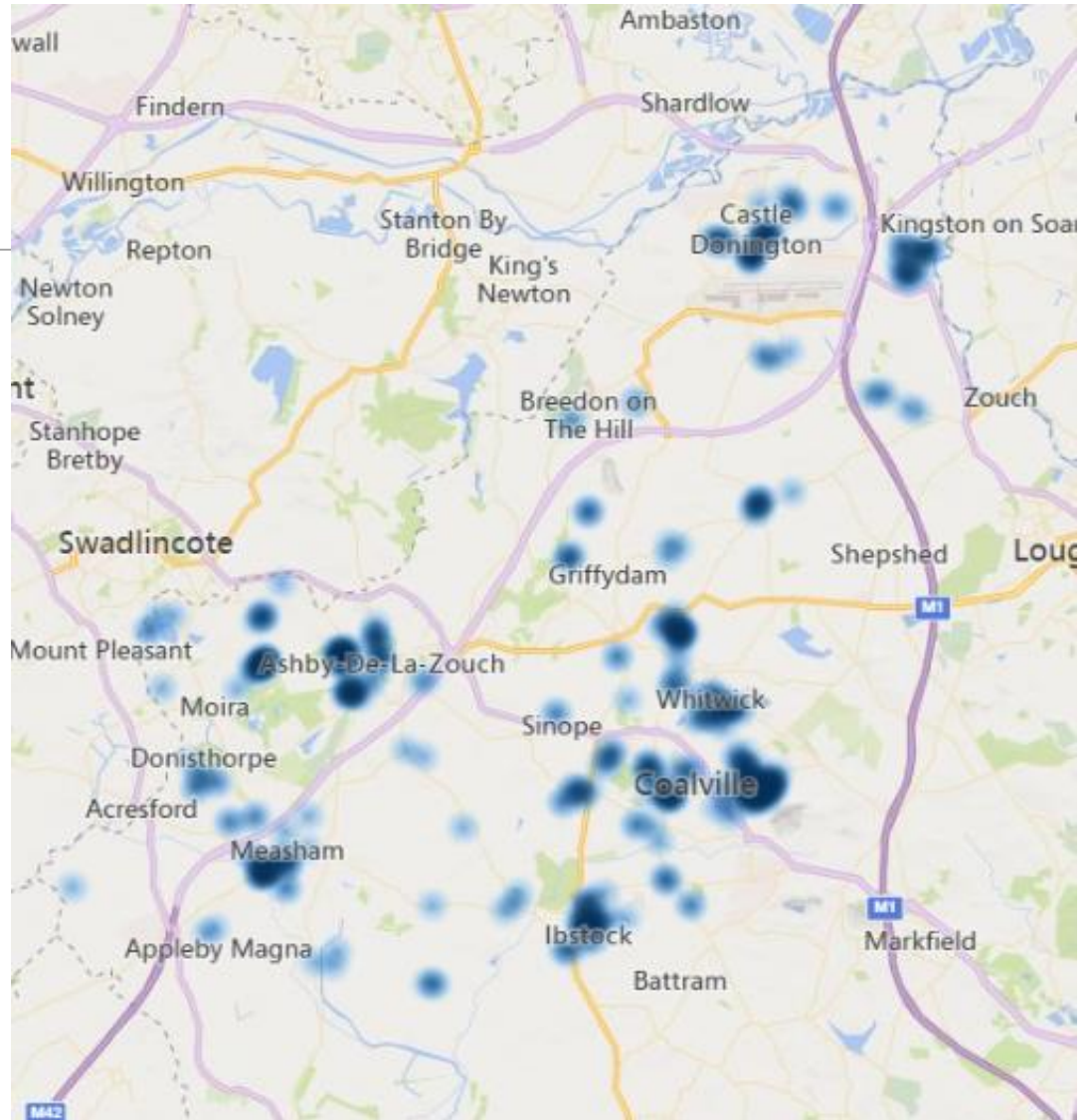Full Ordnance Survey datasets

ARC GIS – largely unused

QL – a relational database that is the main operating software for housing (but lacks a decent user interface)

Tenant Associations (5)

Housing Improvement Board

InTouch (Tenants magazine 4 times a year)

North West Leicestershire
District Council

# Data on Property: Sample of the variables

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Property type | Property detachment – (e.g. semi, terraced, detached) | Build type – (e.g. solid brick, Airey, Wimpey No-fines) |
| Bedrooms | Heating type | Component ages – (how old each of the components are which affect decency, roof, kitchen, windows, bathroom etc. |
| Build date | Roof type | Presence of pv |

# Property Variables: Continued

Wall finishes

Wall construction

Tree quantity

Off road parking

Internet availability

Housing health and safety rating system. Stock condition survey reported on each item included. Such as - Trip hazards, damp and mould, heat

OS UPRN

EPC

# Individual variables

- Age
- Vulnerabilities
- Language
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Preferred method of contact (tel, post, email)
- Contact information

# Other datasets

https://solarwizard.org.uk/

# https://www.climatejust.org.uk/

- Long term climate change – keeping cool in summer especially given vulnerable populations.

- Dataset above would be a starting point.

- Resolution (2023) "*Additionally, more than half (54 per cent) of the poorest fifth of English families, three-times as many as among the richest fifth (18 per cent), live in homes liable of getting too hot, **while two-thirds of socially-renting households**, six-in-ten of those with young children, and more than half of ethnic-minority families **have the highest risk of their homes getting too hot as the nation warms.**"
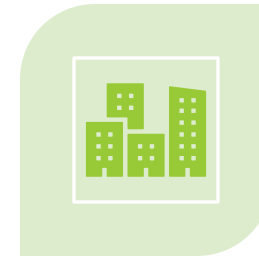
North West Leicestershire District Council

# Looking ahead/possible themes for research

WAVE 3 INVESTMENT SECURED (SPRING 2025) – 800 HOUSES TO BE UPGRADED FOR CARBON REDUCTION INVESTMENT OVER 3 YEARS
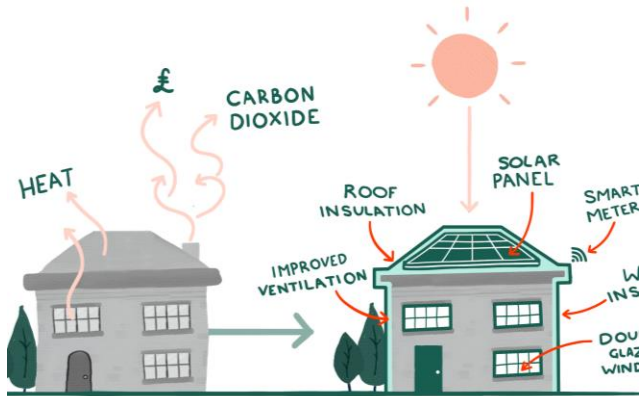
MOULD AND DAMP – ONGOING PROBLEM

QUALITY OF LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD, POORLY MANAGED AND OFTEN DEGRADED GREEN SPACE, DIFFICULT GARDEN ALLOCATION ON SOME PROPERTIES

# Wave 3.0 of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)



NWLDC has secured £8 million in funding through Wave 3.0 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) to launch a transformative three-year retrofit programme, starting April 2025.

The project will enhance the energy efficiency and comfort of 882 council-owned homes, supporting the Government's net zero targets and meeting PAS 2035 standards.

We are currently evaluating deployment options and invite collaboration and insights from other housing providers who have implemented similar technologies across part or all their housing stock.

# Call to Academics – Role of University Partners

- Support monitoring and evaluation of retrofit outcomes

- Analyse energy, carbon, and cost savings

- Research health, comfort, and behavioural impacts

- Contribute to reporting and policy development

- Apply data science and smart tech insights (e.g. AICO, Switchee)
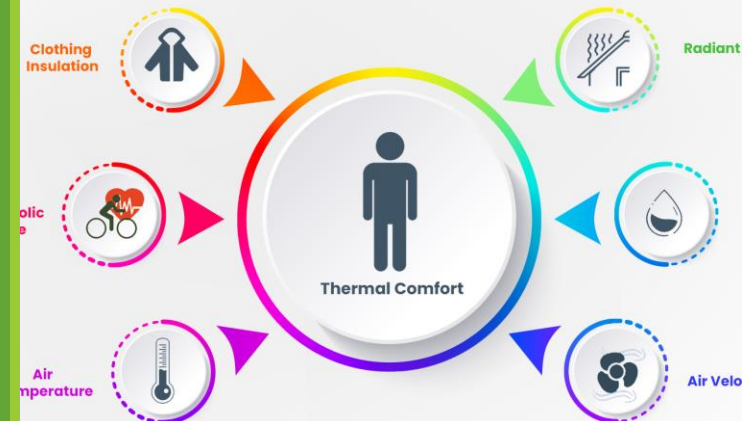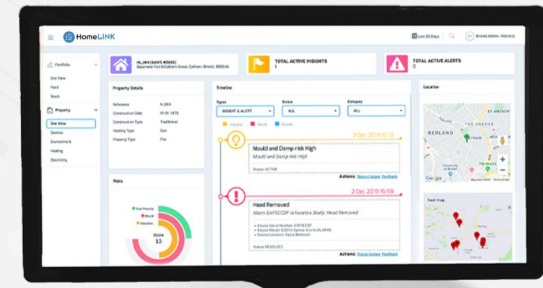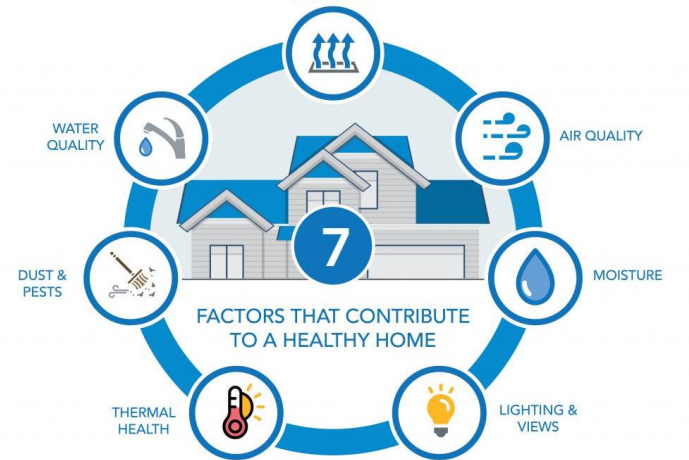
# Damp, Mould and Condensation

- 716 NWLDC properties with open repairs orders relating to damp, mould and condensation.

- Awaab's Law will require social housing providers to investigate health hazards like mould and damp within **14 days** and begin repairs within **7 days**.

- Providers can use **monitoring and stock data** to proactively manage **damp, mould, and condensation** by identifying risks early and preventing issues before they escalate.

# Awaab's Law phased approach

1. From October 2025 social landlords will be required to address damp and mould hazards that present a significant risk of harm to tenants within fixed timescales. From the same point in time, they will also have to address all emergency repairs, (whether they relate to damp and mould or not), as soon as possible and within no longer than 24 hours.

2. In 2026, requirements will expand to a wider range of hazards beyond damp and mould. The government has not yet fully determined which hazards will be included in this second phase, but expects it to include excess cold and excess heat, falls, structural collapse, fire, electrical and explosions, and hygiene hazards.

3. Then in 2027, the requirements of Awaab's Law will expand to apply to the remaining hazards as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) but excluding overcrowding.



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

**Awaab's Law: Improving Social Tenant Rights**

# Themes cont.

- Flooding in some parts of the district is an increasing concern

- Ageing population in the community - Nationally: 60% of residents are pensioners, 40% have either mental illness or limiting long term illness

- New ways of co-creation with tenants and councillors

# Trend –Data monitors: examples Switchee/AICO

Example Variables

- Carbon monoxide (CO) or carbon dioxide ($CO_2$);

- Temperature

- Relative humidity

- Light levels

- Usage patterns and occupancy

- Heat loss rate

- Time to heat

Switchee units include a built-in resident interface console, enabling two-way communication between the tenant and housing provider.

According to Switchee, this platform achieves:

- An overall response rate of 92% to messages sent via the device

- 88% of residents respond within 24 hours, supporting rapid engagement and feedback loops

# Possibilities : Artificial Intelligence



Being used for the basics in parts of the housing sector but could it develop:

- **Spotting trends in repairs** to identify recurring issues and address them proactively.

- **Improving reporting** to meet regulatory requirements with greater accuracy and efficiency.

- **Informing decisions** by turning raw data into actionable insights, such as pinpointing areas where tenants need the most support.

- **Predicting health needs amongst tenants**, preventative treatments

# Potential collaborations

Partnership/support for UKRI bids

Partnership/support for EU Horizon bids

M Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (MKTPs)

Undergraduate placements for traditional sandwich courses

Shorter placements

Project briefs for UG or PG Projects

Staff co-working/co located

Memorandum of Understanding

Hosting of field visits

REF Impact Case Studies

Any other suggestions

# Case study of Cobalt Housing and MKTP

**Healthy Homes - Healthy Tenant - Healthy Community:**

By developing innovative management, engagement and new partnership models this MKTP will help deliver community centric housing, growing community economy, regeneration, cohesion, and resident well-being and prosperity.

**The MKTP Partnership Team**

This is a cross-faculty project led **Dr Lisa Newson** in Psychology, with **Dr Ioannis Kostopoulos** and **Dr Fiona Armstrong-Gibbs** in Liverpool Business School, alongside **Dr Badr Abdullah** and **Dr Ian Jarman** in the Faculty of Engineering and Technology.

# Local potential partners

Groundwork Five Counties – work in deprived areas through environmental matters - https://www.groundwork.org.uk/fivecounties/

Environment Agency

Good links with Health partners and social prescribers - Joy app

ERDF approach possibilities

# A quick word on devolution and staffing in the sector

- Regardless of what happens with devolution our homes and communities will still need to be managed safely and with care

- Merger of housing providers likely to occur under devolution so likely to need more skilled staff e.g. GIS analysis to increase as spatial policies expected to be developed by the regulator

- National shortage of housing professionals – would be worth targeting the sector if you have placement courses

- Opportunity to strengthen links between housing and health staff

# Summary

Housing providers are everywhere – so opportunities for plenty of long-term links with the University sector

Staff shortage could start to be addressed by greater use of placement students especially business, geography, health, civil engineering and data science courses

Better Care Funding - worth exploring locally

Environmental trends will exacerbate or create new problems especially warming but scope to tackle these at a neighbourhood level

Devolution and continued mergers in housing provision will lead to larger providers and the need for change management, integration of different IT systems and more spatial policies (good opportunities for KTPs to address some of this)

# Useful industry resources

www.cih.org – has a good jobs page

www.publicfinance.co.uk

http://hqnetwork.co.uk

https://www.housing.org.uk

https://www.gov.uk/government/announcements

https://www.housemark.co.uk/hm news/all articles

https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news

Linkedin:

https://www.linkedin.com/company/housing-ombudsman/ The Housing Ombudsman

https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/housing-digital/ Housing Digital

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4642487/ Inside Housing

https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8102758/ Social Housing Magazine

# Some recent environmental justice I'm involved with

**OECD Paris – May 2024 – first piece of work on environmental justice**

Blog here with all resources
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/oecd-environmental-justice-conf-2024-jon-fairburn-9bbaf/

Working with OSCI for next IMD – environmental variables reviewed, and air quality index created

Working group with Environment Agency, FoE, Natural England and Leeds – Index of Multiple Environment Deprivation

# Contact information

| Jon Fairburn | Email<br>JON.FAIRBURN@nwleicestershire.gov.uk<br>(note I'm on a 0.4 FTE contract)<br><br>LinkedIn<br>Jon Fairburn - Google Scholar<br><br>Publications repository<br>https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jon-Fairburn |
|---|---|
| Louise Austin | Email<br>LOUISE.AUSTIN@nwleicestershire.gov.uk<br>Landline:01530 454538<br><br>https://www.linkedin.com/in/louaustin/ |