Research: Adding value in an age of austerity

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The Research Unit

A client-led programme of research which collects data to underpin analysis of:

- Housing market trends and imbalances
- Housing conditions: impact of policies
- Housing and housing-related needs
- Customer views of our services
- Impact of new technology
The role of research

- Late 1990s: evidence-informed policy and practice (EIPP) – “What matters is what works”
- Quantitative (modelling future trends) and Qualitative (“through their eyes”)
- The Journey to Excellence: more focused engagement with clients and making an impact – outcomes more important
- Period of profound transformation against a background of austerity: engaging with the sector and market intelligence
- Analyse and critique what is happening: more informed choices that shape the future
- Painting a rounded picture for policy makers: cannot decide priorities or fairness
Housing Market: Review & Perspectives

- Key strategic document
- Synthesis of recent housing research and market intelligence
- Strategic context: economic and socio-demographic drivers
- Developments in each of the three main tenures
- Prospects for the coming three-year period
House Price Index

- University of Ulster’s mix-adjusted analysis: open market transactions from a network of estate agents.
- House price predictions and reality!
Private Rented Sector

- Series of research projects with UU:
- Analysis of changing nature of stock
- Attitudes of tenants: surprisingly high levels of satisfaction with landlord generally
- Profile of landlords and their investment intentions
- DSD’s strategy for the PRS (2010)
- Tenancy Deposit Scheme research
Housing Market Analysis

- Local Housing Systems Analysis: How they operate and change over time
- Emphasises how different parts of the system interact, what happens as a result and how broader economic and socio-demographic trends affect the operation of the system
- Not defined solely by local authority administrative boundaries but by consumer behaviour through house purchases/migration
- Understanding flows and processes vital to effectively intervene to address system imbalances or local problems
Housing Market Analysis

- More dynamic “systems thinking” approach to housing needs assessment which traditionally focused on need for social housing.
- Underpins analysis of 11 Housing Market Areas in NI, as well as sub-market analysis.
- Provides evidence base for District Housing Plans.
- Will continue to provide evidence base in the future as the approach to planning for housing mutates to meet the needs of community planning.
House Condition Surveys

- NIHE has a statutory duty to undertake research into housing conditions
- Data and analysis underpin an enormous range of policies and decisions on distribution of scarce resources
- Focus on two: where the impact and potential impact in policy terms are significant
Reducing fuel poverty

• Investing in social housing to reduce fuel poverty
• Secondary analysis of House Condition Surveys undertaken in 2009 and 2011. Modelling work undertaken in partnership with the Building Research Establishment (BRE)
• Research context:
  • Household incomes generally drifting up (but disposable income reducing in real terms); rising unemployment
  • Energy prices rising steeply: by 65% from 2006-2011 (61% 2009-2011)
  • High dependency on oil (75%) and even solid fuel/ electricity (7%)
Rising oil prices in NI
Reducing fuel poverty in social housing

• Little can be done about the price of fuel or incomes
• Strategy addresses fuel source and insulation
• Total social housing stock: 120,000
• 2009-2011:
  • 10,000 heating conversions (solid fuel/electric to oil/gas)
  • 3,000 new properties: Code 3 standard
  • 25,000 properties insulated/double glazing
Impact of Investment (1)

Fuel poverty in 2009:
• 44% (51% in social housing)

Fuel poverty in 2011:
• 42% (40% in social housing)

• In the private sector, fuel poverty rose
Cost of poor housing

- BRE modelled HCS data to estimate the cost of poor housing to the health service
- ‘Poor housing’ defined as having one or more HHSRS Category 1 hazards (e.g. excessive damp or cold, food safety or sanitation, falls on stairs): 20% of 2009 stock
Cost of poor housing (2)

- Using a model originally developed by the University of Warwick
- Based on estimating the potential effects of hazards on occupants and visitors – in terms of degree of seriousness and likelihood
- Estimated cost of reducing Category 1 hazards to acceptable level: £470m
- Estimated annual savings to Health Service of £33m per annum
- Payback period of 13 years
- Only includes 40% of cost to society as a whole
Impact of Investment (2)

• Investment in social housing – and indeed all housing – can make very significant differences to the health and well-being of particular households.
• There can be direct savings to the public purse…
• ...As well as more indirect ones through higher education standards and greater social inclusion.
• If investment in social housing had not taken place – more than 50% in fuel poverty!
Torrens: Solar Panel Water Heating

- Newly constructed by Fold: 112 houses built to Lifetime Homes and EcoHomes Excellent Standard
- Survey highlighted low levels of employment (31%) and high levels of benefit dependency
- Survey highlighted generally high levels of satisfaction – but also lack of knowledge and maintenance issues
Torrens: Solar Panel Water Heating

- Good Practice Guide for social landlords
- Policies and procedures relating to installation and maintenance
- Advice on handover, education, revisiting, and tenancy termination interviews
Research Programme 2015/16 (1)

Private sector housing market analysis
- House price indices
- Rental index
- Affordability measures

Housing Needs Assessment
- House condition survey
- Household projections
- Housing need

Policy-related research
- Private rented sector
- Tenancy deposit scheme
- Health and housing
- Supporting People
- Assistive technology

Energy-related research
- Fuel poverty
- Affordable Warmth
- Home improvement grants
Research Programme 2015/16 (2)

Regeneration
• Neighbourhood renewal surveys
• Building successful communities

Shared Communities
• Mapping segregation
• Shared communities surveys

Customer research
• Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey
• Social Housing Reform Programme