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‘Generation rent’ suffer mental health issues

Being forced to live long-term in private rented housing is impacting negatively on young people’s mental health, a new study has found.

The term ‘generation rent’ refers to the growing number of young people living in the private rented sector for longer periods of their lives, due to high house prices.

The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) study, by Dr Kim McKee (University of Stirling) and Dr Adriana Mihaela Soaita (University of Glasgow), highlighted issues in the private rented sector which are having a serious negative impact on the wellbeing of young people, and particularly those on the lowest incomes.

These include problems with insecure, expensive and poor-quality housing, which contribute to feelings of stress, anxiety and depression among young people unable to realise their housing aspirations.

For those on the lowest incomes, these issues can even lead to people becoming homeless, [*The ‘frustrated’ housing aspirations of generation rent*](#) report found.

It makes six key housing policy recommendations, including a call for more affordable housing to be built – both for sale and rent. It also says tenants should be educated about their rights, and landlords and letting agents required to undertake training on their legal obligations and duties.

Lead author Dr McKee, Senior Lecturer in Social Policy & Housing at the University of Stirling, said: “The poor experiences reported by the young people in this research is a sad reflection on housing in the UK today.

“Their negative impact on wellbeing, particularly mental health, underlines the need for urgent policy intervention to address the failure of the sector for lower income groups.

“Put simply, for those in low paid and insecure work, social rented housing would provide a better safety net than the private rented sector. We need more social housing to be built, and to stop selling it off by ending the Right to Buy across the UK.”

She said while the situation was better in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK – as recent reforms have provided tenants with greater security of tenancy and more predictable rent increases – there was still more that could be done to improve the situation of Scottish tenants.

“Whilst the recent reforms to the private rented sector in Scotland are to be welcomed, they may not fully address tenants’ concerns about the affordability of private sector rents,” she said.

“These findings are important in providing an initial evidence base regarding the impact of the new private residential tenancy in Scotland, as well as the ongoing consultation on reform to the private rented sector in England.”

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Notes to editors

CaCHE is jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

University of Stirling

The University of Stirling is ranked fifth in Scotland and 40th in the UK for research intensity in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. Stirling is committed to providing education with a purpose and carrying out research which has a positive impact on communities across the globe – addressing real issues, providing solutions and helping to shape society.

Interdisciplinary in its approach, Stirling’s research informs its teaching curriculum and facilitates opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration between staff, students, industry partners and the wider community.

The University’s scenic central Scotland campus – complete with a loch, castle and golf course – is home to more than 14,000 students and 1500 staff representing around 120 nationalities. This includes an ever-expanding base for postgraduate study.

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The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence

The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) is a national centre, independent from government, which provides a leading voice on UK housing policy and practice. Over the course of the 5-year project, it will work to fill current gaps in research and will respond to emerging priorities as they arise.

CaCHE is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The centre is a consortium of 11 higher education institutions and 3 non-academic partners. It consists of 30 co-investigators, 5 knowledge exchange associates, 3 researchers, and 3 administrative staff.

The administrative hub is based at the University of Glasgow. The centre has 5 Knowledge Exchange Hubs based in Glasgow, Belfast, Sheffield, Cardiff and London.

More information can be found at www.housingevidence.ac.uk or contact Claire Martin, Communications & Engagement Officer, Tel: 0141 330 2915 / 07725 327 951.