

SHELTER

Social Housing (Regulation) Bill: House of Lords Report Stage Briefing

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

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 people living in social housing after the Grenfell Tower fire, the Bill must be amended to:

- 1. Ensure the Regulator conducts routine, 'Ofsted-style', inspections of social housing landlords, as promised in the Government's Social Housing White Paper.**
 - a. See Lord Best's tabled amendment (17) [here](#)
- 2. Ensure that senior managers who work for social landlords are properly trained and qualified to manage social housing.**
 - a. See Baroness Hayman's amendment (23) [here](#)

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 Report Stage will be taking place on Tuesday 18th October in the House of Lords.

The fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017 highlighted how poorly managed and under-regulated social housing can have fatal consequences. For five years Grenfell United has 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 they are facing.



Key changes needed to the Bill

The current system of regulation is too weak to guarantee social housing is well managed and maintained for the people living in it.

While the Regulator of Social Housing is required to proactively enforce the economic standards, it cannot currently proactively enforce consumer standards.

To succeed in establishing a system of proactive regulation that creates accountability for people living in social housing the Bill must:

1. **Legislate to ensure that the Regulator conducts routine inspections to check consumer standards are being met.**

The Government's [Social Housing White Paper](#) (2021) committed to introducing 'routine inspections for the largest landlords (those with over 1,000 homes) every four years'. Equally, DLUHC's recent [press release](#) announced that the Bill would introduce 'Ofsted-style inspections' for social landlords. However, the Bill contains no legislative measures requiring the Regulator to do so.

Other Regulators (e.g. Ofsted and Care Quality Commission) are required by legislation to undertake regular inspections, with regulation-making powers to set out their regularity. As Ministers have described social housing as the 'first social service' its Regulator should be subject to similar requirements.

Shelter recommends that [Lord Best's amendment on inspections](#) is taken forward to require the Regulator of Social Housing to undertake regular inspections and give the Secretary of State a regulation-making power to set the frequency (and some minimum expectations for) routine inspections. The amendment allows for different expectations to be set for different landlords or in response to a changing sector/external environment, by providing the Secretary of State with a regulation making power.

2. **Legislate to 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 and maintenance staff must be well-qualified and subject to continuous professional development, in the same way as social workers, teachers and nurses.

In the [Social Housing White Paper](#) the Government said it would 'review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service'. However, the Bill currently includes no measures that would enable professional standards to be mandated in law, as is the case for legislation relating to health professionals, social workers and teachers.

Shelter recommends that [Baroness Hayman's amendment on professionalisation](#) is taken forward to enable the Secretary of State to set standards for registration, professional standards (such as qualifications or experience) and professional development of staff. Like the above, this amendment allows for different expectations to be set for different landlords or in response to a changing sector/external environment, by providing the Secretary of State with a regulation making power.

