



PlaceShapers

Together we help communities thrive

New report: Realising the potential of housing associations in places and communities

Introduction: Empowering local change through housing associations

Housing associations are uniquely placed to drive meaningful change in communities and contribute to the government's ambition for a decade of national renewal.

This document sets out the changes the government and policymakers can make to unlock the sector's full potential.

Housing associations already deliver beyond bricks and mortar – from health and skills to regeneration and climate resilience. But with smarter spending and support from national, regional and local government, they can be an even bigger force in shaping better places and brighter futures.



Key messages

- The Spending Review has given the sector the confidence and tools it needs to plan for investment in new homes and improve the quality and energy efficiency of existing homes.
- Building new homes contributes to the economy and addresses the housing crisis, but housing associations do so much more.
- By investing in their homes, their local communities, and their places, housing associations support people into work, address health and economic inequalities, improve the environment and prevent and address homelessness.
- But with the right support and changes to their operating environment, housing associations can make an even bigger contribution to the government's ambition of a decade of national renewal.
- The way Homes England invest in new supply, including through the Social and Affordable Homes Programme, and the structure and role of social housing in devolution, will be critical in realising the potential of housing associations in places and communities.
- There are a number of factors that can constrain the contribution of housing associations:
 - Exclusion of housing from strategic discussions about what is needed in places and communities.
 - Fragmented, ring-fenced, or short-term funding that limits coordination and hampers efforts to respond to the unique housing challenges of a place.
 - Variable local capacity, especially in rural, coastal, and post-industrial areas.
 - Limited use of shared data and consistent impact measurement tools.
- When national policy is flexible enough to reflect local realities, money is spent efficiently and opportunities to improve lives and build resilient communities are not lost. This is not about spending more — it's about spending smarter, aligning systems, and backing local leaders who can make things work on the ground.
- There are four simple changes the government and policymakers can make that will help realise the potential of housing associations in places and communities:
 1. **Acknowledge the role of housing in improving local outcomes**- ensure housing is a key focus for devolution and embed housing into local governance structures.
 2. **Align and integrate housing funding**- ensure funding can be spent on the housing issues that matter most in an area and funding pots can be joined up to support local delivery.
 3. **Invest in delivery capacity**- target support to rural, coastal, and post-industrial areas where institutional infrastructure is limited and support housing associations with capacity challenges.
 4. **Improve impact measurement**- expand the use of shared metrics and fund long-term evaluations to capture outcomes across housing, health, and public value.
- Our members, housing associations who prioritise their place-shaping role, have the trust, relationships and deep understanding of the places and communities where they work, to be key partners in delivering a decade of national renewal.
- **Our Call to Action – support housing associations so they can contribute as fully as possible to a decade of national renewal.** National and local policymakers, funders, and delivery partners must:
 1. Back local systems with long-term, flexible tools.
 2. Position housing as a platform for cross-sector change.
 3. Treat housing associations as strategic partners.

Access the full report at www.placeshapers.org

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