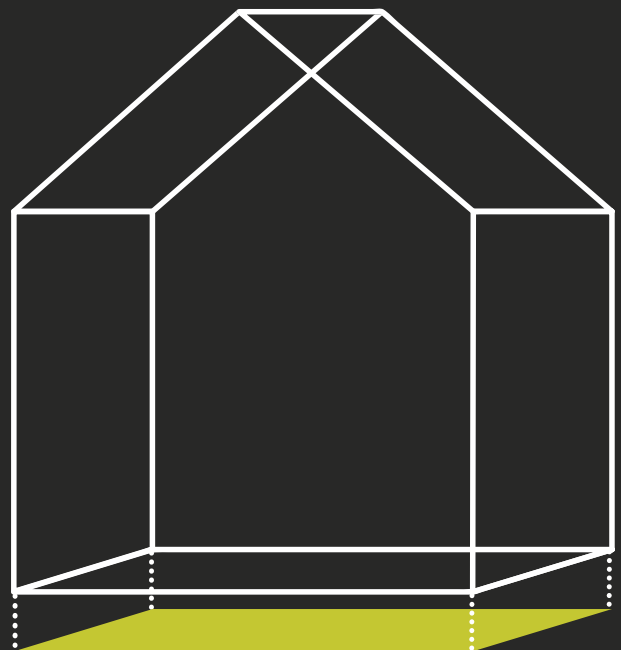# 4 Stability

Defining stability within the Living Home Standard was particularly challenging. The stability that home owners have is often taken for granted, and stability was seen as something which primarily affected people living in the private rented sector and to an extent people in the social rented sector. Whilst people who had experienced instability often spoke powerfully about it's impact, for those who had never encountered this kind of insecurity, the effects were harder to imagine.

Inevitably much of the discussion around stability returned to a discussion of renting. In general, the public was very balanced in their view of the relationship between tenants and landlords: an even-handed sense of fairness prevailed, with considerations of the issues faced by landlords as well of those as tenants.  This is reflected in the definitions included within the Standard, which are defined with consideration of what is reasonable for both tenants and landlords.

Because some of the issues underpinning stability are more pertinent to renters it was challenging to develop a common standard that applies equally to everyone, irrespective of the tenure they live in and their life stage. However, the final attributes within the Living Home Standard attempt to reconcile this as far as possible.

Discussions around stability often referenced the extent to which people felt able to make the place they lived a 'home.'  Issues related to the ability to feel at home, such as being able to make reasonable changes to decoration, were also considered to be part of this dimension of the Standard.

## Essentials

■ **The household has enough control over how long they can live in the home**

**"I don't feel safe because at some point someone can turn round and take that away."**

Discussions around the length of time that people ought to be able to expect to stay in their home revealed that there was no consensus on an amount of time which adequately served everyone. Whilst long-term stability was of limited importance for some, others spoke about the importance of families being able to settle down and have the security that children will be able to stay in a local school and build friendship groups. Attempting to reconcile these differences, it became apparent that it wasn't the length of time itself that was most important, it was that the amount of security available was suitable for each household's needs. Having to move unexpectedly could be a significant upheaval, and even if never required to move, uncertainty in itself could compromise people's ability to 'put down roots.'

■ **If ever given notice to leave the home, the household feel they would be given enough notice to secure somewhere else suitable to live.**

The public felt that in addition to control over the duration of tenure, it was also important that if they were required to move, that they would have adequate notice. As with other elements of stability, what might constitute adequate notice varied depending on the circumstances of the household affected. For example, a family might need longer to plan a move than a young single professional. Distilling this into what was fundamentally about notice periods, the public felt that the most important thing was to have enough time to find another suitable home.

In general, people felt that an acceptable amount of time would have to be sufficiently long to not only find a home in a suitable location, but to have choice between a number of options. Some pointed out that having time to consider a number of properties was especially important in finding somewhere affordable.

**A home must meet 1 of 3 of these statements to meet the Living Home Standard.**

■ **Able to stay in the home long enough to feel part of the local community if wanted**

For some people home was about being part of a wider community. It was recognised that lack of stability could compromise people's ability to make friends, join in social activities or undertake voluntary work. This was often particularly important for families who wanted the security of knowing that children would be able to stay in local schools and make friends in the local area.

■ **Can make changes to the interior of the home such as decorating, if wanted**

Being able to create 'a place that feels like home' was important to people developing a feeling of stability and rootedness. This was particularly challenging in the private rented sector where tenants often felt their opportunities to make basic changes such as hanging pictures or painting a room were very constrained.

**"If you want your own place and it to feel homey then you should be able to do something that makes it feel like your own home."**

■ **Able to keep a pet in the home or garden if wanted**

As a 'nation of animal lovers' being able to keep a pet was for some people an important part of what makes a house a home, as well as being something that could contribute significantly to wellbeing. It could be particularly important for people living alone as a form of companionship. However it was recognised that both private renters and leaseholders often have constraints on their ability to keep a pet.

**"If you want your own place and it to feel homey then you should be able to do something that makes it feel like your own home."**

**" If you want your own place and it to feel homey then you should be able to do something that makes it feel like your own home. "**