



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# The Charter For Social Housing Residents

**Residents Explainer**

**#CharterForSocialHousing**

# A new Charter for Social Housing Residents

Our new Charter sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect:

- 1. To be safe in your home.** We 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 improved access to a strengthened complaints procedure (Housing Ombudsman) which 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 Board. 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. Government will ensure social housing can support people to take their first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.



## How we will ensure this Charter is met

This White Paper sets out what we will do to ensure landlords live up to this new Charter. Our package of measures is summarised in the box below. The most important step we will take is to work with the Regulator of Social Housing (“the regulator”) to create a stronger, consumer regulatory regime, strengthening the formal standards against which landlords are regulated and requiring them 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

# Summary of the policy measures in the White Paper

## To be safe in your home

Building and fire safety is of paramount concern to residents. We are committed to ensuring that all homes are safe to live in and have identified ways both to raise safety standards and to help residents feel safer in their homes. We will:

- Legislate to strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer regulation objectives to explicitly include safety.
- Legislate to require social landlords to identify a nominated person responsible for complying with their health and safety requirements.
- Expect the Regulator of Social Housing to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding with the Health and Safety Executive to ensure effective sharing of information with the Building Safety Regulator.
- Launch a consultation on requiring smoke alarms in social housing and introducing new expectations for carbon monoxide alarms.
- Consult on measures to ensure that social housing residents are protected from harm caused by poor electrical safety.
- Continue to work with the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group and the Building Safety Regulator to ensure resident voices are heard.



***"A home should provide safety, security and dignity. An opportunity to put down roots and contribute to our community so we can enjoy social and civic lives."***

## To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

Residents should get swift and effective resolution of their complaints. Some residents told us that making a complaint can be difficult and time consuming – it can sometimes take months to be resolved, or for the resident to be able to simply access the Housing Ombudsman. To improve this, we have recently:

- Speeded up access to the Housing Ombudsman by removing the need for residents to either go to a 'designated person' or wait eight weeks before approaching the Ombudsman directly.
- Expanded the Housing Ombudsman service, and increased its powers, so it will make quicker decisions and take stronger action against landlords where needed.

### We will do more to:

- Provide residents with consistency across landlord complaint handling by ensuring landlords self-assess against the Housing Ombudsman's complaints handling code by 31 December 2020.
- Ensure tenants know how to raise complaints and have confidence in the system by launching a communications campaign. We will expect landlords, the Housing Ombudsman and the Building Safety Regulator to ensure residents have clear and up to date information on how to make a complaint.
- Legislate to ensure clear co-operation between the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing to hold landlords to account more effectively when things go wrong.
- Make landlords more accountable for their actions by publicising the details of cases determined and published by the Housing Ombudsman.

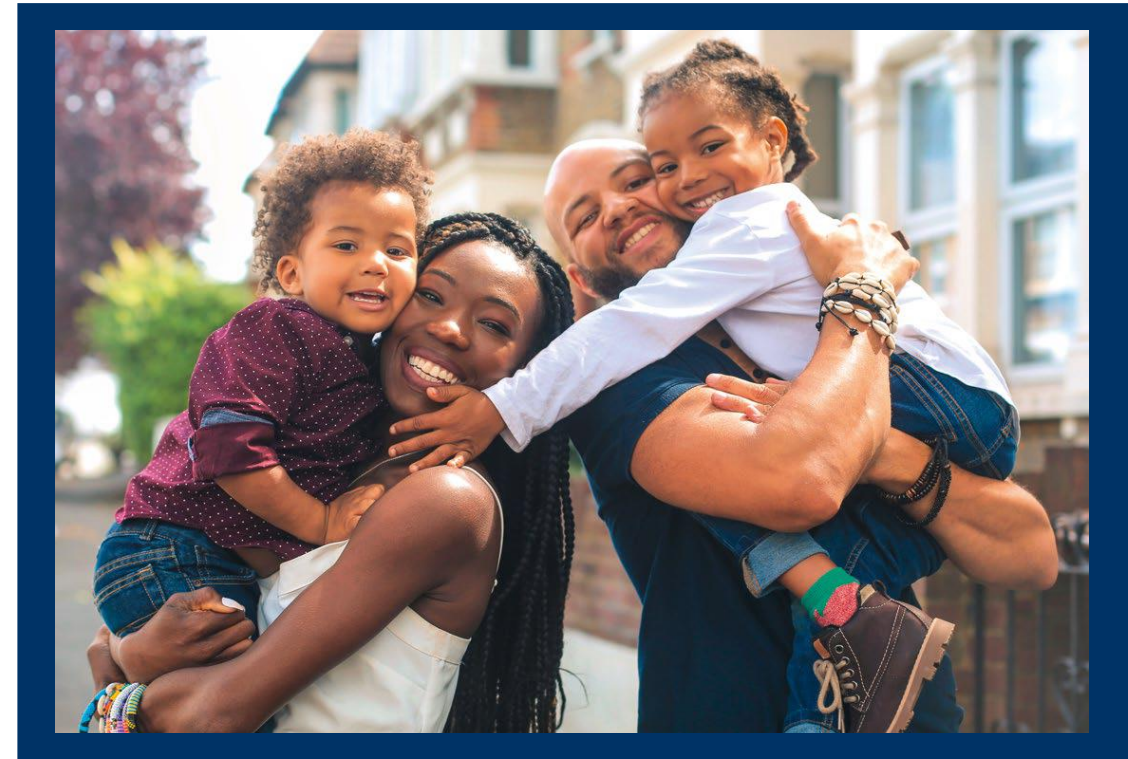


***"Regardless of who you rent from, your landlord should treat you fairly and with respect. And if things go wrong there should be a swift and effective means of redress."***

## To be treated fairly and with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants

Transformation of consumer regulation is needed to further drive the right behaviours and hold landlords to account when they fail. This will complement the robust economic regulation already in place. The Charter sets out our commitment to:

- Transform the consumer regulation role of the Regulator of Social Housing ("the regulator") so it proactively monitors and drives landlords' compliance with improved consumer standards.
- Remove the 'serious detriment test' and introduce routine inspections for the largest landlords (those with over 1,000 homes) every four years.
- Change the regulator's objectives to explicitly cover safety and transparency, and work with it to review its consumer standards to ensure they are up to date and deliver its revised objectives.
- Give the regulator the power to publish a Code of Practice on the consumer standards to be clear what landlords are required to deliver.
- Strengthen the regulator's enforcement powers to tackle failing landlords and to respond to new challenges facing the sector.
- Hold local authorities to account as landlords, including how they manage Arms-Length Management Organisations and Tenant Management Organisations, to make sure they deliver a good service to tenants.
- Require the regulator to set up an Advisory Committee to provide independent and unbiased advice on discharging its functions.



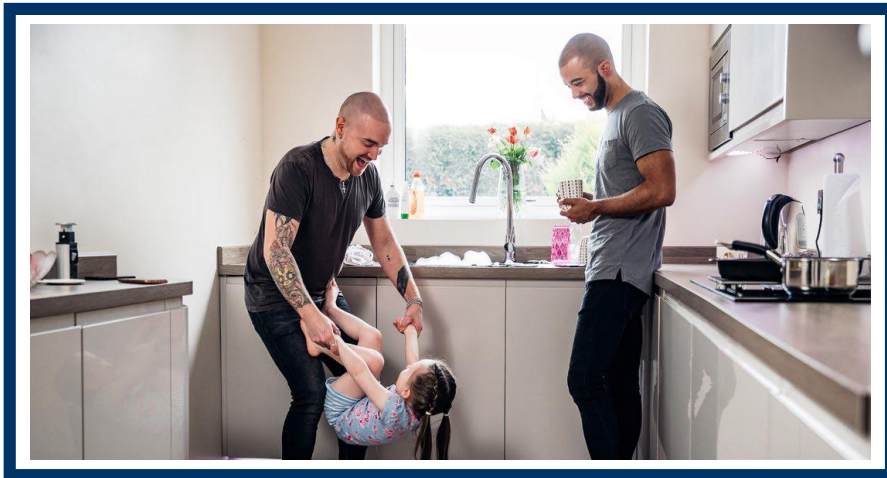
***"We want people living in social housing to be able to access swift and effective resolution and not face unnecessary barriers."***

## To have your voice heard by your landlord

Stronger engagement by landlords will give residents a clearer voice so that they can hold landlords to account.

The Charter sets out how we will:

- Expect the regulator to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants.
- 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.



***“The conversations we have had with residents in creating this White Paper have been fundamental to our understanding of what is important to people living in social housing.”***

## To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in

Tenants are proud of their communities and want greater investment in them. The Charter sets out how we will ensure social tenants have good quality, decent homes and neighbourhoods, including access to green space and support for wellbeing.

We will:

- Review the Decent Homes Standard, including access to and the quality of green spaces.
- Tackle anti-social behaviour by enabling tenants to know who is responsible for action and who can support and assist them if they are faced with behaviours affecting them and possibly their wider community.
- 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.



***Did you know that between 2016 and 2018 one in six households (17%, 3.9 million) in England lived in social housing (they rented their home from a local authority or housing association)?***

## To be supported to take your first step to ownership

We are continuing to increase the supply of good quality social homes and working to give as many residents as possible the right to purchase their own home.

The Charter explains how Government are:

- Investing £11.5 billion to build up to 180,000 affordable homes – the highest single funding commitment to affordable housing in a decade. Around half of these new homes will be for affordable home ownership.
- Implementing a new, fairer and more accessible model for Shared Ownership.
- Implementing a new Right to Shared Ownership for tenants of housing associations and other private registered providers who live in new grant funded homes for rent.
- Emphasising through our new National Design Guide the importance of building beautiful and well-designed social homes.
- Introducing a new Affordable Homes Guarantee Scheme.
- Encouraging local authorities to take advantage of our removal of the borrowing cap to build more council homes.



***“ We are committed to developing more beautiful homes and communities. It should be an aspiration for all new developments. It helps to create a sense of place and foster a sense of community.”***