

Briefing Note

Committee name: Cabinet Housing Committee

Date: 21 January 2026

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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.

Government Strategy and Announcements

- a. The Chancellor, Rachel Reeves MP, delivered the Autumn Budget on the 26 November 2025. Key announcements around housing included:
 - The government are still considering consultation responses on social rent convergence, with a decision expected in January 2026.
 - Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates remain frozen.
 - The Warm Homes Fund received a £1.5bn boost in capital investment to tackle fuel poverty, in addition to the £13.2bn of funding allocated during the Spending Review in the summer. (See item e)
 - The government is not continuing the funding of the Energy Company Obligation on bills after March 2026 and is announcing £1.5 billion of new funding to support households facing fuel poverty.
 - The government will also fund 75% of the cost of the Renewables Obligation to households in 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29.
 - The administration of housing benefit and pension credit will be brought together to streamline the process from autumn 2026.
 - The two-child benefit limit will be scrapped from April which it is estimated will take 450,000 children out of poverty.
 - To improve work incentives, from autumn 2026 the government is adjusting how earnings are treated for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants in supported housing and temporary accommodation, so that most claimants will not be subject to reductions in income for working more hours.
 - Around a quarter of the £5bn National Housing Delivery Fund will be devolved across seven regions in the UK (Greater Manchester, Greater London, Liverpool City Region, the North East, South Yorkshire, West Midlands and West Yorkshire). The fund, announced in June and set to launch in spring 2026, aims to make complex housing regeneration and infrastructure projects viable. The

government say they remain committed to rolling out this funding model to more places at the next Spending Review.

- The government will soon consult on reforming VAT rules to encourage development on land earmarked for social housing.
- b. The implementation plans for the new Renters' Rights Act has been published and shows that reforms will be applied to the social rented sector in phase 2 from late 2026. The first phase of reforms, implementing the new tenancy regime in the private rented sector (PRS), will come into effect on 1 May 2026. These reforms include the end of no fault evictions and will give local authorities stronger enforcement powers, through changes to rent repayment orders and maximum penalties, the expansion of civil penalties, and a new requirement for local councils to report on enforcement activity. Further investigatory powers for local councils to inspect properties, demand documents, and access third-party data came into effect in December 2025.
- c. The next stage of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's (DSENZ) Warm Homes Plan, which seeks to retrofit hundreds of thousands of homes, will now be published in January 2026. Inside Housing has reported that up to £1.29 billion has already been earmarked for social landlords in England and £500 million for local authorities, but key decisions remain unresolved, including the future of the £7,500 Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant and how new schemes will be funded following the decision in the Budget to scrap the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) from March 2026.
- d. The government has announced its National Plan to End Homelessness, a cross departmental strategy backed by £3.5bn and designed to prevent homelessness, halve long term rough sleeping by 2029, and end the unlawful use of bed and breakfasts for families. To achieve these aims it will introduce legislation for a new duty to collaborate, requiring public bodies to work together to prevent homelessness and to avoid discharging anyone from prisons, hospitals, or social care services onto the streets. New targets will include halving the number of people who become homeless on their first night out of prison and ensuring that no eligible person is discharged from hospital to homelessness.

Funding commitments include:

- A new £124m supported housing scheme which will help more than 2,500 people off the streets and into stable accommodation.
 - A £15m innovation programme for councils.
 - A £37m communities programme supporting voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations.
 - A £950m investment from the Local Authority Housing Fund to build 5,000 good quality temporary homes to reduce pressure on temporary accommodation.
 - An additional £50m in year to local authorities through the Homelessness Prevention Grant.
- e. The government has published its Child Poverty Strategy, setting out a package of policies which aims to lift 550,000 children out of relative low income by 2030.

Commitments within the strategy focusing on housing and homelessness include:

- Ministers promise to end unlawful placements of families in B&B accommodation beyond the six-week legal limit, backed by £8 million of Emergency Accommodation Reduction Pilots in 20 areas with the highest use of B&Bs, continuing for three years.
 - The Government also confirms a fourth and largest round of the Local Authority Housing Fund worth £950 million from April 2026, intended to provide better forms of temporary accommodation by 2030.
 - A new legal duty on councils to notify schools, GPs and health visitors whenever a child is placed in temporary accommodation, with the aim of providing more co-ordinated support.
 - Commitments to working with the NHS to avoid mothers with newborns being discharged into B&Bs or similarly unsuitable housing.
- f. The Violence against Women and Girls strategy was published in December and included £500m for local authorities to provide support for victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation, such as domestic abuse refuges, in confidential locations, far from the reach of perpetrators. For those who choose to remain in their own homes, local authorities can deliver Sanctuary Schemes offering practical measures that transform a victim's own home into safe spaces, with expert support to help victims and their children recover and move on with their lives. These schemes combine essential security upgrades such as lock changes, window locks and alarms with specialist domestic abuse support to help survivors stay safe, to give peace of mind and protection where they need it most. The £19 million uplift is expected to support an extra 4,900 households needing safety, meaning the total funding is expected to help nearly 140,000 people over the next three years.
- g. Homes England has published its strategic plan for 2025 to 2030, setting out how it will accelerate housebuilding, and support the market to deliver in excess of 300,000 new homes per year. The plan sets out how over the next five years Homes England will use its land, funding, expertise, and access to private capital to maximise delivery and provide grant funding. It will also offer new low-interest loans through the National Housing Bank, while strengthening relationships with registered providers, housing associations, local authorities, developers, and enhanced mayoral strategic authorities, to ensure they have *"the long-term funding certainty and flexibility they need to deliver their social and affordable housing ambitions."* Homes England's director of affordable housing has also said recently that partners may be able to access funding above the £700m cap under the Social and Affordable Homes Programme, if the agency has *"certainty and confidence"* in deliverability.
- h. Following a recommendation from the Grenfell inquiry, the MHCLG has announced plans for a new regulator to bring together standards across buildings, products and professionals in the construction sector. The inquiry recommended that the government create a 'single construction regulator' to reduce fragmentation and complexity in the way the built environment is regulated. A consultation has been launched seeking views from the construction sector – responses and final plans are expected to be published in summer 2026.

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

- i. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has launched a consultation on changes to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard, which aims to introduce new requirements around competency and clearer information for residents. It also proposes changes to the Consumer Standards Code of Practice, and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). The consultation will run until 3 March 2026, with changes expected to come into force from April 2027. Proposed changes include:
 - The implementation of a new TSM covering electrical safety checks.
 - New requirements around staff competency, including mandatory qualifications for an estimated 30,000 senior housing managers and executives.
 - Tenants of private registered providers (PRPs) will have a similar level of access to information relating to the management of social housing as local authority tenants, with proactive publication and processes to formally request relevant information.
 - Tenants experiencing damp and mould will also be able to request information on how many other homes in their building have similar problems, and what action the landlord has taken regarding repairs.
- j. The government has concluded its Public Bodies Review of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), determining that a full-scale review of the regulator is currently not required. It has concluded that the RSH is a well-run organisation and identified no fundamental weaknesses in its governance, operations or delivery. Ministers stated that the regulator is operating effectively as the social housing sector adjusts to higher regulatory expectations, including stronger consumer regulation and a renewed focus on landlord accountability and standards. It has also set out areas of collaborative focus for the future – including how to share with residents an evidence base for the outcomes of social housing regulation and considering how performance is monitored and assessed across the sector.
- k. The RSH and the Charity Commission have published a Memorandum of Understanding setting out how they will work together to regulate organisations which are both private registered providers of social housing and registered charities. The Memorandum includes commitments to share information, raise issues at an early stage, signpost enquirers to the other organisation where appropriate, discuss matters of mutual interest such as stakeholder engagement, ensure consistency in communicating each other's roles, and avoid duplication while ensuring consistent treatment for bodies regulated by both organisations.

Housing Ombudsman

- l. The Housing Ombudsman has published its latest 'Learning from Severe Maladministration Report' urging social landlords to "see the person behind the repair", drawing on a series of severe maladministration cases. Across cases identified, the Ombudsman found that landlords often worsened service failures by not considering vulnerability, leading to situations such as insecure doors for domestic abuse survivors, children exposed to electrical hazards or collapsing ceilings, and disabled residents left without essential facilities for months. Many

failures stemmed from missed or poorly managed appointments, inadequate record keeping, and outdated systems that wrongly recorded “no access”.

Research and Campaigns

- m. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has launched a consultation inviting the housing sector to help shape the questions and topics included in the 2031 census. The consultation, which will be open until 4 February 2026 aims to ensure housing and population statistics meet the needs of policy makers and local authorities.
- n. The District Councils' Network (DCN) has released a new analysis of how the government's freeze on temporary accommodation subsidy is draining councils across England of £268m a year. Whilst the government reimburses councils for providing temporary accommodation through housing benefit, the rate of subsidy has been frozen since 2011. Councils must pay landlords based on current market rates, creating a significant financial shortfall for local authorities. The Local Government Association (LGA) followed the DCN's analysis with its own report revealing that the amount spent by English councils on temporary accommodation is expected to rise to £3bn by the end of the decade.
- o. According to campaign group Stop Social Housing Stigma's (SSHS) national tenant survey, more than two thirds of tenants still feel stigmatised for living in social housing. The survey included responses from 1,460 social housing tenants and found:
 - 53% feel stigmatised because of the actions of their landlords.
 - Only 27% said that they trusted their landlord 'a lot' or 'a great deal'.
 - 69% thought the government had done little or nothing to address stigma.
 - Only 5% believed the RSH had 'done a lot' and just under 39% felt it had 'not done very much' or 'done a little'.
 - 7.4% of respondents thought the Housing Ombudsman had 'done a lot' while 36.5% felt it had 'done not very much' or 'done nothing'.

Summary of upcoming regulatory changes on performance reporting

There have been several regulatory changes that have been reported to Housing Committee via sectoral insights, the following is a summary of key changes and how they are going to be integrated with the ongoing performance reporting project. An explanation as to why there will be some circumstantial reporting as some of the regulatory changes are enforced on a phased basis has also been included.

1. Changes to electrical safety standards

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2025, have now been extended to include the social rented sector; The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) (Amendment) (Extension to the Social Rented Sector) Regulations 2025.

This sees a significant shift in statutory responsibilities for registered social landlords (RSLs). This amendment now aligns safety standards across private and social rented properties resulting in consistency in tenant protection.

The changes impacting social landlords are:

- Electrical safety inspections are carried out at least every 5 years (by a qualified person)
- Tenants must receive an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) within 28 days of the inspection
- New tenants must be issued an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) before moving in
- All tenants must be provided with the EICR for their property; valid EICRs must be issued, new inspections not necessary if there is a valid/in- time report held
- In service inspection and testing (ISIT/PAT testing) on all electrical equipment/appliances included the tenancy
- Complete a PAT testing remedials within 28 days
- Prospective tenants can request EICR reports and RSLs must provide these within 28 days.

It is important to state the obligation to provide an EICR is only related to individual properties. There is no statutory responsibility to provide EICRs for communal areas of blocks.

Also worth noting, electrical inspection and PAT testing can be undertaken at the same time.

Some other specific expectations include:

- EICR report must also state whether electrical equipment checks are up to date
- EICR report (a copy will suffice) must be kept until the next inspection and test is required or (if later than this) conducted, unless it is superseded by a more recent report.
- Supply a copy of the EICR report to the inspector and tester who will undertake the next inspection and test.

- Within 28 days of the completion of the remedial work or further investigative works, supply the tenant with the report, and written confirmation from the qualified person who carried out the works.

Implementation dates

There are two phases of enforcement:

- Phase 1 – From 1 November 2025 they apply to all new tenancies granted on or after that date
 - For existing tenancies, if a valid EICR is held but has not yet been provided to the tenant, this must be supplied to the tenant by 30 April 2026 (new inspection not necessary)
- Phase 2 – From 1 May 2026 they apply to all existing tenancies that were granted before 1 December 2025
 - Phase 2 must be completed by 1 November 2026; all pre-existing tenancies must have been inspected under the new regulations by this date.

Compliance/Performance measurements and reporting

Given this is a compliance change 100% compliance is expected and all performance metrics will use 100% compliance as the performance measurement.

It will be critical that for the duration of the implementation i.e. the two phases of enforcement, that temporary performance reporting is developed so manage existing reporting and the transitional measurements. When the transition between phases is completed, permanent reporting will be agreed and presented to Housing Committee. So to manage the expectations of Housing Committee, it is likely there are small changes in each report that comes to Committee over the next year however where necessary, changes will be supported by narrative in the report.

2. Changes to hazards safety standards

Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025 also known as Awaab's Law, came into force on 27 October 2025. Awaab's Law is a subsidiary legislation created under the powers granted by The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (in section 42), which realises the Act's aims to improve social housing standards. Also noteworthy when the Social Housing (Regulation) Act became law, a new section 10A was added to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985; this foundation clause allowed new rules on hazards in social housing, such as Awaab's Law, to be introduced.

Many people automatically associate Awaab's Law with damp, mould and condensation (DMC); they rightly associate the Law with the death of Awaab Ishak given Awaab died *after being exposed to mould* at his Rochdale home in December 2020. It is however important to state that Awaab's Law encompasses a wider range of hazards beyond DMC. Awaab's Law is orientated around ensuring safer housing conditions for tenants by holding landlords to account. Awaab's Law seeks to protect tenants from dangerous health and safety hazards including damp and mould, asbestos and domestic and personal hygiene hazards. The Law gives tenants the **right to demand repairs to ensure their homes are safe and provides** a legal obligation on landlords to investigate and repair health hazards within strict time limits.

Hazards in scope of Awaab's Law

For a hazard to be in the scope of the repair requirements under Awaab's law, it must:

- be a part of buildings or land for which the social landlord is responsible
- be the landlord's responsibility to fix
- result from defects, disrepair or lack of maintenance
- be a significant or emergency hazard
- not be damage that is a result of the breach of contract by the tenant.

It is important to define the emergency and significant hazards so to understand when the Law will apply. Using governmental definitions, they are described as:

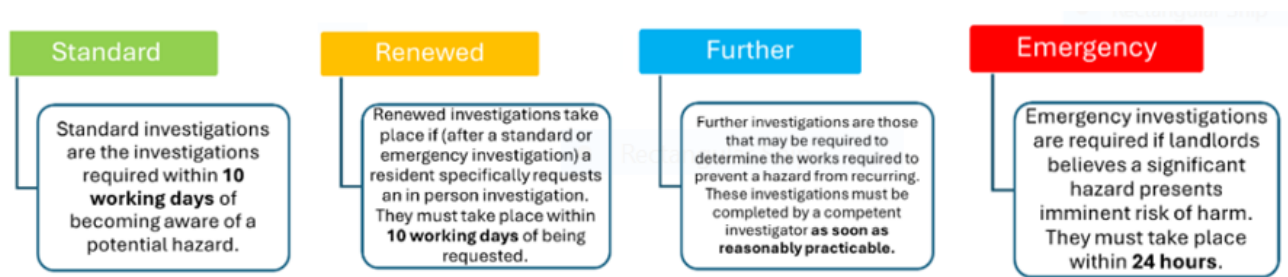
Emergency hazard	An emergency hazard is defined as one that poses <i>an imminent and significant risk of harm</i> to the health or safety of the tenant. An 'imminent and significant risk of harm' is defined as <i>a risk of harm to the occupier's health or safety that a reasonable social landlord with the relevant knowledge would take steps to make safe within 24 hours.</i>
Significant hazard	A significant hazard is defined as a <i>significant risk of harm</i> to the health or safety of a tenant. A <i>significant risk of harm</i> is defined as <i>a risk of harm to the occupier's health or safety that a reasonable lessor with the relevant knowledge would take steps to make safe as a matter of urgency.</i>

Compliance with Awaab's Law will only be achievable and measurable through robust systems for identifying, responding to, and remediating hazards which are driven by the defined statutory timeframes and evidenced by proactive and thorough inspections, clear record-keeping, and prompt communication.

The investigatory process of hazards is a critical aspect of Awaab's Law. Under Awaab's Law there are 4 key types of investigations:

1. Standard investigations
2. Renewed investigations
3. Further investigations
4. Emergency investigations

Each type of investigation has strict timeframes associated with them:



Upon investigation, should a landlord find there is no significant or emergency hazard there are no further repair requirements under Awaab's Law.

Implementation dates

There are three phases of enforcement:

Phase 1 – Mould, damp and emergency hazards (From October 2025)

Phase 1 sees the introduction of time limits and other statutory requirements on social landlords in respect of DMC and 'emergency hazards'.

The requirements of Phase 1 are as follows:

- If a social landlord becomes aware of a potential damp and mould hazard in a social home, they must investigate within 10 working days to ascertain if there is a hazard.
- The landlord must provide residents with a written summary of the investigation findings within three working days of the investigation concluding.
- If it is found that the damp and mould hazard poses a significant risk of harm to the health or safety of a resident, the social landlord must make the property safe (using temporary measures if necessary) within five working days of the investigation. Supplementary work needed to prevent serious hazards reoccurring must be completed within 12 weeks and overall repair works must be completed within a reasonable time period.
- In an emergency situation, the social landlord must investigate and action any emergency repairs as soon as reasonably practicable and, in any event, within 24 hours.
- If the property cannot be made safe within the specified timescales for Awaab's Law, then the social landlord must offer to arrange for the residents to stay in suitable alternative accommodation, at the social landlord's expense, until it is safe to return.
- Landlords must keep clear records of attempts to comply with these requirements, including records of all correspondence with the resident(s) and any contractors. If the landlord is unable to meet these requirements for reasons beyond their control, they will be expected to provide a record of the reasons that prevented them from doing so.

Phase 2 – Expansion of hazards (from 2026)

Statutory time limits will be introduced for additional types of ‘significant hazard’. This will include:

- excess cold and excess heat
 - falls associated with baths etc., on level surfaces, on stairs and between levels
 - structural collapse, and explosions
 - fire, and electrical hazards
 - domestic and personal hygiene and food safety

Phase 3 – All remaining hazards (By 2027)

Awaab's Law will be extended to include all remaining hazards, in the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (except overcrowding), where they present a significant risk of harm. This includes (amongst others) protection against accidents and protection from: asbestos and manufactured mineral fibres, biocides, carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products.

While Phase 2 and 3 are designed in the Law implementation roadmap, currently only high-level narrative is available on these phases so the requirements of these phases are yet to be formally documented. This is however clearly caveated by an official UKG statement that the phased approach does not mean that social landlords have leeway on addressing dangerous issues in their homes in the transition period to the commencement of the phase enforcement date. Social landlords must continue to meet the Safety and Quality standard outcomes as defined by the Regulator of Social Housing. This means social landlords must continue to meet the existing legal duties to keep homes safe (by fixing disrepair), and keeping homes fit for human habitation and free of dangerous Category 1 health or safety hazards.

Compliance/Performance measurements and reporting

There is a necessity to have imminent focus on the compliance of phase 1 due to the 27 October 2025 enforcement date but also because the formal guidance on the other phases is not yet available in terms of specifics.

Given this is a compliance change 100% compliance is expected and all performance metrics will use 100% compliance as the performance measurement. What will be key in the phase 1 reporting is that our reporting represents our performance in relation to DMC and ‘emergency hazards’ both in scope and out of scope of Awaab’s Law and the Regulator will expect to see this given the official statement made when social landlords responsibilities to meet Safety and Quality standard outcomes.

As part of the ongoing audit, we have identified some DMC data for our current DMC management however this is not yet in a format that allows for sound reporting. Work is currently being prioritised that will allow us to management DMC performance against the new regulatory framework and to report on DMC activity as part of the monthly compliance reporting. As of yet, timeframes cannot be put on this work however assurance is given that DMC compliance and reporting is being treated as an utmost priority with the workplan for both the Head of Regulatory Compliance and the Interim Head of Governance, Risk and Assurance.

It will be critical that for the duration of the implementation i.e. the three phases of enforcement, that temporary performance reporting is developed so manage existing reporting and the transitional measurements. When the transition between phases is completed permanent reporting will be agreed and presented to Housing Committee. So to manage the expectations of Housing Committee, it is likely there are small changes in each report that comes to Committee over the next year however where necessary, changes will be supported by narrative in the report.

3. Current consultation on electrical safety checks TSM

It is noteworthy that the Regulatory has opened a consultation on changes to electrical standards. The consultation is currently open and closes on 31 March 2026. The consultation is on proposed changes to the TI&A Standard and the Code, and the proposed introduction of an electrical safety checks TSM.

While this it is only consultation stage it must be recognised there is usually strong motivation to either get to the position that is being consulted on or getting close to it. Therefore, we will keep engaged with the consultation process and ensure improvements and/or changes we make to our systems, ways of working and reporting are futureproofed so we can respond quickly and efficiently to anything that comes out of this consultation.

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