



Policy and Practice Focus

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Manchester 2012

Housing 2012 saw a new venue, in a new city, with a new approach, a new style and a promise that this year's conference would not be a quiet one. Our intention was to encourage challenge and debate and to give delegates the time to think, network, learn and share. This year's conference saw record delegate numbers, a packed exhibition and a full conference programme across four key themes – economy and investment; society; impact and change.

If you missed the biggest housing conference of the year, you missed this:

- Grainia Long opened and closed the conference
- State of the nation address on the fiscal and economic landscape for the country and with reference to housing
- Sir Bob Kerlake discussed his view that housing is central to the coalitions' policies and vital for economic growth
- Grant Shapps managed to endear himself to the audience despite some hard questioning of his current policies

Delegates heard:

- journalists, politicians and housing leaders on what drives housing up the political agenda and how we as a sector, can ensure we maintain a high profile at local and national levels
- how the housing sector can show its worth in times of austerity and budget cuts; how the social value of housing's contribution needs to be articulated clearly and robustly; and how to objectively measure the impact of the services we deliver
- expert debate on government initiatives designed to support new housing supply and discussions on what else providers, funders and decision makers need to do

- how an understanding of the leadership roles of senior managers really can make a significant difference to operational development
- up to date information on housing management and the crucial role of front line housing officers
- a variety of speakers' views on the state of housing and the housing profession and whether we should be looking to other professional bodies for inspiration

Sacred cow sessions included one focusing on shared ownership where delegates said that shared ownership should be more flexible and geared to the customers' circumstances, it should be simpler and not limited to specific properties. Delegates didn't want more government led reviews and would like to see the sector coming up with new solutions. There were also sessions on the future of ALMOs, in house management versus contracting out, is grant funding really needed and whether we should be building to higher standards or building more homes.

Welfare reform continued to grab the attention of delegates at Housing 2012 which included a packed session with speakers including Lord Freud (Minister responsible for welfare reform) and Julia Unwin (CEO of Joseph Rowntree Foundation). Freud's statement that there is consistently broad support among the housing sector for welfare reform was instantly rebutted by Unwin, who warned him against confusing 'pragmatism with consensus.' She said, 'there are strong arguments for it [reform] but the pragmatic response we are coming up with is not saying we think this is the best way either for tenants or for the businesses we run, the direct payment reforms mean that tenants are trading their security for cash'. She also said that 'welfare reform is high on the risk register for every organisation'.

Lord David Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform in his [speech](#) challenged the view that the payment reforms were being implemented arbitrarily. He said that the purpose of the reforms is so that 'people budget in or out of work in the same way' because 'not paying rent creates a barrier to taking up work because the effort is deemed too complex'. He commended the CIH [Making it Fit](#) report launched at the event and cited a number of examples in the report that impressed him as a practical response to welfare reform.

Professor Paul Hickman of Sheffield Hallam University, part of the demonstration project evaluation team said that the purpose of the study was not to assess the performance of the participants but to 'learn the lessons'. A key strand will be assessing the impact on landlord cash-flow and rent collection costs. The study will follow a cohort of tenants to see how they manage their payments of housing benefit. However, one of the delegates questioned whether the study group would be self-selecting because participation was not mandatory.

Tim Power from Oxford City Council, one of demonstration project areas said that for those involved payment of housing benefit to landlords would end on 28 June 2012. From then onward payment of HB would be four weekly in arrears. He said that the majority would pay by direct debit and that it would go in and out of their account on the same day. Oxford City Council are self-financing and so he said the project would test whether their business plan was still viable.

Another key theme at Manchester was the economy – with many sessions devoted to addressing the pressing issues of housing's role in the economy and the need for further investment in housing. Our learning from the 'investment strategy interviews' held with senior stakeholders from the world of housing finance are the subject of a forthcoming report on housing investment which seeks to clarify some of the complex terminology and demystify the investment vehicles and sources of finance available for housing. Aimed as a beginners guide to investment, it will be available free to members later in the Autumn. We are keen to

hear from members on your own understanding of investment - do you understand the different sources of finance or investment vehicles in use? Would a guide to options and terminology be useful? What should it contain? Contact Sian.sankey@cih.org to give your views

Welfare reform

Welfare reform continues to be a priority issue for the housing sector. In July CIH submitted evidence to the Social Security Advisory Committee to inform its scrutiny of the draft universal credit regulations. Some of the main points were:

- ending extended payments acts against creation of work incentives
- the regulations should give clarity on service charges for social housing to reduce concern and confusion about increased cost burdens on landlords
- concern that arrangements for change of circumstances will leave claimants badly out of pocket

You can see our full submission on the [welfare reform page](#) of our website.

Director of Policy & Practice Gavin Smart gave oral evidence to the DWP select committee inquiry into universal credit implementation, following our [written submission](#). You can see Gavin giving evidence [here](#). The main points made were:

- concern that some low income groups may be worse off under universal credit than the current system
- need for improved communication about detail and timings of policy design and implementation
- need for much better impact monitoring and reporting on learning from pathfinders
- need for greater awareness of the implementation challenges outside of England, especially in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

350 people are now signed up for our [online learning network](#) about the direct payments demonstration projects. An interim report on the projects was published in August – it highlights that tenants are often unaware of the reforms and that landlords are having to identify resources and partnerships to prepare for direct payments. Webinars on the early experiences of the demonstration projects, how the impact of direct payments will be evaluated and on plans to support, personal budgeting ran over the summer.

Learning from the UK Housing Award winners

The winners of the 2012 UK Housing Awards were announced at a ceremony on the evening of Wednesday 27 June. Among the winners were **Westfield Housing Association**, who were named Landlord of the Year, and **Roy Irwin**, who received a Lifetime Achievement award.

For CIH the awards form part of our commitment to identify and share examples of innovative or successful ways of doing things, to help drive up performance across the sector. So over the next 12 months we will be working with the 13 organisations who picked up awards to promote their achievements and highlight how their work could be replicated by others.

We have already made information about the lessons that can be learnt from the winning organisations available [on our website](#) and published an issue of [housing practice magazine](#) showcasing their work. We will publish further information about their initiatives as they continue to progress and many of the winning organisations will also be appearing as good practice speakers at our events.



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Summer recess, announcements and the reshuffle...

You could be forgiven for expecting the summer 'parliamentary recess' to be a quiet time for government announcements or activity. This year's summer announcements proved it is anything but, with the Cabinet reshuffle, housing and economic issues all playing centre stage over the summer.

David Cameron's reshuffle saw a lot of change in ministers whose work impacts on housing. CIH praised Grant Shapps' contribution to reform of local authority housing finance, and called for Mark Prisk, the new housing minister to focus on building new homes.

New ministers who will impact on housing issues:

Mark Prisk becomes Housing Minister (from Business Innovation & Skills), replacing Grant Shapps

Nick Boles becomes Planning Minister, replacing Greg Clark

Don Foster replacing Andrew Stunell at DCLG

Brandon Lewis replacing Bob Neil at DCLG

Norman Lamb becomes minister of state at the Department of Health replacing Paul Burstowe

Anna Soubry becomes Public Health Minister, replacing Anne Milton

Baroness Warsi becomes Minister for Faith and Communities

Esther McVey becomes Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) Parliamentary Under Secretary of State replacing Maria Miller as Minister for Disabled People

Maria Miller as Culture Secretary will also take over the women and equalities portfolio from Lynne Featherstone

Familiar faces staying in place:

Iain Duncan Smith stays as Work and Pensions Secretary

Lord Freud stays as Welfare Reform Minister

Eric Pickles stays at Communities and Local Government

You can find out more about the ministerial changes affecting housing, and CIH's views, on our [news pages](#).

Summer housing policy announcements:

Investing in housing to kick start the economy

We are pleased that the government's announcement of a £10 billion investment in housing is intended to stimulate housing supply. Whilst this figure is a drop in the ocean compared to the investment needed to provide homes for all those in need, it comes at a time when housing is in the political spotlight once again. As part of the announcement government has introduced changes to section 106 agreements that will allow developers of sites deemed unviable due to s106 requirements to appeal immediately to the planning inspectorate who will decide how many affordable homes are required.

Grainia Long, CIH chief executive, said: "Today is an important day for the housing industry. By providing £10 billion of financial guarantees to housing organisations, government can make a significant contribution to building more of the homes that we need. Read our [summary of the announcements](#) and our [more detailed analysis](#).

Institutional investment in private rented housing

Sir Adrian Montague's report into institutional investment in the private rented sector created many column inches in support of the need for wider investment in housing. See CIH in the media commenting on the report on our [news pages](#). CIH responded by saying:

- attempts to stimulate professional, long term investment in private renting are helpful
- using flexibility in the planning system to support the development of private rented homes would be acceptable to kick start a new part of the housing sector
- any revised approach to planning obligations should be trialled first
- proposals to explore how a system of voluntary standards can help improve the quality, management and maintenance of private rented homes sound positive.

Squatting, travellers, homelessness and 'beds in sheds'

- the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced a clamp down on 'beds in sheds'
- squatting became a criminal offence as of 2 September
- further advice was offered to local authorities and landowners in how to deal with unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller sites
- neighbourhood planning received a welcome boost from government of a £10 million fund
- homelessness prevention projects are to receive a further £160m over two years
- DCLG are currently inviting organisations to bid for funding for tenant panels and empowerment projects.

3 themes for CIH long-term policy work

In July, CIH's governing board agreed a strategic policy focus on three specific areas economy; health and wellbeing; and support for increasing supply and building. We will focus our longer-term policy development and influencing work on these three areas, with a view to focusing government and wider stakeholders' attention on the deep rooted issues that matter for housing professionals across the country. We will continue to exert influence across all areas of housing policy and practice on behalf of our members.

APPG

CIH continues to provide the secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing. The APPG has cross party support and regularly meets to help influence debate and raise awareness of housing issues with MPs. In early September, we held a debate on

housing and the economy, with three eminent speakers Stephen Ratcliffe, Director of UK Contractors Group; Neil Blake, Head of Research at CBRE and Alex Marsh, University of Bristol. The debate was a success with a number of MPs in attendance discussing housing's role in the economy, the role of government in promoting house building, economic stimulus packages and the overall state of the economy. All the MPs in attendance were in agreement that a further debate on housing in the commons was an important objective.

APPG meetings are not open to the public but if you have views on what we should be encouraging MPs to discuss, then please contact [Laura Shimili](#) We might even ask you to speak at a forthcoming event!

Party conferences

CIH is delighted to be part of [Homes for Britain](#), which aims to create a united voice for housing at this year's political party conferences. We are working with the National Housing Federation, the Home Builders Federation, Crisis, the National Landlords Association and Royal Institute of British Architects to highlight housing's crucial role in driving growth and building strong communities. We are hosting a reception at the Conservative Party conference and are hoping that everyone with an interest in housing will use the Homes for Britain brand at all three conferences to promote their own events. For more information contact [Joanne Kent-Smith](#).

Have your say on government consultations:

CIH will shortly submit evidence to the APPG for housing in the north's inquiry into the impact of welfare reform, based on information submitted to us by our regional colleagues. We are always keen to gather information from members on the impact of policies in their area. Contact [Sian Sankey](#) if you would like to submit evidence for this inquiry.

S106 – open until 8 October, government has launched a consultation on proposals to allow developers to formally request reconsideration of section 106 planning obligations where they were agreed prior to April 2010. Should a local authority refuse, developers would have a right to appeal. We are keen to hear members' views on this proposal: do you have examples of successful voluntary renegotiation of s106; do you think removing affordable housing planning obligations will speed up the delivery of more homes across all tenures? Is there a balance needed between increasing supply and ensuring protecting affordable housing delivery? Contact [Sian Sankey](#) if you want to have your say on this consultation.

Health and care consultations, several consultations from Department of Health are out now and give us further opportunities to reinforce the messages about housing and to demonstrate how it can deliver outcomes for care and health. We welcome your input to our responses to these, and a fuller briefing paper will be available on our website. Please send your comments to [Sarah Davis](#) by 5 October (for the [draft care and support bill](#), the [safeguarding consultation](#) and [responses to the select committee](#)). Feedback on the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) guidance](#) is needed by 21 September.

Recent responses

Pay to Stay – CIH does not support the government's recent proposals to charge higher earning tenants higher rents. The potential for a wholesale shift to market rents is incredibly worrying. We are increasingly concerned about the definition of social housing and the effect the policy would have on housing providers' charitable status. Alongside our [consultation response](#) we have produced an interim report as part of a wider project on [Future options for rents and rent setting](#). A joint project with L&Q, it looks at the wider issues around rents and rent setting in the current political and economic climate.

CIH contact [Laura Shimili](#)

Discharge of homelessness duty into private rented sector, suitability of accommodation: our [response to this consultation](#) is available on our website. It raises some concerns around the new system including the risk of tenancy failure, the relationship between private landlords and tenants claiming welfare benefits and the use of 12 month assured shorthold tenancies given that a local authority will not owe a duty of homelessness to a family rehoused in the private rented sector for two years.

Communities and local government select committee call for evidence on the Housing Ombudsman service: CIH have submitted joint evidence with Housemark, it is available on [our website](#).

Discretionary housing payments guidance: CIH have responded to this consultation and our response is available on [our website](#).

Health and social care

The long awaited social care white paper, [Caring for our Future](#), was published in July, and from our perspective it was very encouraging. In discussions with civil servants in the department we had been assured they had 'got the message' about housing and the paper demonstrated that well. Although it did not take forward the recommendations on funding for care put forward by Dilnot, it focused on prevention, and the role of housing within that, very strongly. It enables housing professionals to use new levers when trying to engage with care and health professionals, and will hopefully drive forward more involvement and consideration of housing services as part of the solution to meeting our growing care needs.

Older LGBT people

John Thornhill has been involved in a project with Stonewall Housing looking at improving housing options for older LGBT people. As a generation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) men and women who came out in the late 1960s enters retirement: landlords are having to gear up to providing appropriate and responsive housing services which recognise diversity. See our [blog in the Guardian](#).

Must reads

- [UK Housing Review 2012](#) – Briefing paper - CIH
- [Making it fit: a guide to preparing for the social size criteria](#) - CIH
- [Social mobility and social housing: Parliamentary taskforce report](#) - CIH
- [Housing and migration: A UK guide to issues and solutions](#) – Housing and Migration Network
- [How to... carry out repairs on time first time](#) - CIH
- [How to... tackle tenancy fraud](#) – CIH
- [The role of housing in drugs recovery](#) - CIH
- [Review of the barriers to institutional investment in private rented homes](#) – CLG
- [Making Institutional Investment in the Private Rented Sector Work](#) – Resolution Foundation
- [Ending expensive social tenancies: Fairness, higher growth and more homes](#) – Policy Exchange

Out and about with the team

John Thornhill recently met with Stop Hate UK: a charity that provides independent and confidential support to people affected by Hate Crime www.stophateuk.org. This builds upon work which CIH has been doing with partners in this Paralympic year supporting the housing

sector to make homes and communities safer for tenants. See our [blog in the Guardian](#) on housing tackling disability related harassment.

Over recent months we have met with MPs, government departments and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for discussions, including the following:

- Meetings with DWP/DCLG to discuss the treatment of support charges under the direct payment system, particularly in relation to hostels
- Meetings with DCLG about changes to terms of local authority agreements for reinvestment of receipts
- A number of meetings around supply and financial models including Vince Cable & Grant Shapps, Treasury officials and regular meetings with senior DCLG and HCA staff
- Regular stakeholder liaison meetings with HCA

We are also a member of DCLG/DWP advisory group on direct payments.

How CIH can help you

Update on the year of practice

In April we launched our 'year of practice', a year in which CIH committed to providing a comprehensive package of advice and support focused on a number of priority areas.

As part of the year of practice, we have been developing a series of [charters](#), these are flexible frameworks that help to identify what outcomes a good quality service can deliver. Organisations sign up to the charters on a voluntary basis and are encouraged to self-assess their performance against them.

We have recently launched two new charters covering [repairs](#) and [equality and diversity](#). So far around 50 organisations have signed up to each of these. They are in addition to the [respect ASB charter](#), which is already established and has over 250 signatories. We are now working with HouseMark and a steering group comprised of practitioners from throughout the sector to develop a further charter focused on **complaints handling** and will be publishing a draft for wider consultation during October.

We are also committed to providing support and advice to organisations to help them to deliver against our charters. We publish concise, practically focused 'how to' guides every fortnight, which can be downloaded [from our website](#). Recent guides include:

- How to... help tenants manage their money
- How to... build skills and capacity in repairs services
- How to... deliver value for money repairs services
- How to... tackle disability related hate crime

In addition, we are also developing new online learning networks as a place where signatories to the charters can discuss and share their approaches and learn from each other.

Service quality tool

CIH's service quality tool, the new framework being developed to measure the effectiveness of housing support services, is shaped for the future, looking as it does at evaluating services to the new care and health outcomes as well as housing support. The pilots for this tool have begun and we will keep you updated on progress.

CIH contact: [Lorraine Regan](#)

Community Harm Statement

The new Community Harm Statement (CHS) is a tool developed by social landlords to provide a more consistent approach of putting the victims at the forefront of a court case, to ensure that the judge has a clear picture of the impact that ASB has had within a community. Landlords who have used the Community Harm Statement since its launch in March 2012 have reported positive results and have been sharing this good practice with other agencies. It is pleasing to see from some of the case studies that the CHS is being widely used and providing some tangible outcomes for victims. CIH would encourage landlords to use the CHS as it does provide a consistent approach in putting victims at the forefront of the case. There are also many other good uses for the CHS which are highlighted in the '[CIH Community Harm Statement Guidance](#)' and '[CIH How to...](#)' guides.

More resources coming soon from CIH to help you

Look out for:

- Updated practice online chapters for promoting homeownership and supported housing
- A new welfare reform chapter
- How to... guides covering, working with the private rented sector, developing effective tenant panels and undertaking equality analysis
- Practical implications of welfare reform
- A publication on managing tenancies

Northern Ireland



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Policy Round Up

Consultations

The summer has seen a series of government consultations published on a new Discretionary Support Policy; a Fundamental Review of the Regulation of Houses in Multiple Occupation; and an Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework. Copies of the consultations are [available](#).

The Discretionary Support Policy outlines the policy rationale behind the successor arrangements to the Social Fund, with Northern Ireland seeking to use the new Welfare Reform arrangements as an opportunity to introduce a more integrated approach to discretionary support. The consultation paper alludes to the possibility of Discretionary Housing Payments being included within this overarching policy which does raise some concerns. However, the lack of detail suggests that this is a longer term objective and would not be an immediate transition in terms of the policy or subsequent delivery mechanisms. The Fundamental Review of HMOs intends to bring in a revised system of regulation that will allow targeting of houses in way that is proportionate to the risk presented and recognises that in order to do so a more flexible system of controls will be necessary. One of the key drivers for the review is the increased demand for HMOs that will result from the changes to housing benefit as part of the welfare reforms.

The consultation on a new Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework aims to introduce a new way of developing and implementing policy and programmes for urban regeneration and community development. Instead of the current focus on process and outputs, the consultation proposes adopting an outcomes-focused approach to policy and programme development which will be implemented using the Logic Model. The intention is a more integrated and collaborative response to the needs of communities founded on a strong evidence base and prioritising results rather than activities. CIH will be responding to each of these consultations – if you have any comments or would like to contribute to our submission please contact [Jennie Donald](#).

Looking forward

September is likely to bring a renewed focus on three main policy areas: Welfare Reform; the Housing Strategy and the future of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The latter has been characterised by considerable interest and speculation about the potential outcomes of the review of the organisation but the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland MLA, has still to announce his decision on the future structure of the Housing Executive. This announcement is due in September. The Welfare Reform (NI) Bill is also due to be introduced into the Assembly this month. There is considerable pressure associated with the introduction of the Bill with the reduced time frame for the legislative process potentially impacting on the development and implementation of universal credit. Whilst there are many aspects of Welfare Reform that CIH has concerns about there are a number of reasons why it is imperative that the Bill is introduced as soon as possible. Delays could mean reduced opportunity for full scrutiny of the Bill and the possibility of amending certain aspects where there is scope for flexibility, particularly with regard to administration. Certainty for applicants, tenants and housing providers will help ensure that they are properly prepared for the changes to benefits and the implications for individual, household and organisational budgets. Failure to implement the changes to existing benefits and phasing in of universal credit on the timescale agreed with DWP could also potentially result in costs that will have to be borne by the Northern Ireland Executive. September should also bring the new Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland. This has long been a priority for the housing sector, as evidenced by the report of the Commission on the Future for Housing, and we welcomed the commitment of the Minister and his department to producing the strategy. The fundamental importance of housing to our society and, particularly in these financially constrained times, the economy, cannot be understated, and necessitates an overarching and integrated policy framework.

How we can help you

CIH working in partnership with NIFHA are beginning what we hope will be a [series of events](#) aimed at helping the housing sector plan and prepare for Welfare Reform. We are starting with a seminar for Board Members – of housing associations and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive – that will look at the risks posed by Welfare Reform and what Board members should be doing to manage those risks. The first seminar is on 2 October and will be repeated on 21 November.

The Building Regulations in Northern Ireland are changing and will have a new emphasis on resistance to the passage of sound (Part G). Sound testing can be costly with remedial works even more expensive and difficult to carry out so CIH, in partnership with NHBC and NIFHA, is running a [seminar aimed at providing a cost-effective alternative for housing associations, private housebuilders and construction companies](#). We have three sessions on 4 and 5 October in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry with presentations from Billy Gillespie, Assistant Group Chief Building Control Officer, North Eastern Group, and Dave Baker, Chief Executive of Robust Details Ltd.

Must reads:

Our [blog](#) on the need for a back to school feel for housing policy and practice in Northern Ireland

Perspectives on the future of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in [Inside Housing](#) and [the Guardian](#)

[NI Housing Bulletin](#)

[NI Residential Property Price Index](#)

Out and about:

Over the summer we've been meeting the Minister for Social Development and MLAs as part of the Housing Policy Forum to discuss welfare reform; officials from the Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in the Republic of Ireland; the housing team at the University of Ulster; the Housing Ireland Editorial Panel; Peter O'Neill from Housing Rights Service; Lucinda McMurrin from NIFHA; Nuala O'Neill from RICS; and the DOE Planning Forum which held its August meeting at the amazing new Public Records Office building in the Titanic Quarter.

Republic of Ireland

**Housing Ireland**

The publication of the second edition of Housing Ireland: A Journal for Irish Housing Professionals has been the major piece of policy work in the Republic of Ireland in recent months. The summer edition is bigger and hopefully better with a focus on bedding in our regular columns and features and building on the excellent contributions to the first edition with a continuing emphasis on informed and thought-provoking articles. We are distributing the journal in hard copy to around 750 people in the Republic of Ireland and it is also available to [download as a pdf](#) from our website. Work has already begun on the Autumn edition but all ideas and suggestions for articles, contributors or anything else that strikes you about the journal are welcome – just contact [Jennie Donald](#) or [Aine Daly](#).

Regulation in the Republic of Ireland

The Department for the Environment, Community and Local Government has published a Draft Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland. The voluntary code is to be the first step towards a statutory regulatory framework for the social housing sector in Ireland. Rather than moving from a baseline of little or no regulation to a full regulatory framework the Department has decided that a collaborative and evolving process is better suited to the sector which is extremely large with a range of organisations ranging from formal organisations building and managing sizeable numbers of homes to very small voluntary and community based operations. CIH will be responding to the consultation on the Draft Voluntary Regulation Code and would welcome any thoughts you have for inclusion. For more information please contact [Jennie Donald](#) or [Aine Daly](#).

Scotland



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Policy roundup

- **Tenancies and Allocations:** Following the closing of the Scottish Government consultation '[Affordable Rented Housing: Creating flexibility for landlords and better outcomes for communities](#)' The [analysis](#) of the responses has now been published. Whilst one of the key objectives of the Scottish Government was to improve flexibility to allow landlords to respond to anti social behaviour more effectively, there was reference to other areas, such as whether income and property could be taken into account, what the reasonable preference groups should contain and succession. Controversially it contained several proposals that could see tenants' tenure be demoted to, or begin with, a short Scottish secure tenancy.

The analysis shows broad agreement with all the proposals, although some showed differences between landlord and tenant views. The Scottish Government has drawn together an Affordable Rented Housing Advisory Group which will be taking forward all of the proposals in the consultation along with two other issues:

- assignation of tenancies by tenants
- The conversion of Scottish Secure Tenancies to Short Scottish Secure Tenancies for persistent non payment of rent

Both of these were amongst the recommendations made by CIH Scotland in its [consultation response](#), which was supportive of the majority of the proposals – although with caveats in some instances. In supporting the role of starter tenancies for all new tenants we looked at the evidence from south of the border on how effective they had been in promoting more positive landlord/tenant relationships and more sustainable tenancies. The final decisions on the content of the forthcoming Housing Bill will be made in light of discussions of the Affordable Rented Housing Group, of which CIH Scotland is a member.

We will update members further via future editions of Policy and Practice Focus.
Contact [David Bookbinder](#) or [Sue Shone](#)

- **Right to Buy:** The Scottish Government consultation on the future of the RTB in Scotland closed on 30 August 2012. CIH Scotland supports abolition and its [consultation response](#) sets out a range of reasons for rejecting the RTB including the supply arguments and the strategic benefits. The analysis of the responses is now in progress with feedback from Scottish Government expected later in the year. Much as there is a sense nationally that abolition is a majority view, there is also awareness that final decisions may reflect the political sensitivity of RTB.
Contact [Lyn Kilpatrick](#) or [David Bookbinder](#)

- **Sustainable Housing:** Two major consultations are out from the Scottish Government on the energy efficiency and fuel poverty front. The proposed Sustainable Housing Strategy effectively focuses on how to tackle energy efficiency in the private sector, with the key question being whether, and how, the Scottish Government might introduce minimum standards for owner occupied housing. CIH Scotland, both in its own right and as a member of the Existing Homes Alliance Scotland, strongly supports a robust system of

minimum standards, but wonders what appetite any government will have for enforcement, particularly where housing market conditions are deemed unfavourable.

The proposed Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing sets down a variety of different standards for different house types. The Standard is to be achieved by 2020. Early impressions are that landlords are not generally unhappy with the proposals but that existing problems such as how to deal with mixed tenure blocks will continue to present real difficulties.

In the meantime, CIH Scotland has called on the Scottish Government to use the replacement for stamp duty (the Scottish Land and Buildings Transaction tax) to incentivise energy efficiency work.

Contact [David Bookbinder](#)

- **Social Housing Regulation:** Another step on the road to the revised regulatory regime has been taken with the closing of the [Scottish Housing Regulator's consultation](#) on the indicators it proposes to use to measure landlords' compliance with the [Scottish Social Housing Charter](#). CIH Scotland worked with HouseMark on our [response](#), which looks comprehensively at both the consultation itself and the [Technical Annex](#). The regulator will be publishing the final indicators in October 2012 to enable landlords to prepare to gather the required data from April 2013. The first Annual Report on the Charter (ARC) is currently due to be sent to the SHR in May 2014, although CIH and others have expressed concern at the ability of landlords to provide the financial data required by 31 May and have requested that this be reviewed.

CIH Scotland has been closely involved in working with the SHR to develop draft indicators and will continue to do so.

Contact [David Bookbinder](#) or [Sue Shone](#)

- **Housing and Regeneration:** In late August CIH Scotland issued a survey of councils and housing associations to develop a picture of the prospects for housing-based regeneration in the current financial climate. CIH is keen to establish the scale of regeneration still needed, what the barriers are and whether these are likely to be overcome in the foreseeable future. We expect to produce a report on the survey findings later in the year.

Must read publications

- [Charter 'toolkit'](#) devised by CIH Scotland, ALACHO, HouseMark and SHBVN

How can we help

- **Housing Benefit Reforms:** The focus of CIH Scotland's attention is now firmly on helping landlords prepare for implementing key changes such as the bedroom tax and the direct payment of Universal Credit. We have now commenced a lengthy round of training/awareness sessions on helping landlords prepare for the changes, and a practice guide will follow around the end of the year.

Consultations we are working on:

- Integration of Adult Health and Social Care in Scotland: Consultation on Proposals
- Consultation on Council Tax Charges on Long-term Unoccupied Homes
- Developing an Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing
- Homes that don't cost the earth: a consultation on Scotland's Sustainable Housing Strategy
- A consultation on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill

Wales



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[Coming soon](#)

Policy round up

August saw the closing date for three Welsh Government housing-related consultations:

- **Homes for Wales White Paper:** The White Paper sets out an ambitious programme of action for the remainder of the current term of Government. It describes proposals for new legislation and other, non-legislative, action under five headings within a whole-system 'stewardship' approach focused on multi-sectoral collaboration:
 - I. **'increasing the supply of homes'** through increased provision of affordable housing, tackling empty homes and developing a mortgage guarantee scheme,
 - II. **'improving the quality of existing homes'** by strengthening public sector added-value procurement opportunities, proposes a tenancy reform bill, a Ministerial Task force to support the achievement of WHQS,
 - III. **'a better private rented sector'** by improving standards of accommodation and management support for capacity building, and increased knowledge of the market.
 - IV. **'better services'** through the Supporting People programme and the development of a national adaptations register.
 - V. **'preventing homelessness'**, proposes a target of ending family homelessness by 2019, a move to a 'homelessness solutions' model and discharge of duty into the PRS.

CIH Cymru's consultation response is available on [our website](#)

- **Proposals for a better private rented sector in Wales:** Welsh Government is proposing to introduce legislation that will require the mandatory registration and licensing of private landlords, as well as letting and managing agents in the private

rented housing sector. CIH Cymru supports these proposals and our consultation response is available on [our website](#)

- **Mobile Homes (Wales) Bill:** Consultation on AM Peter Black's private members bill, includes proposals to remove the site operators right to veto a sale, increase the jurisdiction of the Residential Property Tribunal and introduce a new licensing system and enforcement options for mobile home sites in Wales. CIH Cymru supports these proposals and our consultation response is available on [our website](#).

Supporting People Guidance

The Welsh Government is consulting on the '**Council Tax and Long-term Empty Homes in Wales**' document until 20 October. The paper proposes to allow local authorities the discretion to charge additional council tax on empty domestic properties.

Must reads

Welsh Government has issued new [Supporting People Programme Guidance](#) providing details on arrangements for the administration, commissioning of and payment for Supporting People funded services. The introduction of the new grant will take forward a major change in administration of supporting people services and implement a number of the recommendations made by Professor Sir Mansel Aylward in his Review of the Supporting People Programme in Wales. The document provides guidance for the 2012/13 transition period, and launched the new Supporting People Programme from August 2012.

Out & about with the team

- Julie Nicholas, our new policy and public affairs manager, is participating on a panel discussing the *Homes for Wales* White Paper at the Welsh Tenants conference on 19 September in Llandrindod Wells.
- Rachel Honey-Jones, from i2i, is speaking at the CIH London conference on 18 September about the *Can Do* Toolkit and the Value Wales Community Benefits Measurement Tool. Learn how the CIH Cymru i2i project has been involved in maximising community benefit from housing investment, through the use of the Can Do Toolkit and other hands on support.
- Keith Edwards has been asked to take part in a ministerial Task Force, to examine options for local authorities without viable business plans to achieve WHQS

How can we help you?

The Excellence Factor Conference & Exhibition on 26 September 2012, at the Copthorne Hotel, Cardiff is our one day customer excellence and leadership good practice event, equipping organisations with the tools and knowledge to face the challenges that lie ahead. Further information is available on [our website](#).

The Only Way is Green Conference & Exhibition on 24 October 2012, at the Future Inns, Cardiff is our one day event examining current UK and Welsh Government policies and programmes, helping organisations understand current and emerging issues, and offering practical solutions. Further information is available on [our website](#).

Coming Soon:

Welsh Housing Review 2012 will be published in September and aims to provide a comprehensive source of information on housing data and commentary on market trends, investment, expenditure and needs in the Principality.

HouseMark Wales are running a STAR workshop on 2 October in Pontypridd. This is a service improvement event on the Survey for Tenant and Residents (STAR) in Wales to share good practice and ideas around STAR and satisfaction. More information is available on [their website](#).

CIH Cymru's *Inform to Involve*(i2i) team support organisations in Wales to maximise housing investment opportunities for community benefit, training, jobs and small business development. i2i are publishing three new *Active Response* documents in October:

- **Welfare reforms:** lessons from the Bron Afon Community Housing and Charter Demonstration Project. An evaluation of the work undertaken during the pilot in Torfaen on direct payments, tenant profiling and support.
- **Digital Inclusion:** findings from the i2i and CIH hosted round table discussion on digital inclusion. With a Government target of 80% for online claim submissions by 2017, the digital divide will have a major impact, alongside welfare reform measures. Housing providers have undertaken many effective small-scale projects to date, however measures and funding is fragmented; is there a need for a Wales-wide approach to addressing the issue?
- **Welsh Housing Quality Standards & the “No vote”:** what are the available options, for those Local Authorities whose tenants voted against large scale voluntary transfer, for attaining WHQS?