**Title: Collaboratively Re-Designing a Social Housing Policy**

**Social Change Account:** (300-600 words)

Why is change important, urgent and tricky:

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| Local Authorities in the UK develop and maintain a housing stock in their local area which they manage as affordable, lettable accommodation. Local councils have policies and practices to ensure this housing stock meets legal standards (e.g., gas, electricity, fire, water and asbestos management). However, some lettable standards’ practices have exacerbated hardship and the effects of poverty for populations who already face many difficulties associated with low incomes. National media stories in 2022 about policy decisions to rip out carpets and flooring, which are not replaced, led to a public outcry. More recently the tragic death of the two-year-old Awaab Ishak which the coroner concluded was caused by exposure to mould has drawn attention to the standards that lettable social housing is held to. |

What is the change and the multi-disciplinary collaboration that supported it:

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| A research project was commissioned by a local authority that supported re-designing their lettable standards policy, ensuring that lived experiences of poverty informed the development process. Between February and October 2022, a university-based research team with expertise in Public Health and Co-Design led a collaboration that progressed from a better understanding of what-is through a practice exploring what-might-or-might-not-be to a commitment to what’s-next.  The project brought together a group of tenants, council members working in housing, truth and poverty commission members and researchers to engage in a co-design practice over 4 day-long workshops with c.20 participants. The first workshop sought to acknowledge ‘issues’ related to lettable standards from perspectives of tenants’ lived experience and from council management and staff experience. Working together the collective group defined what for them were ‘the issues’. The second workshop further explored ‘the issues’ plotting out a service and experience map to locate both the issues and the remit of lettable standards in relation to other policies and processes related to council housing. Speculating about alternative futures, what better might look like and how it might be achieved the group articulated the logics underpinning the current policy and explored alternatives. The third workshop worked from a basis of logic related to a Health Home Promise and produced a policy proposition by collectively navigating different understandings and expectations as well as attempts to grasp the scale of this proposed change and the perceived difficulties associated with implementation. The fourth workshop supported a review of the work conducted together up to this point and co-produced an articulation of the re-designed policy and the different dynamic it would create between tenants and the council. |

What challenges or insights does the case foreground?

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| Historic and contemporary contexts of legal compliance, public funding austerity, material and labour shortages in the home repair sector and productivity drivers and measures all influence this case study. As do theories of design-led co-creation and co-production. Within those contexts and demands, how do we understand the suitability and effectiveness of practices to support positive social change? Responding to this question might lead us to examine the selection criteria and rationale for participation; how practices and tactics addressed dynamics of authority, power and influence and the extent to which representation was afforded and repression mitigated. Furthermore, we might challenge the effectiveness and suitability of the collaborative practices in enabling the group surface and explore the tensions and differences within their own constituent group and across them. Finally, to consider if the conditions for a productive dialogue amongst a heterogeneous group were enabled, evidence related to consensus, persuasion and coercion could be evaluated. In short, we need to understand both the sustainment of social changes within their contexts and the effectiveness of different practices to establish conditions for truly inclusive development. |

**Author relationship to the case:** (max 50 words)

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| The author of this case study description is a design researcher and was a member of the research team in the case. As demonstrating positive impact beyond academia becomes more established and pressing as a metric of research excellence in UK HEI researchers have a clear agenda related to the pathways that support research underpinning impact. |

**Keywords:** Co-design; Policy Design; Public Sector, UK

**Web Links:** (max 5)

**Summary:** (max 75 words)

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| This case is about collaborative policy design. It modelled an alternative relationship and way of working between citizens and the local authority. The design practice aimed to ensure that different perspectives including lived experiences of poverty were part of the development process. The project aimed to re-design an existing policy to improve the standards of lettable social housing and begin to create more respectful relationships between the local authority and the citizens of its local area. |

**Country:** UK

**Date of Collaboration:** February - October 2022

**Project funded:** Yes/No if yes, who was the funder(s): Yes. Local Authority.

**Type of partnership:** (describe the major partners) Local Authority – Citizens – University

**Acknowledgments:** (credit for the work/case)

Principal Investigator: Professor Greta Defayter

Co-I: Dr. Nicholas Spencer & Professor Joyce Yee

Gateshead Council. Poverty and Truth Commission. Northumbria University, Healthy Living Lab

**Case Image**: is there an image you can provide to support the case? YES to follow.