

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

Private Sector House Condition Surveys (HCS) are conducted on a regular basis by local authorities as a means of maintaining a detailed picture of housing conditions in the private sector (owner occupied and privately rented homes). Such a picture forms a useful evidence base on which to build strategies and inform investment decisions, and feed into statistical returns and other internal reports. The information is also useful in presenting the potential obligations on an authority in relation to current housing legislation:

- Section 3 Housing Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO)

The survey was a sample survey of a nominal 1,000 dwellings, covering all private sector tenures excluding registered social landlord (RSL) properties. The survey was based on a stratified random sample of addresses in the City of Lincoln, in order to gain a representative picture across the City. A sample of 1,818 was drawn with 984 surveys being undertaken in total.

In order to place the findings in context, comparisons are made to the English House Condition Survey (EHCS) 2006 and the Survey of English Housing 2006-2007, both of which are published by Communities and Local Government (CLG). Some comparative data is drawn from the Family Resources Survey 2006-2007 which is published by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).

### **General survey characteristics**

The following list gives some of the key features of the City of Lincoln's housing stock and population compared with national averages:

- A higher proportion of the housing stock was built pre 1919 (28.1%) and post 1980 (33.5%) with lower proportions built in-between that.
- The proportion of privately rented dwellings that were built pre 1919 at 50.9% is substantially higher than that for owner occupied dwellings (19.6%), with authority average for the same tenure groups being 28.0%.
- The stock has higher proportions of terraced houses, bungalows and high rise purpose built flats (6 or more storeys).
- A slightly lower proportion of older residents in the age bands 60 years and over (35.1% compared with 35.9%).
- The proportion of households who had been resident for up-to 5 years is above the national average (48.5% compared with 36%).

- Average incomes are below those reported in the EHCS 2005 (including when adjusted for inflation £340 compared with £489).
- The proportion of households that have an income of less than £15,000 is 48.2%, which compares to 35% nationally, which could potentially make affordability a significant issue, possibly affecting repair and improvement in the private sector dwelling stock.
- Benefit receipt at 30% is substantially above the national average (17%), which relates back to the proportion of households on low incomes.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Owner occupied</b>	<b>Privately rented</b>	<b>All private sector stock</b>	<b>England</b>
Dwellings	23,400	8,580	32,020	
<i>Per cent of stock<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>56.8%</i>	<i>20.8%</i>	<i>77.6%</i>	
Non decent dwellings <sup>2</sup>	7,700	3,700	11,400	
<i>Rate</i>	<i>32.9%</i>	<i>42.9%</i>	<i>35.6%</i>	<i>36.3%</i>
Vulnerable households in decent homes <sup>3</sup>	4,000	1,500	5,500	
<i>Rate</i>	<i>64.7%</i>	<i>50.5%</i>	<i>60.0%</i>	<i>57.3%</i>
Serious hazard dwellings	4,700	2,200	6,900	
<i>Rate</i>	<i>20.2%</i>	<i>25.5%</i>	<i>21.6%</i>	<i>23.5%</i>
Households in Fuel Poverty	4,700	3,600	8,300	
<i>Rate</i>	<i>20.2%</i>	<i>41.2%</i>	<i>25.9%</i>	<i>16.0%</i>
Mean SAP <sup>4</sup>	53	50	52	49
Residents over 60	9,300	1,400	10,700	
<i>Rate<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>41.6%</i>	<i>17.2%</i>	<i>35.1%</i>	<i>35.9%</i>
Households in receipt of benefit	3,100	5,100	9,200	
<i>Rate<sup>5</sup></i>	<i>27.5%</i>	<i>36.9%</i>	<i>30.0%</i>	<i>17.0%</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Percentages given as a proportion of total housing stock, the remaining 22.4% is all social housing, which was not surveyed as part of this study</i></li> <li><i>2. Non decent dwellings fail the Government Decent Homes Standard which aims to ensure homes are warm, safe, in good condition and have reasonably modern facilities</i></li> <li><i>3. Refers to households in receipt of an income or disability benefit, as defined under former Public Service Agreement 7 objectives</i></li> <li><i>4. SAP is the government's Standard Assessment Procedure for rating energy efficiency on a scale of 1 (poor) to 100 (excellent)</i></li> <li><i>5. As a percentage of occupied dwellings, not all dwellings</i></li> </ol>				

## **Decent Homes Standard**

It is Government policy that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a “decent home”. The Decent Homes Standard contains four broad criteria described in detail in their own individual chapters in the main report:

- Primary reasons for failing the Decent Homes Standard in Lincoln are serious hazards (see below) and thermal comfort. Due to large overlap between the Excess Cold hazard and thermal comfort, tackling energy efficiency is crucial.

## **Cost implications for repair and improvement**

The cost to make dwellings decent in the private sector provides an idea of the cost of bringing dwellings up to a good standard. The costs are the total sum that would be needed for remedial and improvement work, regardless of the source of funding. They take no account of longer term maintenance, which would be in addition to these costs.

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Total Cost (£ million)</b>	<b>Cost per dwelling (£)</b>
Category 1 Hazard	£38.1	6,900
Repair	£17.1	3,700
Amenities	£5.7	300
Thermal comfort	£11.8	6,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£72.7</b>	<b>11,400</b>

## **Category 1 hazards**

One of the most significant changes under the Housing Act 2004 was a change in the minimum standard for housing. The fitness standard was removed and replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a prescribed method of assessing individual hazards, rather than a general standard to give a judgment of fit or unfit. The HHSRS is evidence based – national statistics on the health impacts of hazards encountered in the home are used as a basis for assessing individual hazards.

The HHSRS system deals with a much broader range of issues than the previous fitness standard. It covers a total of 29 hazards in four main groups described in more detail in the main report:

- Primary hazard failures in the City of Lincoln are excess cold, falling on level surfaces and falls on stairs.
- Category 1 hazards are strongly associated with older dwellings and dwellings occupied by those on low incomes, those in receipt of a benefit and those aged under 25 and over 65.

- Proportionately, Category 1 hazards are more strongly associated with the privately rented sector.

### **Energy Efficiency**

Energy efficiency is a key consideration in private sector housing and the following illustrates some of the issues:

- Fuel poverty at 25.9% is over double that found in the EHCS 2006 (11.5%).
- The cost to provide improved energy efficiency measures to the 4,700 owner occupied dwellings in fuel poverty (i.e. spending more than 10% of income on heating) is £2.7 million.
- The mean SAP (energy rating on a scale of 0 (poor) to 100 (good)) is 52 in the City of Lincoln, which is higher than that found nationally (49).
- The less energy efficient dwellings are older dwellings (pre 1919); converted flats, (although these only represent 2.8% of the total private sector housing stock) and privately rented dwellings.
- The level of excess cold hazards is an issue given that just over a third of residents are aged 60 and over in The City of Lincoln (35.1% or 10,750)

### **What of the future?**

The replacement of Best Value Performance Indicators with Public Service Agreements (PSAs), introduced flexible target setting from the list of 198 National Indicators. The most relevant to the condition of private sector housing are:

- PSA17 Tackle poverty and promote greater independence and well-being in later life;
- PSA20 Increase long term housing supply and affordability;
- NI 186 Per Capita CO2 emissions
- NI 187 Fuel Poverty

The national housing agenda is changing priorities, and moving away from dwelling condition toward:

- provision of sufficient affordable housing for all
- the health, safety and well being of occupiers
- reduction in carbon emissions through improved energy efficiency

It is, therefore, increasingly relevant for private sector housing renewal policies to include promoting access to the private rented sector and tackling energy efficiency in non fuel poor households in addition to helping vulnerable

people with repairs, thermal improvement and disabled adaptations in order for them to remain independent in their own homes.