



The latest figures indicate that the housebuilding industry has responded to policies aimed at stimulating housing supply in the UK, and is on track to deliver the Government's one million homes by 2020 pledge. According to Energy Performance Certificate records, the number of new homes completed reached 211,000 in the year to June 2017, up 49% in three years.

However, access is highly unequal; the relative cost of buying a home for the poorest households and individuals has risen faster in the UK than anywhere in Western Europe, fuelling a "worrying" increase in homelessness, [European-wide research has found](#). Housing costs for people who earn about £16,000 a year increased by 45% between 2010 and 2016, compared with an average rise of 10% for the lowest earners across Europe. This is part (not all) of the reason why homelessness has increased across Europe, including the UK and Wales ([estimated to have increased by a third over the past year](#)), as well as other reasons such as the end of assured tenancy. The growing problem of homelessness has received recent policy re-focus, for example, through the 'Housing First' programme which is being implemented in Wales and elsewhere after being successfully implemented in countries such as Finland.

As has been well-documented, there are generational issues with access to housing, particularly for the young. [Currently, almost half of 25-34 year olds are renting privately, up from 21% in 2003-04](#). The proportion of private renters has reached the same levels as in the early 1970s, and has overtaken the number of social renters. Affordability of housing is partly driven by the cost of land. The [total value of UK land has increased more than fivefold](#) in just over 20 years. According to the Valuation Office, whereas the average price of agricultural land in England is £21,000 per hectare, the equivalent with [planning permission for housing now comes in at a cool £6m](#). The requirement proposed in the Housing White Paper for local authorities to proactively plan for rented housing will bring to the fore the challenge for policymakers and landowners to balance delivery with land value.

In the rush to meet the one million new homes targets, concerns over the quality of new housing development are increasing at pace. For example, Shelter [reported that more than half of buyers of new-build homes](#) have had major problems with construction, fixtures and fittings. This may represent a 'time bomb' in terms of the quality of housing as it ages.

There is increasing industry focus on Brexit's potential impact on build costs and access to skilled labour. One possible outcome could be further emphasis on modern methods of construction (MMC). The industry is struggling to deliver 300,000 homes per year through traditional construction techniques. It is estimated that more than 70% of the components of a traditional build can now be manufactured offsite. Several companies have ambitious plans in this area – for example, [Live Verde, has plans for five factories in the UK producing 25,000 units per year by 2022](#). Other big developers such as Berkeley Homes and Legal and General are investing in factories for volumetric housing.

One of the next steps beyond modular builds is the potential application of 3-D printing in construction. [The UAE has said it wants 25% of buildings to be 3D-printed by 2030](#). Dubai has already produced the first 3D-printed office, constructed by a robotic arm in 17 days. In the UK such techniques are in use by construction firms such as [Skanska, which is "printing" concrete blocks at a facility at Loughborough University](#). London-based architecture firm Facit Homes has recently completed a luxurious house in Highgate, north London, using what it describes as