

Response to the Social Housing Green Paper

Tpas 2018





Executive Summary

Tpas welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Social Housing Green Paper. We believe that the Green Paper, and the wider debate it has triggered about the role and purpose of social housing, is a once in a generation opportunity to develop a vision for Social Housing that is shared between tenants, landlords, government and the wider public. As England's leading tenant engagement experts, we have been particularly heartened by the way in which tenant voices, and tenant experience, has been foregrounded in many of the discussions.

In recent weeks we have seen, from government, a shift both in tone and policy in a number of areas. These changes are welcome, but it is vital that these are seen as just the start. We want to work with government, and others, to build on the new political commitment around social housing. Lasting and sustainable change is only possible if we place tenants at the centre of shaping the future, and that is something that we at Tpas are keen to support.

Our response is based on three key principles that were developed through our consultation with our members over recent months namely;-

1. The legitimacy of social housing as a tenure – it isn't second-class housing and tenants are not second-class people.
2. The need to place tenants at the centre of future discussions, and to ensure that there is support in place for them to be part of shaping the next stage of this debate.
3. A call to work with us, and others, to build on what we know works. There is already excellent, proven and innovative practice in the sector and we should all commit to build on this.

In the Green Paper government poses a number of important questions that we have responded to:

- In terms of **ensuring homes are safe and decent**, we ask that the findings of the Hackitt Review are implemented in full. We also set out our thoughts on how a combination of clear information on an agreed standard, local information on what individual landlords are doing and formal regulation and upward pressure from empowered tenants is the best way of ensuring safer homes.



- In terms of **effective resolution of complaints**, we call for a sector wide cultural shift to see complaints as key feedback that can help improve services. We also call for a ‘fixed, fair and fast’ complaints process, based on a consistent national standard alongside the removal of needless red tape that delays action. Routes to redress also need to be visible to tenants and all parts of the system need to be properly resourced to do the job.
- In terms of **empowering residents and strengthening the regulator** we believe providing well informed, confident and supported tenants, with the information that they need to challenge landlords will drive better performance. We believe the governance standard should be revised so that organisations have to demonstrate how all tenants are involved in shaping the services that they receive. We also support the principle of a national voice for tenants to place tenant views alongside government and providers in national policy debates, as well as supporting a more customer orientated, focused and muscular regulator with a clear remit to regulate a new consumer standard that has equal weight and prominence to existing regulatory standards on governance and viability.
- In terms of **tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities** we welcome recent statements but believe there is still too much stigma associated with social housing and that must be addressed. In particular we call for greater leadership from national and local politicians to help drive a more balanced view of social housing tenants.
- Finally, in terms of **expanding supply and supporting home ownership** we recognise and support recent efforts to get local authorities building again, and acknowledge that government does appear to have started to grasp the scale of the supply challenge that we face. However, for future supply there does need to be a sustained and funded focus on developing homes for social rent rather than focusing predominantly on home ownership.

Throughout our response we make a number of practical suggestions, and offers to help support government as it moves onto the next phase of implementation. These offers are real. At Tpas we have considerable knowledge, experience and skills on how to work with landlords and tenants to co-create solutions that work. Our offer to government, is to work alongside you to make sure that the opportunity that the Green Paper provides is something that we do not waste. Tenants now expect more and the sector and government must ensure that expectation is matched with tangible change in how services are delivered, the culture of organisations and how tenants are kept safe in their homes.