



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Matthew Pennycook
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
2 Marsham Street
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To: Council Leaders in England and Private
Registered Providers of Social Housing in
England

Cc: Council Chief Executives in England

14 May 2026

Dear Colleague,

A DECADE OF RENEWAL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING: INTRODUCTION OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING BILL

Everyone deserves to live in a decent, safe, secure and affordable home. Yet far too many families in need of a social rented home are languishing on local authority waiting lists, forced to struggle in the private rented sector or in expensive temporary accommodation, driving up rents and housing benefit costs in the process. At the same time, the ability and willingness of social housing providers to invest in the building of new social rented homes is undermined by the steady and significant loss of existing stock through Right to Buy and ongoing bureaucratic impediments.

This government remains firmly committed to delivering the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation, alongside a transformational and lasting change in the safety and quality of homes. In July 2025, we published [our five-step plan](#) to deliver a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing, providing Registered Providers with the funding and regulatory certainty they needed to quickly ramp up investment in existing and new stock.

Building on that five-step plan, and the [progress made to date](#) in delivering it, the government has today (14 May) introduced the Social Housing Bill into Parliament. The Bill has three core objectives. First, to protect much-needed social housing stock and thereby incentivise the building of more social rented homes. Second, to create a fairer system with greater protections for social housing tenants in instances of domestic abuse. Third, to clarify the statute book and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy so that providers can invest in new social and affordable homes with confidence.

At the heart of the Bill are comprehensive reforms to the Right to Buy scheme that will better protect existing stock and provide councils with the motivation and confidence to build at scale, whilst maintaining a route to homeownership for longstanding tenants. In July 2025, we published a [response to our Right to Buy consultation](#), setting out our intention to bring forward legislation when Parliamentary time allowed. Delivering on that commitment, the Bill will increase eligibility periods from 3 years as a secure tenant to 10 years, reform percentage discounts to better align

with cash caps, and exempt new social homes from the scheme for 35 years to maintain stock levels nationwide, alongside further measures that give councils and providers greater opportunity to retain homes within the sector.

The Bill also strengthens protections for tenants experiencing domestic abuse to remain in their property away from their abuser or to move to suitable alternative accommodation, promoting security and fairness, and supporting the government's wider commitment to tackling violence against women and girls, ensuring that victims are better protected and able to rebuild their lives in safe and stable housing.

Finally, by repealing unworkable legacy provisions from previous housing legislation, including the mandatory 'pay to stay', and streamlining the housing consent process for councils, the Bill will clarify the statute book and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, helping to enable sustained investment in social and affordable housing.

Further detail on the Bill's individual measures can be found on GOV.UK in our [Guide to the Bill](#).

Today's announcement marks the next step in the delivery of our decade of renewal plan. Since January's update, we have made further significant progress. We have opened the 10-year £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme for bids, which has seen ambitious plans from right across the sector to deliver the next generation of homes up and down the country.

Alongside this, we have put in place an emergency short-term intervention to unlock stalled Section 106 delivery. The registration deadline for unsold and uncontracted homes on the Section 106 Homes England Clearing Service is 1 June 2026, and we strongly encourage local planning authorities to keep processing Deed of Variation requests for all homes that have been registered so far. Insights from the Service are informing the development of longer-term measures to improve the mechanics of the Section 106 system. More information will be set out in due course.

We have continued to strengthen the regulatory framework by publishing consultation responses for our [Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards](#) in the social rented sector, and our [Future Homes and Building Standard](#), and have laid [draft statutory guidance](#) before Parliament for the revised Housing Health and Safety Rating System, which will come into force this summer - supporting safer, warmer homes and better outcomes for residents. We have also implemented Phase 1 of Awaab's Law, in force since October 2025; we are now undertaking our test and learn approach before extending the requirements to other hazards.

We have progressed the Right to Manage review, including convening an expert steering group, to explore how more tenants can take greater control of their housing with appropriate support, with this work informing updates to an outdated regulatory framework as part of our wider commitment to strengthening resident control.

Additionally, we have launched a review into the allocation and use of social housing to reduce empty homes, support better use of existing stock and ensure homes go to those most in need, including strengthening council nomination arrangements and reviewing statutory guidance to better reflect local needs and support vulnerable households.

The Social Housing Bill represents the next step in this programme of delivery. Building on the progress made to boost investment, unlock supply and raise standards, the Bill puts in place the legislative foundations needed to sustain delivery over the long term: protecting existing social

homes, clarifying the statute book and reducing bureaucracy, and better protecting tenants who are victims of domestic abuse by providing them with greater security and stability. By aligning with and reinforcing the five-step plan for a decade of renewal, these reforms will help ensure that the progress made since January translates into lasting change, enabling the sector to build at scale while improving the quality and security of social housing for those who rely on it.

Furthermore, alongside the Social Housing Bill, the Government will also be taking forward wider legislative reforms to leasehold and building safety in this parliamentary session. The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill will transform the experience of home ownership for millions of leaseholders across the country, bringing an end to the feudal leasehold system in this Parliament. The Remediation of Unsafe Cladding Bill will look to create certainty as to which buildings require remediation, clarify the responsibilities for conducting remediation, hold the companies who contributed to the crisis to account, and ensure all residents have a route to remediation.

As the Social Housing Bill begins its passage through Parliament, my Department will continue to engage closely with the social housing sector, including local authorities, housing associations, tenant groups and representative bodies, to ensure stakeholders are kept informed and have the opportunity to provide feedback as the Bill progresses. I look forward to continuing to work with you as we take forward this programme of renewal.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP

Minister of State for Housing and Planning