



Healthy Homes campaign update

July 2023

1.1 Lord Crisp calls for an MOT for all new homes

Lord Nigel Crisp, sponsor of the Healthy Homes amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) has called on the government to create primary legislation that acts like an MOT for homes – not only to make sure homes are safe but that they also promote people’s health and wellbeing. He was speaking to a group of peers, MPs, and supporting organisations at a House of Lords event organised by the TCPA on 27th June, joined by Sam Stewart, CEO of Nationwide Foundation, and Dr Hugh Ellis Director of Policy at the TCPA. Participants said there was an urgent need for change, sharing their experiences of damp, poorly insulated and isolated conditions, both in residential conversions through permitted development and in new-build flats.

Lord Crisp also had a [feature splash](#) in the Sunday Express recently about the woeful state of the nation's housing stock. In an accompanying [comment piece](#), he said *"we need compulsory minimum standards. Without them, we are building the slums of the future."*

1.2 Latest BRE report highlights how the current system is failing people

The government has responded to Lord Crisp’s Healthy Homes amendment saying that the National Planning Policy Framework, Building Regulations and other policies already address the Healthy Homes Principles. However, the evidence is overwhelming¹ that current policy, standards² and guidance are failing to deliver decent, affordable and healthy homes for people as they do not provide a clear and mandatory foundation for all new homes, not only to protect people from harm but importantly to also **promote** people’s health. Changes to Permitted Development (PD) in 2021 were insufficient and do not address all healthy homes principles, including: ensuring sites are located with good access to amenities green spaces and play areas; ensuring climate resilience in terms of flood risk, overheating and excess cold; adequate provision of windows (natural light is not the same as dual aspect provisions); ventilation; indoor and outdoor air quality; limiting noise and light pollution. Homes created through PD are also not required to make developer contributions towards community infrastructure and services.

Poor housing will cost over £135.5bn over next 30 years without urgent action, according to the Building Research Establishment (BRE)

The problem for new homes is not just about the poor quality ‘homes’ created through PD conversions. The sector more generally is failing to ensure Healthy Homes across all tenures. According to the latest BRE housing and health report³ failure to invest in decent quality homes now will cost the NHS a further £135.5bn in the next 30 years. They find that poor housing still results in poor health that costs the NHS over £1bn annually, and that is before considering the wider costs to society, in terms of lost hours of work due to ill health, poor school attendance, as well as missed carbon targets. Many existing policies are not mandatory and are failing to ensure

¹ [HH-principles-and-evidence-2.pdf \(tcpa.org.uk\)](#)

² e.g. social landlords may ‘have regard’ to the Decent Homes standard but are not legally required to deliver it

³ [The Cost of Ignoring Poor Quality Housing - BRE Group](#)

that new homes are designed to be resilient to climate change. Notably, Part L of Building Regulations does not meet the new 2035 and 2050 net zero carbon targets⁴. There is also a lack of comprehensive policy that addresses climate adaptation issues, such as increased risk of storms, droughts, and overheating, along with impacts to biodiversity and green infrastructure. This only further highlights how urgent it is to get the quality of our homes right from the outset as the cost of retrofitting, both to human and planetary health, is so harmful.

The BRE report focuses on the cost to people's health from the most extreme hazards, such as risk of fire and excessive cold, but there are many more homes being built or converted that are failing people. Over half UK homes (55% or 15.7 million homes) currently fail overheating criterion⁵, and an estimated 791 excess deaths are associated with overheating each year in England and Wales⁶. Homes should be built that not only protect us from harm but actively promote our health. This is why we need legal reform to embed Healthy Homes principles across all housing tenures, and especially for those who can least afford to get sick. Those on lower incomes are more likely to be living in poor quality housing (22% of people in the lowest quintile income group live in poor homes, compared to 4% in the top quintile). People living in poor quality homes are twice as likely to have poor general health than people who do not (11% of people compared to 22%)⁷.

1.3 Healthy Homes amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB)

The Healthy Homes amendment to the 'LURB' creates overall mandatory obligations for the Secretary of State to consider and report on. They are a direct response to the absence of any statutory requirements to promote health and well-being across the entire regulatory landscape that applies to the built environment. Both planning and regulatory systems have faced deregulation and incremental changes, and neither contains any overarching legal duty to secure and promote the health and well-being of the individual.

The Healthy Homes amendment to the LURB is an opportunity for systemic change. The Healthy Homes principles establish a clear mandatory obligation on the Secretary of State to ensure all new homes, in all tenures, protect and promote people's health.

The dates for the vote on the Healthy Homes amendment in the House of Lords are yet to be announced. The report stage and vote will run from 11th July until mid-September, with the summer recess in between. We must not lose momentum on this vital campaign. We invite all supporting organisations to promote the amendments to their contacts in the House of Lords and encourage all peers to turn out to vote.

Further information:

- Lord Cripps' Healthy Homes amendment (after clauses 128, 231 and schedule 11): [link here](#)
- Evidence and rationale underpinning the eleven Healthy Homes principles: [link here](#)
- Further information about the Healthy Homes campaign: [link here](#)

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⁴ Decarbonising the built environment – UK GBC

⁵ Addressing overheating risk in existing UK homes - Arup 2022

⁶ Small-area assessment of temperature-related mortality risks in England and Wales: a case time series analysis, 2022.

⁷ Trying times • Resolution Foundation 2023