

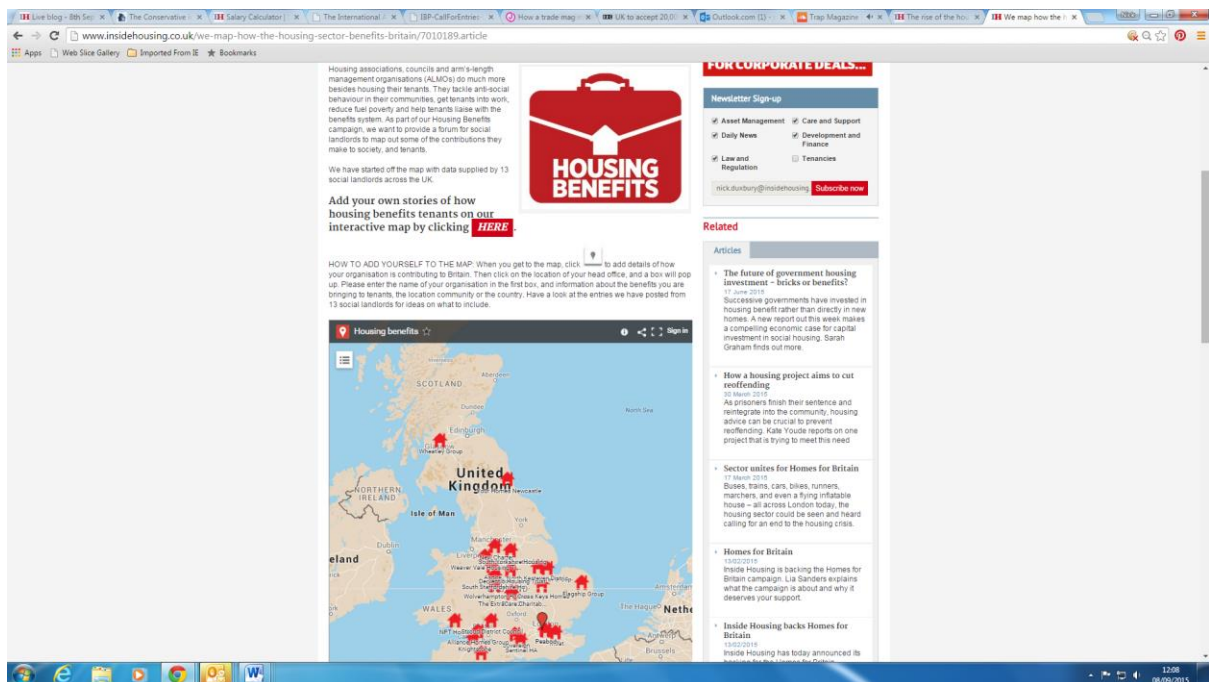
Multi-Media Journalist – Heather Spurr

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/we-map-how-the-housing-sector-benefits-britain/7010189.article>

As campaign editor, Heather has run *Inside Housing's* Housing Benefits campaign to champion social landlords' to demonstrate how they deliver widespread economic benefits and to challenge myths about the sector. The campaign was a success because it united a divided sector through the use of social media.

One of the strongest examples of this was Heather's creation of an interactive map, to show social landlords' contribution throughout Britain. The map shows how individual social landlords help their tenants and communities into work, tackle fuel poverty and prevent homelessness. Crucially, the housing sector was invited to add themselves onto the map, by using the Google Map function.

By following the instructions on the page, housing associations and councils can show how they are benefitting their areas with community programmes. As can be seen, social landlords have been very enthusiastic about interacting with the campaign using this tool.



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the 'Housing Benefits' campaign page. The main content features a map of the United Kingdom with numerous red pins indicating participating social landlords across various regions. Text on the page explains the campaign's goal: to show how social landlords contribute to their communities by helping tenants into work, tackling fuel poverty, and preventing homelessness. It also provides instructions on how to add one's own organization to the map. A sidebar on the right contains a 'Newsletter Sign-up' form and a list of related articles.

<http://housingmyths.com/>

Heather partly set up the Housing Benefits campaign tackle myths about the sector, such as the idea that immigrants jump the queue for social housing. In order to reach out beyond the housing sector, Heather created a guerrilla 'myth busting' Wordpress site that aimed to debunk social housing myths using simple facts and statistics.

Housingmyths.com was widely shared on social media among social housing professionals and outside the sector. The website was also used as a grassroots tool for social housing professionals to fact check the public and local politicians on pervasive ideas about social housing tenants.

Homelessness charity Centrepont wrote in with data they had prepared to examine government claims on how much money it was saving on cuts to young people's housing benefit.



<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/budget-cuts-leave-homeless-at-mercy-of-winter-weather/7007301.article>

In December, Heather wrote a powerful story revealing fears that rough sleepers could be left to die on the streets in winter due to cuts to council budgets. The exclusive poll Heather undertook using online software, SurveyMonkey, told one story. However, Heather chose to illustrate this story by mapping warnings from housing professionals across the country. Using online slide presentation software, Prezi, she was able to visually represent opinions around England, such as the concern from a senior officer in the North West who had a homeless client who lost his toe due to frostbite. The map is both visually exciting and tells candid stories from staff about working in a homelessness department over Christmas in a new and powerful way.

www.insidehousing.co.uk/budget-cuts-leave-homeless-at-mercy-of-winter-weather/7007301/article

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Homelessness charity Crisis said the results of the survey, taken from 115 councils, were 'deeply troubling'. Rick Henderson, chief executive of Homeless LINK, said: 'Sleeping rough in freezing temperatures can kill you. This is why it's essential that greater from the cost is available in every area, with enough resources to meet rising demand'.

Read Heather's stats blog with data behind this story here.

The research suggests budget cuts are leading to council homelessness services buckling under the strain.

In a separate survey question, one in five respondents (19.6%) say they are not confident they have sufficient resources to provide emergency accommodation in freezing temperatures.

A council officer in the north west, said: 'It feels like homelessness is no longer a priority. This is very sad because we have worked with a client who lost their toes as a direct result of foot bite whilst rough sleeping'.

The National Audit Office (NAO) said last month that the government will reduce its funding to councils by an estimated 26% between 2010/11 and 2014/15. It says Supporting People budgets - funding used to support hostel services - will have dropped by 45.3% in local authorities over the same period.

Jon Skates, chief executive of Crisis, said: 'SWEP could be a lifesaver for those left with nowhere else to turn this winter so it's deeply troubling to hear that cuts may leave some councils unable to keep people safe'.

Homelessness minister Kris Hopkins said the fact that a majority of councils had seen no effect on their ability to help those in need was due to government measures to support homeless people, including the No Second Night Out programme.

What council officers think: Severe winter w... by Heather Ryan

"Locally we have prioritized keeping the Severe Emergency Weather Protocol running this year.

"For the future, however, local housing projects are at risk of being stopped due to funding cuts, and we will look for other ways to support those in need."

David Thompson
Start Post

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