

# SHELTER

## Social Housing (Regulation) Bill: Second Reading Briefing

Grenfell United and Shelter strongly welcome the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill.

Over five years on from the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government has introduced the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill, which represents a real opportunity to provide fairness and accountability for people living in social housing.

Grenfell United and Shelter are campaigning to ensure that the Bill is robust enough to truly deliver on the promises to provide a proactive system of regulation that effectively holds social landlords to account.

Too many social tenants are still living in unsafe, unfit homes that are not being routinely inspected or managed effectively.

To meet the promises made to tenants after the Grenfell Tower fire:

- 1. The Government must give firm assurances that the Regulator of Social Housing will use its new powers (Clause 29) to conduct routine inspections of social housing landlords, as promised in the Government's Social Housing White Paper.**
- 2. The Bill must ensure that senior managers who work for social landlords are properly trained and qualified to manage social housing.**

### The need for better regulation

The Government has introduced the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill, which represents a real opportunity to provide fairness and accountability for people living in social housing. The Second Reading of the Bill will be taking place on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November in the House of Commons.

The fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017 highlighted how poorly managed and under-regulated social housing can have fatal consequences. For over five years Grenfell United have campaigned to ensure their 72 loved ones are not remembered for what happened but for what changed. A robust Social Housing Regulation Bill is central to their legacy, to ensure another Grenfell never happens again.

Following the fire, Ministers consulted with survivors, bereaved and 7,000 other social tenants, who were *"not only concerned about safety, but also maintenance, repairs and poor living conditions"*. A new deal was promised. Yet, as recent ITV reports, and campaigning of residents like Kwajo Tweneboa, have shown, too many tenants are still living in unsafe, unfit homes.

Poor management of social housing can affect the health, safety and wellbeing of tenants – individuals with disabilities and support needs, families trying to settle after a period of homelessness, and (disproportionately) people from marginalised backgrounds.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill is a big opportunity to lay the foundations of a robust, proactive system of regulation. One that listens to tenants when things go wrong and has their interests at its heart, as well as the tools to address the issues.

In its current form, the Bill would significantly improve the system of regulation for people living in social housing, but it's vital that MPs take the opportunity, during the Commons Stages, to make sure it is as robust as possible.



## Key measures in the Bill

**The removal of the 'serious detriment test'** gets rid of a significant barrier for the Regulator of Social Housing to effectively begin to enforce consumer standards. This change will enable both proactive inspections of landlords, as well as those in response to complaints, monitoring and external reports.

**Stronger enforcement powers for the Regulator** to tackle poor performance, including:

- Removing the cap on fines for non-compliance
- Power to de-register registered providers for non-compliance, and
- Power to arrange emergency repairs where tenants face imminent risk to safety and/or wellbeing.

We support the introduction of these enforcement powers and believe they should be used in conjunction with **a regular proactive inspection regime (Clause 29)**, to be fully effective.

Equally, we strongly welcome the introduction of a clause that seeks to **address the professionalisation of the sector (Clause 21)**, but this must go further still.

## Key priorities for the Bill

**The Government must give assurances that the Regulator of Social Housing will be expected to conduct routine inspections of all social landlords to check that consumer standards are being met.** The Government's [Social Housing White Paper](#) (2021) committed to introducing routine inspections of social landlords. More recently, a [press release](#) from DLUHC restated this commitment, announcing that the Bill would introduce 'Ofsted-style inspections' for social landlords.

While the Bill does contain legislative measures on inspection plans in Clause 29, **this must come with a confirmation from the Government that all social landlords will be inspected by the Regulator on a regular basis**, with the frequency and scope of inspections dependent on the size and risk level of the landlord.

**The Bill must ensure that senior managers who work for social landlords are properly trained and qualified to manage social housing.** Given that social housing is let to those most in need and tenants can't easily move to an alternative landlord, it's vital that it's professionally managed. Housing management staff must be qualified and subject to continuous professional development. This is reflective of the approach taken in other social professions, such as social work, teaching or nursing.

It is Grenfell United and Shelter's firm belief that social housing management can over time be brought in line with the aforementioned social professions, with legislation that sets out clear requirements and suitable qualifications. Qualifications and training should aim to provide housing management staff with the skills and knowledge needed to do the job, as well as instilling the values and ethics needed to deliver a care-centred service for residents.

**While welcome, Clause 21 does not in itself guarantee that this aim will be met. The Government must clarify its expectations of the Regulator and make improvements to Clause 21 to ensure that it is sufficiently robust to achieve these aims.**

