

# Briefing Note

**Committee name:** Cabinet Housing Committee

**Date:** 24 September 2025

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This note provides information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the officer indicated.

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## Government Strategy and Announcements

- a. On the 3 July the Government published its 10-year strategy – ‘Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing’. The plan sets out 5 steps to improve the supply and quality of housing:
  1. Deliver the biggest boost to grant funding in a generation
  2. Rebuild the sector’s capacity to borrow and invest in new and existing homes
  3. Establish an effective and stable regulatory regime
  4. Reinvigorate council housebuilding
  5. Forge a renewed partnership with the sector to build at scale

Key elements accompanying the plan (some of which had been announced prior to full publication) include:

- A new £39bn Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) running from 2026 to 2036 to deliver 300,000 social and affordable homes (with 60% of these reserved for social rent)
- A 10-year rent settlement from April 2026, allowing social housing rents to rise by consumer price index (CPI) +1% annually to provide more confidence for lenders and investors.
- A rent convergence consultation on allowing social rents to increase by up to £2 a week to align with formula rent levels, with a response expected in the Autumn Budget.
- A Decent Homes Standard (DHS) consultation, which will end in September. Proposed changes include:
  - A shift from age-based criteria to condition-based assessments.
  - Expanded lists of required core facilities (e.g. window restrictors).
  - Stronger provisions on damp and mould.
  - Consideration of home security and floor coverings at tenancy start.
  - Proposals to make the DHS a statutory standard for private landlords from 2035/2037.

- A consultation on minimum energy efficiency standards for social homes, will also end in September. It proposes that socially rented homes should have a minimum EPC C by 2030 (subject to exemptions and a £10k cost cap)
- The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) will introduce a Competence and Conduct Standard from October 2026, requiring senior housing staff to hold a housing qualification or foundation degree at the end of a 3 or 4 year transition period (depending on provider size).
- The Government has also instructed the RSH to introduce Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) from October 2026 to strengthen transparency and empower tenants to hold their landlords to account.
- A £1 million Resident Experience Innovation Fund will launch in late summer 2025. The fund will support social landlords, tenant groups, and other relevant organisations to trial innovative approaches aimed at improving tenant experience, which can then be adopted more widely by the sector.
- They have confirmed the following reforms to Right to Buy (RtB) following 2024's consultation:
  - Newly built council homes will be exempt from RtB for 35 years.
  - Tenants will have had to live in a council property for 10 years (a rise from 3 years) before being eligible for RtB.
  - Discounts will now start at 5% of a property's market value, rising by 1% for each additional year of tenancy up to a maximum of 15% (reduced from a previous maximum of up to 35%).
  - From 2026–27, councils will be permitted to combine Right to Buy receipts with grant funding under the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) to deliver new houses.

No timeline has currently been confirmed for these changes with legislation expected when “parliamentary time allows”.

- A Council Housebuilding Skills and Capacity Programme (CHSCP) has been launched and will provide £12 million in 2025-26. It will include:
    - A Council Housebuilding Support Service, delivering tailored advice, training and peer networks.
    - An expansion of the Pathways to Planning programme to recruit and train graduates in surveying and project management, targeting 50 placements.
    - A £5.5m Support Fund, managed by Homes England, to help councils prepare stronger bids for the SAHP.
  - Government encouragement for housing associations to acquire uncontracted or unsold Section 106 homes, and to use the Homes England Section 106 Affordable Housing Clearing Service to support housing delivery.
- b. Following Angela Rayner MP's resignation as Deputy Prime Minister and Housing Secretary, Steve Reed OBE MP has been announced as the new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). He will be supported by Alison McGovern MP as Minister of State, and Miatta Fahnbulleh MP and Samantha Dixon MP as Parliamentary Under-Secretaries.
- c. In July the Government announced progress and updates for their Remediation Acceleration Plan, originally published in December 2024. Changes include:

- Giving social landlords equal access to government remediation funding as private landlords, supported by a new joint plan between government, social landlords and regulators to speed up remediation, cutting years off the time to make social tenants safe and improving resident experience before, during and after remedial works.
  - Bringing forward a Remediation Bill to create a hard 'endpoint' for remediation. A Legal Duty to Remediate will compel landlords to remediate their buildings within fixed timescales or face criminal prosecution. Avoidance is not an option. Where landlords fail, new powers - including a Remediation Backstop - will ensure the work gets done. The Bill will be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time allows.
  - Tightening fire assessment standards to minimise delays to remediation start dates and provide certainty on the scope of works.
  - Supporting the delivery of Local Remediation Acceleration Plans (LRAPs) to enhance collaborative working and expertise at regional levels, further to the over £5 million in funding already provided to metro mayors.
  - Establishing a National Remediation System (NRS) to serve as the single source of data for all relevant buildings over 11 metres to enhance information sharing across partner organisations.
  - Provide funding, on a strictly exceptional basis, to multi-occupied residential buildings under 11 metres where it is needed to address life-critical fire safety risks from cladding and there are no alternatives to fund the works.
  - Bringing forward legislation to ensure that regulators can enforce the remediation or mitigation of critical issues following a decant of a residential building of 11m+. This will ensure that decants are either averted, or residents can return to their homes as quickly as possible.
  - Implementing a long-term, sustainable approach to the Waking Watch Replacement Fund.
  - Ensuring that, even after remediation, social landlords who have signed the Joint Plan continue to allow shared owners to sublet their properties up to market rent level where demonstrable efforts are being made to sell the property.
- d. The HCLG Committee launched an inquiry into housing conditions in England at the start of July. The inquiry will examine the prevalence of hazards such as damp and mould, assess the effectiveness of Government policies including Awaab's Law and the reformed Decent Homes Standard, and explore how the quality of new-build homes and temporary accommodation can be improved. The inquiry will examine four key areas: social housing, private rented housing, new-build quality, and temporary accommodation. Oral evidence sessions will begin in September.
- e. At the end of July, the Delegated Legislation Committee approved:
- The Draft Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) (Amendment) (Extension to the Social Rented Sector) Regulations 2025 – which apply private rented sector electrical safety regulations to social housing, meaning all social landlords must ensure qualified professionals inspect and test electrical installations at least every five years. Landlords must also carry out any necessary repairs to meet safety standards. Currently

this has only been required every 10 years, but the council have been pre-emptively transitioning to the five-year standard.

- The Draft Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025 – which extends Awaab's Law to social housing, requiring landlords to investigate and resolve serious hazards, such as damp and mould, within strict timeframes. The council have already carried out extensive work to ensure that damp, mould and condensation is understood and well managed within properties.

### Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

- f. The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) new focus report emphasises the importance of landlords maintaining accurate understanding and evidence of the condition of their homes. Based on evidence from April 2024 to June 2025, the report concludes that poor or incomplete knowledge of stock condition puts tenants at risk, limits landlords' ability to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) and weakens long-term financial planning. The RSH has warned that failure to secure robust stock condition surveys and act on the data contributes to regulatory downgrades under the Consumer Standards. Nearly three-quarters of C3 or C4 assessments since April 2024 involved failures in stock condition knowledge. Stock condition survey coverage is improving, with median large landlords having surveyed 75% of their stock (up from 68% in 2023), but many landlords are behind in delivering full coverage and moving to 5-yearly survey cycles.
- g. The RSH has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) to confirm their commitment to working together. The agreement will see the two regulators share details on housing providers' failures and risk. The BSR will notify the RSH when it serves a compliance notice to a building owned by a registered provider, or when the BSR issues a special measures order. Similarly, the RSH will notify the BSR before it publishes its own regulatory judgements.

### Housing Ombudsman

- h. The Housing Ombudsman has published its latest Learning from Severe Maladministration report on the management of antisocial behaviour (ASB) drawing on casework from 12 landlords. It urges landlords to improve their response to ASB, particularly in cases involving hate incidents, noise complaints, and delays to essential repairs. The report highlights that problems emerge from the poor use of risk assessments, ineffective action planning, and insufficient integration between ASB and repair teams.
- i. The Ombudsman also recently published another 'Learning from Severe Maladministration' report highlighting concerns around windows. The report is split into three areas for landlords to focus on - individual circumstances, major works, and responsive repairs. Issues highlighted include failings to conduct risk assessments, delaying repairs in favour of later major works, and poor communication. The issues raise safety concerns related to both potential falls and excess cold due to window disrepair impacting residents' health. The report concludes: *"The Housing Ombudsman's renewed focus on this issue reflects growing concerns about tenant safety, particularly as incidents related to faulty*

*windows or neglected safety equipment come to light. The lack of proactive maintenance and robust record keeping has left many social landlords unprepared to address these risks effectively.”*

The recommendations come as analysis by the NHS-funded National Child Mortality Database (NCMD), which is run by the University of Bristol, found that 16 young children died after falling from windows or balconies between April 2019 and May 2025. Nine of which were living in social housing and were under the age of eleven. One theme identified in the report was families reporting windows as broken, sometimes on multiple occasions, and the landlord or local authority failing to fix them quickly enough.

### Research and Campaigns

- j. Inside Housing collected data from 188 councils and 40 housing associations across the UK that shows a significant increase in reported assaults against housing staff in the last three years. In 2024, over 6,000 incidents were reported, with a majority involving verbal abuse. Across 188 English authorities, more than 3,017 verbal, physical or sexual assaults were recorded against resident-facing housing staff in 2024. This is an almost threefold rise since 2020, when 1,026 total assaults were recorded by the same authorities. The total number rose year on year between 2020 and 2024, with a 20% increase in assaults recorded against housing staff at these councils between 2023 and 2024. Tenants and management quoted by Inside Housing point to cost-of-living pressures and the shortage of appropriate housing as factors behind the increase in violence and assaults. Residents pointed out that the increase is in line with a rise in anti-social behaviour.
- k. The Housing Forum has published a new report that shows social rents in England have declined in real terms over the past decade as they have failed to keep pace with inflation. This has placed increasing financial pressure on landlords and led to viability risks. The proportion of income paid by tenants has also fallen from 29.2% in 2013-14, to 26.4% in 2023-24, and the proportion of social tenants finding it difficult to pay rent dropping from 41% to 28%. However, Housemark have warned that a 5% impact from proposed welfare reforms could increase rent arrears by up to £240m. The findings come as the Government considers changes to rent convergence through a public consultation as part of the wider social housing rent settlement.
- l. Following the publication of the latest quarterly housing statistics by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), homelessness charities Shelter and Crisis have called on the government to unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The figures show that a record 131,140 households are in temporary accommodation, including 169,050 children. This is a 11.6% increase compared to the previous year. Shelter have stressed that the delivery of social rent homes is vital but that in the short-term unfreezing the LHA will help to ensure people can afford accommodation.

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