

Housing and Homelessness Panel
(Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

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Social Housing White Paper:
The Charter for Social Housing Residents

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Agenda Item 6

Introduction

- Grenfell Tower tragedy led government to focus on tenants and safety
- Countrywide roadshows and wide consultations with tenants
- Social Housing Green Paper 2018
- Call for Evidence on how social housing is regulated
- ¹⁶ MHCLG published the Social Housing White Paper in November 2020, entitled The Charter for Social Housing Residents (The Charter)
- Linked to and heavily referencing Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill
- Will be driven by legislation and regulation
- Clear expectation that landlords should not wait

Seven Themed Chapters

- To be safe in your home
- To know how your landlord is performing
- To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- To be treated with respect
- To have your voice heard by your landlord
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- To be supported to take your first step to ownership

Chapter 1: To be Safe in Your Home 1

- Building Safety Bill - enhanced regulatory regime for all buildings, including a more stringent regime for the design, construction, day-to-day management and maintenance of higher-risk buildings, with residents having a strong voice in the system.
- Fire Safety Consultation on Government proposals to implement the recommendations in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report
- Supported a Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group, bringing together social landlords and residents from across the country to test approaches to engagement on building safety.
- Published a Fire Safety Bill which will clarify the scope of the Fire Safety Order in its application to the structure, external walls and flat entrance doors in multi-occupied residential buildings.

Chapter 1: To be Safe in Your Home 2

- Strengthening the RSH's consumer regulation objectives to explicitly include safety.
- Requiring social landlords to identify a nominated person responsible for complying with their health and safety requirements.
- Regulator of Social Housing work with HSE to ensure effective sharing of information with the Building Safety Regulator.
- Consult on requiring smoke alarms in social housing and introducing new expectations for carbon monoxide alarms (now complete).
- Consult on measures to ensure that social housing residents are protected from harm caused by poor electrical safety.
- Continue to work with the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group and the Building Safety Regulator to ensure resident voices are heard.

Chapter 1: To be Safe in Your Home 3

- Engagement on safety
- Building Safety Manager for high rise and named Accountable Person
- Two-way engagement with residents on how safety is managed
- Residents automatically receive information about the fire and structural
20 protections in place to manage risks within their building
- Residents have access to a quick and effective route to raise complaints about fire and structural safety
- Residents have information to enable them to understand and fulfil their safety responsibilities
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs)

Chapter 1: To be Safe in Your Home - Impacts

- Unprecedented consultation and ongoing engagement
- Different from “Resident Involvement”
- New areas of work
- Provision of information
- Resident safety comes first
- Staffing resource required
- Housing Revenue Account needs to provide the resource to deliver

Chapter 2: Know how your landlord is performing 1

- Tenants need to be able to hold their landlords to account
- RSH to bring in a set of tenant satisfaction measures for all landlords on things that matter to tenants – consultation already underway.
- A new access to information scheme for social housing tenants of providers so that information relating to landlords is easily accessible by tenants.
- Landlords required to provide complete transparency in publishing and reporting expenditure including levels of executive remuneration.
- 22 • Information to be in an accessible format so tenants can see how funds are being spent
- Tenants able to challenge whether money is being spent on the things that matter to them
- Landlords required to identify a senior person in their organisation who is responsible for ensuring they comply with the consumer standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Landlords to report to every tenant on such matters at least once a year, if not continuously, using technology.

Chapter 2: Know how your landlord is performing 2

Draft Performance Measures

- Decent Homes Standard compliance
- Responsive repairs completed right first time
- Tenant satisfaction with landlord's repairs and maintenance service
- Compliance with health and safety obligations:
 - Gas safety
 - Electrical safety
 - Fire safety
 - Asbestos
 - Water safety
 - Lift safety
- Tenant satisfaction with the health and safety of their home

Chapter 2: Know how your landlord is performing 3

Draft Performance Measures

- Number of complaints relative to the size of the landlord
- % of complaints resolved within agreed timescale
- Tenant satisfaction with landlord's complaints handling
- 24 Number of complaints relating to fairness and/or respect, relative to the size of the landlord
- Tenant satisfaction that their landlord listens to their views and takes notice of them
- Tenant satisfaction with landlord's engagement with tenants

Chapter 2: Know how your landlord is performing 4

Draft Performance Measures

- % of communal areas meeting the required standard
- Number of complaints relating to communal areas, relative to the size of the landlord
- Tenant satisfaction with landlord actions to keep communal areas clean and safe
- Tenant satisfaction with landlord contribution to the neighbourhood associated with their home
- Number of complaints relating to anti-social behaviour, relative to the size of the landlord
- Tenant satisfaction with landlord's handling of anti-social behaviour
- Tenant overall satisfaction with the service their landlord provides

Chapter 2: Know how your landlord is performing 5

Impacts

- More performance measures to include in Annual Report with a focus on building safety and compliance
- Real time data and technology needed to support publication
- Greater level of detail on expenditure
- Likely to be greater scrutiny on Housing Revenue Account spend which is ring-fenced by statute so that rental income can only be spend on activities that relate to the management and maintenance of the tenants homes
- More work with Ambassadors to understand spending
- Responsible person for ensuring Consumer Standards are being met

Chapter 3: Complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

- Building Safety Bill removed democratic filter, speeding up access to the Housing Ombudsman
- Expanded the Housing Ombudsman service which is aiming to halve its decision times by March 2022.
- Increased the Housing Ombudsman's powers to take action against landlords where needed. The Housing Ombudsman has published a new Complaint Handling Code.
- Two stage complaint process, not three with 10 day max response time

Chapter 3: Complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

- Support improved complaint handling by landlords and hold them to account through stronger action by the Housing Ombudsman.
- MHCLG to run an awareness campaign to publicise complaining
- MHCLG to formalise and strengthen the relationship between the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman by introducing a statutory requirement for both bodies to co-operate with each other in undertaking their responsibilities in holding landlords to account.
- MHCLG to make the Housing Ombudsman a statutory consultee for any proposal concerning changes to the Regulator of Social Housing's economic and consumer standards.
- MHCLG to make the Regulator of Social Housing a statutory consultee for any changes to the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

Chapter 3: Complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Impacts

- Moving to a two stage process
- Need to adopt the HO definition of a complaint
- Need to publish exclusions (vexatious complaints)
- Updated policy and process to be available on-line
- Reasonable adjustments policy to be in place
- Complaint officer post to be recruited
- Investigating officers to have autonomy and authority
- Continuing to promote tenants being able to complain

Chapter 4: To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants 1

- Strengthened the remit and powers of the RSH
- RSH to proactively monitor and drive landlords' compliance with its consumer standards.
- Remove the 'serious detriment test' and introduce routine inspections for the largest landlords (with over 1,000 homes) every four years.
- RSH's objectives to explicitly cover safety and transparency, reviewing consumer standards
- RSH to have the power to publish a Code of Practice on the consumer standards to be clearer on what landlords are required to deliver.
- Strengthen RSH's enforcement powers to tackle failing landlords and to respond to new challenges facing the sector, including removing the cap on the level of fines it can issue, introducing Performance Improvement Plans for landlords failing to comply, and introducing a new power to arrange emergency repairs if needed where a survey uncovers evidence of systemic landlord failures.
- Set out an expectation for all landlords to self-refer breaches with the regulatory standards.

Chapter 4: To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants 2

- Continued Co-regulation
- “The existing regulatory regime works on the basis of co-regulation. This means that it is the responsibility of the boards of housing associations and ³ other private providers of social housing, or of Councillors in local authority landlords, to be assured that they comply with the outcome focused standards set by the regulator”
- On safety, “Driving and embedding culture change throughout organisations is the collective responsibility of Boards and, in the case of local authorities, Councillors.”
- Landlords to identify and make public a nominated person responsible for compliance with their health and safety requirements.

Chapter 5: To have your voice heard by your landlord 1

- RSH to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants.
- RSH to deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between ³² landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account.
- RSH to review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service.

Chapter 5: To have your voice heard by your landlord 2

Impacts

- Engagement is more than just resident involvement with landlords.
- Additional training for tenants on how to engage
- Tackling loneliness through ongoing engagement with tenants
- Tailored engagement for individual tenants
- Meeting tenants personally and finding out:
 - What matters to each tenant
 - Check on the general condition of the home (unreported repairs/damp)
 - Gather information on protected characteristics, contact preferences, reasonable adjustments needed and contacts
 - Promote tenant portal to aid channel shift and effective reporting of repairs etc

Chapter 6: To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in 1

- Decarbonisation of social housing grants
- Health and wellbeing initiatives, promoting more and better green spaces
- Review the Decent Homes Standard to consider if it should be updated, including how it can better support the decarbonisation and energy efficiency of social homes, and improve communal and green spaces.
- ³⁴ Continue to engage with the latest evidence on the impact of housing conditions on health, including COVID-19 transmission, and actively consider options to mitigate these impacts.
- Review professionalisation to consider how well housing staff are equipped to work with people with mental health needs and encourage best practice for landlords working with those with mental health needs.
- Clarify the roles of agencies involved in tackling anti-social behaviour and signpost tenants to those agencies who can give them the most appropriate support and assistance when faced with anti-social behaviour.
- Consider the results of the allocations evidence collection exercise findings to ensure that housing is allocated in the fairest way possible and achieves the best outcomes for local places and communities.

Chapter 6: To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in 2

- Much greater support for tenants facing anti-social behaviour and crime
- MHCLG to work with the NHF and LGA to encourage social landlords to inform residents of their right to make a community trigger application
- 33 • RSH to review regulatory standards to make it clear that landlords should have a policy setting out how they should tackle issues surrounding domestic abuse
- Supporting the Armed Forces Community

Chapter 6: To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in - Impacts

- Greater engagement with tenants on carbon reduction initiatives
- Higher quality of green space provision
- Increased regime of estate quality inspections needs resourcing
- Strong emphasis on improving ASB services and support for victims of ASB
- Strong emphasis on dealing with domestic abuse
- ASB and the estate to be included in performance indicators

Chapter 7: To be supported to take your first step to ownership

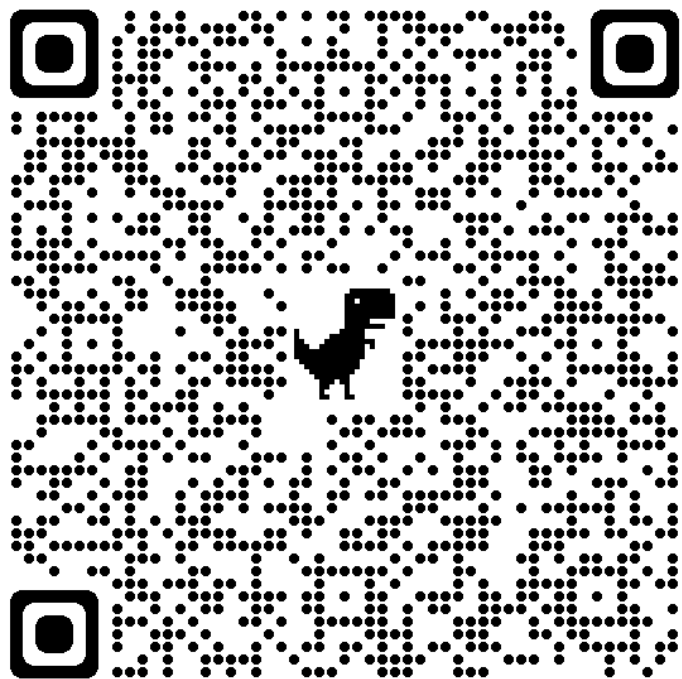
- Raft of initiatives to promote building social rent homes and ownership
- Helping residents into home ownership
- New shared ownership model
- Continuing to support the Right to Buy
- Leasehold reform and supporting leaseholders

Summary

- Upping the game
- Wide range of new activities and “new work”
- Lots of engagement work is essential to understand tenants concerns and needs
- Focus on tenants first, listening to them, respecting them and then what affects them:
 - ∞ • The home and the quality of the home
 - The estate and the environment
 - Fire safety
 - Building safety
 - Consumer standards and ASB
- Significant budget investment needed to deliver
- Don't wait for legislation and regulation

You can read the full version of “The Social Housing White Paper: The Charter for Social Housing Residents” at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936098/The charter for social housing residents - social housing white paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936098/The_charter_for_social_housing_residents_-_social_housing_white_paper.pdf) or using the QR code from a smart phone or device.

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Questions?

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