

SHELTER

Social Housing (Regulation) Bill: Public Bill Committee 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 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, the Government must:

- 1. Give firm assurances that the Regulator of Social Housing will use its new powers (Clause 29) to conduct routine inspections of all social landlords.**
- 2. Amend the Bill (Clause 21) to ensure that senior managers who work for social landlords are properly trained and qualified to manage social housing.**
- 3. Amend the Bill to enable new, clearer, consumer standards that cover the issues that matter to tenants.**

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 fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017 highlighted how poorly managed and under-regulated social housing can have devastating consequences. For five years Grenfell United – the bereaved and survivors of the fire – have campaigned to ensure their 72 loved ones are remembered for meaningful change to the system of social housing regulation, to ensure, to ensure another Grenfell never happens again and people living in social tenants have safe, secure, homes.

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”*. Yet, too many families in social housing are still living in unsafe, substandard conditions, with no proactive regulation of the consumer standards. The homes they rent are putting lives, health and well-being at risk. 448,000 social homes fail to meet the Government’s Decent Homes Standard.¹

This Bill is vital in introducing the tough legislation that’s clearly urgently needed to protect tenants. Shocking cases of tenants living in wholly unacceptable conditions continue to come to light. In 2021, ITV News Political Correspondent, Daniel Hewitt, spent six months travelling the country uncovering the shocking conditions endured by individuals and families

¹ Brown, M. and Booth, R. 15 November 2022, [Death of two-year-old from mould in flat a ‘defining moment’, says coroner](#), The Guardian



living in social housing, owned and run by both local councils and housing associations.² Campaigning by Kwajo Tweneboa has also shown tenants facing appalling conditions and difficulties in getting complaints resolved.³ Most recently, the death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak was judged to be a result of prolonged exposure to mould in his family's flat. It is clear that poorly managed and maintained social housing can kill.

A new generation of social housing is the answer to the housing emergency. But the Government need to make sure our social homes are good quality and well-managed. The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill is the 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.

Key changes needed to the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill

Shelter strongly supports the introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill and are campaigning alongside Grenfell United to ensure that the Bill is as robust as possible. The priority for the Bill must be to allow the Regulator of Social Housing and other relevant bodies to design and implement a robust, effective system of regulation in social housing.

In order to truly deliver on promises outlined by the Government in the Social Housing White Paper, the Bill must deliver on proactive inspections, professionalisation of the sector, and consumer standards:

Clause 29: Shelter is calling for routine inspections of all social landlords, which get to the heart of the service a landlord is providing. This must include seeking the views of tenants directly. The introduction of Clause 29, on inspection plans, is welcome. But **this must come alongside firm assurances from the Government that the Regulator of Social Housing will use its new powers to conduct routine inspections of all social housing landlords.**

Clause 21: Shelter recommends that the Government strengthens Clause 21 (standards on competence and conduct) to ensure senior housing management staff meet clear and objective expectations on professional training, professional qualifications and continuous professional development. While introduction of Clause 21 is welcome, it does not guarantee that that this aim will be met. **Clause 21 should be strengthened to ensure that senior managers in social housing are properly qualified and trained to manage social housing.**

New Clause (preceding Clause 21): Shelter welcomes the introduction of new consumer standards on safety (Schedule 5, paragraph 17), transparency (Clause 22) and competence and conduct (Clause 21). But there are other matters of great importance to tenants on which the Regulator should also have the power to set consumer standards. These include the need for an urgent move ('transfer') to escape risk to life from domestic or neighbourhood violence. **The Government should amend the Bill to extend the scope of the consumer standards to other areas of housing management important to tenants.**

² Hewitt, D. [Britain's Housing Shame: A story of shocking conditions and tenants' despair at a lack of action, 12 September 2021](#), ITV

³ Geraghty, L. [Kwajo Tweneboa wants his new documentary to make you angry about the housing crisis](#), 2022, Big Issue

