

Social Housing White Paper and the Consumer Standards

Tamworth Borough Council

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Chapter 1: To be safe in your home

Chapter 2: To know how your landlord is performing

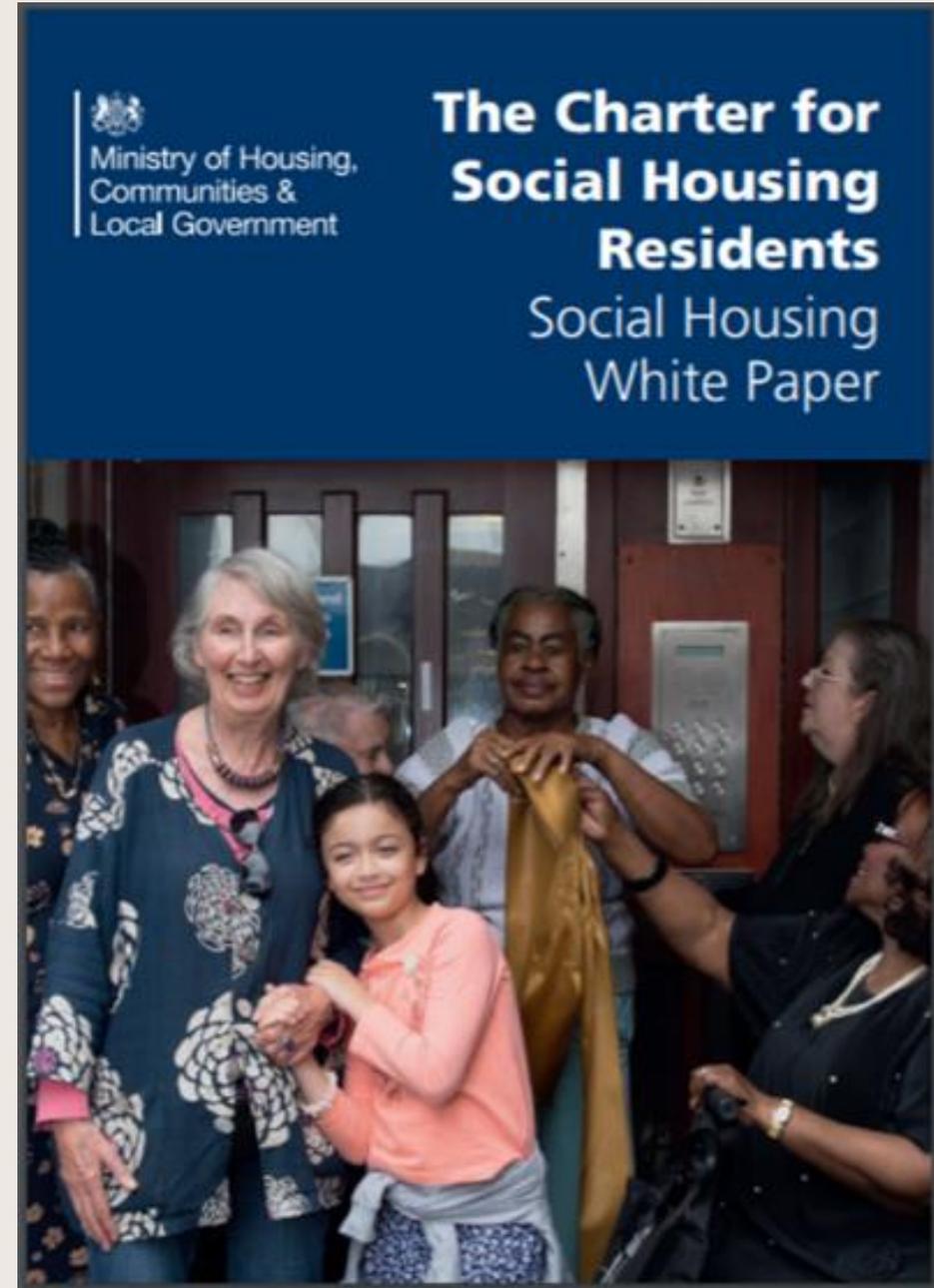
Chapter 3: To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

Chapter 4: To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants

Chapter 5: To have your voice heard by your landlord

Chapter 6: To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in

Chapter 7: To be supported to take your first step to ownership



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Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

- Focus on Social Landlords (i.e. stock-owning Councils and Housing Associations)
- Economic and Consumer Standards (and judgements)
- In-Depth Assessments & (new) Consumer Standards Inspections

The Housing Ombudsman (THO)

- Focus on Tenants
- New Complaints Code (Landlords self-assess)
- New 'name and shame' on maladministration findings
- Thematic investigations (call for evidence, report on findings and learning – currently 'Damp and Mould' investigation)

Building Safety Regulator (new)

- Focus on tall buildings
- Part of Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Focus on Safety not just Compliance

The RSH Consumer Standards

All Registered Providers (RPs) are required to comply with the Consumer Standards which first came into force in 2012. The Consumer Standards are short, outcomes-based standards which comprise:

- **Tenancy Standard** : Let homes and manage tenancies in a fair, transparent and efficient way
- **Home Standard**: Keep homes safe, decent and in a good state of repair
- **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment**: Understand and respond to the diverse needs of tenants, provide choice and opportunities for involvement, resolve complaints fairly and promptly
- **Neighbourhood and Community**: Keep the wider area clean and safe, help to tackle anti-social behaviour and promote community well-being

Currently the RSH's approach to regulating these standards is reactive. However, the Social Housing White Paper ('The Charter for Social Housing Residents') published in November 2020 has signalled the introduction of a proactive approach to the regulation of the Consumer Standards.



- Four-yearly consumer inspection reviews will be carried out for large housing associations, local authorities, and smaller housing providers presenting a high risk against the consumer standards, such as specialist supported housing providers.
- This equates to over 400 organisations with a total of 100 inspections a year.
- There need to be changes in legislation to give the minister the power to direct the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in some areas, so there is a process to go through.



Implications for Governance

- A co-regulatory approach will be applicable to consumer regulation, as it is with economic regulation.
- This isn't about inspecting buildings but proactive, intelligence-led, risk-based assurance on compliance with the consumer standards.
- Regulation can't take the place of an effective Board or Cabinet, but new powers provide more protection to ensure those landlords who are failing in their responsibilities around safety and consumer issues address the issues in a timely and effective way – or the RSH will.



What can you do now?



“all of you will have heard over the last few years our “don’t wait” message. In advance of legislation, we expect providers to take action to deliver the aims of the White Paper: ensuring that residents live in good quality homes and are listened to when things go wrong. Don’t wait for the regulator to have the powers to enforce this”

– Fiona MacGregor (CE of the RSH) speaking at the 2021 CIH Housing Conference

- Get the basics right - focus on the core services to tenants and ensure data is in order.
- Do more to proactively identify themes and trends – joining the dots on repairs requests and using complaints as a source of intelligence and rich data.
- Accountability through transparency is key and can be addressed now, so have this on the agenda and think about how you will verify KPI results
- Raise awareness of the consumer standards as proactive regulation is coming
- Review evidence of compliance with the standards. Where there isn’t in-house capacity – leverage relationships and/or seek expert independent assurance.

Thank you

