

## **Green Paper Summary**

### **Ensuring homes are safe and decent**

Social housing must be safe and decent. Fire safety is a high priority following Grenfell Tower tragedy and the Government have set up an expert panel to advise on action to ensure buildings are safe, carried out an independent review of building regulations and fire safety and will be bringing forward legislation that supports the recommendations outlined in the independent review to make the building regulations more effective.

Part of the independent review states that residents have an important role to play in identifying and reporting issues that may impact on the safety of the building. Residents must also co-operate with crucial fire safety works to ensure their own safety and that of their neighbours.

As well as being safe all homes should be maintained to a decent standard. The current requirement is for homes to be free from hazards that pose a risk to residents, to be in a reasonable state of repair to have reasonably modern facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms, efficient heating and effective insulation.

### **Effective resolution of complaints**

Residents should have a stronger voice to influence decisions and challenge their landlord to improve performance. They must also be able to access good complaints processes, as well as swift and effective redress where appropriate.

Under current procedures if residents wish to submit their unresolved complaint to the Housing Ombudsman for a formal investigation they must first refer it to a “designated person” (a local councillor, MP or tenant panel) or wait 8 weeks to refer it to the Ombudsman. This is known as the “democratic filter”. This “democratic filter” was introduced in the Localism Act 2011 to drive local resolution to complaints but this process does not appear to work for residents and there is a perception that redress takes too long.

### **Empowering residents**

For residents to be empowered they need good information on how their landlord is performing compared to others. The Government wants landlords to be assessed against standards that matter to residents. The Government considers that the most effective way to do this is for the performance of all landlords to be assessed against a number of agreed and meaningful key performance indicators which will be made publically available in a way that enables easy comparison. These performance indicators will be focussed on areas such as:

- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining the safety of buildings
- Effective handling of complaints
- Respectful and helpful engagement with resident
- Responsible neighbourhood management, including tackling anti-social behaviour

## **Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities**

The Government carried out engagement events with residents during the preparation of the Green Paper. Stigma was the most consistent theme raised during the events. Residents said they were made to feel like “second class citizens” rather than hard working and honest people. The Government wants to celebrate thriving communities that exist across the country with social housing at their heart and recognise the important contribution social housing residents make to the vibrant and diverse communities that make up our country.

The Government want to celebrate the role of residents in shaping fantastic places by recognising the best neighbourhoods. Awards could include investment to support successful initiatives to grow, or funding for an event or a street party to bring people together.