



## G15 progress on tackling stigma in social housing

Update following the publication of "Taking the Stigma out of Social Housing: The Residents' View" (January 2025)

### 1. Introduction

In January 2025 the [G15 Residents' Group published research](#) exploring the impact of stigma on people living in social housing. The report highlighted how stigma can shape residents' experience of services, influence trust in landlords, and affect wider perceptions of social housing.

Since publication, G15 members have taken forward a range of activity to respond to these findings. This includes work within organisations, alongside residents, and through wider sector collaboration.

The research makes clear the role housing associations sometimes play in reinforcing stigma, but also the role they can play in tackling it. While residents identified wider factors such as media coverage, political language and government policy as the most influential in shaping stigma, their landlord was the most commonly cited interaction that shaped their day-to-day experience with stigma.

Almost one in five residents reported experiencing stigma when dealing with their landlord. This highlights that, although much of the wider narrative sits outside landlords' control, there is a clear responsibility to ensure that everyday interactions do not reinforce those experiences.

How residents are treated when they contact their landlord, whether about a repair, a complaint or a routine enquiry, plays a significant role in how stigma is felt in practice. This places a clear emphasis on the quality, consistency and tone of service delivery as a key part of addressing stigma.

The examples set out in this paper highlight emerging practice and the steps being taken to respond to the findings. This should be seen as the beginning of a longer programme of work, rather than a completed position.

### 2. Overview of activity across G15

- Members are taking forward work through a combination of internal strategies, service improvement programmes and resident engagement activity
- This includes strengthening resident influence, reviewing services and improving communication and organisational culture
- The Stop Social Housing Stigma (SSHS) campaign, highlighted in the report as a key recommendation, has provided a practical framework for many members to support this work
- All but one member is now engaged with SSHS, including formal partnership, participation as "friends" of the campaign, and use of the Journey Planner. The remaining member has indicated plans to revisit engagement with the campaign later in the year.

Across the group, there is a clear and shared commitment to addressing stigma, with members taking forward activity in ways that reflect their organisational context while contributing to a collective direction of travel.



### **3. Internal awareness and organisational focus**

Across G15, members took steps to ensure the findings of the report were shared internally and understood at all levels of their organisations. This included internal communications, intranet articles and team briefings. In one example, a member shared communications directly from its Chief Executive, demonstrating the importance of the findings and the organisation's response. For many landlords, the report was also discussed at senior levels, including executive teams, boards and committees.

This has helped to build a shared understanding that stigma is closely linked to service delivery, organisational culture and resident experience.

### **4. Key areas of progress**

Across G15, members are taking forward a range of activities to address stigma. While approaches vary, several consistent areas of focus are emerging.

#### **4.1 Strengthening resident voice and influence**

A central theme across responses is the role of residents in shaping services and organisational priorities.

Members have strengthened governance structures and engagement frameworks to ensure that resident voice has a clearer route into decision-making. This includes resident-led panels, thematic groups and refreshed engagement approaches designed to reach a broader range of residents.

In practice, this has meant moving beyond consultation towards co-production. Residents are contributing to service standards, reviewing policies and shaping priorities for improvement. In some cases, this includes resident-led scrutiny of complaints or participation in task and finish groups.

This reflects a shared recognition that tackling stigma requires lived experience to be embedded in how services are designed and delivered.

#### **4.2 Language and communications**

A consistent and strongly evidenced theme across G15 is the role of language in shaping residents' experience and wider perceptions of social housing.

Members have identified that stigma is often experienced through everyday communication, including letters, policies, conversations with staff and external messaging. As a result, many organisations are reviewing how they communicate.

Within policies and procedures, this includes moving towards plain English, reducing jargon and ensuring documents are written with residents as the primary audience. Some members are using resident panels and Equality Impact Assessments to test whether language is clear and respectful.

There is also a focus on day-to-day communication. Members are introducing tone of voice guidance, reviewing standard letters and scripts, and supporting staff to communicate with empathy and clarity. In some cases, this work has been shaped directly by resident feedback.



For example, one member used engagement with thousands of residents to identify concerns about tone and communication, which informed changes to guidance, training and communications. Externally, members are reflecting this shift by increasing the use of resident stories, reviewing imagery and contributing to wider sector conversations.

#### **4.3 Improving services and everyday interactions**

Many members are focusing on how stigma is experienced through day-to-day service delivery, particularly in areas where residents have frequent contact with their landlord.

This includes improving consistency, responsiveness and fairness across services such as repairs, neighbourhood management and customer contact. There is a shared understanding that perceptions of stigma are closely linked to whether residents feel listened to and treated fairly.

Examples include co-designed expectations for contractor behaviour in residents' homes, improvements to how services are prioritised based on individual circumstances, and stronger approaches to identifying and responding to vulnerability.

One member has removed tenure-based approaches to compensation, ensuring outcomes are based on impact rather than housing status. In another example, one member has reviewed its approach to damp and mould, recognising how stigma can affect how residents engage with services. This has led to a greater focus on more balanced and respectful conversations, ensuring residents are treated as partners in resolving issues rather than being positioned as the cause of problems.

These examples demonstrate how addressing stigma is closely linked to improving the quality and consistency of core services.

#### **4.4 Staff behaviour and organisational culture**

Members are focusing on organisational culture and staff behaviour as key drivers of resident experience.

This includes training on communication, empathy and inclusive behaviours, as well as wider work to support staff to understand residents' circumstances. In many cases, this is embedded within broader learning and development programmes.

Some members have introduced updated behavioural frameworks. For example, one member's framework sets expectations around treating residents with dignity and respect, avoiding assumptions and challenging bias.

One member has also focused on embedding this through training and culture change. This includes delivering a bespoke, values-driven two-day training programme on communication and resident experience to colleagues in its complaints team, alongside a shorter online learning module rolled out more widely across the organisation.

Other approaches include training to support staff in handling complex or sensitive situations and responding appropriately to residents' needs.



#### 4.5 External narrative and sector leadership

Alongside internal changes, members are contributing to wider efforts to challenge stigma at a sector level.

This includes publishing articles, sharing resident stories and engaging with media and stakeholders. Contributions from a number of members have helped to raise awareness and promote a more balanced understanding of social housing.

Some members are also contributing to research and evidence building, helping to demonstrate the value and contribution of social housing communities. This includes work across a number of members in assessing the Value of a Social Tenancy (VoST).

Articles include:

[Inside Housing - Comment - Empowering diverse communities to share decisions](#)

[The sector must work together to change the narrative and tackle stigma | Comment | Housing Today](#)

[Inside Housing - Comment - To tackle social housing stigma, staff must look at their own language and behaviour](#)

#### 5. Case studies: tackling stigma in practice

##### Case study one: piloting the Journey Planner and shaping a resident-led approach

One member played an early role in piloting the Stop Social Housing Stigma Journey Planner, helping to test and refine the approach through direct engagement with residents and staff.

As part of this, the organisation brought together residents, frontline staff and senior leaders in a workshop focused on how stigma is experienced in practice. The session created space for residents to share openly how language, behaviour and service delivery can contribute to stigma, particularly in areas such as repairs and communication.

Insights from this work informed both the organisation's internal programme and the wider development of the Journey Planner. This led to:

- a clearer focus on language and tone of voice in resident interactions
- targeted training for staff to improve communication and empathy
- a review of communications, including letters and scripts
- co-designed service improvements, including a Repairs Charter setting expectations for contractor behaviour

This approach demonstrates how structured, resident-led engagement can shape both organisational change and wider sector tools, ensuring that responses to stigma are grounded in lived experience.

##### Case study two: setting up a dedicated stigma group

One member has taken a structured approach by treating stigma as a defined organisational priority, with residents playing a central role in shaping the response.



A resident-led Tackling Stigma group has been established to guide and challenge the organisation's work. This group ensures that lived experience informs decisions and that progress is grounded in how residents actually experience services.

This work is aligned to the SSHS Journey Planner and has led to:

- reviews of policies and communications to improve clarity and remove language that may feel stigmatising
- co-produced tools, including plain English guidance developed with residents
- integration of stigma considerations into staff training, governance and service design

By embedding stigma across multiple areas of the organisation, this approach shows how resident leadership can drive consistent change rather than isolated initiatives.

### **Case study three: strengthening how we listen and act on resident feedback**

One member has focused on ensuring that residents can see how their feedback leads to change, recognising that visibility of action is key to building trust.

A central part of this approach is a consistent “you said, we did” model, which is used to demonstrate how resident input has shaped decisions and services. This is supported by published reports, which bring together what residents have raised and what has been delivered in response.

Progress is also shared back through resident forums, providing a clear route for residents to track delivery over time and hold the organisation to account.

By making the link between feedback and action visible, this approach helps build confidence that engagement leads to change and that residents are listened to in how services are delivered.

## **6. Future research**

Building on the progress to date, the G15 Residents' Group will undertake further research in summer 2026 to deepen understanding of how stigma is experienced and how it can be addressed.

This work will be shaped by insights from group members, particularly the importance of service interactions, language and resident influence.

## **7. Conclusion**

Since the publication of the G15 stigma report, members have taken forward a broad range of activity to address stigma in social housing. This includes strengthening resident influence, improving services and communications, and supporting culture change within organisations.

While there is a clear shared commitment across G15, members recognise that this is the early stage of a longer programme of work. The activity set out in this paper highlights good practice and initial progress, but there is more to do to ensure that all residents consistently feel treated with fairness and respect.

Addressing stigma requires sustained attention over time. These examples provide a foundation for further development and shared learning across the sector.