Housing professionals of the future will need to be able to think widely and act collaboratively, working in a commitment to welfare values in an increasingly entrepreneurial culture. Above all they will need to be adaptable and flexible, willing and able to copewith constant change, risk and uncertainty.

The short-term demand for staff who are trained and competent to do the job today, and the longer-term need for people who have the capacity not only to cope with change but to contribute to ways of responding. The fully-rounded professional, of course, is someone who combines both current competence and future flexibility.

Peter Malpass is professor of housing policy and head of the school of housing and urban studies at the University of the West of England. UWE is organising a conference on 12-13 July to look at the undermining of both council housing and the idea of professionalism itself. The conference website is at www.uwe.ac.uk/fbe/hus/news/conference.pdf