

The Charter for Social Housing Residents - Social Housing White Paper

The Social Housing White Paper 2020, builds upon the proposals set out in the Social Housing Green Paper 'A new deal for social housing residents', the Review of Social Housing Regulation: Call for Evidence and of course the learning from the Grenfell Tower Tragedy. It sets out a new Charter for Social Housing Residents

Government focus and purpose of the white paper;

- To provide clarity on the standards that every social tenant in England is entitled to expect from their landlords
- To raise the standard of social housing and meet the housing aspirations of residents now and in the future
- To provide quality, safe environments free from crime & anti-social behaviour
- To feel protected and empowered by a regulatory regime and a culture of transparency, accountability, decency and service befitting the intentions and traditions of social housing
- To provide routes to self- ownership

Tenants Charter:

The Charter for Social Housing Residents sits at the heart of paper and outlines seven key commitments that residents should expect from their landlords.

1. **To be safe in your home.** Government will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
2. **To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong Ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
4. **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer Regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Governance board (Housing Committee). The Government will provide help, if you want it to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

It specifically outlines plans for new regulation, a strengthened Housing Ombudsman to speed up complaints, and a set of tenant satisfaction measures that social housing landlords will have to report against.

Reforms:

The paper sets out a range of reforms to ensure landlords comply with the Charter:

- A reformed Regulator of Social Housing with new reactive and proactive consumer regulation, requiring Landlords to;
- Be transparent about their performance and decision-making so that tenants and the Regulator can hold them to account.
- Put things right when they go wrong.
- Listen to tenants through effective engagement.
- Inspect organisations with over 1,000 homes at least once every four years to review compliance with the consumer standards.
- A strengthened Housing Ombudsman to allow tenants easier access and speed up complaint resolution, as well as providing new quarterly webinars for residents on insight reports, complaints data, learning points and case studies to ensure they can challenge and bring their landlord to account.
- A series of new key performance indicators (KPIs) that landlords will be required to report against, with proposed satisfaction measures on repairs, safety, complaints, engagement, and neighbourhood management. Landlords will also be required to report on executive pay and how they spend their money.
- A new accountable person for safety, and consumer standards, within each organisation, at SDC this will be the Director of Communities.
- An expectation that tenants should be able to access key information from their landlord, although housing associations will not be subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.
- An intention to tackle anti-social behaviour by clarifying the roles of different agencies and signposting who can support residents.

Areas subject to further Consultation:

- The Government has launched a further **consultation on mandating smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in rental homes**.
- The Regulator of Social Housing's powers have now been extended and **new draft Tenant Satisfaction and Key Performance Indicators (KPI)** will follow.
- Government will also look to directly influence **changes to the consumer regulation framework** following conversations with tenants, landlords and stakeholders. Including 'safety' and removing the 'serious detriment test' and resulting in a code of practice on the consumer standards
- Ongoing review of the **Decent Home Standard** to include decarbonisation and placemaking, improving communal and green spaces.
- **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.

NEXT STEPS

Whilst the White paper has wide ranging implications for all social landlords, there are several areas where, as a sector, good progress has already been made that can be built on:

- Since the Grenfell tragedy there has been an increasing focus on the strength of Tenants and Residents voice and influence in providers strategic decision making.
- There has been a similar focus on improving customer satisfaction through improved engagement and customer experience mapping.
- Approaches to complaint management have been reviewed in the light of the new Housing Ombudsman code with processes and policies being updated to comply with the new Code, reducing processes to two stages

Key challenges and opportunities;

- Many areas are still open to consultation with opportunities to influence and ensure our residents voices are heard.
- The design, age and building materials of existing tenants' homes and new H&S requirements
- Addressing the climate change and energy efficiency targets
- Improving access to our services through a strong and accessible digital offer
- Re-designing service delivery in the light of the Covid experience and the focus on Safety, ASB, Domestic Abuse and Tenant Engagement and involvement
- A shared focus with partners and stakeholders on inclusion, respect and tackling social housing stigma
- A stronger focus on Consumer regulation requirements and Governance
- Resident and community engagement – ensuring its meaningful and inclusive

Going forward the focus for all social housing providers is on working constructively with NHF/CIH and the Regulator to help shape the detail behind the charter and the regulatory changes, through consultation events and workshops and to review their current position against the requirements. This is against the backdrop of delivering services during the Covid pandemic, reviewing the learning from the last 12 months and understanding what this means for future service delivery. The white paper supports and is supported by current and evolving legislation and regulation, including;

The Building Safety Bill (2020) – which seeks to create an enhanced regulatory regime for all buildings, covering the design, construction, day-to-day management and maintenance of higher-risk buildings, with residents having a strong voice in the system. Requiring providers to ensure they create and embed a culture of engagement with fire and building safety.

It should be noted that **Culture is referred to 23 times** in the white paper- “drive a culture change to put safety first” “develop a national culture of engagement on fire and structural safety for residents of all tenures” “supports a culture change whereby landlords are more open with tenants” “ensure that the needs of tenants are embedded in the culture of all landlords” There is a real focus on embedding change across the sector.

Feedback from the Housing Sector

Chartered Institute of Housing

We welcome the commitment to raise standards, the focus on increased transparency and the desire to give tenants a real opportunity to shape and influence the decisions that impact on their lives..... CIH is also pleased that the government has responded to calls to review the Decent Homes Standard, which is due a fundamental refresh..... We welcome the intention of the white paper, which puts tenants front and centre and aims to address the stigmatisation of social housing and people who live in social housing.

Local Government Association

“It is paramount that the voice of all social housing residents is heard, and councils are committed to improving standards, empowering/supporting tenants and measures that will make the existing redress process clearer, equitable and accessible for all.....also determined that their tenants should have the security of a safe and well-maintained home with any issues quickly and satisfactorily addressed. Tenants of all housing tenures should expect that their landlords will consistently work towards improving living conditions..... As important as these reforms are for tenants, they will not help to tackle the severe shortage of social housing the country faces.

TPAS

The White Paper is a follow up to 2018's Green Paper, and in many ways, it's the start of a process. On proactive consumer regulation, performance reporting and updating decent homes there's lots of work to do on the detail, and we'll be supporting our members with their own preparation, as well as influencing national policies. We may not have all the detail, but the direction of travel is very clear. Of course, there's plenty missing from the white paper. I'm as disappointed as everyone else to see how little is proposed to tackle stigma and nothing at all on the national tenants' voice.

Requirements of the Charter

A review of the White Paper has been completed and the key requirements outlined in the seven elements of the Charter are shown below

<p>Charter 1</p>	<p>To be safe in your home</p> <p>Safety will become part of the Regulators’ new consumer regulation role, including the development of statutory and good practice guidance on engaging residents of all tenures on safety issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social landlords will need to identify a nominated person responsible for complying with their health and safety requirements • A Memorandum of Understanding between the Health and Safety Executive and the Building Safety Regulator will be put in place to ensure effective sharing of information • Consultation on mandating smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in social housing has been launched • Consultation on measures to ensure that social housing residents are protected from harm caused by poor electrical safety is planned
<p>Charter 2</p>	<p>To know how your landlord is performing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regulator will introduce a new set of tenant satisfaction measures. • Landlords will have to provide a clear breakdown of how their income is being spent, including levels of executive salaries and management costs (relative to the size of the landlord) to be published alongside tenant satisfaction measures • A new Access to Information Scheme will be introduced – which will be in line with the Freedom of Information Act – for social housing tenants so that information relating to landlords is easily accessible • Landlords will be required to identify a senior person in their organisation who is responsible for ensuring they comply with the consumer standards set by the Regulator • Landlords will be expected to report to every tenant on such matters at least once a year, if not continuously, using technology (the use of apps is referenced in the paper)
<p>Charter 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly • Landlords will be required to comply with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, ensuring that they have good processes in place to respond swiftly and effectively to complaints. • Landlords have been asked to self-assess against the Code by 31 December 2020 and publish the results.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From March 2021, reports on the complaints the Housing Ombudsman has handled for individual landlords, as well as the determinations on individual cases, will be published on the Housing Ombudsman’s website • Keep the Housing Ombudsman’s powers, and compliance with them, under review and consider ways to strengthen them, including the option of legislation to put the Complaint Handling Code on a statutory footing • Run an awareness campaign so social housing residents know their rights, are confident in navigating their routes to complain, and are aware of how to escalate to get redress where needed. • Ensure lessons are learned and maintain residents’ confidence in the Housing Ombudsman Service through the appointment by the Ombudsman of an independent reviewer by March 2021 to examine any complaints made about the service that the Housing Ombudsman provides • Formalise and strengthen the relationship between the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman by introducing a statutory requirement for both bodies to cooperate with each other in undertaking their responsibilities in holding landlords to account • Make the Housing Ombudsman a statutory consultee for any proposal concerning changes to the Regulator of Social Housing’s economic and consumer standards and make the Regulator of Social Housing a statutory consultee for any changes to the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.
<p>Charter 4</p>	<p>To be treated with respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new consumer regulation function within the Regulator of Social Housing, which will proactively monitor consumer standards • Remove the ‘serious detriment test’ and introduce routine inspections for the largest landlords (with over 1,000 homes) every four years • Change the Regulator of Social Housing’s objectives to explicitly cover safety and transparency, and work with it to review its consumer standards to ensure they are up to date • The Regulator will have new powers to publish a Code of Practice on the consumer standards which will be clearer on Landlord requirements • Removing the cap on the level of fines the Regulator can issue and introducing Performance Improvement Plans for landlords failing to comply • Reduce the notice period for surveys on the condition of properties, and introduce a new power to arrange emergency repairs if needed where a survey uncovers evidence of systemic landlord failures • Review the statutory Right to Manage guidance • Set out an expectation for all landlords to self-refer breaches with the regulatory standards

<p>Charter 5</p>	<p>To have your voice heard by your landlord</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regulator will require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants. • Focus on tackling loneliness and ensuring that tenant-led engagement activities linked to Covid-19 can continue. • Deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account • Review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service.
<p>Charter 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in • This section focusses on well designed, decent homes, good neighbourhoods, and pride in the community. • There will be a review of the Decent Homes Standard to ensure it is delivering what is needed for safety and decency now. It will assess how the standard can support better energy efficiency and the decarbonisation of social homes. • The Decent Homes Standard review will consider access to safe, open, and green spaces for people’s wellbeing and how improvements to communal space could make places more liveable, safe, and comfortable. • There will be a review of the tenant’s experience when dealing with frontline staff and how in some cases this can lead to stigma based on their interactions. • The review will include professionalisation as to whether housing staff are equipped with the right knowledge and skills to work with people with mental health needs and the government will encourage best practice for landlords working with those with mental health needs. • There is consideration for supporting tenants facing anti-social behaviour and crime. The new tenant satisfaction measures will include measures on responsible neighbourhood management, including tackling anti-social behaviour. • The Government will work with the Home Office and other partners to develop an understanding on how crime and tenant’s perception of crime can be measured and reported. There will also be clarity on the different responsibilities that police, local authorities, and landlords have for ASB management. • The Government will work with the National Housing Federation and Local Government Association to encourage social landlords to inform residents of their right to make a community trigger application on how their ASB case is being managed (leading to a multi-agency case review). • There will be a review of perpetrators of anti-social behaviour who suffer mental health issues.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It considers how to integrate communities and prevents social housing tenants from being made to feel like social class citizens. • It covers how social housing is allocated fairly through local authority allocation schemes. There will also be a review of how government can improve access to suitable homes to disabled people. • For those tenants facing domestic abuse, the Government will expect the Regulator to review and amend its Regulatory Standards to make it clear that landlords should have a policy setting out how they should tackle issues relating to domestic abuse. • The Government identifies a commitment to provide priority for social housing for the armed forces community.
<p>Charter 7</p>	<p>To be supported to take your first step to ownership</p> <p>This section of the report highlights policies and funding that have been put in place to increase the supply of affordable housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built over 486,600 new affordable homes since 2010, including 142,400 for social rent • Announced our new £11.5bn Affordable Homes Programme that will deliver up to 180,000 new homes • Announced a new £3bn Affordable Homes Guarantee Scheme • Removed the cap on local authority borrowing to fund housebuilding • Consulted on whether greater flexibilities can be offered around how local authorities can use receipts from Right to Buy sales • Supported community-led housebuilding through the community housing fund • Announced Government will consult on further guidance to provide clarity on rural exception sites policy, to ensure they are used to their full potential. • Introduced a new shared ownership model • Announced that around half of the homes delivered by the new Affordable Homes Programme will be for affordable home ownership • Announced a new Right to Shared Ownership, meaning that most new grant-funded housing association homes for rent will give residents the opportunity to purchase a 10% (or more) stake in their home and to purchase further shares in future • Launched a pilot of Voluntary Right to Buy in the Midlands • Amended the National Planning Policy Framework and published a new national design guide to emphasise the importance of beauty and good design • Emphasised through our new National Design Guide the importance of building beautiful and well-designed social homes.

Further detail and requirements of the Charter for Social Housing Residents

Useful links

[The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Social housing green paper: a 'new deal' for social housing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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