

NewStatesman

# Spotlight

**HOUSING: THE POLITICS OF PROPERTY**

Alex Cunningham MP / Helen Hayes MP / Sadie Morgan



  
BARRATT  
DEVELOPMENTS PLC



 FISHER  
GERMAN

 Greenlite  
Energy Assessors

 GROSVENOR



# A new era of social housing

**Paul Bridge, chief executive at Civitas, explains how, against a backdrop of massive unmet demand, the company's social housing model can be part of the solution to the UK's housing needs**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



**A**fter 40 years of Right to Buy, low building rates and gradually dwindling stock, there is a growing consensus that social housing is under enormous supply pressure. Last year, figures from the homeless charity Shelter revealed that 1.15m households were on social housing waiting lists, amounting to around 4.5m people. Many are in need of specialist supported housing as demand amongst adults with complex needs has been driven by population growth as well as medical advances resulting in improved outcomes and life expectancies for those with long-term disabilities. Care in the community, as opposed to placing disabled adults in institutional care, has resulted in a far higher quality of life and better social outcomes for individuals and their families. But the development and maintenance of this type of specialist supported social housing needs investment, resources, and a very specific set of experiences and skills. If current trends are borne out, there will be a 29,053-person shortfall in supported housing in 2020, rising to 46,771 by 2024-25.

Accommodation for people with complex care needs often requires extensive modification to tailor buildings to people's requirements. These aren't standard-issue homes. They often include office space for carers; sensory rooms for residents; sensor-operated lights, showers and bathrooms; extensive outdoor spaces; thick and reinforced walls; under-floor heating to avoid protruding radiators;

centrally controlled ovens to reduce the risk of accidents and fires; and centrally controlled doors to prevent vulnerable residents leaving the premises without proper supervision. Rental costs are significantly higher than your average social home, and yet vastly more expensive institutional care – whether it's long stays in hospitals or care homes – is often many multiples of the cost of the supported living model.

Founded in 2016, Civitas is a stock exchange-listed company working with 157 local authorities in the provision of housing for 4,072 people across England and Wales. With the support of government, Civitas specialises in supported social housing in an era when local authorities and housing associations lack the experience and funding to make adequate investments in much-needed housing stock. The company also offers investors steady, long-term ethical investment opportunities with a highly secure 5 per cent annual rate of return.

This year's report into our social impact by The Good Economy found that 96 per cent of our residents coming from hospital have seen an improvement in their mental health since moving into our accommodation. 90 per cent of family members stated that residents' motivation and aspirations have increased since moving into specialist accommodation, and overall, the company's £827m property portfolio generated £114m of social value in 2018 alone, including £59m of direct savings to the Treasury.

When public sector budgets are stretched, and with demand for housing remaining high, partnership between local and national government along with the private and charitable sectors is essential to meeting housing needs. As a founding member of the ethical investment platform, The Big Exchange, Civitas, working closely with national homeless charities such as Crisis and The Big Issue, is well placed to be part of the UK's housing solution, and help deliver high-quality homes for those who need them most.