

# Safe as Houses?

## Crime and changing tenure patterns

Police Effectiveness in a Changing World Project

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Andy Higgins and Roger Jarman

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### About the Police Foundation

The Police Foundation is an independent think tank focused on developing knowledge and understanding of policing and challenging the police service and the government to improve policing for the benefit of the public. The Police Foundation acts as a bridge between the public, the police and the government, while being owned by none of them.

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# Executive summary

The Police Foundation's *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project seeks to identify how the police, working with other agencies and the public, can effectively tackle crime at a time when both the context in which it occurs, and the resources available to address it, are changing rapidly.

Working in Luton and Slough – two English towns that have felt the local impacts of global change acutely – the project aims to develop locally-tailored, evidence-based solutions to persistent crime problems, which are responsive to the local effects of socio-economic, technological and geo-political change. In doing so, it seeks to better understand the impacts these changes are having on public services tasked with tackling crime and associated social problems.

The project has taken a problem-oriented approach. A preliminary scanning phase focused attention on two challenging neighbourhoods in each town and on the most relevant crime problems – violence in Slough and burglary in Luton – before a multi-method research and analysis phase sought out new insights and perspectives on these local issues, to inform new ways of responding to them.

In both towns, analysis suggested that housing factors, particularly the prevalence of lower quality, privately rented accommodation, were relevant to understanding the contemporary drivers of the crime problems being faced.

In Luton, higher rates of private renting were found to be associated with local area burglary rates. Although the predictive value is modest, over the longer term, the amount of private renting accounted for more of the variance in neighbourhood burglary rates than deprivation,

employment, social renting or any of the other socio-demographic Census variables available for analysis. As well as deprivation and overcrowding, neighbourhood burglary rates were also found to correlate with population growth, the proportion of residents born outside of the UK and (negatively) with the proportion of households comprising families. These findings led us to consider whether there were deficits of home security at the lower-cost end of the local private rented sector and whether these transient areas with 'churning' tenant populations might lack the community resources to resist criminal predation.

In Slough, analysis drew attention to the sizable proportion of violent crime that, although not domestic violence, occurred within residential dwellings. In one neighbourhood this was found to be associated, in part, with the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), leading to the hypothesis that the particular stresses and insecurities of living in low-quality, crowded accommodation, with shared facilities and little or no choice of co-habitees, may increase the risk that incidents of violent crime occur.

These considerations prompted a number of questions as the project turned to designing new crime reduction initiatives; how could Luton's private landlords be encouraged to invest in proper home security for their properties? Could anything be done to persuade landlords to value longer-term tenancies so that tenants stay in an area for longer and communities might establish firmer roots and become more resilient? How could 'tinder-box' conditions inside Slough's HMOs be defused and landlords encouraged to take more interest in – and responsibility for – what goes on within their properties and the local neighbourhood?

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The lack of encouraging answers, and the paucity of options available to local community safety partners faced with the task of mitigating the harmful by-products of some elements of the private rented sector (PRS), provide the 'jumping off point' for this paper.

## The private rented sector

The private rented housing sector (PRS) in England is expanding. Between 2001 and 2011 the proportion of households in the PRS increased by half, with one in five households (totalling four million) now renting from private landlords. With stagnation in social housing provision, the buy-to-let sector increasingly dominating the bottom end of the market, and the transfer of right-to-buy former council housing into the PRS, the sector is increasingly providing homes for the poorest and most vulnerable households, often supported by state housing benefits.

In some places, including three of the four project focus wards, expanding urban pockets of lower-cost private renting also act as 'gateway' areas for recent-migrant communities, bringing greater diversity but also transience and vulnerability to these neighbourhoods.

When added to local pockets of high demand for housing, and a rental industry dominated by small, untrained and largely non-professional operators, it is not difficult to see how conditions in these properties – and in the wider areas where they cluster – can deteriorate, compromising the safety and increasing the vulnerability of those who live there, including to crimes like burglary and violent assault.

In contrast to the social rented sector, where an extensive and established regulatory framework

has provided the platform for several decades of management activity, design initiatives, mixed tenure policies and partnership work, in part aimed at tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, the PRS is only lightly regulated and has few in-built mechanisms to control crime.

Despite being subject to a plethora of laws and regulations, the PRS has no independent regulator, and instead relies on a mixed economy of voluntary self-regulation schemes that do little to improve the conduct of the worst landlords. Insofar as they are concerned with safety, these schemes, along with the previous government's *Tenant's Charter* and indeed the 2004 Housing Act, tend to focus on gas, electricity, fires and similar Health and Safety standards, with little or no regard given to home security, protection against intruders, or the social composition of shared dwellings. As a result, particularly under conditions of high demand, there are limited incentives for landlords to improve home security in their properties or to manage the behaviour of their tenants. Even where they have powers to do so, local authorities are often woefully under-resourced to take action.

At a local level, and where certain conditions are met, local authorities do have powers to introduce Additional and Selective licensing schemes to place a firmer grip, respectively on smaller HMOs or all privately rented housing. The obstacles to doing so are substantial (and were increased by legislation passed at the end of the last parliament) and given that many local authorities increasingly have to rely on the PRS to discharge their housing duties, some may think carefully before going down this route. However, there are indications that where this approach has been taken a range of positive outcomes can follow.

The London Borough of Newham was the first to introduce a borough-wide selective licensing scheme in January 2013. Working with the police, HMRC and the Borders Agency, the council has enforced the scheme vigorously, resulting in arrests, cautions and prosecutions for a range of criminal and immigration offences, a clampdown on Council Tax and Housing Benefit fraud, and uncovering evidence of tax evasion and other illegal practices. In addition, a number of ‘rogue’ landlords have been prohibited from letting property, and others have quit the market, resulting in the return of large numbers of HMOs to single family use.

While it appears that Newham, and other local authorities that have taken a similar course, are exercising more control over their local PRS, the impact of this activity on crime remains to be fully evidenced. However, it is the key contention of this paper that opportunities for local partners to undertake positive action to address crime problems linked to the PRS are greater in places where a firmer regulatory grip has been achieved through licensing and related measures. Furthermore, had these measures been in place in Luton or Slough, the options available in response to the project’s analysis, would have been substantially wider and more potent.

Our towns and cities are changing; the widening gap between rich and poor, differential access to finance, the fragmentation of families, greater international mobility and the shift from state to market provision all impact on how, where and whether people can access a safe place to live. The analysis presented here indicates that in some places, these shifts are shaping the type of crime problems that the police, local authorities

and other community safety partners have a duty to address. Equally, these services are facing an unprecedented reduction in resources; they need methods and tools that are effective, efficient and responsive, as well as favourable conditions in which to use them.

This paper concludes with a set of recommendations for the police, local authorities and the government which, if adopted, would help embed those methods, sharpen the tools and provide conducive conditions for their use. In summary:

1. As part of a general commitment to reducing crime and demand through ‘problem solving’, local police and community safety partners should seek to understand how the crime problems they face are linked to social changes in the neighbourhoods in which they occur.
  2. In particular, police analysts (and those who task them) should be alive to changes in housing conditions and markets and share data with local authorities and others to investigate shifts in the local housing picture and potential links to crime.
  3. Better data on the local tenure structure should be collected to enable this, including through local licensing schemes (where they exist) and in routine crime recording.
  4. Local police should seek to understand the local PRS regulatory landscape (including any discretionary licensing schemes in operation or voluntary accreditation schemes) and work with local authorities and others to explore ways in which these might be utilised and strengthened to deliver reductions in crime and demand for service.
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5. The Housing Act 2004 should be amended so that 'entry by intruders' is reclassified as a Category 1 harm.
  6. A National Register of Landlords should be set up to ensure all private landlords need a licence before they are allowed to let property.
  7. Local authorities should be empowered to create their own PRS licensing schemes without undue restriction from central government, through which they can exercise greater influence over the operation of the sector in their areas.
  8. Any income – fees and fines primarily – generated from local licensing schemes should be invested directly in enforcement and other PRS-related activity including that linked to crime reduction initiatives.
  9. Social landlords should be encouraged to provide managing agent services for private landlords to reduce churn, improve tenant rights and develop 'collective efficacy' throughout the PRS, but especially in our most deprived communities.
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# 1. Introduction: Police effectiveness in a changing world

The Police Foundation is currently engaged in a major, independently-funded action research project entitled *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World*. This project aims to generate insights into how the police, working with other agencies and the public, can effectively tackle crime at a time when both crime and the resources available to address it are being fundamentally reshaped by major socio-economic, technological and geo-political changes, in particular:

- The globalisation of markets for goods, services and labour.
- The rapid expansion of information technology and social media.
- The growth of personal mobility, migration and diversity.
- The fragmentation of families and communities.
- The ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor.
- The reduction in public spending and public sector reform (in the UK).

The project is based in two English towns, Luton and Slough, both of which have experienced many of the effects of this rapidly changing environment including increasing ethnic diversity, high population turnover and, as we explore in this paper, changes in how, where and whether residents have access to a safe place to live.

The main aim of the project is to develop locally-tailored, evidence-based solutions to persistent crime problems that take account of how these towns are impacted by, and adapting to, these changes. Just as importantly, the

project aims to understand the challenges confronting those attempting to tackle crime in this climate, and to suggest ways in which these could be better addressed by changes in policy and practice.

## Crime reduction and the changing housing market

Preventing crime is integral to the role of the police. It is the first Peelian Principle<sup>1</sup> and, since the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act in 1998, has become a responsibility they have shared with local authorities and other public bodies. Without the help of partner agencies, the police can do little to affect the drivers of crime, prevent it from occurring and reduce its negative impacts – including the costly demand it places on public services. However, since the global financial crisis of 2007/08, the budgets of both the police and most other public services have been reduced significantly and, paradoxically (but perhaps inevitably), resources for preventative work – as opposed to the more urgent (but not necessarily more important) work responding to calls for assistance – have become harder to secure and more difficult to co-ordinate. Therefore, finding new and innovative ways to prevent crime holds the promise of reducing demand for service to a level that can be adequately met with a shrinking resource-base. If, as has been claimed, 80 per cent of police officers' time is spent responding to crime or situations where there is a risk of crime (HMIC, 2012), preventing it from occurring would seem to be the logical way of keeping demand at a more manageable and affordable level.

<sup>1</sup> The Peelian Principles are a set of nine 'General Instructions' first issued by the Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis in 1829. The first principle is 'to prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.' See for example: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-by-consent>

In this paper we identify and examine a link between crime and the changing structure of the housing market. We describe the way in which tenure structure is changing with the rapid expansion of the private rented sector (PRS), and present findings from the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project that suggest these patterns may be relevant to understanding the drivers of burglary and violence in our project sites. After reviewing the historical and current state of housing regulation, the paper concludes with recommendations for both crime reduction practice and housing policy that could improve the effectiveness of efforts to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) in neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of lower quality private rented accommodation.

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## 2. Tackling crime in Luton and Slough – a problem-oriented approach

The *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project has adopted a problem-oriented approach to addressing crime in Luton and Slough, broadly following the four stage process of Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (SARA) (Eck and Spelman, 1987; Weisburd et al., 2008). The first or ‘Scanning’ phase had two components. Firstly, based on an assessment of crime and demography in the two towns, two wards in each were selected that were experiencing persistent crime issues and in which elements of ‘the changing world’ appeared particularly relevant.

Figure 1 briefly sets out the key characteristics of the four wards (which have been given pseudonyms for the purposes of this study). As it illustrates, although all four wards have relatively high rates of crime and deprivation, they are different in character and have been impacted by socio-demographic change to different extents and in different ways.

The second component of scanning was undertaken to establish *which* crime problems should be prioritised in these neighbourhoods. Crime-trend analysis and local consultation

**Figure 1: Ward profiles**<sup>2</sup>

<p>Slough</p> <p><i>Puckford</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Most deprived ward in Slough</b> and in most deprived 15 per cent of wards in England</li> <li>• <b>High population growth</b> with an increase of two thirds between 2001 to 2011</li> <li>• <b>Ethnically very diverse</b> – a quarter of residents were born in southern Asia and more than one in ten in EU accession states</li> <li>• <b>Gateway for new migrants</b> with about a third of the population arriving in UK since 2004 and a suspected large ‘hidden’ population living in House in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and outbuildings</li> <li>• <b>Above average rates of violence</b> and overall crime, with concerns also about ASB and alcohol misuse.</li> </ul> <p><i>Broadham</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Traditional 1950s Local Authority housing estate</b> on edge of town</li> <li>• <b>Established, predominantly white, working-class community</b> with more than three quarters of residents born in the UK and a relatively stable population</li> <li>• <b>Second most deprived ward</b> and typically second (to Puckford) on range of public health indicators</li> <li>• <b>Increase in recorded violent crime</b> with concerns about gang-related youth violence and ASB as well as domestic violence.</li> </ul>	<p>Luton</p> <p><i>Chalk Mills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mixed ward</b> incorporating town centre shops, station, university buildings and most civic amenities, but also residential areas including two Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA)* in the most deprived 10 per cent in England</li> <li>• <b>Less ethnically diverse</b> than other parts of Luton</li> <li>• <b>Gateway area for Eastern and Southern European migrants</b></li> <li>• <b>Highest crime rate in Luton</b> (reflecting town centre), but also persistently high residential burglary rates and a substantial increase in range of acquisitive crimes.</li> </ul> <p><i>Wood Ridge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Predominantly residential</b> ward bordering town centre (adjacent to Chalk Mills)</li> <li>• <b>More deprived</b> areas (bordering town centre) as well as more affluent areas</li> <li>• <b>Over-representation of working age population</b></li> <li>• <b>Locally recognised ‘hotspot’ for burglary and robbery</b>, but also community concerns about on-street sex trade and local drug market.</li> </ul> <p>* LSOAs are small administrative areas, typically containing around 650 households, for which a range of descriptive Census data are available.</p>
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<sup>2</sup> Descriptions reflect understanding of the wards in mid-2012.

resulted in a focus on (residential) burglary in Luton and on violence in Slough. Although in some ways representing traditional ‘volume’ crimes rather than ‘new’ policing problems, these were locally agreed priorities, for which local interest could be assured (at the time) and about which new insights and perspectives would be welcomed.

With these geographic and crime focuses established, the project moved on to its ‘Analysis’ phase. This included quantitative assessments of police and partner agency data sets, crime mapping, in-depth qualitative interviews with local convicted offenders and victims of crime and discussions with local practitioners. This resulted in a rich mix of findings which included (but were not limited to) a number of insights into links to local housing markets and tenure structures; briefly summarised below.

In Luton, tenure type – and specifically the prevalence of the private rented sector (PRS) – was found to be significantly associated with local area burglary rates. Although the predictive relationship was not strong, over the longer term (nine years) private renting better predicted burglary rates than deprivation, unemployment or any other available Census variable.<sup>3</sup> Higher area burglary rates were also found to be associated with deprivation and several indicators of social ‘instability’.<sup>4</sup> In the context of other evidence<sup>5</sup>, this raised important questions about the extent to which both the failure of private landlords to provide adequate home security, and community factors such as a deficit of ‘collective efficacy’ (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999) in areas with ‘churning’ short-term tenancies, might be increasing the risk of burglary in the town (particularly in certain areas).

In Slough, analysis revealed that it was not just ‘domestic’ violence that happens behind closed

doors. Local efforts to reduce violent crime (as in many other places) have tended to focus on managing public space, either by providing a police presence in ‘hotspots’ at peak times or, for example, through alcohol licensing regulation. Analysis showed however that more than 40 per cent of incidents of ‘non-domestic’ violence occurred *inside* private dwellings. Closer analysis of data for one ward suggested that these ‘indoor’ offences disproportionately take place in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs<sup>6</sup>), which again raised questions about the links between crime and tenure, but more specifically about the effectiveness of current PRS regulation.

In the light of these considerations, and while planning for the ‘Response’ phase of the SARA problem solving process, attention turned to identifying mechanisms through which positive changes might be brought about within the local private rented housing sector, as a route to targeted crime reduction. The paucity of available options, however, dictated that the interventions which followed had to address the problems from different angles, drawing on other analytical insights. These interventions will be subject to ‘Assessments’ (that is, evaluation), which will be reported in subsequent publications. In the meantime, this paper takes as its starting point the apparent powerlessness of local practitioners in the face of an expanding, low quality private rented sector and its potentially negative consequences. It explores its historical context and reviews attempts in other parts of England to overcome it. In the final section we conclude that progress is possible, but that the right combination of local problem oriented action, local housing policies and national legislation is required to provide the conditions in which effective responses to crime problems linked to the PRS can be devised and implemented.

<sup>3</sup> The proportion of households in privately rented accommodation was found to be the best available predictor of burglary from a set of socio-economic Census variables over the longer (nine year) period and one of several significant (though not strongly) associated factors in the shorter-term (one year).

<sup>4</sup> Such as rapid population growth, population ‘churn’ and comparatively few resident families.

<sup>5</sup> Set out in Section 4.

<sup>6</sup> A property is an HMO if at least three tenants live there; forming more than one household and occupiers share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities.

### 3. Tenure changes in England since 2001

After a long period of decline, the private rented sector (PRS) has grown significantly over the last 15 years, in both absolute terms and as a proportion of all housing (see figure 2). With the stagnation of the social rented sector, people on low incomes including families with children have increasingly had to turn to the PRS to provide a roof over their heads. At the same time, owner occupation has been declining (as a proportion of all housing) for the first time ever (Office for National Statistics, 2013). This has been attributed (in part) to high and rising house prices and the inability of potential buyers to raise mortgage finance. A burgeoning buy-to-let sector has also squeezed out owner occupiers at the bottom end of the market, and exacerbated the deficit of affordable private housing for first time and other buyers (Wilcox et al., 2014).

The 2011 Census for England reveals the change in tenure patterns in the recent past. Between 2001 and 2011 the proportion of housing that was privately rented<sup>7</sup> increased by half (from 12 to 18 per cent) while owner occupation fell slightly (from 69 to 64 per cent, see figure 2). In numerical terms, more than 1.5 million properties were added to the PRS stock within ten years. In 2011

The PRS had more than four million homes (almost one in five dwellings); up by two thirds on a decade previously. The sector is now bigger than the social rented sector across England as a whole, and in five out of the nine English regions. In London, more than a quarter of households were privately rented in 2011, with an increase of nine percentage points over the previous decade.

The expansion of the PRS has been boosted both by the development of the buy-to-let (BTL) market (which didn't exist twenty years ago) (Heath, 2014) and by the sale of former council housing (originally purchased by occupiers under the Right to Buy) on to private landlords (Salsbury, 2014). In many areas these will be among the cheapest places to rent property and will, inevitably, become home for some of the most deprived households in the local community.

The more up to date English Housing Survey (EHS) measures tenure differently from the Census but confirms the inexorable growth of the PRS. In 2001 the EHS recorded that 71 per cent of England's housing stock was owner occupied, 10 per cent was rented privately and 20 per cent was let to social housing tenants. By 2012/13, two thirds was owner occupied, 18 per cent was privately rented

**Figure 2: Household Tenure in England: 2001 and 2011 (ONS 2003, ONS 2013)**

Household tenure	2001 (millions)	%	2011 (millions)	%
<b>Owner occupied*</b>	<b>14.05</b>	<b>68.7</b>	<b>14.15</b>	<b>64.1</b>
<b>Social rented</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>17.7</b>
<b>Privately rented**</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>18.2</b>
<b>Number of Households (total)</b>	<b>20.45</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22.06</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Includes shared ownership; \*\* Includes 'Other' rented (see footnote 7)

<sup>7</sup> For simplicity and consistency the figures cited here for private renting are a combination of Census tenure categories *Private rented: private landlord or letting agency*, *Private rented: other* (which includes those renting from an employer or family member etc.) and *Living rent free* (which was combined with *Private rented: other* in 2001 but reported separately in 2011). The increase in

the proportion of households renting from a private landlord or letting agency between the two Censuses (from 8.8 per cent in 2001 to 15.4 per cent in 2011) was greater than for the combined category.



and 17 per cent was let to social housing tenants (DCLG, 2014a). Like the Census, the EHS shows that the size of the PRS nearly doubled during this period. These trends are set to continue unless we see radical changes in housing policy.

## The state of the private rented sector

Almost nine out of ten private landlords in England are classified as 'private individual landlords' (as opposed to companies or 'other organisations'); these own over 70 per cent of the PRS stock in the country. Almost 80 per cent of individual landlords own just one property, sometimes having acquired the asset through inheritance. Just five per cent of landlords operate as companies but these do own 15 per cent of the privately rented stock (DCLG, 2011).

The condition and quality of accommodation in the PRS varies markedly, with up to one third of households living in homes that are of poor quality, unmodernised, or fail to reach 'decent homes' standards.<sup>8</sup> This end of the market – with poorer quality homes – tends to house more deprived households and so called 'gateway' communities (to which new migrants head initially before moving on). Data shows that nearly one million vulnerable households in the PRS are living in non-decent homes (NFA, 2014).

Rents in the PRS are, on average, more than twice those in social housing<sup>9</sup>, and for those of

limited means 'like for like' renting tends to cost more in the private sector than renting from social landlords<sup>10</sup>. This partly explains why a quarter of tenants living in the PRS need housing benefit to help pay their rent; in 2014/15, 40 per cent of the housing benefit bill (£9.5bn) was spent supporting households living in the PRS (Apps, 2014). PRS tenancies are also insecure: tenants can be evicted after just six months of occupation, landlord repossession in the courts are at their highest level ever<sup>11</sup>, and the ending of shorthold tenancies is now recorded as the biggest cause of homelessness (DCLG, 2014b).

## Housing tenure changes in Luton and Slough

Substantial tenure changes have taken place in Luton and Slough; as much as, if not more than, in the rest of the country. In Luton in 2001 70 per cent of households were owner-occupiers, 16 per cent lived in the social rented sector and 13 per cent were tenants in the PRS. Ten years later owner occupation had fallen to 63 per cent, social renting had declined slightly to 14 per cent, while the proportion of households in the PRS had nearly doubled to 23 per cent (16,800 households). In both Chalk Mills and Wood Ridge wards the proportion is greater still at 40 and 50 per cent respectively (see figure 3)<sup>12</sup>.

The changes in tenure patterns witnessed in Luton over the last 10 years are mirrored in

<sup>8</sup> A 'Decent Home' meets all of the following four criteria:

- (i) It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing as set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
  - (ii) It is in a reasonable state of repair (related to the age and condition of a range of building components including walls, roofs, windows, doors, chimneys, electrics and heating systems).
  - (iii) It has reasonably modern facilities and services (related to the age, size and layout and location of the kitchen, bathroom and WC and any common areas for blocks of flats, and to noise insulation).
  - (iv) It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (related to insulation and heating efficiency).
- (DCLG, 2006b).

<sup>9</sup> In 2012/13 local authority rents in England were £78.78 per week (DCLG, 2014c). In March 2013 housing association rents in England were £88.41 per week (DCLG, 2014d). By comparison the average weekly rent in May 2013 in the PRS for the UK as a whole was approximately £180 per week (based on charted data shown at <http://homelet.co.uk/homelet-rental-index/>).

<sup>10</sup> For example rents (and taxpayer contributions through housing benefit) are higher for former council houses that have passed to the PRS through right-to-buy, than rents for council housing (Copley, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> There were 114,500 possession orders in England by landlords in 2013, more than in any of the previous six years. See [http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why\\_we\\_campaign/housing\\_facts\\_and\\_figures/subsection?section=repossession\\_arrears](http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why_we_campaign/housing_facts_and_figures/subsection?section=repossession_arrears).

<sup>12</sup> The way in which ward level Census data on tenure type was recorded and reported changed between 2001 and 2011. This means it is not possible to assess change over time at the ward level.

**Figure 3: Household Tenure in Chalk Mills and Wood Ridge in Luton, 2011 (ONS, 2013)**

Ward	Tenure	Number of households	Percentage of households
<b>Chalk Mills</b>	Owner Occupation *	1,647	32.7
	Social Rented	1,349	26.8
	Private Rented **	2,038	40.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5,034</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Wood Ridge</b>	Owner Occupation *	1,656	41.6
	Social Rented	464	11.7
	Private Rented **	1,859	46.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,979</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Includes shared ownership; \*\* Includes 'Other' rented (see footnote 7)

**Figure 4: Household Tenure in Puckford and Broadham in Slough, 2011 (ONS, 2013)**

Ward	Tenure	Number of households	Percentage of households
<b>Puckford</b>	Owner Occupation *	1,663	39.2
	Social Rented	790	18.6
	Private Rented **	1,788	42.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,241</b>	<b>100.0 ***</b>
<b>Broadham</b>	Owner Occupation *	1,788	49.0
	Social Rented	1,501	41.1
	Private Rented **	359	9.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,648</b>	<b>100.0 ***</b>

\* Includes shared ownership; \*\* Includes 'Other' rented (see footnote 7); \*\*\* May not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding

Slough. In 2001 over two thirds of households lived in owner occupied accommodation, 12 per cent lived in the PRS and 21 per cent lived in

social housing. By 2011 just over half of households lived in the owner occupied sector, 21 per cent rented from the local authority or housing

associations, but the proportion of households living in the PRS had more than doubled to 25 per cent. The (very different) distribution of tenures in Puckford and Broadham is shown in figure 4.

In Puckford, more than 40 per cent of households were private tenants and a slightly smaller proportion were owner occupiers. In contrast, in Broadham where the social rented sector remains strong, only one in ten households rented privately – far fewer than in other wards in Slough.

In Luton as a whole there are 171 licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which house over 1,093 tenants (Luton Borough Council, no date 1). Slough operates the Mandatory Licensing scheme (see Section 5 below) but in 2011 also introduced an Additional Licensing scheme in Puckford to cover HMOs of all sizes after problems with the management of these properties in the area were identified. In Puckford alone there are at least 164 known HMOs.<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, the number of households in the PRS in Luton and Slough doubled in the ten years up to 2011; at around one in four households, the proportion living in the PRS, in both towns, is considerably greater than in England as a whole and in three of the project's four focus wards the concentration of private renting is greater still. The towns both witnessed the type of shift to the PRS which was more common in London over the decade than in the rest of England.

Studies of housing and crime have tended to focus on the social rented sector (see Section 5). Given the expansion of the PRS, particularly in some of the most challenged and challenging parts of cities and towns like Luton and Slough, it seems timely to explore how this change might be

relevant to understanding crime in local communities and the implications for housing policy and crime reduction practice.

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<sup>13</sup> The Census tends to underestimate the number of HMOs in an area, for instance, the 2011 Census recorded only eight shared dwellings in Puckford.



## 4. Crime and housing tenure in Luton and Slough

The analysis phase of the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project was designed to enable the development of targeted crime reduction interventions in particular neighbourhoods, in line with the problem-oriented approach outlined previously. As such its insights are local, based on modest data sets and indicative rather than conclusive. It is not a comprehensive study of crime and housing issues, nor do its findings necessarily apply beyond the project areas themselves. Having said this, there are some clear indications of links between housing tenure and crime in both towns which raise important questions and warrant closer investigation.

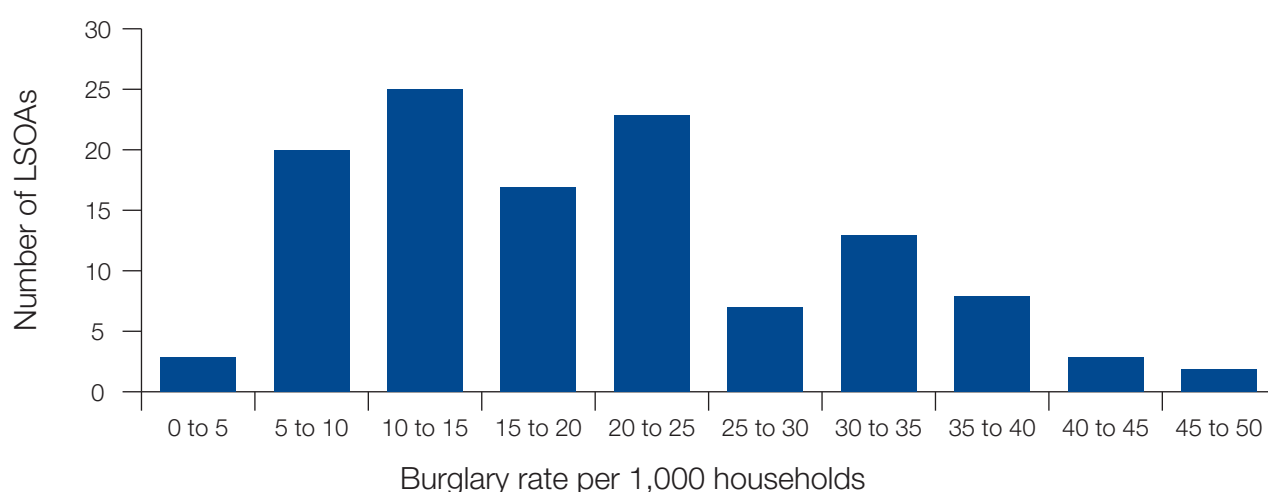
### Understanding burglary in Luton

As with many types of crime, it is well established that burglary (and the risk of burglary victimisation) tends to be concentrated in geographical 'hotspots' (see for example Eck et al., 2005). Sometimes these are fleeting, perhaps reflecting a spree by a prolific offender, but sometimes these

represent more persistent and intransigent problems. In Luton, as elsewhere, crime mapping techniques are regularly used to identify hotspots to guide police patrols or other targeted crime reduction activity. As part of this analysis an attempt was made to go beyond these routine products in order to better understand the *types* of places that tend to experience higher and lower burglary rates. Could typical characteristics of burglary-prone neighbourhoods be identified? Are there socio-economic correlates that might indicate drivers? And if so, might these hint at productive avenues for intervention?

Luton consists of 121 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) – small administrative areas, typically containing around 650 households, for which a range of descriptive Census data are available. In 2012/13 across Luton as a whole, the burglary rate was about 20 per 1,000 households; however this varied across Luton's LSOAs from zero to almost 50 per 1,000 households (see figure 5).<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 5: Distribution of Luton LSOAs by 2012/13 burglary rate per 1,000 households**



<sup>14</sup> Burglary rates have been calculated based on the number of recorded 'Burglary in a Dwelling' offences; this excludes break-ins to sheds and out-buildings, (most) commercial premises and other buildings that are not dwellings. 'Attempted' burglaries are included in these figures.

As figure 5 shows, Luton contains a number of LSOAs with burglary rates well above that for the town as a whole. It was pertinent to investigate how these higher-rate areas differed from the low-rate neighbourhoods and how these differences might inform an approach to burglary reduction. To do this, a number of correlation and regression analyses were run to establish the extent to which a set of socio-economic variables (taken from the 2011 Census) were associated with LSOA burglary rates over both the shorter (one year) and longer (nine year) term.<sup>15 16</sup> To explore whether certain factors might be associated with burglary *specifically*, as opposed to crime more generally; the analysis was repeated for the all-crime rates for the same periods.<sup>17</sup>

Overall, while a number of statistically significant correlates and predictors of localised burglary (and all-crime) rates were identified, none was particularly strong<sup>18</sup>; this indicates that while area characteristics might have some bearing on burglary rates, others factors may be more influential (speculatively, those relating to individual offender's behaviour and time at liberty). Nevertheless the results (presented in full in appendix 1), do provide a number of suggestive insights into the structural factors associated with burglary in Luton, which have potential implications for designing crime reduction interventions.

Mirroring analysis of national surveys (Higgins et al., 2010), over both the longer and shorter term, burglary and all-crime rates in Luton were found to be significantly associated with household

deprivation and more strongly associated with multiple-deprivation.<sup>19</sup> As expected, burglary, like crime in general, tends to happen in less 'well-off' places, with a multitude of social and economic problems and challenges.

In this analysis, however, deprivation was not the best available predictor of crime at the LSOA level; instead **the all-crime rate was found to be more closely associated with the proportion of households living in rented accommodation** (both private and social renting). In fact the proportion of households that rented their homes was the strongest predictor of crime identified in this study; accounting for 34 per cent of the variance in all-crime rates across the LSOAs in 2012-13 (once four town centre outlier LSOAs had been excluded).

For the all-crime measure, the analysis identified statistically significant correlations with both social and private renting (separately) and with both combined, although when considered separately their predictive value was weaker. However, **when burglary alone was considered, the correlation with social renting disappeared; only private renting was found to be associated with burglary.** Over the longer time period, the percentage of households renting privately was the best available (univariate) predictor of burglary, (although this was still relatively weak, accounting for 21 per cent of the variance).

In other words, **while crime in general tends to happen in deprived parts of Luton with high levels of renting, it is the level of private**

<sup>15</sup> Figures for the number of residents and households were taken from the 2011 Census. This means that the only crime data for which these base figures are strictly appropriate are those from 2010-2011. Given that the population rose from 2001 to 2013, and given that the growth varied considerably between LSOAs, crime rate data aggregated from 2005 to 2013 should be treated cautiously. On the other hand, a longer time frame provides a larger sample of burglary data and should mitigate the impact of random variation which might affect the single year figures.

<sup>16</sup> This analysis was conducted for the Police Foundation by Malcolm Hibberd, an independent consultant.

<sup>17</sup> The all-crime analysis identified four LSOAs (predominantly town centre areas) that were outliers in terms of crime rates and a number of other variables, when these were excluded; the strength of the relationships was generally improved. For simplicity only the one year all-crime analysis is reported here.

<sup>18</sup> Either individually or when combined in multivariate models.

<sup>19</sup> Deprivation is measured in the Census through four inter-related dimensions of employment, education, health (including disability) and over-crowding. In this case 'multiple deprivation' relates to the proportion of households deprived on all four measures.

### **renting in an area that best predicts burglary, whereas social renting does not.**

Multivariate analysis could only improve on the predictive value of private renting levels (alone) slightly; a model combining the percentage of households renting privately and the percentage of residents unemployed, accounted for 24 per cent of the variance in LSOA burglary rates over the longer period.

For the single year (2012/13) private renting was found to be one of several significant (although again relatively weak) univariate predictors of burglary which also included population growth, overcrowding and the proportion of residents not born in the UK. Interestingly, these were all better predictors of burglary than deprivation, unemployment or social renting. No significant multivariate model could be identified for the one-year time period.

The suggestion of a link between burglary and private renting is not without precedent. Livingstone et al. (2014) found higher rates of burglary and theft in areas of Glasgow with a mix of owner occupation and private renting compared with parts of the city where owner occupation, social renting or a mix of the two predominated. However, it is equally interesting to note that this disparity may be a feature of places with particular conditions, rather than a characteristic of the entire sector. Recently published analysis of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) suggests that on a national basis, socially rented properties are at greater risk of burglary than those rented privately, despite comparable levels of home security (with both tenure types at greater risk, and less well

secured, than owner-occupied homes) (Tseloni and Thompson, 2015). Why might Luton (and perhaps some other areas as well) buck this trend? Two mechanisms seem promising.

Firstly, attention has been drawn to the fact that the substantial reduction in burglary victimisation witnessed nationwide over the last two decades, has been least marked among poorer households and that differential access to basic household security appears to explain this trend (Tilley et al., 2011). In the Luton context, this could suggest that physical security deficits (e.g. poor quality (or the absence of) door and window locks, security lighting and alarms etc.) in neighbourhoods where the private rented sector (PRS) predominates, are a determining factor in the geographic concentration of burglary.

It is important to be cautious about moving from this kind of area-level explanation to conclusions about the security (specifically) of privately rented properties in these areas<sup>20</sup>. However, given what is known about local housing demand and the broader character of these neighbourhoods (including in the accounts provided to us by local public service professionals), it is reasonable to hypothesise that neither private landlords nor transient tenants have meaningful incentives to invest in robust home security, resulting in a concentration of offending opportunities and elevated local burglary rates.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, again drawing on local professional insights, it is possible to speculate that in some parts of Luton, security standards in the PRS have fallen below those of the local social rented (and owner occupied) sectors and below 'average' PRS conditions across the country.

<sup>20</sup> The analysis shows that burglary rates tend to be higher in *areas* with more private renting, not that rates are higher for privately rented properties and to make this assumption would risk committing an 'ecological fallacy'; see for example Baldwin and Bottoms (1976, pp.37-8).

<sup>21</sup> It has not proved possible to test this hypothesis. Data on tenure type is not held locally at an individual property level; measures to address this deficit are recommended in Section 7.

Although they tell us little about tenure-type, research interviews with locally resident burglary offenders (also conducted as part of the analysis phase) do tend to support the security-deficits explanation. As the quotations below illustrate, many (although not all) offenders described offending patterns that could be characterised as ‘opportunistic’, tending to seek out low-noise, easy access opportunities (older UPVC doors and windows, which were commonplace in both wards, were particularly attractive features). In many cases they recounted offending under the imperative of problematic heroin and/or crack cocaine addiction and in these circumstances an apparently ‘down-market’ property was not an unattractive option, particularly where access was straightforward:<sup>22</sup>

*I’d walk down the road and I might try every door along that street... if there was nobody there and the door would open easily or the window was open, or I could open the window it would be that. It wasn’t like, pick one... I’d try the whole street.*

*Some UPVC windows, some of them are easy but some of them are really hard... I think there’s some that are better quality than others... if it was really hard and I was making too much noise, then I’d just go.*

*To be honest, I’ve gotten into houses which look lovely outside, and there’s been nothing inside worth stealing, you know, I’ve been in into houses with the windows falling off from the outside and there’s been thousands in(side)... you never knew.*

The geographic concentration of burglary in Luton also appears to be connected to the pattern of

offender residence. Luton’s burglary offenders (or at least those who had been apprehended and charged), tend to live close to the places where they offended. The average distance between a burglar’s place of residence and the property targeted was two and a half kilometres for offences across the whole of Luton and even less for offences in the two wards.<sup>23</sup> This fits well with offenders’ reports of spotting and taking opportunities in the course of daily routines, such as travelling, usually on foot, between home (or other nearby anchor points) and the town centre’s drugs markets and civic amenities (including the probation offices).

*Well, a lot of the time I was just walking around the back of town and stuff, or I might be on my way from [home area] to go out and score [drugs]... so if I’m walking into town, like anything from where I lived down to town would be a goal if I see the opportunity.*

*You’re going about your everyday business, yes, I might be going for probation and come out of probation and just see something and just go in.*

Unsurprisingly given this proximity the number of offenders resident in each LSOA was found to be correlated with similar factors to LSOA burglary rates, including deprivation, overcrowding and rented housing, however **both social and private renting (separately and combined) were associated with a higher incidence of offender residences**. While it is not surprising that offenders tend to live in the more deprived parts of town or that they find opportunities to offend close to home (Bernasco and Luykx, 2003), it does appear that they also tend to find more

<sup>22</sup> While property characteristics appear to be relevant to understanding the distribution of offences, it is of interest that no evidence was identified, (either from offender interviews or data analysis) of target selection based on victim characteristics. For example, although both wards have relatively large student populations, much of which is housed in private rented accommodation, student victimisation was found to be proportionate to ward populations.

<sup>23</sup> This calculation excludes the very small proportion of offenders who gave addresses outside of the county of Bedfordshire.

attractive **opportunities in areas where private rather than social renting predominates.**

While physical security might play a role in explaining this pattern, a second potential mechanism suggests that less tangible factors may explain offenders' preference for PRS dominant areas: the analysis showed that these higher-burglary localities were also places of considerable flux. Between the Censuses of 2001 and 2011, Luton's population grew by just over ten per cent; however this growth was not evenly spread. Six LSOAs, including three within the project wards, saw population increases of more than 50 per cent. Significantly, population growth was also found to be one of the better predictors of the burglary rate at the LSOA level, as were the proportion of residents born overseas and (to a lesser extent) the proportion of households not occupied by families.

While no combination of factors was strongly predictive of burglary, a multiple regression model combining the proportion of residents not born in the UK, the proportion of households not comprising families and the rate of population growth, predicted the level of private renting in an LSOA extremely well (accounting for 76 per cent of the variance<sup>24</sup> – see appendix 1).

These findings suggest that neighbourhoods with high levels of private renting may be characterised as lacking social 'stability'; places where churn and transience lead to weak community ties and low social capital, which in turn could make them more vulnerable to burglary.

Much has been written about 'collective efficacy', or the extent to which neighbours in an area know and trust each other and are willing to intervene to

protect their neighbourhood and fellow residents. Research suggests that resident attitudes toward living in a neighbourhood that are consistent with shared social norms and strong 'collective efficacy', are protective against disorder and some types of crime (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Most significantly, there is also evidence that offenders can be aware of residents' willingness to look out for each other and will modify their choice of target accordingly (Bottoms, 2012). Concurring with this, our offender interviews indicated strong sensitivity to natural surveillance and that many would avoid an area if they felt they were likely to be seen and challenged or reported. One offender even suggested that in some parts of town it was possible to go unchallenged 'in plain sight'.

*If there's a lot of activity around the house... builders in the area... or a lot of people are looking out of their windows and that yes, a lot of the time it's not worth the risk.*

*If there were people around... people walking up and down the street, or neighbours out in their gardens and that I won't bother.*

*Sometimes it was better to do it more blatantly, when there's a lot of people around, where they're just getting on with what they're getting on with... you don't stick out like a sore thumb.*

It seems plausible, therefore, that in neighbourhoods characterised by population churn, transience, and overcrowded, lower-cost, privately-rented housing, residents may lack the confidence and social resources to turn their attention outwards, to notice those out of place,

<sup>24</sup> Regression analysis can be used to assess the extent to which a dependent variable (in this case the proportion of households that rent privately in LSOAs in Luton) can be predicted using one or more other (independent) variables. A perfect prediction can be described as accounting for 100 per cent of the variance, thus the greater the proportion of variance accounted for, the greater the predictive strength of the independent variable(s).



to challenge and repel potential threats, and to come together to achieve shared security goals – and that this might be recognised and exploited by offenders.

## Exploring problem-oriented responses in Luton

The above findings led to questions about how the police and the local authorities might work with tenants and landlords to improve the physical security of rented homes in persistent burglary hotspots. Can anything be done to improve ‘collective efficacy’ in these high-turnover, predominantly low-cost, private rental neighbourhoods? And crucially, what incentives and regulatory levers might be available to the police and their partners to bring about positive change in residential areas where the PRS predominates?

Exploratory discussions with local practitioners suggested that, while there are some steps that can be taken (see Section 7), there are disappointingly few encouraging answers to these questions. Luton faces significant demand for its scarce housing resources, due in part to limited opportunities for new home building, but also (practitioners told us) to an influx of families housed out-of-area by London councils, displaced from the capital by changes to the benefit system.<sup>25</sup> In addition, a town centre university and a fluid migrant workforce have kept demand for lower-cost private rented accommodation high, resulting in few market incentives for landlords to maintain and improve standards. A voluntary accreditation scheme for private sector landlords is in place but only a small number of larger (and in all likelihood more

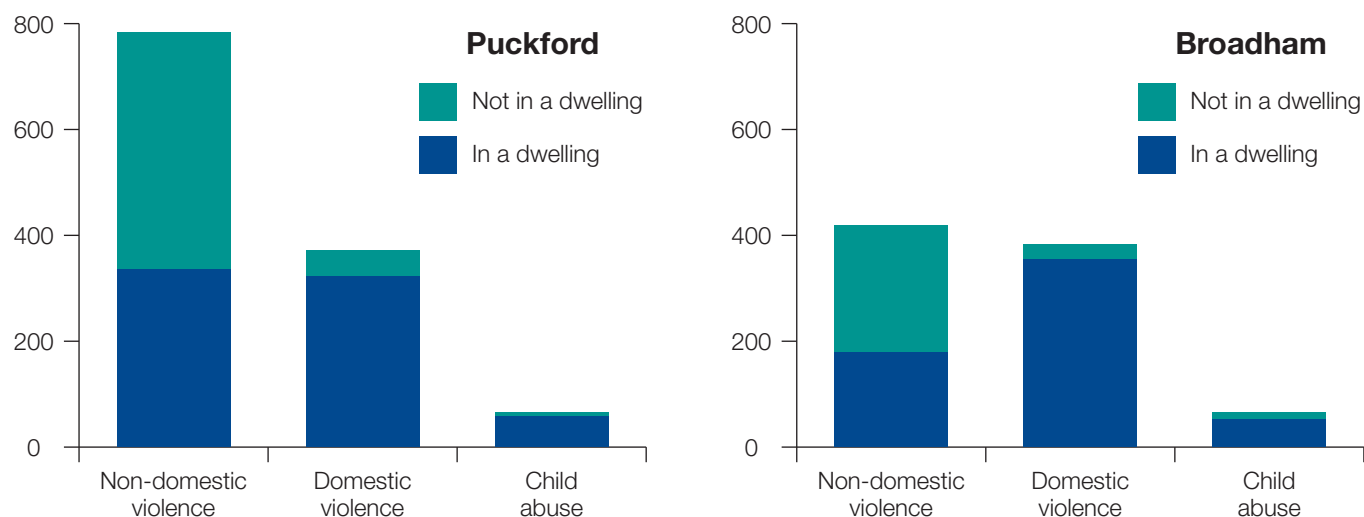
professional) landlords have signed up. Local strategic documents express concern about the condition of private sector housing stock (Luton Borough Council, no date 2), while housing practitioners are frustrated by the lack of enforcement powers and resources available to improve standards in the PRS. The regulatory background to these circumstances is explored further in Section 5, along with an alternative approach that might prove more conducive to facilitating interventions of this kind (Section 6), but the lack of available mechanisms for leveraging positive changes in the PRS remains a key challenge for the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project in Luton.

## Understanding violence in Slough

For very good reasons the police routinely divide violence into two different types of crime. The approach to domestic violence (or more accurately, violence that is identified as domestic abuse) focuses on securing immediate safety, arresting and pursuing criminal justice sanctions against perpetrators and identifying and managing those cases with the highest levels of risk. In recognition of the huge scale of under-reporting, domestic violence is rarely considered a crime-type that should be ‘managed down’.<sup>26</sup> Other violent crime, referred to here as non-domestic violence, tends to be treated differently. Like other ‘volume’ crime types, in addition to responding and investigating when it does occur, the police routinely undertake tactical activity aimed at preventing and reducing the number of non-domestic violent incidents. This might include anticipating when and where violence could occur in order to provide a deterrent police presence or, for example, using

<sup>25</sup> Although a recent Supreme case ruling may make out of Borough placements by local authorities more difficult in future (*Ms Nzolameso v Westminster City Council* [2015] UKSC 22).

<sup>26</sup> Although in Slough, as elsewhere, the police do contribute to more strategic, long-term prevention initiatives.

**Figure 6: Recorded VAP offences by 'type' and location, 2009/10 to 2012/13 combined**

alcohol licensing provisions to manage problems related to the night-time economy. In Slough, as elsewhere, this kind of activity is regularly undertaken, predicated on the assumption that non-domestic violence is something that largely takes place in public places and there is good evidence that 'place management' approaches such as these can be effective, particularly when based on good analysis and information sharing (for example see Florence et al., 2011).

The project remit in Slough covered both domestic and non-domestic violence and, as in Luton, included a detailed analysis of place, with mapping techniques applied to crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) datasets, local Accident and Emergency Department data, ambulance deployment data, and local authority housing records. While this yielded some useful but largely predictable insights, one unexpected finding related to the extent to which non-domestic (as well as domestic) violence occurred *inside private dwellings*. This meant that approaches focused either on policing public

space or domestic violence were failing to address a significant part of the problem.

Figure 6 shows the number of Violence Against the Person (VAP)<sup>27</sup> offences recorded by the police in each of the focus wards over a four year period (to March 2013), divided into domestic and non-domestic violence (with offences flagged as 'child-abuse' also split out) and by the type of location in which they occurred (aggregated up to 'dwelling' and 'non-dwelling' categories). As expected, the vast majority of domestic violence and child abuse incidents occurred inside private dwellings, however **more than 40 per cent of non-domestic incidents in both wards also took place 'behind closed doors'**.

This finding came as a surprise to local practitioners, whose thinking about non-domestic violence was framed by public place-management responses such as tackling local gang issues and managing the night time economy. Further checks were therefore undertaken to make sure these results were robust. Were these offences in fact

<sup>27</sup> This is the principle accounting unit for violent crime offences and includes both physical assaults (of varying degrees of severity) and other offences including Harassment and Threats to Kill.

'domestic' offences wrongly recorded or harassment cases or other forms of 'non-physical' violence allocated to dwellings by some default procedure? Could they be accounted for by atypical, 'semi-public' dwellings like care-homes or hostels? In each case the answer was negative; the offenders in these incidents were largely recorded as *acquaintances*<sup>28</sup> of the victim, rather than family members or intimate partners and therefore did not fit the definition of domestic violence (although it was not uncommon for these addresses to also be known for domestic violence). Up to three quarters of the incidents were physical assaults rather than harassment or threats, and although children's homes and hostels did appear within the data, the vast majority of incidents occurred in private residential premises. Analysis also showed that these offences usually took place within the victim's own home (as opposed to another dwelling), and that women and girls (although still minority participants), were involved both as victims and perpetrators more often than in violent offences in public places.

The following quotations, from some of those who had experienced violence in these circumstances illustrate the way in which disputes and discord between acquainted parties can escalate to assaults within private spaces.

*There was five of them [young boys] in my garden, seen them all before around the estate and they had just been in a fight, one was badly hurt... but I didn't want any trouble. Just wanted them to get off my property and I told them that, but they came into my house and started on me.*

*My neighbour's son had been coming in at the weekend playing music non-stop the*

*whole time. The problem is that my neighbour is never there so I called the police one night because I'd had enough... there was a knock at the door and when I opened it she went mad and attacked me... She (grabbed) my hair and pulled loads of it out... we ended up on the floor. Next thing I know, I could hear her son in the flat having a fight with my partner.*

*The first assault was by my neighbour... and he was running around the street, nasty guy. He'd been drinking with friends and was bothering my next door neighbour and then he started making his way over to my house and assaulted me.*

In summary, 20 to 30 per cent of all recorded violence in the two wards fell into a category that did not fit the working understanding of violence held locally by practitioners. Residents were experiencing violence behind closed doors, often in their own homes, typically at the hands of known acquaintances (who were neither family members nor intimate partners), and while both genders were impacted, the frequent involvement of women and girls (particularly in Broadham) was a particular feature of this category of violence crime.

Importantly, while these violent offences received a response from the police (and sometimes also by hospitals, courts and probation) as individual incidents, they were neither amenable to the public place-management measures routinely used in the town, nor subject to the risk assessment and case management processes (including through the local MARAC<sup>29</sup>) that would be applied if the incidents fell under the definition of domestic violence. What, if any, opportunities did the police and their partners have to address this category of

<sup>28</sup> This indicates that they are 'known' to the victim, but not a family member or spouse / partner (or-ex), beyond this, there is no data available to describe the nature of the acquaintance relationship.

<sup>29</sup> Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, at which local partner agencies share information about high risk domestic abuse cases, seeking to minimise the risks of further harm.



violence, which seemed to fall between two familiar, well-trodden operational responses?

To investigate, a better understanding of the types of dwellings in which violence occurred was required. For the purposes of this study, Slough Borough Council made available lists of council owned rented properties and of all known Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) within the two wards.<sup>30 31</sup> By cross referencing against crime records, it was possible to calculate the proportion of (private dwelling) violent crime venues, the proportion of violence victims' addresses, and the proportion of violent offenders' addresses, that were either HMOs or local authority rented.<sup>32</sup> These were then compared with the proportions that would be expected if offences were evenly distributed across dwellings in the wards regardless of tenure (full results and methodological notes are included in Appendix 2).

According to the 2011 Census, 31 per cent of dwellings in Broadham are rented from the council (providing homes for 31 per cent of the ward population<sup>33</sup>), but more than half of the ward's violence victims and offenders<sup>34</sup>, for both domestic and non-domestic offences, were resident in these council rented properties. In addition, 48 per cent of domestic violence incidents and 52 per cent of non-domestic offences which occurred within dwellings took place within council-owned social housing. In all cases the difference was statistically significant.

Puckford has a very different tenure mix. Only eight per cent of dwellings are rented directly from the council, (housing seven per cent of the ward population), but the ward also contains a large

number of HMOs. Local authority lists were used to identify 164 properties known to be HMOs, representing about four per cent of dwellings within the ward. Based on the average occupancy (where listed), these known HMOs were estimated to house eight per cent of the ward population. While no disproportionate concentration of violence was found in Puckford's council rented houses, significant differences were identified for HMOs, particularly in relation to the category of non-domestic violence in dwellings. 18 per cent of all non-domestic violence in dwellings occurred within the 164 known HMOs, and 13 per cent of victims and 19 per cent of offenders in this category of violence gave these HMOs as their home address. Each of these proportions is significantly greater than that expected if these offences were distributed across dwellings regardless of tenure type.

These findings are tentative, based on small data sets and, in part, rely on working estimates of HMO occupancy that may be conservative, but the picture they paint is not entirely unsurprising. Social housing and HMOs are both indicative of relative deprivation, and deprivation and violence are known to be strongly correlated (Upton et al., 2012). In relation to social housing no additional causal link between tenure type or housing conditions and violence is put forward; in relation to HMOs, however, it is reasonable to suggest that there is a direct relationship, linked to the particular stresses and insecurities of living in low-quality, crowded accommodation, with shared facilities and little or no choice of co-habitees.

Qualitative interviews with violent offenders (many of whom had also been victims) give some

<sup>30</sup> Under the terms of a Data Sharing Agreement.

<sup>31</sup> Despite the introduction of an Additional Licensing scheme for HMOs in Puckford in 2011, it was acknowledged that this list was likely to be an underestimate of the number of HMOs within the wards at the time.

<sup>32</sup> For victim and offender addresses this was calculated for all victims/offenders and only for those who were resident within the ward. No equivalent data was available to identify other tenure types.

<sup>33</sup> This and other figures in this section are for the number of residents living in dwellings rented directly from the council (i.e. not including those renting from Housing Associations). In contrast the data tables in Section 3 include both council owned and housing association properties under the heading Social Rented.

<sup>34</sup> Of violent offences in the ward where the victim and/or perpetrator also lived in the ward.

indication of these factors. They also hint at the challenges of offender resettlement in the context of intense housing need and the detriment that may result to efforts to reduce reoffending where this goes unmet (see for example Niven and Olagundoye, 2002). Additionally, these quotations also illustrate the dilemma local authorities can face when dealing with private sector landlords, in reconciling the tensions between meeting housing obligations and ensuring decent and safe living conditions within the sector.

*I came over from Pakistan by myself at 13; I had to look after myself, no family. I was put with a Pakistani family till I was 16 and they were nice and I was doing well... then when I was 16... Slough Borough Council made me move into one room in a shared flat... was on housing benefits...the trouble started when I moved there because people were drinking every night....I was fine when I was living with a Pakistani family...but since I've been in this place, we get into trouble all the time, fighting and that.*

*When I came out of probation I got put in a shared house with some guys I didn't know... it was disgusting... drugs and drink bottles everywhere and the landlord shafted us left, right and centre... he'd threaten us with eviction nearly every day and send round his henchmen.*

*Before I got on probation... I came to Slough... I had a local connection in [Puckford] and viewed some properties for rent and they were horrendous, you know dangerous... Sockets hanging off walls, filthy and disgusting, couldn't actually believe places like that still exist.*

## Exploring problem-oriented responses in Slough

As in Luton, housing market factors, specifically relating to parts of the private rented sector, appear to be pertinent to understanding violence (and potentially other types of crime and antisocial behaviour) in Slough. Significant housing demand, resourcing challenges and legislative barriers have meant that despite local efforts to regulate and licence HMOs and to tackle the tenacious problem of 'beds in sheds' (BBC, 2013), few feasible options were available to the project for tackling violence by focusing directly on HMOs.

## 5. The regulatory framework in housing: responding to crime and antisocial behaviour

In the last thirty years there has been an increasing focus on the service that landlords – almost exclusively social landlords – can offer tenants affected by antisocial and criminal behaviour, particularly on large housing estates. This section looks at the constitutional and regulatory frameworks in the social housing sector and how these have encouraged social landlords to address crime and antisocial behaviour issues in the sector. The approach adopted by social housing landlords is contrasted with the situation in the PRS.

### Governance and regulation in social housing

The governance arrangements in social housing are vastly different from those in the private rented sector (PRS). Local authorities and their arm's length management organisations (ALMOs) in England own 1.67m properties, which they let to households in need (Wilcox et al., 2014). They are also the freehold managers of thousands of council owned blocks where flats have been bought by former tenants under the 'Right to Buy' legislation and may also own some street properties acquired during various urban regeneration programmes mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. Local authorities are democratically accountable bodies with councillors who are ultimately responsible for the delivery of the housing service to their tenants and leaseholders. Local authority housing services are delivered by professional staff, backed up by officials in other departments responsible for financial, legal, planning and other services. Typically the head of

the paid housing service in a local authority would be accountable to the Housing Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet Member or the Chair of the Housing Committee.

Housing associations (or private registered providers (PRPs) as they are formally known) are constituted very differently from local authorities but are still classed as social landlords. This is unsurprising given that they are 'third sector' organisations with charitable objectives, which are ultimately run to provide housing for people in need. There are over 1,750 PRPs in England (HCA, 2015a) which own and let 2.3m properties (Wilcox et al., 2014). Like local authorities they are run by professional housing staff, although some functions (such as legal services) may be purchased from other parties.

Housing associations are controlled and overseen by boards of trustees like other bodies with charitable objectives. Boards are led by a chair who works closely with an association's chief officer to run the organisation in line with its objectives. Although not subject to the democratic accountability of local authorities, housing associations are accountable through other mechanisms such as published Annual Reports and Annual General Meetings.

Additionally, housing associations are regulated by a range of statutory bodies. The most important of these is the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), which operates a regulatory framework that concentrates on the financial viability and governance of PRPs.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-and-communities-agency> for a description of the agency's roles and responsibilities.

Some PRPs are also regulated by the Charity Commission.<sup>36</sup>

The HCA also has a limited remit over the quality of services delivered by PRPs to their tenants – as it does with local authorities and ALMOs. Under the Localism Act 2011, the agency has developed a series of Consumer Standards with which all social landlords should comply; however the HCA has a statutory duty to intervene only where absolutely necessary. In relation to its Consumer Standards, intervention by the agency is only possible where ‘serious detriment’ has been identified. So far the HCA has made only a handful of judgements reprimanding social landlords where they have breached Consumer Standards – usually around gas safety issues (HCA, 2015b).

This limited role of the HCA in overseeing housing service delivery is in marked contrast to the position between 2000/01 and 2010/11, when housing associations were subject to a regulatory regime overseen initially by the Housing Corporation and then the Tenant Services Authority. Over the same period, local authority, ALMO *and* housing association housing services were also subject to inspection by the Audit Commission<sup>37</sup>. A key focus of the inspection regime centred on the approach of social landlords to tackling antisocial behaviour (ASB) in communities where social landlords operated, as this was a service area that tenants were most concerned about (after the repairs service). Research has shown that the service performance of social landlords improved significantly in the first decade of this century and that much of the improvement can be attributed to the impact of the Audit Commission’s

inspection framework (Pawson and Wilcox, 2011).

As well as the statutory framework for the regulation of housing services delivered by all social landlords, tenants in the social housing sector also have recourse to an ombudsman service if their complaints cannot be resolved at the organisational level.<sup>38</sup>

In summary, the social rented sector is comprehensively regulated with a range of governance mechanisms in place to ensure that social landlords are responsive to their tenants and work to ensure safe and acceptable living conditions. As discussed below, this regulatory framework has provided the platform for concerted efforts to address crime and ASB affecting the sector and continues to provide the basis for on-going collaboration between the police and local authority housing functions, in pursuit of community safety objectives.

## **Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour in social housing**

In the decades immediately following the Second World War, inner-city, privately rented neighbourhoods typically saw the greatest concentrations of poverty, and were the focus of concerns about crime and social disorder. Crime studies of this period reveal links between crime and tenure, with violent offending in particular associated with areas dominated by private renting (Baldwin and Bottoms, 1976). By contrast, the council housing of the period tended to have higher rents and more affluent tenants, with many estates accommodating stable working-class communities, characterised by lower levels of crime. Slum clearance and

<sup>36</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission> for a description of the Commission’s roles and responsibilities.

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/>. The 2010-15 Coalition Government announced the abolition of the Audit Commission in August 2010. Although the new regulatory framework allows for the inspection of

social housing providers, no inspections have been commissioned by the HCA since the abolition of the Commission.

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>.

urban renewal changed this, with the poorest households moving from the private rented sector (PRS) into social housing and the more affluent into owner occupation. This changed the character of many council estates and resulted in increased levels of crime; with local housing allocation policies sometimes exacerbating the problem (Bottoms et al., 2002). The policies of the 1980s accelerated this process as the poorest were ‘funnelled’ into social renting, particularly in the stock that was not popular under the right-to-buy (Murie, 1997).

By the 1980s and in response to these developments, significant policy efforts began to address crime on housing estates, largely by focusing on ‘designing out’ crime or ‘target hardening’ measures. Entry phone systems were incorporated in blocks of flats and concierge services were provided in some estates with particularly severe problems. During this period the police also launched their ‘Secured by Design’ initiative.<sup>39</sup>

These approaches tended to ignore the role that housing management could play in addressing crime in social housing. For instance social landlords may use evictions and the threat of evictions for breaches of tenancy conditions to manage disruptive and even criminal tenants. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the 1990s showed that a holistic approach to addressing crime on social housing estates stood a better chance of success than, say, a concentration on physical regeneration. The study concluded that where a broader package of measures was introduced, including improvement in housing management and youth and community initiatives, the impact on crime

appeared to be more sustained (Osborn and Shaftoe, 1995).

Around the same time, a group of Chief Housing Officers created what is now known as the Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group (SLCNG)<sup>40</sup>, which called for a more effective response to crime and antisocial behaviour in social housing. Working alongside the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and other agencies, the SLCNG achieved a number of notable successes, including the creation of Introductory Tenancies under the Housing Act 1996 and the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Based on the premise that conditions on ‘problem’ estates might be improved by encouraging more mixed communities, with households on different income levels, local authorities, working with housing associations and other partners, began a concerted effort to change the tenure mix on estates, introducing more owner occupation and shared ownership<sup>41</sup>. Additionally, between 2000 and 2010 the government’s Decent Homes Programme transformed many of the nation’s housing estates, as local authorities were allocated resources to tackle a huge backlog in stock repairs and maintenance. Housing associations were also required to bring their stock up to the same standard, although they generally used their own resources to do so.

The impact of these developments on crime and antisocial behaviour is difficult to assess. Data from HouseMark<sup>42</sup>, which monitors the outcomes of antisocial behaviour services delivered by social landlords, indicate some degree of success; ASB case resolution has increased from

<sup>39</sup> See <http://www.securedbydesign.com/> for details of this police-led initiative.

<sup>40</sup> See <http://www.slcng.org.uk/> for the history of this group and its functions.

<sup>41</sup> There are numerous examples of regeneration schemes of this kind including the Chalkhill Estate in the London Borough of Brent and Woodberry Down in the London Borough of Hackney. The Government developed a new model of housing provider – Housing Action Trusts (HATs) – that also sought to break

up mono tenure local authority housing estates. HATs were non-departmental public bodies, set up to redevelop some of the poorest council housing estates in England’s inner-city suburbs. Six Housing Action Trusts were established under the Housing Act 1988.

<sup>42</sup> HouseMark is part owned by the CIH and the National Housing Federation.



47 per cent in 2006/07 to more than 90 per cent today, with high levels of complainant satisfaction (Wickenden, 2014). There is also some evidence that schemes that have created more mixed communities and made improvements to the social housing stock have had a positive impact on crime (DCLG, 2010)<sup>43</sup>. However, it should be acknowledged that these programmes also focused on job creation and community development and that more systematic studies of the effects of mixed housing tenure policies (Livingston et al., 2014) or housing management (Murie, 1997) on crime, do not suggest that these alone are effective.

The picture is further complicated by a number of parallel developments. Under the ‘Localism’ agenda, councils have been given more freedom to stipulate who they can house in their housing stock. Some exclude ex-offenders while many have placed residential qualifications on their allocations<sup>44</sup>, but perhaps most importantly these developments have occurred in parallel with the rise of ‘partnership policing’.

Through Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and, since 2010, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), the resources and processes by which local authority housing services (and housing associations) can address crime and community safety issues have increasingly been deployed in collaboration with the police, often (ideally) as part of problem-oriented responses to specific crime problems. Work of this kind has included: improving gating, entry phone systems and CCTV in council blocks; closing down ‘crack-houses’ identified through shared intelligence; evicting, threatening to evict or obtaining behaviour orders and agreements with

problematic tenants; and, rehousing vulnerable individuals away from sources of potential harm or helping to resolve inter-tenant disputes. These are now relatively routine examples of collaborative crime reduction responses to problems in or linked to social housing.

So, the picture emerges of a social housing sector over the last 30 years, where a combination of factors has helped councils and housing associations, working with the police and others, to increasingly address many of the causes and consequences of crime and antisocial behaviour in the communities they directly oversee.

## **The legal and regulatory framework for the private rented sector**

The PRS displays many of the features of a sector made up of a multitude of small businesses that operate on an informal basis. The larger companies in the sector are generally well run businesses, but many landlords with just one or two properties have a less professional approach. Thus, written tenancy agreements are often not in place and there is increasing concern about tax evasion in the sector (see for instance Stafford, 2012). Furthermore, landlords are sometimes untrained and unaware of their responsibilities to their tenants; some know little about the need to ensure their properties are let in a fit and safe condition. Often private landlords are ignorant of the many laws and regulations that apply in the sector – not helped by the fact that there are some 50 Acts of parliament and over 70 sets of regulations that oversee its operation. Landlords can use lettings agents to manage their properties; these sometimes work in a more professional way, but some operate

<sup>43</sup> An assessment of the New Deal for Communities programme reports that a programme area in Birmingham witnessed a reduction in crime from 53 to 25 incidents per 1,000 population between 2001 and 2009, and that only 39 per cent of residents reported that household burglary was a problem in 2008, compared with 61 per cent in 2002 (Shared Intelligence, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, the allocations policy of the London Borough of Ealing (Ealing Council, 2013).

outside the law and deliver poor services both to tenants and landlords (Lunn, 2014).

Despite these characteristics, the PRS in England is not subject to statutory regulation by an independent regulator (such as the HCA) or by councils operating at the local level. The sector does have a plethora of accreditation and other schemes for both landlords and letting agents that form a framework of self-regulation. The most active accreditation scheme is run by the UK Landlord Accreditation Partnership (UKLAP). Launched in 2004, UKLAP is a partnership of landlords, local authorities and providers of university accommodation. It has accredited over 11,100 landlords and 800 agents (2013 figures). The Partnership is particularly active in London where it has the support of every borough and where the London Rental Standard encourages landlords with properties in the capital to become accredited.<sup>45</sup> The Mayor of London has an ambitious target to secure 100,000 accredited landlords between May 2014 and May 2016, however by June 2015 just under 14,500 had signed up (GLA, no date).

Such schemes aim to raise standards by providing education and training to landlords, identifying poor practice and generally increasing levels of professionalism. Most accredit the landlord rather than the property. Landlords are required to be 'fit and proper persons', sign up to a code of conduct, and attend training and development courses. Landlords should also comply with statutory conditions, meet decent home standards, maintain gas and electricity supplies, and provide smoke alarms. In addition to accreditation schemes there are numerous trade and professional bodies that set standards and operate codes of practice to

which member landlords and lettings agents are expected to adhere. The National Landlords' Association (NLA), Association of Residential and Lettings Agents (ARLA), Residential Landlords' Association (RLA) and Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA) are all membership bodies that provide guidance and advice to landlords and lettings agents about the ways they can run their businesses and comply with the law and achieve best practice.

The 2010–15 coalition government resisted pressure to comprehensively regulate the PRS; however, ministers of that administration did heed calls that PRS management standards needed to be improved. In October 2013 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched its draft Tenants' Charter for the PRS (DCLG, 2013), the provisions of which included:

- Safety (including gas and electrical checks).
- Property condition.
- The role of letting and other agents.
- The nature of tenancy agreements.
- The rights and responsibilities of landlords (including deposit taking, written tenancy agreements, and provision of rent books).
- The rights and responsibilities of tenants (including making rent payments on time and sub-letting arrangements).
- Ending a tenancy.

These provisions have been enshrined in a checklist published and regularly updated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, 2015a). Tellingly, this makes no reference at all to the security standards that tenants should expect when renting from a private landlord.

<sup>45</sup> See <http://www.londonlandlords.org.uk/> for details of the accreditation scheme.

In the latter stages of the 2010–15 coalition government legislation was introduced that reflected a more interventionist approach. For instance, under Section 83 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, letting agents must now be part of an officially recognised redress scheme. This provision was introduced following widespread criticism (Residential Landlord, 2013) of some lettings agents that had adopted poor – sometimes illegal – practices in their dealings with tenants and landlord clients.

More controversially, the government now requires private landlords to check the migrant status of their tenants under the Immigration Act 2014. The ‘Right to Rent’ provisions are being piloted in five urban authorities in the West Midlands including Birmingham, with online advice and codes of practice available to help landlords comply with the law (Home Office, 2014). Following the 2015 general election, Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the scheme will be rolled out nationwide without waiting for the results of the pilot and that a ‘mandatory licensing regime’ will be introduced for private landlords (Cameron, 2015). Details remain sketchy, and such an initiative would run counter to the new government’s de-regulation approach, but this might signal a shift in thinking. These and other provisions governing the operation of the PRS could be included in the government’s forthcoming Housing Bill, which will primarily focus on granting housing association tenants the Right to Buy.

The coalition government also legislated to outlaw so called ‘retaliatory evictions’ in the PRS. This followed growing evidence that some landlords were evicting tenants simply because they were asking for repairs to be carried out on their

homes. This additional protection for tenants was introduced as part of the Deregulation Act 2015.

## Local authority oversight of the private rented sector

At the local level, councils are empowered to introduce a range of licensing schemes for the PRS under the Housing Act 2004, which enables them to regulate many of the services delivered by private landlords operating in their areas.

There are three types of licensing:

- *Mandatory licensing* of larger Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- *Additional licensing* of smaller HMOs.
- *Selective licensing* of all types of private rented housing.

Some HMOs are subject to mandatory licensing under the Housing Act 2004. These HMOs are in properties:

- That are at least three storeys high.
- That have at least five tenants living there, forming more than one household.
- Where toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities are shared with other tenants.

Additional and Selective licensing are discretionary powers. Additional licensing may be introduced by a local authority for smaller HMOs in all or part of their area if there are significant management issues and/or the properties are in poor condition. Selective licensing allows local authorities to license all privately rented housing in a designated area, if that area suffers from low housing demand and/or significant antisocial behaviour. For both Additional and Selective licensing, local residents, landlords and tenants must be



consulted prior to their introduction. Evidence is also needed that an authority's enforcement and other actions have been applied effectively. Furthermore, discretionary licensing proposals need to be consistent with an authority's housing strategy and a co-ordinated approach to dealing with homelessness, empty homes and antisocial behaviour (ASB). These conditions amount to a substantial set of hurdles to be negotiated before discretionary licensing, and greater local controls over the PRS, can be introduced.

To add further complexity, the rules governing selective licensing schemes changed in the final weeks of the last parliament when, in March 2015, the government issued a draft Statutory Instrument entitled *The Selective Licensing of Houses (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015* (SI 2015/977). The necessary parliamentary consent was achieved before the House rose and new criteria for selective licensing schemes came into effect on 1 April 2015. As a result, the current situation is that a selective licensing designation may be made if the area to which it relates satisfies *one or more* of the following conditions:

- Low housing demand (or is likely to become such an area).
- A significant and persistent problem caused by antisocial behaviour (ASB).
- Poor property conditions.
- High levels of migration.
- High levels of deprivation.
- High levels of crime.

Local authorities will also be required to obtain confirmation from the Secretary of State for any selective licensing scheme which would cover more than 20 per cent of their

geographical area or would affect more than 20 per cent of privately rented homes in the local authority area. These new rules will enable local authorities to introduce 'effective licensing schemes to address specific problems arising in particular areas' (DCLG, 2015b). Given these stipulations a local authority might have difficulty gaining approval for a licensing scheme that would cover the whole of its jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the guidance on the new framework states that selective licensing should only be introduced where 'there is no practical and beneficial alternative' (DCLG, 2015b: 7). This implies that the outgoing government saw such schemes as being a last resort. To support this stance the government issued advice to local authorities on improving the PRS in their areas and tackling poor housing conditions in the sector (DCLG, 2015b; DCLG, 2015c).

Outside of housing law, local authorities can address the proliferation of HMOs by the use of Article 4 Directions. Using planning legislation, local authorities can, within a defined area, require landlords to seek planning permission to convert a Class C3 dwelling house into a Class C4 HMO. These Directions help prevent communities becoming unbalanced with high concentrations of HMOs in areas which were formerly given over to single family dwellings (Jarman, 2014).

While the legislative and bureaucratic obstacles facing local authorities wishing to regulate the PRS may be substantial, it is worth noting that the strategic decisions involved may be just as challenging. Local authorities are increasingly turning to the PRS to meet local housing needs as the provision of social housing has faltered, and the Localism Act 2011 now enables local

authorities to discharge their duties to homeless households by offering accommodation in the PRS. This can place local authorities in a difficult position. On one level councils want to access PRS accommodation to fulfil their duties to house homeless households locally, at as low a cost as possible, but this may mean that on some occasions the accommodation might not meet the high standards a local authority would ideally expect. Indeed, there is evidence that local authorities in London are not even requiring that landlords who are used to house nominees in need are part of an accreditation scheme.<sup>46</sup>

## Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour in the private rented sector

As the PRS has grown, central government, local authorities and other agencies have taken an increasing interest in how the sector operates and performs. Given the emerging link between the PRS and some types of crime (as reported in Section 4) there appears to be a strong case for improving the sector's responsiveness to community safety concerns. However, the requirements are currently extremely limited. For example, while there are standards on gas and electrical safety and the provision of smoke alarms in the PRS<sup>47</sup>, there is very little guidance on target hardening by providing door and window locks for tenanted properties; and while landlords may be required to check prospective tenant's immigration status, there is no necessity for them to obtain references or check for serious criminal convictions for those applying to move into HMOs.

Particularly under conditions of high demand, there are very limited incentives to encourage landlords to improve the security of their

properties or indeed manage and address the behaviour of their tenants. Furthermore, local authorities can only take enforcement action against landlords under specific legislation – primarily the Housing Act 2004 – which generally addresses health and safety issues and the fitness of residential properties for habitation (for instance in relation to damp, mould growth, temperature regulation and space). Under the legislation landlords' responsibilities include water, gas and electricity services, sanitation and drainage, and space and water heating, but there is no mention of security or protection against intruders. Indeed under the *Housing Health and Safety Rating* system, the harm caused by an intruder is judged to be only 'moderate' which is the lowest category of all (DCLG, 2006a).

Compounding this, local authorities are poorly resourced to take enforcement action of any kind against landlords who rent out properties that do not meet modern standards. Cuts in local authority budgets have meant councils have fewer resources to tackle poor standards in the PRS. A survey by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health in 2012 showed that 40 per cent of Environmental Health Officers believed local authority cuts were affecting their ability to prosecute 'rogue' landlords and 80 per cent said that frontline staff had been lost since 2010. One local authority commented that its private sector housing team had been 'practically disbanded' (Wall, 2012).

Given this context, it is unsurprising that the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project team and their local partners had few options available to tackle the crime problems described in Section 4, through the machinery of the private rented housing sector.

<sup>46</sup> Roger Jarman (co-author) has worked for Housing Quality Network looking at the potential for PRS licensing in a number of London boroughs where the need to house homeless households is so great, officers feel they cannot require landlords to sign up to local accreditation schemes. These projects have also revealed widespread scepticism about the value of accreditation schemes in addressing poor housing conditions and inadequate management

standards in some parts of the PRS (see for instance <http://modern.gov.redbridge.gov.uk/documents/s99684/> (appendix G)).

<sup>47</sup> Smoke alarms will be required in the PRS from October 2015 if government plans secure parliamentary approval (written statement by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, HL Deb 16 March 2015, c 55WS).

## 6. An alternative approach

There are a variety of ways that the state can influence the management of the private rented sector (PRS) and the sector's stock condition. However, the 2010–15 coalition government took only piecemeal steps to introduce legislation or additional regulations to exercise more control over the running of the sector. The government's 'hands off' approach is consistent with its objectives of both minimising the state's role in private markets and promoting its localism agenda (although the recent restrictions placed on PRS licensing seems to undermine the latter). Local authorities have therefore been left to decide for themselves whether they would like to regulate the PRS in their areas more closely, primarily using the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.

Although there is a strong case for an enhanced central government role in regulating some elements of the PRS at a national level, in general local authorities are best placed to manage and oversee the PRS in their areas as the sector operates in a variety of market settings. The PRS in a London Borough, for instance, will be very different from those in the cities of the North or in England's market towns and villages.

Section 5 outlined the regulatory framework for the PRS in England, setting out in particular the powers that local authorities have to influence and control the operation of the PRS in their areas. Many of the powers are discretionary in nature, but it is clear that these provide additional opportunities for more robust intervention and a greater range of powers to promote responsible practices. So for example the London borough of Newham has introduced PRS licensing schemes and other measures that help tackle antisocial and criminal activity in the borough. The powers

used by the authority to regulate the PRS across the whole borough include:

- Mandatory licensing of HMOs over two storeys.
- Discretionary *Additional* licensing of HMOs of less than two storeys.
- Discretionary *Selective* licensing of single family dwellings in the PRS.
- Discretionary use of *Article 4 Directions* to curtail proliferation of HMOs in areas predominantly consisting of family dwellings.

Newham introduced its borough-wide selective licensing scheme in January 2013. This was the first of its kind in the country and was introduced following extensive consultation with tenants, landlords and other parties. Given high levels of housing demand in the borough, the scheme was introduced on the basis that significant and persistent antisocial behaviour was present throughout the Borough and was linked to the poor management of the PRS housing stock. The scheme also aimed to address other problems in the PRS including so called 'beds in sheds' and breaches of planning law.

Before introducing the scheme, Newham had to gather evidence on the links between ASB and the location of PRS stock and show that despite the authority's best efforts, their enforcement and other actions were not significantly improving the management and/or the condition of the sector. Newham also had to demonstrate that its proposals were consistent with its housing strategy and policies on homelessness, empty homes and ASB.

Extensive consultation then followed, accompanied by a media and communications

**Figure 7: London Borough of Newham licensing scheme: Key performance indicators**

Action/activity	Number (from January 2013 to November 2014 inclusive)
Properties inspected	1785
Prosecutions brought against landlords for licensing offences	438
Simple cautions (for lesser charges)	209
Arrests made during licensing operations	376
Multi-agency operations involving the council, police, HMRC, Border Agency, etc.	201
Rent Repayment Orders commenced	52
Landlords banned	22
Additional Council Tax collected (from July 2013)	£707,280

campaign locally, regionally and nationally over a seven month period.<sup>48</sup> Newham charged the first landlords £150 per property for a 5-year licence, while those who did not sign up at the outset were charged £500.

By January 2014 there had been 32,000 applications for licences covering 90 per cent of the PRS and 30,000 licences had been issued. The scheme revealed 7,000 new private rented properties in addition to the 2011 Census figure of 35,700. Over £6 million in licence fees had been collected to fund the initiative up to 2017/18.

Newham has vigorously enforced the licensing scheme over the last two and a half years. During 2013, 5,600 warning letters were sent and over 1,800 joint operational visits made, with the police and the UK Border Agency forcing 4,500 'reluctant' landlords to licence (East, 2014).

In a report to the council in December 2014, a number of key performance indicators recorded the actions and outcomes of Newham's licensing scheme (Moffat, 2014). These are set out above in Figure 7.

The same report also recorded recent actions taken by the council against landlords operating illegally. One landlord was fined £8,850 for breaching licence conditions. Another was fined £15,480 for failing to license his premises and breaching the licence conditions on his HMO property. Others were fined for failing to comply with a Building Act Notice (£5,500) and for failing to take out a licence under the Selective Licensing scheme (£7,200). In all cases the fines also included costs to the Council.

Newham has identified a number of benefits from its robust approach to the regulation of the PRS in the Borough. These include:

<sup>48</sup> A national campaign was necessary because many Newham landlords were not resident in the borough.

- Working with the Police and other agencies, arrests were made for immigration, grievous bodily harm (GBH), fraud, theft and harassment offences.
- Prohibition of certain landlords from operating locally because they failed the 'fit and proper' person test.
- Placing landlords 'of concern' on probation with 12 month licences only (charged at £500 per annum).
- A clampdown on council tax fraud.
- The recovery of Housing Benefit payments under the Rent Repayment Order (RRO) regime from unlicensed landlords.
- The identification of a wide range of fraud cases covering sham companies, money laundering, property flipping and illegal developments.
- The uncovering of unlicensed landlords of leasehold stock sold under the right-to-buy.
- Evidence of significant tax evasion by landlords operating cash only businesses.<sup>49</sup>
- HMOs returned to family occupation – up to 500 properties are no longer HMOs because Newham's licensing system has 'prompted' landlords to abandon the use of some single family dwellings as inadequate/unsafe HMOs.

The council claims that all tenants in licensed properties are now protected by their regulation of the PRS through:

- The prevention of overcrowding in PRS homes.
- Improved standards of management with specific obligations including around rubbish disposal and pest control.

- Improved safety obligations imposed on landlords.
- Conditions imposed on landlords to deal with ASB from occupiers and visitors.
- Ensuring deposits are protected, references checked and proper tenancies granted.
- Identifying the landlord responsible for the property with contact details for emergencies.

Many local authorities (particularly in London) have been persuaded of the benefits of discretionary licensing schemes in the PRS following the experience of Newham. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (no date) introduced Borough-wide licensing in September 2014 and Waltham Forest (2015) introduced PRS licensing for virtually all privately-let properties from April 2015. Meanwhile, Redbridge (2015) consulted on the introduction of a Borough-wide scheme over the winter 2014/15. Brent Borough Council (no date) has taken a different approach and has introduced Additional Licensing for smaller HMOs borough-wide but has only implemented Selective Licensing in three Wards where antisocial behaviour is linked to the poor management of the PRS stock. Some authorities outside London have also looked to introduce council-wide licensing schemes, such as Liverpool City Council (no date), which is due to implement their proposal this year. Oxford City Council and Hastings District Council have also taken a proactive approach to tackling rogue landlords using licensing and other powers<sup>50</sup>.

However, as noted previously, introducing licensing schemes is not straightforward and some authorities have abandoned their proposals. Milton Keynes Council, for example, argued that licensing would help it combat ASB

<sup>49</sup> The Council claims HMRC could raise an additional £20 million per annum on rental income using the Council's information on the PRS in Newham alone.

<sup>50</sup> See [http://oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decH/Houses\\_in\\_Multiple\\_Occupation\\_occw.htm](http://oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decH/Houses_in_Multiple_Occupation_occw.htm) and [http://www.hastings.gov.uk/housing\\_tax\\_benefits/improving\\_homes/houses\\_multiple\\_occupation/](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/housing_tax_benefits/improving_homes/houses_multiple_occupation/) respectively.



in the city, but representations by landlords and others saw the council withdraw its proposals (RLA Landlord News Hub, 2014). Other authorities including Manchester and Leeds have introduced selective licensing schemes but subsequently abandoned them on the grounds that there were better, and cheaper, ways to ensure private landlords follow best practice and maintain their properties in a decent condition (Jarman, 2014).

As previously described, introducing discretionary licensing requires local authorities to develop a case; these can be subject to legal challenge and, as might be expected, private landlords and their representative bodies are overwhelmingly opposed to PRS licensing, arguing that it is bureaucratic, expensive and largely ineffectual in tackling rogue landlords and poor housing conditions<sup>51</sup>. The recent changes to the licensing framework suggest that the previous government was persuaded by the lobbying of private landlords to significantly limit the capacity of local authorities to set up licensing schemes of this kind.

Prior to the recent changes, threats of legal action to stop or restrict licensing schemes were commonplace but rarely materialised; however, following a recent High Court case reviewing the proposed introduction of a licensing scheme in Enfield, local authorities will need to carefully consider the consultation methods they employ when setting out proposed licensing schemes in future<sup>52</sup>. The prospective reform of the current legal framework governing PRS licensing schemes in England is considered in the next section of this report.

As we discuss in the next section, schemes such as these appear to provide substantial

opportunities for developing better responses to the type of local crime problems encountered in Luton and Slough; however the recent changes to the legal framework governing PRS licensing cast doubt over their future.

<sup>51</sup> See, for instance, the position of the Residential Landlords' Association (2015).

<sup>52</sup> In *R (Regas) v LB Enfield* [2014] EWHC 4173 the judge ruled that the consultation exercise was flawed on the grounds that Enfield had not consulted landlords operating outside the borough and that an 'engagement process' adopted by the Council did not constitute consultation under the law.

## 7. Discussion and recommendations

The *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project has set out to better understand persistent crime problems in two English towns in the grip of considerable social change. Working to problem-oriented principles, scanning and analysis have guided the development of locally tailored crime-reduction initiatives, which the police and partners are working to deliver at a time when they are having to adapt to new and challenging working conditions. Although the project did not set out to specifically focus on tenure structures or the private rented sector, in both towns these arose as relevant factors in explaining, respectively, local burglary and violence problems.

In Luton it was identified that the level of private renting in a neighbourhood was significantly associated with the burglary rate and that, although not strongly predictive, it explained more of the variation in neighbourhood burglary rates than any of the other variables available for analysis (including deprivation, unemployment or social renting). It was also shown that these places where the PRS and burglary are more prevalent have more indicators of churn, transience and ‘instability’. As a consequence, addressing deficits in ‘collective efficacy’ and improving home-security in these areas, particularly at the lower-quality end of the private rented housing market, constituted the core of an action plan for the ‘Response’ (intervention) phase of the project. Launched in August 2014 under the local community safety partnership’s ‘soLUTiONS’ brand, the Luton Burglary Reduction Initiative (BRI) encourages residents in the most vulnerable parts of Chalk Mills and Wood Ridge to undergo a Home Security Assessment (HSA). The assessment acts as a gateway to a number of

financial and practical support schemes through which (subject to eligibility) residents can better secure their homes.<sup>53</sup>

In the case of socially rented homes, or where the occupant is elderly, relatively straightforward referral routes are available; however, addressing security deficits in privately rented properties required a new referral mechanism to be established. Luton’s Home Improvement Agency (HIA), is a not-for-profit organisation administered by the council’s housing department. The agency delivers key services to vulnerable households, including a ‘handyman’ scheme that provides repair and remedial maintenance services, including basic home security improvements (such as repairs to doors and windows, fitting new locks, tidying gardens etc.). To qualify for assistance residents must live in homes within the private sector (rented or owner-occupied) and receive some form of state benefits. In its routine work the agency identifies households in need of their services through a network of ‘front-line referrers’, although up to now this has not included the police.

Putting in place a referral pathway between the local police (who should know where extra target-hardening is most needed) and the HIA (who have the means and some funding to deliver it), is a good example of ‘joined-up’ partnership working. The HIA has experience of working with private sector landlords to secure the necessary permissions to carry out works and although they are acutely aware of the difficulties (particularly in the all-too-common circumstance that a tenant is unable even to provide contact details for the landlord) they are well practised in opening a dialogue and negotiating access.

<sup>53</sup> No additional funding for target hardening was made available for this project; the goal was to make sure that existing provision was routed effectively into the places where it was needed most.

In Slough, the finding that over 40 per cent of violent incidents occurred in private dwellings but did not fall under the definition of domestic violence was particularly striking. In Puckford, a part of town characterised by flux, diversity and deprivation, Houses in Multiple Occupation were disproportionately the venue for these offences, leading to a hypothesis that overcrowded, stressful and unsafe living conditions in this section of the private rented sector were a contributing factor.

Overall, rather than a narrow focus on HMOs, analysis and consultation in Slough suggested that the best opportunity for tackling violence lay in improving the identification and co-ordination of the response to *recurrence*. A group of local practitioners (known as the Violence Multi-Agency Panel or VMAP) has been established, which meets fortnightly to share intelligence<sup>54</sup> and apply problem solving thinking to a caseload of individuals (victims, offenders and those who have been both) who have been identified as repeatedly involved in violence. Appropriate cases are assigned to ‘owners’ (from among the local professionals involved in VMAP) to progress activity aimed at addressing the underlying causes of violence and preventing further recurrence. Local authority housing practitioners are integral to the group and have made invaluable contributions to a number of cases (as have staff from third-sector organisations dealing with homelessness and housing need). The contribution of local authority housing staff has included arranging inspection visits to HMOs following reports of (recurrent) violence, providing background intelligence on neighbour disputes and, in a notable example, leading efforts to rehouse a vulnerable council tenant who had

repeatedly been the victim of violence and whose housing arrangements were clearly contributing to their vulnerability and isolation.

As these programme descriptions demonstrate, housing practitioners can make a valuable contribution to partnership crime-reduction efforts; however in both of these initiatives they are doing so on a case-by-case basis, in difficult conditions, and with few resources and limited powers. In both towns, while developing these interventions, it seemed worthwhile to explore whether the problematic local consequences of the private rented housing market could be addressed in a more strategic and structural way. In Luton, could landlords be incentivised to invest in proper security for their properties, and could anything be done to persuade landlords to value longer-term tenancies, so that tenants stay in an area for longer and communities might establish firmer roots and become more resilient? In Slough, how could ‘tinder-box’ conditions inside HMOs be defused or landlords encouraged to take more interest in what goes on within their properties? But promising interventions were hard to identify. As described above, in contrast to the social housing sector the PRS seems to contain very few legislative or other levers for effecting positive change.

The reasons for this lie in the history of the UK housing market, the housing policies adopted by successive governments and the contrasting regulatory frameworks that have developed across the two rental sectors.<sup>55</sup> In the period from the 1960s to the 1990s, the prevailing narrative linked crime with social housing, particularly large mono-tenure, local authority housing estates, in which deprived and under-resourced tenant

<sup>54</sup> Within the provisions of local Information Sharing Agreements.

<sup>55</sup> We concentrate here on the position in England although many of our conclusions apply to other parts of the UK too.



households were frequently both the victims and perpetrators of crime. Housing allocation policies, lack of investment, and poor housing management all contributed to a sense that many council estates were ‘no go’ areas subject to high levels of crime (see in particular Murie, 1997). The methods used by the government, local authorities and their partners to address endemic problems on some social housing estates, where crime and other social, economic and environmental problems were evident, have been described in Section 5. Regeneration schemes combined physical improvement to housing stock with more mixed tenures and new approaches to housing management. While the evidence of the impact of these approaches on crime is mixed (Murie, 1997; Livingstone et al., 2014), in combination with other developments, including the rise of ‘partnership policing’, these have resulted in a well-regulated sector which provides a range of opportunities for local community safety partners to address crime and antisocial behaviour issues.

Over the same period, however, ‘Right to Buy’ has diminished the stock of local authority housing, and as new-build has failed to keep pace with growing need, the sector has shrunk considerably. Much of the displaced need for social housing has been picked up by the PRS, which has grown dramatically. More families now live in the PRS, and households that may previously have lived in social housing, including those excluded by local changes in eligibility criteria, now rent privately. Looking ahead, this trend is likely to continue, as more households are placed within the PRS by local authorities who are now able to discharge their duty to homeless households by offering them properties

in the sector (DCLG, 2012) and as social housing stock reduces further with newly announced extension of right-to-buy to housing associations.

As a consequence, some parts of the PRS (particularly where rents are relatively low and within local housing allowance limits) have become the site for concentrations of deprivation, overcrowding, households with complex needs, and, as we have suggested, of crime problems as well. Often (and particularly in places like Luton and Slough with multiple global connections) these have also become transient ‘gateway’ areas for migrant communities seeking relatively inexpensive, short-term accommodation, adding further complexity to the demand placed on public sector resources. As described here, however, opportunities for positive interventions to tackle crime and other problems relating to the PRS are far more limited than for social housing. Although there are many laws and regulations that govern practices in the sector, the amateur landlords that dominate the PRS are likely to know just a fraction of their legal and other responsibilities. Many lettings agents are also ignorant of their responsibilities, both to landlords and tenants, and in many places local authority housing officials and environmental health officers are woefully under-resourced and under-empowered to intervene. Overall, this amounts to a minimally-regulated sector in which control and intervention are difficult to achieve.

**It is the key contention of this paper that opportunities for local partners to undertake positive action to address crime problems linked to the PRS, are greater in places where a firmer regulatory grip has been placed on the sector.** As described in Section

6, given the previous government's reluctance to introduce a nationwide regulatory framework, local authorities have been looking at a variety of ways to improve conditions in the PRS in their areas. Voluntary accreditation schemes have had some success but membership levels are low with the vast majority of landlords unaware of their existence and the worst landlords least likely to opt in. Many authorities feel compulsion is needed, so licensing under the Housing Act 2004 is seen as the best option to affect improvement. These have been employed with varying success throughout the country with London-based councils showing a particular interest. Newham's approach is probably the best known; the authority has adopted a borough-wide licensing scheme for which it claims a range of positive outcomes, including (but not limited to): police and border agency arrests; prohibition and other penalties against 'rogue' landlords; action on a range of tax evasion and fraud offences; and 'positive' changes in premises usage, including a reduction in the number of HMOs.

Although these outcomes are extensive, to our knowledge no robust evidence has been produced of the *impact* of such schemes on crime. However, *if* the kind of regime that has been implemented in Newham had been in place in Luton or Slough, it seems likely that a substantially broader and more potent set of options would have been available to respond to the local crime problems identified. For example, in Luton:

- Once hotspot areas had been identified it would have been a straightforward exercise to identify all registered private landlords with properties in the area and contact them to make them aware of increased local risk,

asking for their co-operation in ensuring their properties are adequately secured and in passing on home security advice (locking doors and windows etc.) to tenants.

- In cases of particular concern (e.g. where specific security deficits are identified through street-surveys or Home Security Assessments), direct approaches by the police could be made to landlords highlighting specific problems, reminding them of their responsibilities under the Housing Act 2004 (under the entry by intruders hazard) and asking them for their co-operation in preventing crime.
- Where co-operation was not forthcoming a better resourced and more active enforcement regime, able to apply scrutiny across a range of areas of responsibilities, might have been able to apply greater leverage<sup>56</sup>.
- Under the auspices of joint inspection visits to the properties of 'reluctant' landlords, police officers would have opportunities to assess conditions inside rental properties, identify security vulnerabilities, and provide advice and guidance to landlords and tenants. There may also be productive intelligence gathering opportunities in such visits or chances to identify stolen goods.
- Building on existing licensing infrastructure, it might have been possible to add extra levels of voluntary accreditation for those landlords who demonstrate above mandatory minimum levels of concern for home security, incentivising participation with 'recommended' status, for example through the local university or Citizens Advice Bureau.

<sup>56</sup> Although it is acknowledged that under current arrangements it is not possible to fund enforcement activity through revenues generated by licensing. This point is addressed in the housing policy recommendations that follow.

- Over the longer term, a more intrusive inspection and enforcement regime might have discouraged irresponsible landlords, unwilling to maintain acceptable standards (including in home security) from continuing to let properties in the area, making for a generally more co-operative and responsibly run local sector.
- Overall, a better quality, more closely regulated rental market might encourage more stable neighbourhoods with resident populations more amenable to efforts to catalyse 'collective efficacy'. Thus tenants living in better quality housing may be less inclined to move on once they are able to do so and consequently become more inclined to take steps to improve and protect their neighbourhoods (which could, ultimately result in higher rental revenues as the desirability of the neighbourhood increased).

#### In Slough:

- Protocols could have been agreed between the police and the council such that reports of violence (or other crime) within an HMO might quickly trigger an inspection visit and contact with a landlord. A better resourced council enforcement/inspection team would have more capacity to deliver this (jointly with the police).
- Landlords would be deterred / prevented from overcrowding shared dwellings, which might reduce the stresses and tensions that can lead to violent incidents.
- The threat of sanctions would incentivise landlords to seek tenant references, attend to unauthorised occupancy, address disputes, and generally be more concerned with the

behaviour of those staying or visiting their properties.

- A change in property usage may result, as seen in Newham, with HMOs returning to single family occupation, removing the associated risk factors for violence.

#### In both sites:

- The data sets generated through a licensing scheme could enable improved local problem analysis and a more detailed understanding of the relationship between crime and tenure. They would for example enable property level (rather than area level) associations to be investigated.

As with many programmes that seek to impact on bounded geographic areas, borough-wide (or smaller area) PRS licensing schemes will inevitably attract criticism on the grounds of displacement – or even of encouraging 'nimbyistic' gentrification. Won't such measures only move irresponsible landlords, poor accommodation conditions, overcrowding and crime elsewhere? While it is true that measures like these cannot solve all the problems associated with deprivation, overcrowding and high housing demand, it is also well established that targeted crime reduction does not necessarily result in displacement and may in fact bring about diffusions of benefit (Clarke and Weisburd, 1994); the same may well apply here. Furthermore, it seems possible that with the right regulatory framework and a dynamic, analytically-driven approach to spotting and tackling problems, local housing and community safety partners would be well placed to respond decisively and effectively where and when problems such as these arise.

These reflections on the broader context to the *Police Effectiveness in a Changing World* project

findings in Luton and Slough have lead us to a number of recommendations for improving crime reduction practice and housing policy, which are set out below.

Most generally, given the rapidly changing structure of housing tenure, the imperative for the police and partners to find effective ways to reduce crime/demand, and in acknowledgement that the analysis presented here is only small-scale and locally focused, we also suggest that **the impact of growth in the PRS on crime and disorder should prove a worthwhile and timely subject for further research.**

## Crime reduction recommendations

Demand on the police is changing and has grown in some business areas (College of Policing, 2015) against a backdrop of shrinking resources. A problem-oriented approach can be used to help manage and reduce that demand, yet in some places the resources and structures for doing so are being diminished as the pressure to deal with reactive demand ratchets up. This cycle is self-defeating. **Police and Community Safety Partnerships should therefore invest in a problem-solving approach, to reap the longer-term benefits in demand reduction.**

In addition to creating new forms of crime, socio-economic and demographic changes are altering the local character of 'traditional' volume crime types like burglary and violence. **Local crime analysis should seek to explore this changing context by situating crime problems and responses within a broader understanding of the changing neighbourhoods in which they occur.**

**Analysis which draws on diverse, multi-agency data sets is likely to be of particular value here.**

Housing markets and tenure structures have proved important for understanding different crime problems in both project sites, with some parts of the private rented sector proving particularly relevant to concentrations of burglary and violence. Similar factors may well be relevant elsewhere. **Police analysts and those who utilise their products should be alive to changes in local housing markets and share data with local authorities and others to investigate potential links and trends.** For example, efforts should be made to understand (and where possible map) the geographic distribution of tenure type (particularly private renting), compare this with the concentration of crime and other sources of demand on state services, and seek to generate and test hypotheses in light of any resulting linkages.

The analysis presented here has suffered from a lack of available property-level data on tenure type and local analysis would be substantially aided by the collection of tenure data. For example, **recording the tenure status of any burgled property – or any dwelling that was the venue for any type of crime – within routine crime recording, should be relatively easy to achieve and could provide a valuable analytic resource to inform crime reduction interventions.**

Where the evidence suggests that there are benefits in doing so, **strong strategic and operational partnership links should be established between local police and those responsible for regulating and improving**

**conditions in the PRS locally. Local police should seek to understand the local PRS regulatory landscape (including any discretionary licensing schemes in operation or voluntary accreditation schemes) and explore ways in which these might be utilised and strengthened to deliver reductions in crime.**

## Housing policy recommendations

While great strides have been made in the social housing sector to improve the quality of life for residents – including by addressing crime and antisocial behaviour – developments in the private rented sector have not kept pace. To address this, **the Housing Act 2004 should be amended so that ‘entry by intruders’ is reclassified as Category 1 harm.** This would place more stringent requirements on landlords to secure properties let to private tenants. For example, **minimum British Standard door and window locks should be set as the standard, requiring them to be installed in all privately rented properties.**<sup>57</sup>

On the basis of the findings presented here, **the establishment of a National Register of Landlords would ensure that all landlords would need a license before they were allowed to let property. The licensing system should be as simple as possible, with no hurdle criteria.** Landlords would be charged an annual fee in return for a registration number which would appear on all official documentation. The licence application would be administered

nationally and landlords would need one licence only irrespective of the number of properties they own.<sup>58</sup> Such a scheme could act as the platform for tailored local regulation, which would in turn enable crime prevention interventions such as the examples set out earlier in this section.

**Additionally, local authorities should be empowered to create their own PRS licensing schemes through which they can exercise greater control over the sector in their areas.** These could be in specific parts of an authority or across a whole council area and would be subject to consultation with interested parties. Councils would not, however, have to prove any of the criteria that the previous government stipulated were necessary before discretionary licensing could be introduced.<sup>59</sup> A property-level register of rented premises could form one part of any local scheme and would provide a valuable resource for local analysis.

To help landlords understand the conditions they are expected to meet when letting property, **a standard set of minimum licence conditions should be adopted by local authorities that introduce their own PRS licensing. Subject to consultation, local authorities should be able to introduce additional conditions if warranted by local circumstances.** Any fees that local authorities might charge for their licensing schemes are likely to vary by region, reflecting the different labour and other costs that local authorities face in different parts of the country. Licence fees should be raised on individual properties as is the case currently.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> This approach has recently been supported by David Lammy MP (2015) writing for Policy Exchange. Lammy calls for private landlords to ‘ensure their properties meet the minimum security standard, including the installation of window locks, double locks or deadlocks on external doors, internal lighting on a timer and external lighting on a sensor’, and adds that, ‘[t]his obligation should be triggered by the signing or renewing of a lease’ (p.9).

<sup>58</sup> This was first suggested in a government-commissioned review of the PRS (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008). Scotland already administers a national register for private landlords.

<sup>59</sup> The 2010–15 coalition government’s changes to the licensing provisions of the Housing Act 2004, announced in March 2015, will make it more difficult for

local authorities to introduce new selective licensing schemes. Nevertheless, where problems with the management of the PRS have been identified, councils should seriously consider introducing licensing schemes. Indeed, the government itself now seems to be examining the potential for the mandatory licensing of the PRS (Cameron, 2015).

<sup>60</sup> This is because each property would be subject to the conditions set for letting and would be subject to inspection by the relevant local authority (in the same way that every car on Britain’s roads has to be taxed and have a valid MOT). The same conditions should pertain when a landlord is letting property to tenants.



Under existing legislation, local authorities can only use resources from the General Fund to finance enforcement activity in the private rented sector.<sup>61</sup>

An alternative would be to **allow any income generated from licensing schemes to be invested directly in enforcement activity, including that linked to crime reduction initiatives.** Landlords prosecuted for breaking the conditions of their licence could also be required to pay for the investigation and enforcement actions of the local authority on a similar basis to the model employed by the Health and Safety Executive.

Given the increasing number of vulnerable tenants being housed within the PRS, PRS tenants should be offered greater security of tenure in order to give them the opportunity to establish roots in the communities where they live, which in turn should help to strengthen ‘collective efficacy’. **We propose that PRS tenants are offered tenancies up to three years in duration.**

There is substantial evidence that the quality of housing management at the bottom end of the PRS market could be improved significantly. Local authorities (which own housing stock), ALMOs and housing associations are recognised for their generally high standard of housing management. Some social landlords have developed a full management and maintenance service for private landlords. **We recommend that this model be developed further and that more social landlords should consider providing managing agent services for private landlords to reduce churn, improve tenant rights and develop ‘collective efficacy’ throughout the PRS, but especially in our most deprived communities.**

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<sup>61</sup> (Hemming (t/a Simply Pleasure) Ltd vs. Westminster City Council, [2013] EWCA Civ 591, see also Residential Landlords’ Association, 2013). However, a Supreme Court ruling on 12 May 2015 has overturned the Court of Appeal judgement, which could mean that in future local authorities could run **and** enforce a licensing scheme using fees raised from licence holders (on the application of Hemming (t/a Simply Pleasure Ltd) and others v Westminster City Council [2015] UKSC 25).



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# Appendix 1

## Luton correlation and regression analysis – results

**Table A1.1** Simple (univariate) linear regression statistics with recorded **burglary** per 1000 households for **April 2012 to March 2013**.

	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>beta</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Per cent</i> change in population from 2001 to 2011 Census	0.396***	0.157	0.298	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least one dimension	0.289**	0.083	0.304	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least two dimensions	0.253**	0.064	0.312	0.005
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least three dimensions	0.271**	0.074	0.861	0.003
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on all four dimensions	0.259**	0.067	5.245	0.004
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 in employment	-0.294**	0.086	-0.393	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed	0.261**	0.068	1.615	0.004
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, aged 16-24	0.232**	0.054	4.565	0.011
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, never worked	0.253**	0.064	4.618	0.005
<i>Per cent</i> households with families	-0.027	0.001	-0.028	0.771
<i>Per cent</i> families in households with children	-0.216**	0.047	-0.275	0.017
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially rented accommodation	0.030	0.001	-0.024	0.745
<i>Per cent</i> households in privately rented accommodation	0.303***	0.092	0.266	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially or privately rented accommodation	0.194*	0.038	0.122	0.033
<i>Per cent</i> households with more than one person per room	0.348***	0.121	0.842	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with room occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.339***	0.115	0.404	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with bedroom occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.298***	0.089	0.447	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> residents not born in the UK	0.430**	0.185	0.427	0.000

Asterisks show one-tailed statistical significance of Pearson correlation coefficients:

\*\*\* for  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* for  $p < 0.01$ , \* for  $p < 0.05$ ; the absence of an asterisk means the correlation is not statistically significant.

**Table A1.2** Simple (univariate) linear regression statistics with recorded **burglary** per 1000 households for **April 2005 to March 2013**.

	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>beta</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Per cent</i> change in population from 2001 to 2011 Census	0.365***	0.133	1.796	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least one dimension	0.323***	0.104	2.228	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least two dimensions	0.257**	0.066	2.078	0.004
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least three dimensions	0.316***	0.100	6.558	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on all four dimensions	0.397***	0.157	52.655	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 in employment	-0.298***	0.089	-2.613	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed	0.328***	0.108	13.306	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, aged 16-24	0.249**	0.062	32.206	0.006
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, never worked	0.246**	0.061	29.511	0.006
<i>Per cent</i> households with families	-0.281**	0.079	-1.911	0.002
<i>Per cent</i> families in households with children	-0.193*	0.037	-1.610	0.034
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially rented accommodation	0.128	0.016	0.687	0.161
<i>Per cent</i> households in privately rented accommodation	0.456***	0.208	2.615	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially or privately rented accommodation	0.425***	0.180	1.745	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with more than one person per room	0.287**	0.083	4.551	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> households with room occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.444***	0.197	3.471	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with bedroom occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.295**	0.087	2.887	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> residents not born in the UK	0.439***	0.192	2.857	0.000

Asterisks show one-tailed statistical significance of Pearson correlation coefficients:

\*\*\* for  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* for  $p < 0.01$ , \* for  $p < 0.05$ ; the absence of an asterisk means the correlation is not statistically significant.

**Table A1.3** Simple (univariate) linear regression statistics with **recorded crime** per 1000 population for **April 2012 to March 2013**.

	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>beta</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Per cent</i> change in population from 2001 to 2011 Census	0.407***	0.166	2.129	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least one dimension	0.350***	0.123	2.566	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least two dimensions	0.316***	0.100	2.711	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least three dimensions	0.336***	0.113	7.426	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on all four dimensions	0.429***	0.184	60.621	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 in employment	-0.354***	0.125	-3.292	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed	0.242**	0.059	10.438	0.007
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, aged 16-24	0.187*	0.035	25.621	0.040
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, never worked	0.112	0.013	14.257	0.221
<i>Per cent</i> households with families	-0.579***	0.335	-4.184	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> families in households with children	0.041	0.002	0.367	0.653
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially rented accommodation	0.256**	0.070	1.511	0.003
<i>Per cent</i> households in privately rented accommodation	0.478***	0.228	2.913	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially or privately rented accommodation	0.546***	0.298	2.382	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with more than one person per room	0.151*	0.023	2.543	0.099
<i>Per cent</i> households with room occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.513***	0.264	4.258	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with bedroom occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.185*	0.034	1.923	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> residents not born in the UK	0.338***	0.114	2.339	0.000

Asterisks show one-tailed statistical significance of Pearson correlation coefficients:

\*\*\* for  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* for  $p < 0.01$ , \* for  $p < 0.05$ ; the absence of an asterisk means the correlation is not statistically significant.

**Table A1.4** Simple (univariate) linear regression statistics with **recorded crime** per 1000 population for **April 2012 to March 2013, excluding four outlier LSOAs**.

	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>beta</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Per cent</i> change in population from 2001 to 2011 Census	0.276**	0.076	0.737	0.003
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least one dimension	0.432***	0.187	1.510	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least two dimensions	0.417***	0.174	1.697	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least three dimensions	0.429***	0.184	4.481	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on all four dimensions	0.475***	0.226	32.218	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 in employment	0.308***	0.095	-1.407	0.001
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed	0.445***	0.198	8.927	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, aged 16-24	0.219*	0.048	14.121	0.018
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, never worked	0.179	0.032	10.605	0.054
<i>Per cent</i> households with families	0.533***	0.284	-1.960	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> families in households with children	0.130	0.017	-0.540	0.158
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially rented accommodation	0.321***	0.103	0.868	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households in privately rented accommodation	0.448***	0.201	1.349	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially or privately rented accommodation	0.581***	0.338	1.268	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with more than one person per room	0.190*	0.036	1.474	0.040
<i>Per cent</i> households with room occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.480***	0.230	1.993	0.000
<i>Per cent</i> households with bedroom occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.195*	0.038	0.946	0.034
<i>Per cent</i> residents not born in the UK	0.310***	0.096	1.030	0.001

Asterisks show one-tailed statistical significance of Pearson correlation coefficients:

\*\*\* for  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* for  $p < 0.01$ , \* for  $p < 0.05$ ; the absence of an asterisk means the correlation is not statistically significant.

### Multiple Regression using LSOA rates recorded burglary per 1000 households (2005-13) as Dependent Variable

Recorded burglary per 1000 households by LSOA over the longer term period (April 2005 to March 2013) can be predicted from the two variables as shown below. However the model is weak, accounting for only 23.9% of the variance in burglary. Tolerance and VIF results show that there is no problem with multicollinearity.

<b>DV: Recorded burglary per 1000 households, 2005-13</b>				
<b>IV</b>	beta	significance	tolerance	VIF
<b>% households privately rented</b>	2.228	0.000	0.874	1.144
<b>% residents unemployed</b>	7.724	0.029	0.874	1.144
<b>R-squared</b>	<b>0.239</b>			

### Multiple Regression using LSOA rates of private rented housing as Dependent Variable

The percentage of households renting privately in an LSOA in Luton can be predicted from three variables. Private renting is higher where there is a larger percentage population increase, a larger percentage of residents not born in the UK, and where there is a lower percentage of households with families. This accounts for 75.1% of the variance. Tolerance and VIF results show that there is no problem with multicollinearity.

<b>DV: % households privately rented</b>				
<b>IV</b>	beta	significance	tolerance	VIF
<b>% residents not born in UK</b>	0.659	0.000	0.457	2.190
<b>% households with families</b>	-0.434	0.000	0.962	1.039
<b>% population change 2001-11</b>	0.162	0.006	0.445	2.248
<b>R-squared</b>	0.757			
<b>R-sq (adjusted)</b>	<b>0.751</b>			

**Table A1.5** Correlation between socio-demographic variables (Census 2011) and number of **offenders resident** 2011-13, across all 121 LSOAs in Luton

	<b>r</b>	<b>Statistical significance</b>
<i>Per cent</i> change in population from 2001 to 2011 Census	0.477	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least one dimension	0.434	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least two dimensions	0.415	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on at least three dimensions	0.462	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households deprived on all four dimensions	0.494	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 in employment	-0.442	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed	0.399	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, aged 16-24	0.346	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> residents aged 16-74 unemployed, never worked	0.314	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households with families	-0.419	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> families in households with children	-0.165	$p < 0.05$
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially rented accommodation	0.252	$p < 0.01$
<i>Per cent</i> households in privately rented accommodation	0.540	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households in socially or privately rented accommodation	0.580	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households with more than one person per room	0.365	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households with room occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.626	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> households with bedroom occupancy rating of -1 or less	0.373	$p < 0.001$
<i>Per cent</i> residents not born in the UK	0.466	$p < 0.001$

Correlation coefficients and statistical significance (one-tailed) for correlation between demographic variables and number of offenders resident, across all 121 LSOAs in Luton.



## Appendix 2

### Slough tenure type analysis

#### ***Methodological note***

Address lists of known HMOs and of council owned rented properties were provided by Slough Borough Council<sup>63</sup>. After cleaning, de-duplication and mapping 164 HMOs and 340 council properties were identified in Puckford and 16 HMOs and 1,152 council properties in Broadham.

These address lists were matched against violence victim's addresses, offender's addresses and offence locations (for offences where the location was identified as being a dwelling) taken from police crime records between 2009/10 and 2012/13. For each ward, the proportion of victim addresses, offender addresses and (dwelling) venues that were HMOs and council properties was calculated. For victim and offender addresses this was calculated both for all victims / offenders and for only those resident within the Ward.

The difference between these proportions and those that would be expected if tenure type and violence were unrelated, given the prevalence of these tenure types within the Wards, was established. Differences were tested for statistical significance.

Ward populations and dwelling totals and the number of people living in council rented properties were sourced from 2011 Census data<sup>64</sup>. The number of people living in HMOs was estimated based on the number of HMOs and the average occupancy rate (5.8) where this was recorded in council records.

Results summary tables are included overleaf.

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<sup>63</sup> For the purposes of this project, under the terms of the projects Data Sharing Agreement.

<sup>64</sup> <https://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

**Table A2.1 Proportion of Broadham residents, violent crime victims and violent offenders resident in HMOs and council rented accommodation**

	% resident in HMOs in Broadham	% resident in council-rented properties in Broadham
Ward population	1*	31
Domestic Violence victims (all)	0	<b>48</b>
Domestic Violence victims (all ward resident)	0	<b>53</b>
Domestic Violence offenders (all)	0	36
Domestic Violence offenders (all ward resident)	0	<b>53</b>
Non-Domestic Violence victims (all)	0	35
Non-Domestic Violence victims (all ward resident)	0	<b>51</b>
Non-Domestic Violence offenders (all)	0	37
Non-Domestic Violence offenders (all ward resident)	0	<b>61</b>
	% that are HMOs	% that are council rented properties
Dwellings	1	31
Venues for Domestic Violence (that occurred in dwellings)	0	<b>48</b>
Venues for Non-Domestic Violence (that occurred in dwellings)	1	<b>52</b>

Figures in **bold** are statistically significant from proportion of ward population resident in tenure type / proportion of dwelling of tenure type, at 95% confidence level.

\* Estimated

**Table A2.2 Proportion of Puckford residents, violent crime victims and violent offenders resident in HMOs and council rented accommodation**

	% resident in HMOs in Puckford	% resident in council-rented properties in Puckford
Ward population	8*	7
Domestic Violence victims (all)	7	7
Domestic Violence victims (all ward resident)	9	7
Domestic Violence offenders (all)	9	6
Domestic Violence offenders (all ward resident)	13	5
Non-Domestic Violence victims (all)	8	<b>4</b>
Non-Domestic Violence victims (all ward resident)	<b>13</b>	7
Non-Domestic Violence offenders (all)	9	8
Non-Domestic Violence offenders (all ward resident)	<b>19</b>	8
	% that are HMOs	% that are council rented properties
Dwellings	4	8
Venues for Domestic Violence (that occurred in dwellings)	<b>10</b>	8
Venues for Non-Domestic Violence (that occurred in dwellings)	<b>18</b>	6

Figures in **bold** are statistically significant from proportion of ward population resident in tenure type / proportion of dwelling of tenure type, at 95% confidence level.

\* Estimated



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