

Ministry for Homes, Communities and Local Government Green Paper “A new deal for social housing”

Summary briefing

The social housing green paper titled “A new deal for social housing”, published on 14 August 2018, is the Government’s vision for social housing. It sets out proposals to rebalance the relationship between tenants and landlords, drawing on the Government’s engagement with social tenants following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower.

Consultation on the proposals in the Green Paper closes on 6 November 2018.

The paper is designed around **five principles**:

- a safe and decent home which is fundamental to a sense of security and our ability to get on in life;
- improving and speeding up how complaints are resolved;
- empowering residents and ensuring their voices are heard so that landlords are held to account;
- tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities, challenging the stereotypes that exist about residents and their communities; and,
- building the social homes that we need and ensuring that those homes can act as a springboard to home ownership.

Key points regarding each principle include:

A safe and decent home

- Ensuring resident safety: Government are seeking to bring forward implementation of the recommendations on tenant involvement from Dame Judith Hackitt’s Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. This will include a programme of support for tenants to engage landlords in issues of building safety
- Decent Homes standard: Government will consider whether the Decent Homes standard provides adequate safety and standards for social tenants
- Government is asking for views on whether minimum standards recently introduced for privately rented housing should also apply to social homes

Improving and speeding up how complaints are resolved

- Removing barriers to redress: Government is seeking views on strengthening local mediation for disputes, and on the value of the requirement for a designated person (either a tenant panel, MP or councillor) to consider a case before it can be escalated to the Ombudsman
- Supporting resident to raise complaints: the paper seeks views on raising awareness of complaint processes and improving tenants’ access to advice and support
- Speeding up the complaints process: the paper seeks views on speeding up landlords’ complaints process, and how existing systems can be developed to give tenants an effective route for raising safety concerns

Empowering residents and ensuring their voices are heard

- Government is seeking views on new performance indicators to help inform tenants, and proposals to make handling of complaints part of the overall reporting framework. There could also be a role for the Regulator in publishing comparative ratings for landlords
- Rewarding good performance: government funding for building programmes could be conditional on a new measure of tenant satisfaction
- Ensuring residents voices are heard: the paper seeks views on making tenant engagement more consistent, and providing a national platform for tenants
- Strengthening choice over services: Government is seeking views on a new stock transfer programme to promote the transfer of local authority owned housing to community based housing associations; setting up trailblazers for new models of resident led governance; the ability of Tenant Management Organisations to deliver good outcomes for tenants, and examples of other forms of innovative tenant involvement
- A stronger regulator: the paper seeks views on the ability of the regulator to scrutinise the performance of social landlords and take action against them

Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities

- Celebrating thriving communities - the paper seeks views on investing in community initiatives and events, and on how to share positive stories of social housing residents and their neighbourhoods.
- Embedding good customer service and neighbourhood management – the Government is seeking views on supporting the professionalisation of housing teams and developing a performance indicator to understand service improvement and social value
- Promoting good design – the paper seeks views on how planning guidance can support good design in the social sector, and how to involve residents in design

Building the social homes that we need

- Supporting councils to build more – the paper seeks views on the balance between investing in grant or borrowing, the proposals for reforming Right to Buy, enabling housing companies, and confirms the repealing the Higher Value Assets policy.
- Community-led housing – the paper seeks views on how to boost the community-led housing, developing new community owned homes, and enabling resident-led estate regeneration.
- Helping housing associations and others develop more affordable homes – the paper seeks views on what additional certainties are needed by housing associations to deliver more homes
- Ensure we are using existing social housing efficiently for those who need it most – the paper seeks views on a review to understand social housing allocations, and confirms council flexibility on fixed-term tenancies.
- Ensuring social housing is a springboard to homeownership – the paper seeks views on how to further support shared ownership products, confirms continuing of voluntary Right to Buy pilots

The Government has also issued a consultation on changing the rules governing the use of right to buy receipts (deadline 9 October 2018) and a call for evidence on the regulation of social housing (deadline 6 November 2018) alongside the green paper.

