switchee



The overheating challenge
White paper

What summer of 2026 told us about overheating risk inside social homes.

Overheating is becoming a growing concern for social housing providers across the UK. Summers are getting hotter, and periods of extreme heat are becoming more common. This means landlords need to better understand how their homes cope with rising temperatures and which properties may be most at risk.

Summer 2026 highlighted just how serious this issue can be. Data from homes monitored by Switchee shows that **81% reached Medium or High Risk** of overheating, with **44% reaching High Risk**. But the figures only tell part of the story. It's also important to understand how hot homes get, how long these conditions last, and which homes and residents are most affected.

This white paper looks at what the data from summer 2026 tells us about overheating in UK social housing, how the risk varies between homes, and what housing providers can do to better prepare for hotter summers ahead.

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1. Why is overheating a growing concern?

For the last few years, damp and mould have rightly been a priority for social housing providers. But keeping homes healthy goes beyond these issues. Across the UK, rising temperatures and more frequent periods of extreme heat mean housing providers need to understand how their homes cope with warmer conditions and what this means for residents.

The responsibility to provide safe, suitable homes is reflected in housing legislation. In England, the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 strengthened tenants' rights where a home is not reasonably suitable to live in, while the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) recognises excess heat as a potential hazard. Awaab's Law reinforces this focus on identifying and responding to hazards in social housing in England, including requirements relating to excess heat.

Overheating can be difficult to identify because it is not always obvious. Outdoor temperatures alone cannot tell landlords how hot it is inside a home. Even properties in the same area can have very different indoor temperatures, and residents may not always report that their homes are becoming too hot.

Summer 2026 brought this issue into focus. According to the Met Office's provisional climate statistics, the UK experienced its warmest summer on record, with a mean temperature of 16.5˚C. Temperatures of 28˚C or above were recorded somewhere in the UK over 55 days, highlighting the exceptional persistence of the heat. While this summer was particularly extreme, It reflects a broader trend towards warmer UK summers, with recent years increasingly dominating the temperature records.

Looking at what happens inside homes during periods of hot weather gives housing providers a better understanding than weather data alone. It helps show how homes respond to heat, how conditions vary between properties, and where overheating could become an ongoing problem for residents.

2. What did summer 2026 tell us?

Data from homes monitored by Switchee during summer 2026 shows that many experienced high indoor temperatures. These Overheating Risk findings relate to the homes in the Switchee dataset and should not be taken as a measure of overheating across all UK social housing. However, they provide a useful insight into how extreme heat affected conditions inside the homes monitored.



81%

of monitored homes reached Medium or High Risk during summer 2026.



44%

of monitored homes reached High Risk.



More than

4 in 5

experienced a calculated 'feels like' temperature above 26˚C.



More than

1 in 2

experienced a calculated 'feels like' temperature above 32˚C.

The temperature inside the home matters.

Outdoor temperatures alone don't tell us what residents experience inside their homes. The way heat translates into indoor conditions can vary considerably between properties, meaning homes in the same area can experience very different levels of overheating. Environmental data recorded inside homes can provide a clearer picture of where elevated temperatures are occurring, how severe they become, and where further investigation may be appropriate.

How Switchee's Overheating Risk is measured.

Our Overheating Risk metric methodology uses environmental data recorded inside monitored homes to assess overheating risk over a rolling seven-day period.

Heat Index, also known as "feels like" temperature, combines air temperature and relative humidity to estimate how hot conditions feel to the human body.

Properties are classified according to the Heat Index recorded over the previous seven days:

- **High Risk:** A Heat Index above 32˚C for two or more hours within the seven-day period. These conditions are associated with an increased risk of heat-related illness, including heat exhaustion and heatstroke.
- **Medium Risk:** A Heat Index above 26˚C for two or more hours within the seven-day period. This threshold aligns with NHS England's guidance on temperatures that can affect people who are vulnerable to heat.

These classifications help identify the severity of overheating conditions and provide insight into how long properties experience potentially concerning temperatures.

Overheating Risk is available exclusively to customers with Switchee devices installed and is accessible via the Switchee Portal.

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3. Is overheating becoming more severe?

Looking across three summers provides important context for the 2026 findings. The year-on-year data shows that Overheating Risk within monitored homes has increased in both scale and severity.

Risk category	2024	2025	2026
Medium Risk	53%	63%	37%
High Risk	6%	15%	44%
Medium + High Risk	60%	77%	81%
'Feels like' >32˚C	11%	22%	52%

The proportion of monitored homes classified as Medium or High Risk increased from **60% in 2024 to 81% in 2026**. But the more significant change is within that total: High Risk increased from **6% to 44%** over the same period.

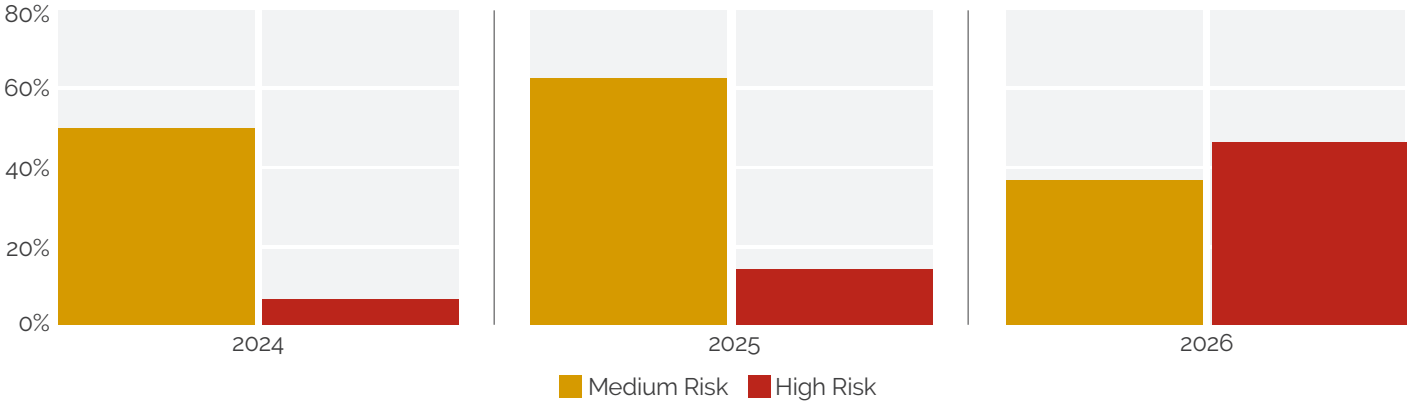
Between 2025 and 2026, Medium Risk fell from 63% to 37%, while High Risk rose from 15% to 44%. This suggests the change is not simply an increase in the number of homes experiencing overheating, but a shift towards more severe conditions.

The same pattern can be seen in indoor temperatures. The proportion of monitored homes experiencing a calculated 'feels like' temperature above 32˚C more than doubled, from **22% in 2025 to 52% in 2026**.

Summer 2026 was exceptional, so these findings should not be treated as a prediction of future summers. They do, however, provide valuable evidence of how homes performed during prolonged periods of unusually high temperatures, and what increasing heat could mean for social housing in the years ahead.

Overheating Risk has shifted towards higher severity

Percentage of monitored homes in each risk category across summers 2024 to 2026.



4. Is overheating just a heatwave problem?

The number of homes experiencing Overheating Risk is only part of the picture. How long those conditions persist helps distinguish a short period of extreme heat from a pattern that continues over weeks.

82% of Medium Risk properties remained in that risk category for more than 28 days.

This suggests that, within the monitored dataset, Medium Risk was often persistent rather than limited to one or two particularly hot days.

High Risk showed a different pattern. 37% of High Risk properties experienced that level for 8–14 days, while 25% experienced it for 1–7 days. A further 14% remained at High Risk for more than 28 days, combining both severity and duration.

This distinction matters. Some homes may experience short, acute periods of extreme heat, while others experience elevated temperatures over much longer periods. Looking at both severity and duration provides a more complete picture of Overheating Risk and can help housing providers identify where further investigation may be needed.

5. What can - and can't - predict overheating?

Summer 2026 shows that geography and property age alone cannot reliably identify which homes will experience overheating. Location and building characteristics provide useful context, but other factors may influence risk.

Location does not tell the whole story.

Regionally, Wales recorded the highest proportion of monitored homes reaching High Risk at 66%, followed by the South East at 61% and the South West at 60%. But significant risk was not confined to warmer southern areas: in the North East, 69% of monitored homes experienced Medium Risk conditions.

These figures are based on homes within the Switchee-monitored dataset and should not be interpreted as representative of all housing stock within each region. They do, however, illustrate why postcode alone cannot provide a complete picture of indoor conditions.

Newer does not necessarily mean cooler.

Property age does not provide a simple answer either. Homes built between 1950 and 1966 recorded a High Risk rate of 42%, rising to 48–51% across later periods and 57–66% in several post-2003 cohorts. This does not mean newer homes inherently overheat more, but it shows that construction age alone is not enough to identify overheating risk.

From design assessment to lived performance.

Overheating is increasingly considered at the design stage, with Approved Document O and CIBSE TM59 providing frameworks for assessing risk. However, once occupied, factors such as orientation, glazing, ventilation, solar gain, construction, and occupancy can all influence how a home performs in practice.

In-home monitoring provides an additional layer of evidence, helping providers understand how homes actually perform over time and use that insight to inform investment, retrofit, and the design of new homes.

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6. What does this mean for housing providers?

The findings point to a visibility challenge. If overheating can be widespread, severe, persistent, and difficult to predict from geography or property age alone, housing providers need ways to understand what is actually happening inside individual homes.

Resident reports, property records, and inspections remain important. But residents may not recognise excessive heat as a housing issue, they may assume it is simply part of summer, or may not report it at all. As a result, relying on reported problems alone may leave some overheating risks unidentified.

In-home monitoring can help bridge this gap. Switchee's data provides insight into the conditions residents are living in, helping providers identify potential Overheating Risk, understand how conditions develop over time, and pinpoint where further investigation or intervention may be needed. By turning environmental data into actionable insight, providers can make more informed decisions about where to focus resources, how to prioritise investment, and whether interventions are improving conditions inside homes.

The lesson from an exceptional summer is therefore not that every home will experience the same conditions every year. It is that providers need more than outdoor temperatures, geography, and property characteristics to understand where the greatest risks lie. By combining in-home data with resident feedback and professional judgement, providers can move from responding to reported problems towards identifying risk earlier and targeting action where it can make the greatest difference.

7. From insight to action: preparing for summers to come.

Collecting data is not the objective. Its value comes from turning information into insight that teams can act on. Understanding what happened during periods of high heat can help housing providers identify visibility gaps, recognise patterns across their homes, and use that evidence to inform how they prepare for future summers.



01. Identify.

Understand which homes experienced potentially concerning conditions and establish what environmental data is already available across the portfolio.

02. Prioritise.

Look for patterns by property type, construction period, location, severity and duration, and identify where further investigation may be appropriate.

03. Investigate.

Combine environmental data with property characteristics, resident circumstances, and other available information to understand what may be driving the risk.

04. Act.

Determine the most appropriate response based on conditions in each home and residents' needs. This could include improving ventilation, introducing shading measures, addressing insulation or building fabric issues, providing targeted resident support, or exploring cooling solutions where necessary.

Switchee supports this process through real-time property data, actionable insights, identification of likely causes of overheating, and tailored recommendations for next steps, helping housing providers make informed decisions and prioritise interventions where they are needed most

05. Monitor and learn.

Continue monitoring where appropriate to understand whether conditions change following action, and use that evidence to inform future retrofit, ventilation, planned investment, and new-home specification.

At property level, this means going beyond a single temperature reading. The more useful questions are:

- Which homes experienced concerning conditions?
- When did they occur?
- How severe they became?

- How long they persisted?
- What other information is available?
- What action was taken?
- Whether conditions changed afterwards?

Over time, this creates a stronger evidence base for understanding which homes may be more susceptible to overheating, and which interventions make a meaningful difference.

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8. Conclusion.

Summer 2026 was exceptional. It was the UK's hottest summer on record and exposed homes to prolonged periods of high temperatures. For housing providers, it also provided an opportunity to understand how those conditions translated into the lived environment inside monitored homes.

Across the Switchee-monitored homes in this analysis, **81% reached Medium** or High Risk, while **44% reached High Risk**. Looking across three years of data, the proportion classified as High Risk increased from 6% in 2024 to 44% in 2026.

But prevalence is only part of the story. Risk was often persistent, while higher-risk conditions were frequently concentrated into shorter periods. Significant risk was also observed across different regions and construction cohorts. Geography and property age can provide useful context, but neither tells a provider exactly what residents are experiencing inside a particular home.

Summer 2026 should not be treated as a prediction of every summer to come. Instead, it provides a valuable real-world stress test of how homes perform under extreme conditions. As warmer summers become more likely, understanding what happens inside individual homes will become an increasingly important part of keeping residents safe, and homes healthy.

For housing providers, better visibility can help turn uncertainty into evidence: identifying where conditions may require attention, informing investigation and action, and understanding whether interventions make a difference.

The question is no longer whether overheating is a housing issue. It is how well we can see it.
Safe homes need to be safe all year round.

9. Methodology.

This paper draws on environmental data collected by Switchee from monitored homes between 2024 and 2026. The analysis covers a sample of over 25,000 homes in each of 2024, 2025, and 2026. The data captures temperature and humidity conditions inside these homes and has been analysed using Switchee's Overheating Risk methodology to assess how often homes experienced Medium or High Risk, the severity of recorded conditions, and how long they persisted.

The "feels like" temperature referenced in this paper is the Heat Index, calculated using air temperature and relative humidity recorded inside monitored homes.

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10. About Switchee.

Switchee provides smart technology and real-time intelligence to help social housing providers improve the quality of life for residents and the performance of their homes.

Using connected devices and environmental data, Switchee provides insight into conditions inside homes, helping landlords and local authorities identify potential risks, understand property performance and support more informed decisions around repairs, retrofit and resident services.

Switchee collects more than 60 billion data points annually and powers more than 500 million analytics calculations. Its technology is used by more than 130 social housing providers across the UK.

A resident-first approach is central to the platform, combining environmental insight with two-way communication between landlords and residents. This helps providers better understand what is happening inside homes, support residents and measure whether interventions are making a difference.

By bringing together data, resident engagement and actionable insight, Switchee helps housing providers work towards warmer, safer and healthier homes.

Contact our team here to learn more.

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