

RESEARCH DESIGN WS4



Phase I: case study research

We conducted 10 synchronous online focus groups and 31 semi-structured telephone interviews (April 2013-2014) with 62 young people drawn from eight local authority case studies. The age and tenure breakdown of the sample are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample characteristics

	With parents	Private tenants	Social tenants	Shared equity	Mortgagors	Total
Age group						
18-24	10	5	1	1	2	19
25-35	6	20	3	0	14	43
Subjective financial situation						
Comfortable / alright	10	11	1	0	9	31
Just about getting by	2	11	1	0	5	19
Finding it (very) difficult	2	3	2	1	2	10

The case studies outlined in Table 2, were chosen to enable us to explore young people's experiences of navigating different types of housing markets in diverse geographies. In addition, they enabled us to be sensitive to the spatial dimension of housing policy, which is a devolved power in the UK constitutional context, resulting in significant divergence in policy agendas and programmes.¹ As such our case studies included rural and urban areas with differing housing tenure structures and affordability pressures.

Table 2 Case Study Matrix

	Urban	Rural
England	Sheffield Surrey	Cornwall
Northern Ireland	Belfast	-
Scotland	Edinburgh North Lanarkshire	Scottish Borders
Wales	Merthyr Tydfil	-

¹ Muir, J. and McKee, K. (2015) *Devolution, Localism and Housing Policy*: <http://bigsocietylocalismhousing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Thematic-Report-3.pdf>

Case Study Profiles

- **Belfast:** Northern Ireland's capital city. It has experienced significant growth in its private rented sector (20 per cent) and a fall in its average house prices in recent years. Whilst owner-occupation remains the most popular tenure, at 52 per cent it is nonetheless below the average figure for Northern Ireland. Moreover, the city retains a sizeable social rented stock, housing 26 per cent of households. Belfast is also a very young city, with over 20 per cent being under 16, and the city being home to a vibrant student population.²
- **Cornwall:** a rural local authority on the coast of the south west of England. Stocks of social housing are lower than the national average (11 per cent), with the housing market dominated by private housing: both owner-occupation and private rent. A popular holiday destination, local people must compete with incomers purchasing second homes and holiday-lets, with lower than average incomes further exacerbating the problem of housing affordability. Rough sleeping, empty properties and above average numbers of people residing in temporary and mobile structures have also been noted as issues by the local authority.³
- **Edinburgh:** Scotland's capital city. Located on the east coast of the country, it has amongst the highest house prices in Scotland: 30 per cent higher than the Scottish average. It also has a large, competitive private rented market (22 per cent) and a smaller than average social rented sector (15 per cent). Average private rents in the city are £913 (Q1 2015), up 25 per cent since 2009. Intermediate tenures such as shared equity and mid-market rent have been promoted by the local authority to try and meet housing need. A projected population growth above the Scottish average means demand for housing is likely to increase further.⁴
- **Merthyr Tydfil:** the smallest unitary authority in Wales. With a strong industrial heritage and above average levels of economic inactivity it also has a proportionately younger population than Wales as a whole. Average house prices are amongst the lowest in Wales, with figures experiencing a further dip post credit-crunch. Merthyr retains a sizeable social rented stock (21 per cent households). However, low incomes and high levels of reliance on social security benefits means homeownership is beyond the reach of many citizens.⁵
- **North Lanarkshire** is an urban local authority in the west of Scotland that has experienced significant de-industrialisation. Sharing a boundary with Glasgow, it has the fourth highest population of all Scottish local authorities. Nonetheless, it also has amongst the lowest average house prices in Scotland, which have dropped further since 2007, coupled with a large social rented sector (31 per cent) and small private rented sector (4 per cent). Around 20 per cent of North Lanarkshire's

² Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2014) Belfast LHA *Belfast District Housing Plan & Local Housing Strategy 2014/2015*: http://www.nihe.gov.uk/belfast_district_housing_plan_2014.pdf

³ Cornwall Council (2014) *Strategic Housing Framework: our strategy for Cornwall 2014-2019*: https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/9631240/strategic-housing-framework_web.pdf

⁴ Edinburgh City Council (2011) *City Housing Strategy 2012-2017*: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/34414/item_no_11_-_city_housing_strategy_2012-2017

⁵ Davies, J. and Watkins, C. (2014) *Merthyr Tydfil Local Housing Market Assessment 2014-19*: <http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/media/1596/merthyr-tydfil-lmha-2014.pdf>

population live in some of the most deprived communities in Scotland.⁶ It is a popular commuter belt to neighbouring Glasgow and other areas in the central belt.

- **Scottish Borders:** located adjacent to the border with England, this rural local authority's tenure pattern broadly mirrors Scotland wide trends. Its housing market is strongly influenced by the economies of neighbouring Edinburgh and the Lothian's as locals are competing with commuters, as well as those purchasing holiday homes in the area. Whilst unemployment is low, the area has amongst the lowest average wages in Scotland, which exacerbates problems of affordability. The size of the social rented sector is in line with national figures, whilst the private rented sector is slightly higher than the Scottish average. Homeownership is the largest tenure.⁷
- **Sheffield:** England's fourth largest city, it contains a mix of urban and rural communities and has a strong industrial heritage. House prices in the city are somewhat below the English average, moreover the city retains a sizeable stock of social housing (26 per cent), and has undergone significant regeneration through housing market renewal. Sheffield is also home to a growing BME community.
- **Surrey:** adjacent to London in the south east, this English council has some of the highest house prices in the UK, both at the top and bottom end of the housing market. Being on the London fringe it is a popular commuter belt to the capital, and houses a large number of key workers. Whilst average incomes are high by national standards, the affordability of housing remains an issue across all tenures. Levels of renting: both social and private are lower than the English average.⁸⁹ Surrey county council comprises of 11 borough or district councils that govern and deliver services at a more local level. This reflects the more complex picture of local governance in England, where services are delivered at different scales in different areas.

Phase II: key actor interviews

To supplement the case study phase we interviewed 18 housing and financial experts working in the public, private and voluntary sectors across the four UK jurisdictions.

Contact for further information: Dr Kim McKee, Centre for Housing Research, University of St Andrews (km410@st-andrews.ac.uk)

⁶ North Lanarkshire Council (2011) *Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016*: <http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/mobile/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=6776&p=0>

⁷ Scottish Borders Council (2012) *Local Housing Strategy 2012-2017*: <http://preview.tinyurl.com/q2uyxf7>

⁸ Fordham Research (2008) *West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment*: http://www.waverley.gov.uk/downloads/file/1177/west_surrey_strategic_housing_market_assessment_-_full_report

⁹ DCA (2008) *East Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment*: <https://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/Elmbridge%20Borough%20Council/Planning/EastSurreyPart1.pdf>