

Housing chief executives - WhatsApp summary

May - June 2025

A note to readers

These notes summarise recent discussions on Campbell Tickell's WhatsApp group for Chief Executives of housing associations and ALMOs across all four UK jurisdictions and the Republic of Ireland. A full summary of discussions from the inception of the group is available on request.

This is a closed group, open only to CEOs in housing associations and ALMOs. It currently has around 260 members.

While discussions are confidential and unattributable, members of the group are keen for the content themes and issues to be shared widely to assist with broader understanding.

Please note:

The following digest highlights matters that have been discussed in the group. None of the content should be treated as representing the collective views of the group as such, or be attributed to any of its members. The group is an information-sharing forum and not a policy-making body.

Contact us

If you are a housing CEO who would like to join, please email james.tickell@campbelltickell.com or greg.campbell@campbelltickell.com.

Latest highlights, May – June 2025

Governance

1. A pay and reward policy for the Board, colleagues and executive teams was shared with the group. The policy is under current review to prevent market research and amendments, annually.
2. One member asked for examples of Board timetables and committee structures ahead of their governance review.
3. One charity member sought to gain advice from members who have become an RP as they write a brief to their Board about potentially becoming an RP, to gain access to more funding routes.

Spending Review: 11 June 2025

4. In response to the Spending Review announcement of £39 billion investment into the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP), there was much optimism amongst the members of the group.
5. Some members emphasised the need to review budget details, while others raised concerns about supported housing oversight and the challenges of delivering projects amid skills and material shortages, particularly in construction and net zero initiatives.

Political discussion

6. There was discussion around how to build relationships with Reform-led councils and help to set their agenda. Some members did have experience of conversations with Reform and found they were engaging and open to learning. There was some discussion around budget management in

Reform-led counties and the need for workable policy positions, although a suggestion that these are worth trying to shape through good rapport. Some positive engagement has taken place.

7. Members shared the news that the Scottish government had a reshuffle and that the new Housing Minister was to be Màiri McAllan. There was a question raised about how much of the £39bn announced at the Spending Review would contribute to the Scottish housing sector.

Information sharing with tenants

8. A discussion around publishing planned investment programmes with tenants was started, with many members sharing a sense of frustration. Stock data and other data gaps provide limited certainty over investment programmes which means that sharing this work with tenant ahead of time is challenging. One comment shared their publishing of 5-year planned programmes with tenants through a customer app.

Statistical Data Return (SDR)

9. Best practice was discussed around taking SDR to the Board for approval and whether conversation was meaningful. There were mixed responses with at least 5 members not taking the SDR to their Boards for approval, one member shared that it is included in the annual report with others approving through Executive Teams before reporting to the Board afterwards.
10. Of the members that do share the SDR with their Boards, some discussed that it was a challenge to have meaningful discussion. Some share it through reporting documents, one member shared that they share through a presentation and one member shared it virtually.

Stock Condition: Completion rates and access refusals

11. One comment sought to gain insight into completion rates and access refusals as they consider their own stock condition cycle. Many comments reflected high completion rates, above 90%.
12. Comments reflected efforts to gain access to remaining properties through coordination of gas engineers, housing colleagues, communications teams and independent surveyors.
13. One example was shared where tenants were encouraged and willing to take photographs, so virtual access was gained when physical access was not possible.

SAR Requests

14. One member wanted to understand other members' SAR requests in 24/25, including how many homes they manage, and any trends related to disrepairs. At least 10 members of the group replied with varying figures. Some mentioned that Disrepairs were the biggest trend among SAR requests.

Cybersecurity

15. A discussion was started about virtual Security Operations Centre (SOC) and other members experiences, particularly relating to smaller organisations. Some comments do have a 24/7 SOC, with other comments exploring quotes and options. Affordability was mentioned as a challenge.

Downsizing encouragement

16. The group discussed the challenges around encouraging customers to downsize which can be resource intensive, emotive and has a high failure rate as customers change their minds.

17. Financial incentives, help with removals, sorting utilities was discussed as options which help to increase uptake. One example of this was a local authority scheme known as 'Right Sizing'. Schemes need to be of high quality and include provision of the right support.

Media

18. One member asked the group whether they still operate a corporate Twitter/X account. Most responses suggested no usage or reduced usage. There is suggestion that higher engagement is found on other platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.
19. Comments discussed their frustrations around the negative framing of social housing, particularly by the Housing Ombudsman. There was a suggestion that clickbait headlines and severe individual cases were being framed as a generalised narrative.
20. There was some media acknowledgement of ageing stock, lack of resources and the need for more investment which was a narrative that was supported by some members of the group.

DLO's charging for no access visits

21. There was a discussion around issues of no access for pre-arranged visits for DLO's and whether charging for missed appointments could be a solution to this expensive issue. However, there was a general approach that this would be too complex to manage, given the subjectivity of reasonable excuses.
22. Other solutions were mentioned such as a 'Move towards' approach, communications plan where tenants were reminded that money lost on missed appointments would translate into less investment made into tenant services. There was some comparison drawn to solutions used by the NHS to reduce missed appointments.

Ring doorbells

23. One member queried policies around tenants' use of ring/camera doorbells, with concerns around privacy and legality. Comments confirmed these concerns with ASB situations and privacy issues leading to video doorbells being removed and policy guidelines implemented.

Damp and Mould

24. One member of the group shared about their trial of using hydroxyl technology as a solution to damp and mould issues. Another member mentioned their consideration of this technology but highlighted issues around evidence, suggesting it would protect workers with mould but not full treatment of domestic mould.
25. One member shared their development of an AI tool which assists the early identification of DMC.

Recommendations were asked for and shared in the group

26. Platforms: Learning and development; MRI software for housing, asset management and financials.
27. Organisations: Recruitment for an Interim Head of Governance, Internal auditors, Gas Technical Audit company, Customer Care training.
28. Services: 'Out of funder advice' service, IT support services for a small provider.
29. Speaker request around the topic of Artificial Intelligence.
30. Financial Regulations for smaller providers – simplified wording.