



16 March 2021

Dear Chief Executive

(Please share this letter with your Chief Housing Officer and Lead Member for Housing)

I am writing on behalf of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) following the publication, in November 2020, of the government's White Paper on social housing: [The charter for social housing residents](#). The Paper, which has been informed by a process of consultation and engagement with social housing residents following the fire at Grenfell Tower, sets out a range of measures with the aim of rebalancing the relationship between social landlords – both local authorities and housing associations – and tenants.

While much of the responsibility for delivering the expectations set out in the White Paper rests with social landlords, its implementation will be underpinned by a strengthened consumer regulation regime that we have been asked to take on as RSH. That regime will build on our existing *reactive* consumer regulation role and standards, which all social landlords, including local authorities, are currently subject to, and includes health and safety responsibilities.

The White Paper sets out clear expectations that social tenants should be able to expect good quality homes and services, whoever their landlord is. Our new remit, once implemented, will be proactive and involve regular regulatory engagement between us and local authorities with housing stock (including those with ALMOs and/or TMOs), as well as between us and private registered providers (housing associations). The key regulatory changes are outlined in Chapter 4 of the White Paper.

As we develop the new social housing consumer regulation regime, we consider that it must pass three tests for it to be successful:

1. It must make a meaningful difference to tenants
2. It must be deliverable by landlords, whether housing association or local authority landlords
3. We must be able to regulate it effectively.

To implement the changes, we will focus on the following broad areas:

- changes needed to the consumer standards that all social landlords will be required to meet
- the proactive consumer regulation activity (including, for example, a programme of inspections as outlined in the White Paper) through which we will monitor and assess whether those standards are being met; and
- agreeing a set of tenant satisfaction measures that will both inform our regulation and help tenants hold their landlords to account.

Please refer to the RSH website for our interim correspondence arrangements during the current period of social isolation due to Covid-19. If you need to contact us by post, you should do so via the Leeds address: Regulator of Social Housing, 1st Floor, Lateral, 8 City Walk, Leeds LS11 9AT.

However, please note that post may not reach us in a timely manner or at all, and contact via email would be safer.



By far the most important of these areas are the standards. We need to have the right standards in place to get the right outcomes for tenants and allow us to act when these outcomes are not being delivered. Proactive consumer regulation and tenant satisfaction measures will be important supporting tools to help deliver those outcomes and support assurance to ensure that the standards are being met.

It will take time to carry out all the changes that will be needed including changes to legislation. We want to use that time effectively to work with all our stakeholders, including local authorities and tenants, to make sure that social housing consumer regulation is fit for purpose and complements our economic regulation work. In the case of local authorities, our economic regulation work applies in respect of rent regulation. As you will know from [the letter my colleague Will Perry wrote last week](#) about rents data collection for 2020/21, we are continuing to engage with local authorities on this aspect of regulation and how we will follow up, proportionately, to gain assurance of compliance where we see evidence, including from data returns, that there may be an issue.

However, changes to regulation are only part of the picture. The outcomes set out by the White Paper's charter are about the relationship between landlord and tenant, and how landlords can work with their tenants more effectively. While full implementation of the proactive consumer regulation regime will take time, we have been clear in our messaging that all landlords can act now to start delivering those outcomes. The White Paper sets a clear direction of travel and we encourage all landlords, including local authority landlords, ALMOs and TMOs to consider what steps they can take now to follow it.

As we begin the work of implementing the new consumer regulation regime, we are keen to strengthen our links with the local authority housing sector and engage and work with you as we develop our approach. As part of a wider programme of engagement with social housing tenants, landlords and other stakeholders the LGA has arranged a webinar on Friday 19th March about consumer regulation in the local authority housing sector at which I and local authority colleagues will be speaking. I hope to see you there or at other events in the future.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all social landlords that our [existing consumer standards](#) continue to apply. More information about our current approach to regulating against our consumer standards can be found in our annual [Consumer Regulation Review](#). In the event of potential non-compliance please contact the Referrals and Regulatory Enquiries team (enquiries@rsh.gov.uk) in the first instance.

I look forward to working with you and your colleagues as we implement our new approach to consumer regulation.

Yours faithfully



Fiona MacGregor
Chief Executive, Regulator of Social Housing