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Spatial Economics Research Centre

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Local homes for local people

The "local homes for local people" debate has reignited as a result of a [report for the EHRC](#).

I can't see mention of this in [Building Britain's Future](#), but here, [from Hansard](#) is what Gordon Brown said on 29th June: "[...] we can now also reform social housing allocation, enabling local authorities to give more priority to local people whose names have been on waiting lists for far too long. [...] We want to see a bigger role and responsibility for local authorities to meet housing needs of people in their areas."

[John Healey](#) (7th July) is pushing the increased Local Authority autonomy side of this: "In some areas, they may want to give people who have waited the longest preference. In some areas, they may want to give preference to people who have moved to take up work. They may want, in rural areas, to give preference to those with local connections or their preference may be to reduce overcrowding or attract skilled workers"

Personally, I don't like the politics of this. That aside, in terms of equity "local homes for local people" enshrines the right to live where you are born (residency criteria) or where you work (employment criteria). There is a debate to be had about whether these are sufficiently strong rights to weaken those around housing need (the current criteria). In terms of efficiency there is a strong argument that we need *more* mobility in the social housing sector not less. "In" quickly when people are in trouble and "out" when their long term situation improves. Further, from a spatial perspective, social housing acts as a very severe constraint on geographical mobility. As such mobility has an important role to play in adjusting to the changing economic geography of the UK economy "local homes for local people" is surely a step backwards.

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Tuesday, July 07, 2009](#)

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