

Area Panel: 15, 16, 17 & 25 October 2018
Briefing Paper: A new deal for social housing;
Government Green Paper and
consultation

Introduction

A briefing paper is attached about the government's green paper on social housing. It has been prepared by the council's corporate policy team and sets out the content of the green paper and areas where the government would like feedback.

Residents are asked to read this briefing before the Area Panel meetings and to prepare for discussion at the meetings on the consultation questions.

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BHCC Policy Network Briefing

Subject: “A New Deal for Social Housing” Government Green Paper and Consultation

Date: August 2018

Audience: Corporate Policy Network

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Purpose of the briefing

A concise summary of the Government Green Paper “A New Deal for Social Housing”

Recommendations

To note the proposals contained within the report and to contribute to the government consultation as appropriate

What is the subject?

Context

- Social housing makes up around 1/5 of all households
- Social housing is housing to rent below market level rents or to buy through schemes such as shared ownership.
- It is made available to help those whose needs are not served by the market.
- Registered providers are financially regulated and funded by the government through the [Homes and Communities Agency](#)
- Guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. Social Rent levels take into account a measure of relative local earnings as well as relative property values. It is typically set at around 50-60 per cent of market rents. “Affordable Rent” was introduced in 2011 to support building more new homes below market rents. Affordable Rent levels are set at a maximum of 80 per cent of the market rent.
- Since the 1980s there has been a shift towards most of the provision of social homes being by housing associations, through a combination of homes transferred from local authorities, and housing associations mainly taking over the role of building new social homes.
- Around 14 per cent of social housing is supported housing (accommodation provided alongside support, to help people live independently) and intended to support the

most vulnerable in our society, (older people, people with mental ill health, learning disabilities, physical and sensory disabilities, autistic adults, care leavers, people fleeing domestic abuse, rough sleepers, those with drug and alcohol dependencies, vulnerable ex-service personnel and ex-offenders).

- Age makeup of social housing residents is similar to the general demographic.
- 43 per cent of all black households live in the social rented sector, compared to 16 per cent of white households and 25 per cent of all ethnic minority households.
- 43 per cent of social rented households are in full or part-time work. This is lower than the average for all households (60 per cent).
- Half of social households have at least one member with a long term illness or disability.
- There is very little movement into owner occupation. However 2/3 residents aspire to home ownership.

What are the solutions?

Stated Objectives of the Green Paper

- Improving fairness, quality and safety for residents living in social housing
- Rebalancing the relationship between tenants and landlords, strengthening protections for tenants
- Tackling stigma
- Ensuring that social housing can support people to achieve home ownership

5 Key priorities

- A safe and decent home (the government sees this is fundamental to a sense of security)
- Swift and effective resolution so that when residents have concerns about the safety or standard of their home they see results.
- Empowering residents and holding landlords to account.
- Tackling stigma
- Building the social homes that we need and ensuring that social homes can act as a springboard to home ownership.

Who does it affect and how?

- BHCC Housing Development / Housing Management / Properties / Transport /

Planning / EEC

- Housing Associations
- Social Housing residents
- Social Housing Landlords
- Communities and community groups
- Existing tenants, residents on housing registers, and all residents seeking affordable homes to rent or buy

Who supports it?

National government

Responses to Social Housing Green Paper

Organisation	Response
National Housing Federation (Represents social landlords to around 6m people)	<p>Supports Government's commitment to ensuring tenants get quality services and can hold their landlords to account if they don't.</p> <p>However, Green Paper needs to address effects of recent welfare reforms that have caused real hardship for tenants.</p> <p>Supports building and investment in more social housing. To achieve the ambition of a future where everyone can access a quality home they can afford we need to build 90,000 new social rent homes every year.</p>
LGA	<p>Councils need freedoms and powers to invest in new and existing housing that is genuinely affordable. The loss of social housing means councils are currently spending more and more on housing benefit to supplement expensive rents instead of investing in genuinely affordable homes.</p> <p>Calls on Government to go further:</p> <p>Scrap the housing borrowing cap, and enable all councils, across the country, to borrow to build.</p> <p>Allow councils to set Right to Buy discounts locally and to keep 100 per cent of receipts from homes sold.</p> <p>Welcomes abandonment of plans to force the sale of council homes and recommends that decisions on council owned housing stock transfer are best made at local level by councils and residents.</p>

<p>Homeless Link (National charity for organisations working with homeless in England)</p>	<p>Expressed disappointment at lack of additional funding to build</p>
<p>Joseph Roundtree Foundation</p>	<p>Endorses view that the minimum the Green Paper needs to do is commit to an additional 30,000 homes per year, to bridge the gap between existing supply and newly arising need for affordable homes (of all types).</p> <p>Research for Crisis and the National Housing Federation suggests that if Government wants to meet current needs and address backlog needs amongst those on the lowest incomes, it needs to go further, to 90,000 a year.</p> <p>The 80% marker rent 'Affordable Rent' model is not realistically affordable to those on low incomes. This puts pressure on Housing Benefit. 'Affordable Rents' should mean Living Rents, which have a direct link to local earnings.</p> <p>Shared-ownership schemes remain out of reach for all but 3% of new social tenants. The government should focus on ensuring supply of homes to let at genuinely low social rents.</p>
<p>Women's aid (National charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children.)</p>	<p>Welcomes announcement that legislation to phase out lifetime tenancies will not be going ahead. But leaving decision to offer secure tenancies 'at discretion' of local authorities is not enough to protect domestic abuse survivors</p> <p>Calls on the government to urgently bring forward promised legislation to protect lifetime tenancies for survivors of domestic abuse. While awaiting legislation, the government needs to make it clear that all local authorities must ensure that survivors retain their lifetime tenancies after fleeing domestic abuse.</p>

Is it already happening locally?

N/a

How does it fit with our Corporate Plan?

Supports our purpose of:

A good life

Ensuring a city for all ages, inclusive of everyone and protecting the most vulnerable.

Via providing housing at reduced rents to support the vulnerable and to help those whose needs are not served by the market.

A vibrant economy

Promoting a world class economy with a local workforce to match.

Ensures the workforce needed to match job market demand can afford to live in the city.

- Supports our principle of increased equality and service priority of a A strong, sustainable economy that creates employment opportunity along with decent, affordable housing.

SWOT analysis

A full SWOT analysis will be completed when consultation closes and government response is issued.

Options consideration

Until Government response to the consultation is known there is no immediate action for the council to take.

However, CPN members are encouraged to note the proposals contained within the report and to contribute to the government consultation as appropriate

A grid containing a detailed breakdown of the Government's priorities, intended actions and consultation questions is included as a separate document below.

Links to further information

[Consultation document](#)

How to Respond

Enquiries:	During the consultation, if you have any enquiries, please contact: SocialHousingGreenPaper@communities.gsi.gov.uk
How to respond:	Consultation responses should be submitted by online survey: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/A_new_deal_for_social_housing

For further information on the Corporate Policy Network please contact
Lead Officer for Policy, Partnerships & Scrutiny: **Simon Newell**
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Principle	Actions / intentions	Consultation questions
1- A safe and decent home	<p>Fire safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £400 million funding for local authorities and housing associations to remove and replace unsafe aluminium composite material cladding on social residential buildings • Information for residents on safety, giving clear rights and responsibilities <p>Decent Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decent Homes Standard to be reviewed to consider whether it is demanding enough • Allowing councils to continue to have choice over their use of fixed term tenancies, enabling them to offer residents greater security in their homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can residents best be supported to work with landlords to ensure homes are safe? • Should new safety measures in the private rented sector also apply to social housing? • Are there any changes to what constitutes a Decent Home that we should consider? • Do we need additional measures to make sure social homes are safe and decent?
2- Swift and effective resolution so that when residents have concerns about the safety or standard of their home they see results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed up complaints process, improve access to effective dispute resolution, increase support and advocacy for tenants to seek redress • Considering bringing together redress schemes into a single housing ombudsman service • Strengthening mediation opportunities available for tenants and landlords • Review 'Democratic Filter' system for ombudsman complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to strengthen mediation opportunities for landlords and residents? • Should we improve/ remove the "democratic filter" for ombudsman complaints? • How can we ensure that residents understand how best to escalate a complaint and access the right advice and support? • How can we ensure that landlords' processes for dealing with complaints are fast and effective? • How can we best ensure safety concerns are handled swiftly and effectively?

<p>3- Empowering residents and holding landlords to account.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the Regulator of Social Housing. • Reviewing objectives and standards to ensure landlords and residents have a shared understanding of good property management • Landlords to be assessed via KPIs, which will be published along with league tables • Exploring options for financial incentivisation and penalisation, linking funding eligibility to KPI performance • Improving landlord engagement with residents • National lobbying platform for residents • Considering a new stock transfer programme transferring local authority housing to community-based housing associations. • Considering how best to support residents to take on some of their own services/ and whether appetite is there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on proposed KPI system • How could reporting outcomes of landlords' complaint handling be improved? • Could resident engagement and scrutiny measures be improved? • Is there a need for a stronger lobbying representation for residents at a national level? • Would there be interest in a programme to promote the transfer of local authority housing to community-based housing associations? • Are Tenant Management Organisations fit for purpose and delivering positive outcomes? • Are there benefits to models that support residents to take on some of their own services? • Should the Regulator have increased powers towards local authority landlords? • Should the Government take to make the Regulator more accountable to Parliament?
<p>4- Tackling stigma</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering ways to recognise creation of positive communities. Awards could include investment to support successful initiatives to grow, or funding for an event or a street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could we support or deliver a best neighbourhood competition? • What more could be done to tackle stigma? • How to encourage the professionalisation of

	<p>party to bring people together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the professionalisation of housing management and courteous and respectful customer service standards as norm • Promotion of good quality design, quality and energy efficient buildings and public spaces • The National Planning Policy Framework sets out policies that support this aim 	<p>housing management to high quality customer service standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can planning guidance support good design in the social sector? • How can we involve social housing residents in the planning and design of new developments?
5- (a) Building the social homes that we need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambition is to extend the opportunity of home ownership to as many social tenants as possible, with the responsibility to maintain and increase the stock of social housing for those who need it • Supporting Local Authorities to build more: • Raising the housing borrowing cap by up to £1 billion • New rent settlement of Consumer Price Index +1 per cent • Considering allowing local authorities to keep the Right to Buy receipts they already hold for longer than the current three years to ensure the receipts can be used alongside the borrowing cap increase. (Consultation open) • Repealing part of Housing and Planning Act 2016 that would compel councils to make a payment in respect of their vacant higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can government support communities to deliver new build community-led homes? • What level of additional affordable housing, over existing investment plans, could be delivered by social housing providers if they were given longer term certainty over funding?

	<p>value council homes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New £163 million Homes England programme of funding for community groups bringing housebuilding projects forward and capital funding for local authorities to provide local enabling infrastructure (such as access roads) • Decision not to implement Housing and Planning Act 2016 rules restricting use of lifetime tenancies by local authority landlords. 	
<p>(b) And ensuring that those homes can act as a springboard to home ownership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £200 million large-scale pilot (in the Midlands) of the Voluntary Right to Buy for housing association tenants this summer. (While monitoring housing associations' ability to keep pace in replacing the homes lost to Right To Buy • Remove barriers to shared ownership as a route to full home ownership • Rent to Buy scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we best support providers to develop new shared ownership products that enable people to build up more equity in their homes?

