

The Provision of Floor Coverings in Social Housing

Learning Report 1: Scene Setting

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About Altair

Altair Ltd is a specialist consultancy operating across the social housing sector. We have been providing varied and creative solutions to our clients for over ten years. Our consultancy and advisory services include supporting leaders on governance, regulation, transformation and change, strategy, policy and research, and property development strategy and delivery.



A grant-making partner for the social housing sector

About The Longleigh Foundation

Longleigh is a grant-making charitable foundation dedicated to supporting the individuals and communities served by the social housing sector.

Our mission is the reason why we exist. It is our purpose, our cause and it is: to support transformation in the lives of residents and communities, becoming the charity partner to the social housing sector.

Foreword

Social housing sets out to address the issues of inequality and poverty through the provision of warm, safe homes to those who need it the most. We believe the publication of our first learning report, the first of three learning reports to be followed by an interim and final report, as timely.

At the time of publication, we know that social landlords are reflecting on the best ways to help their tenants during hugely challenging times. We know that housing organisations have responded with a range of measures; increasing their crisis funds, capacity in money advice and support teams and some increasing the risk levels associated with income collection. Set against this wider context, we want the housing sector to reflect on the common approach of letting properties without floor coverings.

The provision of floor coverings at point of let makes common sense. In general, social housing is allocated to those in the most need and unable to afford private rented or homeownership options. We want to understand the experiences of tenants moving into social housing and how they manage to fund floor coverings in their new homes or cope without them.

Longleigh has commissioned this research in response to their experience as a grant maker, often providing grant to families moving into social housing without floor coverings. This learning report outlines the work of Longleigh and other grant makers to support those moving into social housing without floor covering provision.

Longleigh has asked Altair Advisory and Consultancy to conduct this research over three years and to do so to build on the 'Floored' research by Tai Pawb and TPAS in Wales and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation House to Home findings. We've seen the impact of the 'Floored' research in Wales, making great strides towards a change in the Welsh Quality standard.

We seek to continue the momentum in Wales and replicate its successes in England and Scotland. We know that housing organisations are often driven by the standards set by their respective regulator and that a regulatory change will result in a real difference for tenants. We've also created a steering group of individuals identified across the sector that will help the momentum of the research.

In formulating this research piece, we've been overwhelmed by the number of individuals and organisations approaching the research team and steering group with words of encouragement and an overwhelming tone of 'at last'. We've already been told by a range of individuals, from both personal and professional experience, of the impact of the lack of floor coverings within social housing.

Throughout this research we're looking to both build the moral case for the provision of floor coverings, as well as the business case for landlords and we will focus on each throughout each of our phases of research.

Executive summary

This report is the first of three learning reports produced by Altair, commissioned by Longleigh Foundation, a grant making partner for the social housing sector.

Our first report shares the current picture of the provision of floor coverings at point of let within social housing.

This report will be followed by two learning reports, an interim report, and our final report in January 2025 our reports will be titled:

- Learning Report 2: Tenant Perspectives
- Learning Report 3: Landlord Perspectives
- Interim Report: Options for Change
- Final Report: Floor Coverings and Social Housing

The research piece seeks to:

- Keep tenant voice at its heart.
- Build on the findings from Tai Pawb's Floored Research¹ and House to home, research commissioned by JRF and conducted by Altair in 2018².
- Make practical recommendations to the sector that have the greatest meaningful impact on provision of floor coverings to tenants.
- Articulate a business case that considers the financial, economic and social benefits alongside the costs of any proposals versus maintaining the status quo.

To understand the current provision of floor coverings, Altair hosted a survey between September 2022 and January 2023. A total of 31 landlords responded to the survey, covering 347,927 representing 6.6% of social homes across England, Scotland and Wales. There was representation within the survey from landlords in all regions aside from the east midlands.

Landlords told us that they are less likely to install floor coverings at point of let for general needs properties and that floor coverings are more likely to be provided for shared ownership properties. For landlords providing floor coverings in some and not all their properties, floor coverings are provided in hard-to-let properties, left in during the reletting process or provided through means-testing.

We asked landlords what factors hold them back from providing floor coverings and they told us the key barriers are:

- financial cost to the organisation,
- delays to void processes,
- ongoing maintenance, and,
- lack of clarity around the relationship between landlords and tenants.

¹ [TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb \(2020\) Floored.](#)

² [House to home: giving social housing tenants a place to call home | JRF](#)

We also sought to identify the ways in which the provision gap is filled, this is partially through grant making organisations. Grant makers have told us that 501 grants have been made for flooring to social housing residents in 2021/22 totalling just under £174k, representing 6% of the total grants for the year. Although each grant maker has its own separate criteria for an award of grant for floor coverings (including some who do not provide grant in this area at all) it is our understanding that grant is awarded in the most severe of circumstances, and therefore likely to be a small proportion of provision gap.

In our early research, we've spoken to organisations that provide flooring at point of let for some or all of their homes and we have provided case studies of their experiences within this report. The case studies indicate that the provision of floor coverings can directly impact customer satisfaction levels, refusal rates and staff satisfaction. In addition, there are indicators that when done well, the cost of floor coverings can be kept low and the impact of installation requirements can be kept to a minimum.

Next steps

Throughout this research programme, we are conducting a data collection programme with landlords throughout the UK. The aim of the data collection programme is to strengthen our knowledge of the financial, environmental and social impacts of flooring installation. We continue to recruit landlords to our data collection programme, and those interested can still reach out to Altair to take part.

The next phase of our research seeks to understand the experiences of tenants living in social housing and we will be capturing the views of tenants through surveying, interviews, and focus groups. Our findings will be shared in the summer.

Introduction

About this project

Longleigh commissioned Altair to conduct a three-year research project which investigates the impact of and opportunities for UK (Wales, Scotland and England) social housing provider's floor covering standards, keeping tenant voice at the heart of the research.

The overall research piece seeks to:

- Engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including social housing tenants, social housing landlords, grant making organisations, regulatory bodies and charities serving social housing tenants.
- Keep tenant voice at its heart.
- Build on the findings from Tai Pawb's Floored Research³ and House to home, research commissioned by JRF and conducted by Altair in 2018⁴.
- Make practical recommendations to the sector that have the greatest meaningful impact on provision of floor coverings to tenants.
- Articulate a business case that considers the financial, economic and social benefits alongside the costs of any proposals versus maintaining the status quo.

The main purpose of the overall research piece is to ultimately raise the profile of the lack of floor covering provision in social housing and create an opportunity to affect policy change on floor covering provision in social housing in the UK.

The research will be conducted across three learning reports, an interim report, and a final report.

- Learning Report 1: Scene Setting
- Learning Report 2: Tenant Perspectives
- Learning Report 3: Landlord Perspectives
- Interim Report: Options for Change
- Final Report: Floor Coverings and Social Housing

A Steering Group has been recruited to oversee the research project. Steering Group members have been selected based on their role and experience of the social housing sector alongside their ability to influence change. A full list of Steering Group members and their biographies is available at Appendix 1 of this report.

³ [TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb \(2020\) Floored.](#)

⁴ [House to home: giving social housing tenants a place to call home | JRF](#)

Aims of the first report

Our first report aims to:

- Set out the current provision of floor coverings in social housing.
- Set out the key barriers for the provision of floor coverings in social housing.
- Set out the known benefits of the provision of floor coverings in social housing.
- Highlight areas of good practice currently adopted by social housing landlords.

Our first report is based on the findings from:

- A survey of social housing landlords, hosted by Altair between September 2022 and January 2023.
- A survey of grant making organisations, hosted by Altair between December 2022 and January 2023.
- A review of the current literature.
- Interviews with organisations identified as delivering good practice.

Current requirements – the provision of floor coverings

Current expectations for the provision of floor coverings in social rented properties are set within the guidance for the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) states that flooring in kitchens and bathroom should be “capable of being readily cleansed and maintained in a hygienic condition”.⁵ There currently is no prescription for floor coverings under the specific regulatory expectations for social housing landlords in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Welsh Government has launched a consultation on a revised Welsh Housing Quality Standard, including seeking views on “whether at change of tenancy all habitable rooms (bedrooms and living rooms), staircases and landings located within the home should have suitable floor coverings”⁶

The definition of floor coverings set out in the revised Welsh Housing Quality Standard will be used throughout the research, alongside the expectation that flooring in kitchens and bathrooms are captured in the specific requirements of the HHSRS.

⁵ [DLUHC \(2006\) Housing health and safety rating system \(HHSRS\) operating guidance: housing inspections and assessment of hazards.](#)

⁶ [Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)



What does the literature say?

Literature review

What does the literature say?

- 1.1.** Overall, there is very little specific research and literature about only the provision of floor coverings in social housing. Often floor coverings are grouped together with furniture when discussed in existing literature. For example, End Furniture Poverty include floor coverings in their definition of essential furniture. They have found that 2% of social rented properties were let as furnished or partly furnished in comparison to 29% of private rented properties.⁷
- 1.2.** In 2020, the 'Floored' report is one of the only research pieces that has explored purely the impact of the provision of floor coverings in social homes and the first piece of research to understand the sector's approach regarding the provision of floor coverings in Wales. This research surveyed both housing associations and local authorities to understand their policies and practice before understanding how this impacts tenants. The report shone a spotlight onto an under-discussed practice in social housing that many social housing landlords do not provide new flooring at the point of let and that instead, it is the tenant's responsibility.

Social housing and poverty in the UK

- 1.3.** In 2013, JRF assessed⁸ that 43% of tenants are living in poverty after housing costs had been paid. In the current economic environment, we can make the assumption that the percentage of tenants living in poverty has increased.
- 1.4.** We have learned from the resident voice index cost of living report that 73% of tenants currently living in social housing in the UK would not be able to cope with an unexpected household expense⁹, with 78% of tenants being worried all or most of the time about meeting monthly living expenses. The impact of debt on physical and mental health is well documented.
- 1.5.** The resident voice index asked residents to name household items that they don't currently have that would improve their quality of life, amongst other items, residents named carpets. One survey respondent provided the following response "*Carpet! Can't even afford that right now after moving, once winter hits the cold is going to be worse*"

⁷ [End Furniture Poverty \(2021\) No place like home.](#)

⁸ [poverty-housing-options-full.pdf](#)

⁹ [RVI-Cost-of-Living-Crunch-Time.pdf \(residentvoiceindex.com\)](#)

Provision of floor coverings in social housing

Table 1: Summary of the provision of floor coverings in England, Scotland and Wales

	England	Scotland	Wales
Regulatory Legal Requirements on Housing Standard	Decent Homes Standard	Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)	Draft Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)
Description	Decent Homes Standard refers to the age and condition of components, and being free of hazards, but makes no stipulation that flooring should be provided.	Under the SHQS, homes must be energy efficient, safe and secure. As part of the SHQS in internal floor structure should be free from any rotting or structural issues but floor coverings in any part of the house are not included in the standard.	Draft standard requires 'at change of tenancy, all habitable rooms, staircases and landings should have suitable floor coverings'.
Regulatory Guidance	Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	-	Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
Description	The HHSRS states that flooring in kitchens and bathrooms should be easy to clean. Slip resistant flooring is also highlighted as important in preventing falls, with particular reference to the increased probability of a fall on stairs without carpet coverings.	-	Same as in England.
Any requirement for flooring?	Yes	No	Yes
Regulation	No Requirements	No Requirements	Across the entire property
Guidance	In the bathroom and kitchen only	No Requirements	In the bathroom and kitchen only

- 1.6.** In England and Scotland there are no legal or regulatory requirements for social housing landlords to provide floor coverings in their homes.
- 1.7.** Whereas, in Wales, the Welsh Government has launched a consultation on a revised Welsh Housing Quality Standard, and requires 'at change of tenancy, all habitable rooms, staircases and landings should have suitable floor coverings'. The new WHQS followed 'Floored' report and the Bevan Foundation's 'Solving Poverty: Reforming help with housing costs'¹⁰ that directly called for improvements to the WHQS in relation to floor coverings.
- 1.8.** The draft WHQS 2023 will require landlords to provide flooring or keep suitable flooring left in a property from the previous tenancies if the floor covering is in a good condition. The WHQS notes social landlords should consider the 'specific needs of the tenant, and the durability and maintenance requirements'¹¹ when determining if the floor covering is suitable and appropriate. The standard also references the British Standard BN EN 1307:2014 'textile floor coverings' classification as potentially useful to landlords when assessing textile floor coverings.

Impacts of providing floor coverings in social housing

- 1.9.** Floor coverings provide warmth and comfort as well as preventing slips and noise. By providing floor coverings, landlords are helping to reduce furniture poverty.
- 1.10.** Impacts of furniture poverty, which includes a lack of floor coverings, include:
- Reduced tenancy sustainment.^{12 13}
 - Creating a barrier to letting housing to homeless families.¹⁴
 - Financial hardship for tenants.¹⁵

¹⁰ [Behvan Foundation \(2020\) 'Solving Poverty Support with housing costs'](#)

¹¹ [The Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023: draft \(gov.wales\)](#)

¹² [Robson, B. \(2018\) House to home: giving social housing tenants a place to call home. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.](#)

¹³ [Ambrose, A. and Batty, E. and Eadson, W. and Hickman, P. and Quinn, G. \(2016\) Assessment of the need for furniture provision for new NIHE tenants. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University.](#)

¹⁴ [National Housing Federation \(2022\) Housing homeless families.](#)

¹⁵ [TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb \(2020\) Floored.](#)

1.11. Research suggests that benefits of floor coverings include:

- Reduction in void rent loss.¹⁶
- Reduced void turnover – Thirteen saw a reduction from 600/year to 200/year and Citizen saw an 8% reduction in one pilot and between a 30% and 50% reduction over a 12-month period in another.⁵
- Reduced void costs as tenants happier in home and more likely to maintain – Thirteen saw void costs reduce by £500.^{5 17}
- Increased staff and tenant satisfaction.⁵
- Reduced refusal rate.⁶
- Improvements in tenant health and wellbeing from better quality.¹⁸
- Reduced likelihood and severity of falls.¹⁹

1.12. The sector has faced bad press from the practice of ripping out floor coverings at point of relet, which has highlighted the cost and discomfort to tenants.²⁰

1.13. There is also limited evidence that prospective tenants viewing properties, particularly those moving from private sector leased accommodation, expect floor coverings to be provided.²¹

1.14. Government has made it clear that they “want social housing where landlords are providing tenants with high quality housing they themselves would be happy to live in”.²² Issues around floor coverings and quality standards will only become more important with the new consumer regulations regime, including the updated decent homes standard.

¹⁶ [Donovan, C. and Hardman, B. \(2022\) A Blueprint for Furniture Provision in Social Housing. End Furniture Poverty.](#)

¹⁷ [TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb \(2020\) Floored.](#)

¹⁸ [With quality defined as tenant rating of the overall condition of the property – see Rolfe, S., Garnham, L., Godwin, J. et al. \(2020\) Housing as a social determinant of health and wellbeing: developing an empirically-informed realist theoretical framework. BMC Public Health 20, 1138.](#)

¹⁹ [DLUHC \(2006\) Housing health and safety rating system \(HHSRS\) operating guidance: housing inspections and assessment of hazards.](#)

²⁰ [Maddocks, E. \(2022\) Preston: Families left with bare floors as ex-tenants told to rip out carpets. BBC News, article published on 23 April 2022.](#)

²¹ [Resident Scrutiny Panel, Haringey \(2019\) Customer Insight Review – Voids Service.](#)

²² [DLUHC \(2022\) Social Housing Quality.](#)



Current practice

Current practice

Current practice of social housing landlords

2.1. Altair ran a survey about the provision of floor covering with social housing landlords between September 2022 and January 2023.

The survey asked about:

- Approach to floor coverings across different tenure types.
- Rationale for approach.
- Perception of barriers.

The profile of survey respondents

2.2. The survey was targeted at landlords working in England, Scotland and Wales. A total of 31 landlords responded to the survey, covering 347,927 representing 6.6% of social homes across England, Scotland and Wales. There was good coverage of different regions and types of landlords (local authorities and housing associations) in England. A breakdown of the location and stock profile of respondents can be seen in 2 and **Figure 1**.

Table 2 Country or English region of respondent headquarters

Country/region	Percentage of responses (n=31)
East Midlands	6%
East of England	6%
London	10%
North East	10%
North West	13%
South East	19%
South West	13%
Yorkshire and Humber	13%
Scotland	6%
Wales	3%

2.3. Survey respondents were asked the number of properties they owned (stock). Most responses were from landlords with between 10,001 and 25,000 homes.

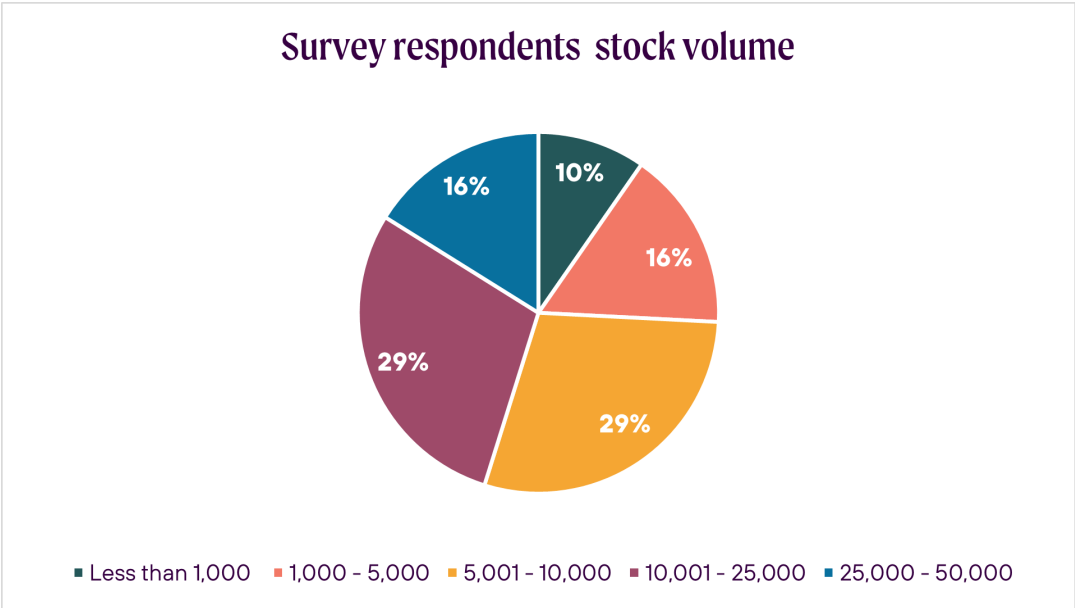


Figure 1 Survey respondents stock volume (n=31)

Floor covering provision by tenure

2.4. **Figure 2** shows how many of the 31 landlords who responded provide floor coverings in general needs, affordable and intermediate rent, older person's and supported housing, and shared ownership.

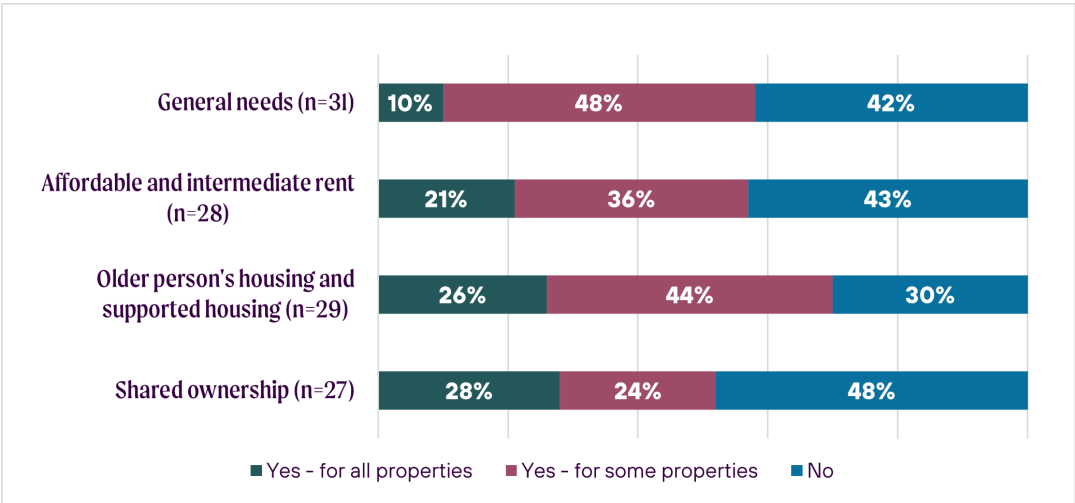


Figure 2 Provision of floor coverings (in addition to the bathroom and kitchen) at point of let by tenure (response number varies)

- 2.5.** Results show that general needs is the least likely of all tenures to have floor coverings provided in all properties (only 10% of landlords do this).
- 2.6.** Shared ownership is the most likely tenure to have a floor covering provision, with 28% of landlords doing so for all properties, the likely reason for this is due to developers specifications for new build homes.
- 2.7.** To further understand where social housing landlords were providing floor coverings in some homes, we asked what proportion of homes by tenure type floor coverings were provided.
- 2.8.** The findings echoed the overall provision of floor coverings by tenure type, with floor covering provision being low in general needs (62% of landlords providing floor coverings for less than 10% of homes) and a higher provision in Shared Ownership (14% of landlords providing floor coverings in 40-59% of homes) and Older person's and supported housing (13% of landlords providing floor coverings in 60-79% of homes):

Tenure type	The installation of floor coverings by % of properties						
		Less than 10%	between 10%-19%	between 20%-39%	between 40%-59%	between 60%-79%	Not sure
	Shared ownership (n=7)	43%	0%	0%	14%	0%	43%
	Older person's housing and supported housing (n=8)	38%	0%	25%	25%	13%	0%
	Affordable and intermediate rent (n=9)	44%	11%	11%	33%	0%	0%
	General needs (n=13)	62%	15%	8%	15%	0%	0%

Figure 3 Proportion of homes with floor covering provision by tenure for respondents who provide floor covering in some properties

- 2.9.** For those that provide floor coverings in some but not all their properties, there were three potential reasons:
- Only provided in hard-to-let properties.
 - Previous tenants' floor coverings gifted if in good condition, subject to agreement of new tenants.
 - Means-tested provision.
- 2.10.** Other reasons mentioned by respondents were provision limited to new builds, floor coverings were provided as part of furniture packages or provided in flats but not houses.

- 2.11.** When it came to questions on process, **Figure 4** shows that 61% of social housing landlords (n=22) say they do not have a specific process in place for reusing floor coverings and 64% monitor if floor coverings have been installed in homes after the tenant has moved in.

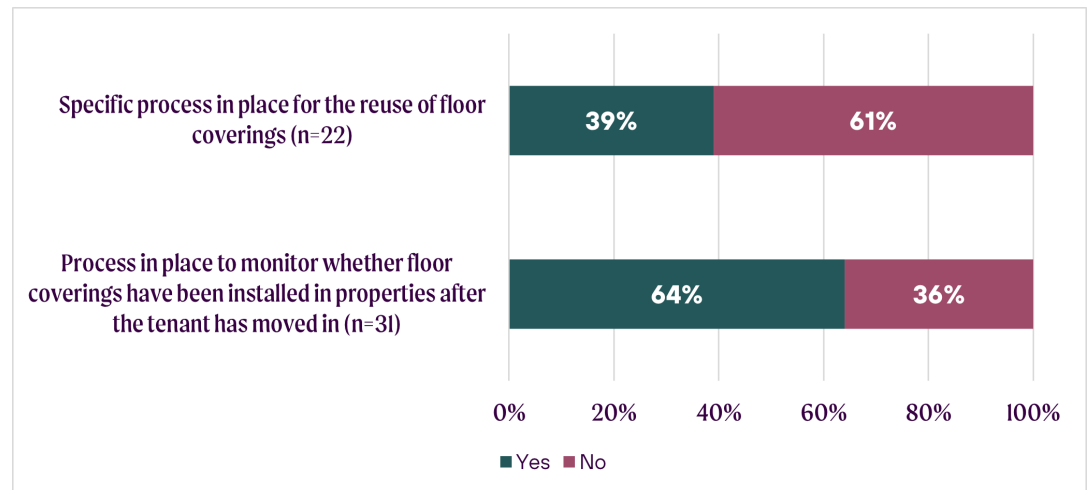


Figure 4 Processes around reusing floor coverings and monitoring whether put in place after tenant moved in

- 2.12.** **Figure 5** presents results on disposals of floor coverings during the void process. It was more common to remove floor coverings in some voids (83%, n=30), with 17% (n=30) disposing floor coverings for all voids.

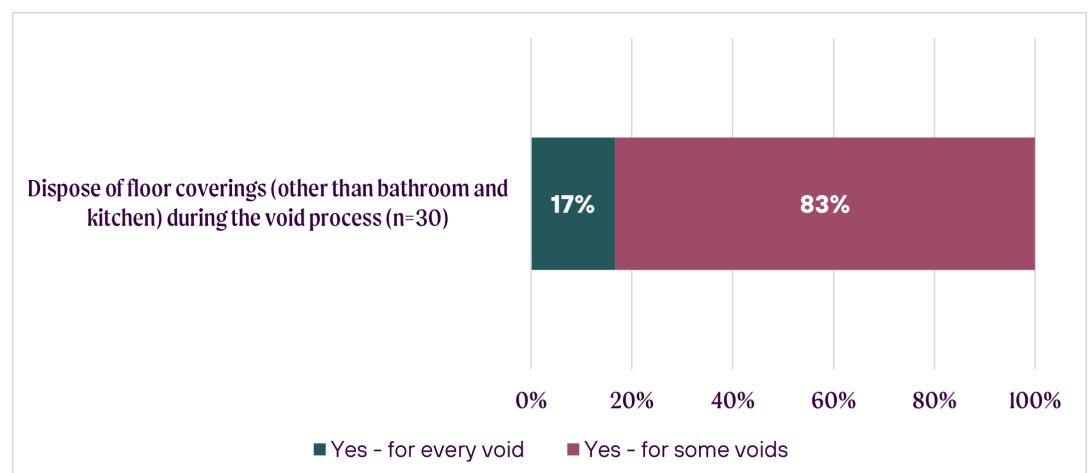


Figure 5 Whether respondents dispose of floor coverings during the void process

- 2.13.** Comments on void practice were provided by 17 respondents. The majority of those discussed gifting tenants floor coverings if it was in good condition and the incoming tenant wanted to keep it;

"If the flooring is in good condition, we will ask the incoming tenant if they want to retain it"

"Carpets that can be cleaned and left in situ will be"

One respondent stated that *"[We] very rarely [leave floor coverings in] we might leave floor coverings in properties, if they are in exceptionally good condition"*

- 2.14.** We also asked about recycling. Most comments related to reusing existing floor coverings. Some were not aware of what happened to carpets during the void process as it was dependent on contractors. Recycling does happen in a few organisations, with one saying "If properties have flooring as part of the furniture package then the company we use will remove them and recycle them no matter if it is vinyl or carpet".

Potential barriers to providing floor coverings

- 2.15.** Respondents were asked to rank 10 barriers to providing floor coverings at point of let from the biggest barrier to the smallest barrier. The barriers were rated 0-10, with 0 representing no barrier and 10 representing the most significant barrier.
- 2.16.** **Figure 6** shows that the financial cost to the organisation was the most common choice for biggest barrier (with an average ranking of 9.21), followed by unnecessary delays to the void process and ongoing maintenance. These can all broadly be categorised as higher costs, either from provision, void loss or maintenance. One respondent did say that they don't have barriers and think the barriers listed can be easily overcome.

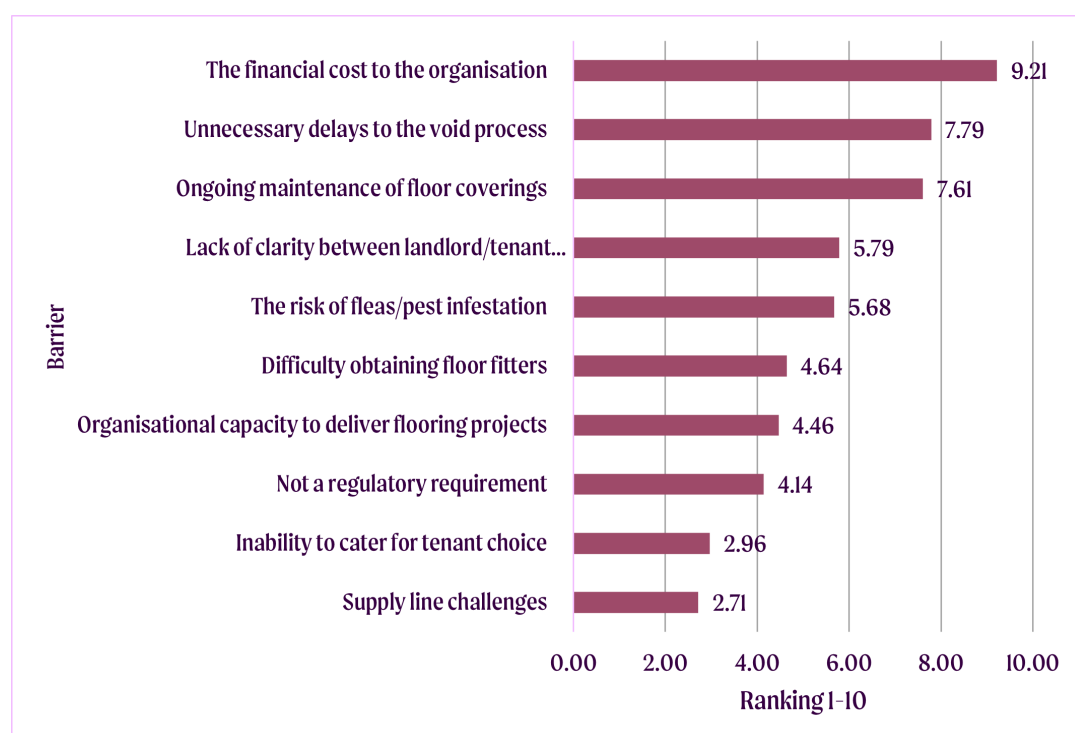


Figure 6 Barriers ranked by respondents (n= 28)

- 2.17.** On fleas and pests, this was also reflected in comments to other questions where one provider said: *"We leave the carpet in the property at void if it's in very good condition. If there have been pets its automatically removed as there is a huge fear around fleas and pests."*

Carpet gifting

- 2.18.** Landlords either installing new floor coverings or leaving existing floor coverings in situ at point of let mitigate the lack of clarity in landlord/tenant responsibility and the requirement for any ongoing maintenance through carpet gifting. Housing Management Solicitors, Devonshires have provided a specific comment in relation to the gifting of floor covering below.

Devonshires' view – gifting floor coverings

There has been an upturn in RPs exploring the possibility of gifting carpet and other flooring upon re-let, rather than removing the flooring, often at their own cost. This can be both economical and environmentally friendly but can also help alleviate financial hardship for the new tenant. The barriers to leaving flooring in place usually relate to infestations or poor condition, and confusion about who is responsible for maintaining the flooring. It would, of course, never be reasonable for a landlord to leave an infested, damaged or soiled carpet in place and this is something that would obviously have to be inspected before offering the flooring to the new resident. However, providing the flooring is in adequate and safe condition, RPs can leave the flooring in place without fear of being required to maintain it by gifting the floor coverings to the new tenant.

When gifting any items, a gifting agreement should be used to document that the specified flooring is being given to the tenant, and they accept it, upon which ownership passes to the tenant and they are then responsible for the maintenance, replacement or repair of the floor coverings gifted. The agreements do not have to be overly complicated and should be completed at sign up to the tenancy.

Samantha Grix, Partner, Devonshires

Experience of grant makers

- 2.19.** We surveyed grant makers to understand how many social housing tenants apply (successfully) for floor coverings grants. In total, across four grant makers, 501 grants were made for floor coverings to tenants. This means that, of all grant applications received, 7% were successful applications in relation to floor coverings. On average, applications for grant for floor coverings from social housing residents in 2021/22 were 6% of total applications.

- 2.20.** In terms of amount awarded, grants for floor coverings totalled just under £174k, meaning an average award of £346 per successful applicant. When looked at by grant maker, the median total of grant awarded for floor coverings was £8,791 (from a minimum total of £2,000 to a maximum of £153,782) and the median grant per application was £454.12 (min. £334, max. £1,028). On average, grants for floor coverings were a median of 6% of total grants for the year.
- 2.21.** Buttle UK²³ has provided some of the experiences of the tenants approaching them for support through their grant making activity:

Case study 1

A young person was living independently in supported accommodation while pursuing an apprenticeship and further education. Young person was completely reliant on benefits and had no earned income.

"I was feeling really low with pretty much everything. I wasn't happy and was going through a lot of things on my own."

The young person was being supported by a youth agency who made an application to Buttle UK for them and helped them apply for social housing. Whilst they moved into a flat, there was no provision of floor coverings in the lounge/bedroom. Buttle UK awarded equipment and course materials, plus a washing machine, cooker and a carpet for their bedroom.

"When I was told ... about Buttle I thought it sounded too good to be true. Buttle and ... have worked so hard to support all my worries and have made my transition from supported living into independent living so pleasant. I can't believe I had never heard of them before, they even paid for a brand-new cooker and washing machine which are expensive items and other items, I thought I would not have for a long time."

Case study 2

Mum and three children were victims of domestic abuse. They were supported by social services, housing and the Police to move into social housing, into a property with no carpets. This was at a time when, due to the abuse and ongoing harassment, they were still suffering from trauma. Their finances and mental health were low and Mum was struggling to cope with stress and making decisions.

Buttle UK awarded them £500 funding for carpets for the children's bedrooms, as well as a cooker, bedroom furniture, clothing and toys.

Buttle have informed the research team that case study 2 is extremely common in their experience.

²³ Home - Buttle UK

Good practice case study

- 2.22.** Some social housing landlords have taken steps to increase the provision of floor coverings within their properties at point of let.

thirteen

Thirteen has 35,000 homes across the North East, concentrated in Teeside. In 2018, they piloted an enhanced void with carpets, decoration and updated bathrooms and kitchens.

They rolled out an enhanced void standard covering internal and external works, which cost an average of £22,000 per property, in 100 properties and compared this with a control group with average costs of £4,500 per property. It could be said we went a little too far in the pilot!

The properties in the enhanced void cost group performed better in core terms around re-lets within a year, arrears and number of reportable repairs at move in, while the ones in the control group matched previous outcomes.

To make costs more sustainable, they explored what mattered most to tenants in the enhanced void cost homes and found out that the decoration and carpets were most important. To the point of being important above everything else.

Focusing on just carpets and decoration brought void costs down to £4,600. Costs are calculated on a lifespan of seven years for a carpet. They chose neutral décor and grey carpets, in line with current fashion. When the property is relet, Thirteen attempt to keep all carpets and gift these to new tenants.

The impact has been:

- A reduction in void turnover from 11% to 7% (representing over £1million).
- Increased tenant satisfaction.
- Reduced arrears (though some of this may be related to other factors).

Their advice for others thinking of introducing carpets is:

- Run a pilot but decide what matters for your customers quickly – mainstreaming is a brave decision, so it is important to run an effective pilot programme.
- Subcontract carpet fitters, perhaps as part of a Direct Labour Organisation (DLO). Do what you do well and leave the rest to others.
- Source direct supplies where possible. Thirteen saved £10/m² by setting up an effective long term partnership



Our early conclusions

Our early conclusions

- 3.1.** The provision of floor coverings in social housing is low, especially for general needs accommodation, which represents the highest proportion of social homes across the UK. The current provision of floor coverings at point of let for general needs accommodation is around 10% of homes, aligning with the findings by Tai Pawb in Wales, where 10% of landlords fitting floor coverings for new lets as standard practice.²⁴
- 3.2.** The drivers for the installation of floor coverings by some landlords doesn't seem to be directly attributed to addressing poverty, with the provision of floor coverings in shared ownership accommodation and affordable and intermediate rent being higher than that in general needs accommodations. This may well be due to developer's specifications and we will seek to understand this more in the next phases of this research.
- 3.3.** The key barrier for the provision of floor coverings is financial cost as well as the impact on void turnaround times. We will consider these barriers throughout the future of the research programme.
- 3.4.** Some Social Landlords have taken individual approaches to address the provision of floor coverings and have improved standards with the following key drivers:
- Improving tenant satisfaction levels
 - Improving void turnaround time
 - Addressing the challenges associated with hard to let properties
- 3.5.** The information known from the literature review and interviews with landlords showing good practice indicate that the provision of floor coverings can impact tenant satisfaction, improve void turnaround times and the ability to let hard to let properties. These key elements will be considered at the next phase of the research.

²⁴ [FLOORED-FULL-final-report.pdf \(taipawb.org\)](#)





Next steps



Next steps

- 4.1.** This report is the first of three learning reports which will be followed by an interim report and our final report in January 2025 our reports will be titled:
- Learning Report 2: Tenant Perspectives
 - Learning Report 3: Landlord Perspectives
 - Interim Report: Options for Change
 - Final Report: Floor Coverings and Social Housing
- 4.2.** The next phase of our research is to understand the experiences of tenants and we welcome tenants and those representing tenants to reach out to the research team to participate in the next phase of our research.

Data collection programme

- 4.3.** In the early phases of the research, we have set up a data collection programme with six social housing landlords.

This programme seeks to demonstrate the impact that floor coverings can have on:

- Tenant satisfaction
 - Financial and general wellbeing
 - Staff satisfaction
 - Reducing refusal rate of property
 - Reduction in void rent loss
- 4.4.** We are still welcoming social housing landlords to participate in the data collection programme and those interested can reach out to the research team to participate in the next phase of our research.

Steering group



Claire Donovan – Chair

Claire Donovan is the Head of Policy, Research and Campaigns at End Furniture Poverty, the campaigning arm of FRC Group, former Social Enterprise of the Year. FRC Group has been providing support to people in furniture poverty for 34 years with the provision of both new and preloved furniture.

A former journalist, Claire joined FRC Group as Communications Manager, before taking over the delivery of the End Furniture Poverty (EFP), campaign, which raises awareness of the issue of Furniture Poverty; carries out research to highlight the consequences and reality of living in Furniture Poverty; and develops solutions to ensure that everyone has access to the essential furniture items that they need to participate in society and lead a secure life. Flooring is one of EFP's essential furniture items and one of the hardest items for people to access so Claire was very keen to be involved in this key project. Claire is also a trustee of the Reuse Network, the membership body supporting furniture reuse charities across the UK.



Alison Inman

Alison Inman is Past President of the Chartered Institute of Housing. She currently sits on the boards of Saffron Housing Trust, Tpas and Housing Diversity Network and is a former Chair of the National Federation of ALMOs. She is a co-founder of SHOUT, the social housing campaign group and has written extensively in the housing press.



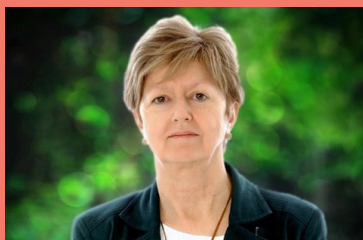
Alicja Zalensinka

Alicja is the Chief Executive Officer of Tai Pawb – an organisation working to advance equality and social justice in housing in Wales. Alongside colleagues from TPAS Cymru, she has lead on the development and implementation of recommendations of FLOORED report, which highlighted the lack of appropriate flooring in social housing in Wales.



Andy Peers

Andy is the Chief Executive of the Longleigh Foundation and through Longleigh's grant-making activities, and engagement with other providers of grants to individuals and families, had seen how the lack of flooring provision in social housing was affecting the quality of life for so many. The funding of this research project is something Andy is proud of as a great example of how the breadth of Longleigh's grant-making remit and commitment to collaboration could lead to transformational changes across the social housing sector and the residents that live in those homes.



Anne Dokov

Anne is a trustee of two charities that work with people in the social housing sector, one being the Longleigh Foundation which is funding this study and the other which helps people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. She is also a Board Member of a housing association that provides specialist quality housing and support services in the Midlands and North West.

Prior to that she spent nine years as a Board Member with a large Housing Association where she had a particular interest in Customer Care, Housing Operations, Governance and People issues.



Brian Robson

Brian Robson is Executive Director (Policy and Public Affairs) at the Northern Housing Consortium, a membership body for 140 councils, housing associations and ALMOs across the North of England. Brian also serves on the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Decent Homes Review Sounding Board. Prior to joining the NHC, Brian led the housing policy and research programme at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for four years, where he commissioned Altair to develop policy and practice proposals on furnished tenancies as a way to mitigate and relieve poverty in the social rented sector.



Fayann Simpson OBE

Fayann, who joined the L&Q's Group Board in 2018, has devoted nearly 20 years to working as an involved resident. For two decades she has worked tirelessly with L&Q and the wider social housing sector to drive continuous improvement in the quality of homes and services. Following the Grenfell tragedy, she has also taken a place on Industry Safety Steering Group chaired by Dame Judith Hackitt's. Fayann is also a board member at Sustainability for Housing. Her expertise sees her taking part in various high-profile debates with stakeholders and industry experts, and she is a regular media commentator.

Fayann is pleased to be involved in this work as she thinks it is so important for the sector to understand the impact of flooring provision for residents and how residents feel in their homes. Fayann hopes this research will really improve our understanding of the significance of floor covering and help the sector make better decisions on how to invest in homes.



National Housing Federation

The National Housing Federation (NHF) are the voice of England's housing associations. The NHF support our members to deliver that social purpose, with ambitious work that leads to positive change.



Glossary of terms

Social housing landlords

A provider of social housing as defined by:

- The Regulator of Social Housing (England)
- The Scottish Housing Regulator (Scotland)
- The Welsh Ministers (Wales)

Social rent

The rental charge for sub-market rent products including:

- Social rent properties
- Affordable rent properties
- Intermediate rent properties

Social housing

Housing provided by social housing landlords. This includes:

- Housing association properties
- Local authority properties (including those rented at a social rent and managed by Arms-length management organisations)

Floor coverings

A material to cover the floor of a room including carpets and hard floor coverings i.e., laminate and floor tiles.

Tenants

The named tenant living in a property provided by a social housing landlord. Our terminology throughout this report includes:

- Shared owners living in shared ownership homes.
- Temporary and licensees tenants living in supported accommodation

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