



Chartered
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Housing

What you need to know about the social housing green paper 2018



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On 14 August government published a [social housing green paper – a new deal for social housing](#). It sets out a proposed strategy for reforming social housing.

It is based around five core themes:

- ensuring homes are safe and decent
- effective resolution of complaints
- empowering residents and strengthening the regulator
- tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
- expanding supply and supporting home ownership.

This briefing, exclusively for CIH members, summarises the main policies which are proposed by government under each heading and then gives an initial CIH response to the paper overall.

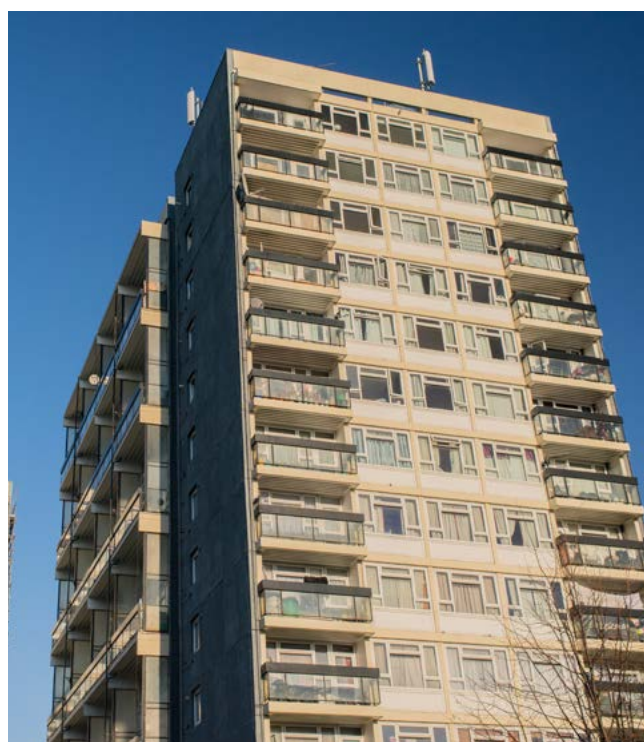
The green paper is a consultation and many of the proposals put forward are broad statements of intent, or government has presented a number of different options to deal with a perceived problem. At this stage not all are concrete, detailed policy proposals.

Government is seeking feedback on its plans. CIH will be responding to the consultation, which will run until 6 November, and we will be seeking the views of our members between now and then. There will be a number of ways in which you will be able to help to shape our response but one of these is to join our [member opinion panel](#) and take part in regular surveys on our policy work.

Ensuring homes are safe and decent

The government proposes:

- implementing the recommendations from the Hackitt Review of building regulations and fire safety, legislating to fundamentally reform the current system
- establishing a pilot with a group of social landlords who would trial options to improve communication and engagement with residents on safety issues
- reviewing the decent homes standard. This might include adding new requirements around energy efficiency and fire safety to mirror those recently introduced in the private rented sector.





Complaints resolution

The government proposes:

- a number of possible options to improve the way that complaints about social landlords are handled, including:
 - looking at ways to speed up landlords' internal complaints processes, for example by asking the regulator to set out some suggested timings in a code of practice
 - exploring ways to improve the use of mediation in landlord/tenant disputes
 - looking at ways to raise awareness among tenants of their rights and the options available to them to make a complaint about their landlord
 - reforming or removing the requirement that complainants go through a 'designated person' (an MP, councillor or tenant panel) or wait eight weeks before they can contact the Ombudsman with a complaint.

Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator

The government proposes:

- requiring all landlords to provide data on a number of key performance indicators to the regulator for regular publication. The regulator would then publish these in the form of league tables to enable comparison between landlords. Performance could then be taken into account when government funding is being allocated to individual landlords, for example to support the development of new homes

- considering a number of potential changes to the system of regulation for social landlords. A [separate call for evidence](#) has also been published on this subject. Potential changes could include:
 - enabling the regulator to take a more proactive approach to enforcing the 'consumer standards' (covering tenant involvement and empowerment, homes, tenancies and neighbourhoods and communities)
 - giving the regulator more powers to scrutinise the performance of local authority landlords
- considering options to give tenants a voice on policy issues at a national level, including perhaps establishing a representative body
- looking at a variety of options to promote more community ownership, or community leadership of social landlords.





Tackling stigma

The government proposes:

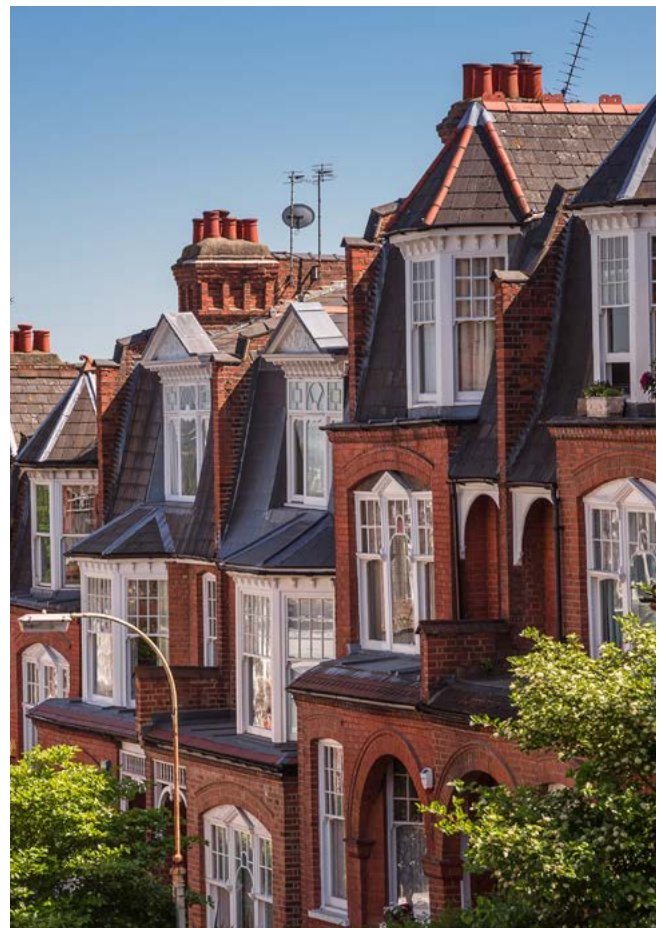
- providing support for community events and initiatives
- encouraging greater levels of professionalism and a 'customer service culture' within the social housing sector
- publishing further guidance on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to encourage new affordable homes to be designed to the same standard as other tenures and ensuring these are well-integrated within developments.

Expanding supply and supporting home ownership

The government proposes:

- scrapping plans to require councils to sell their most valuable homes as they become vacant, in order to fund the extension of the right to buy to all housing association tenants
- giving councils new flexibilities to spend the money raised from right to buy sales on new homes. A [separate consultation](#) has been launched to look at this issue
- scrapping plans to require councils to offer all new tenants a tenancy for a fixed term. Local authorities will still be able to use fixed term tenancies at their discretion
- ensuring that where an existing secure/assured tenant needs to move as a result of domestic abuse, they are always able to retain their lifetime tenancy

- entering into deals with some housing associations to provide certainty over government funding over a longer period than is currently possible. This is intended to address the 'stop-start' nature of government's current approach to allocating funding for five years at a time
- looking at ways to support the development of more community-led house building
- gathering further evidence on how the current approach to social housing allocations is working in practice in different parts of the country
- looking at ways to make it easier for new shared owners to increase their stake in their home in the future. This might include, for example, allowing them to buy much smaller increments than are usually possible.





Initial CIH response

The green paper makes an important contribution to the critical debate about what we think social housing is, what it does and what we want it to be in the 21st century.

This is an area in which we have recently carried out extensive research and our proposals for the future of social housing are set out in our report [Rethinking Social Housing](#). In this we argue that it has a unique and positive part to play in housing people, helping to create thriving, mixed communities, and meeting needs that the market will not. We believe that we must now reclaim social housing as a pillar of the society we want to be, along with free health care and education – and that it must be at the centre of government plans to solve the housing crisis.

While the green paper rightly recognises the importance of new supply, we are concerned that the plans for new affordable homes are still not ambitious enough. Research shows we need a minimum of 78,000 new social rented homes each year, but in 2017/18 just over 5,000 were delivered – and we estimate that between 2012 and 2020 we will have lost 230,000 of these homes in total.

This is why we have called on government to rebalance the £53 billion funding for housing, so that affordable housing gets a fairer share than the 21 percent it has now. This is essential if we are to make sure that everyone has a decent, affordable place to call home.

There are however a number of specific proposals included in the green paper which are positive:

- proposals to strengthen the role of the regulator for social housing where housing providers' services fall short of what their tenants deserve is something CIH argued for in our Rethinking Social Housing report and it's good to see government thinking in the same way
- we welcome the aim to tackle the stigmatisation of social housing, an issue which our report highlighted. Our [Ipsos Mori public opinion polling](#) showed that 65 percent of those interviewed felt that the negative view of people living in social housing is unfair
- we are also pleased to see that government plans to consult on the rules on how local authorities can use the money they receive from Right to Buy sales, as well as dropping plans to force local authorities to sell their most valuable homes. CIH has long argued for the removal of the barriers that prevent councils playing a full part in building the new affordable homes we so badly need.

