



**Housing, Communities and Local  
Government Committee**

# **Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector**

**Fourth Report of Session 2024–26**

**HC 1154**

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# Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

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# Summary

Most social homes provide tenants with warm, safe and decent places to live. However, progress at bringing social homes up to the Decent Homes Standard has almost ground to a halt, with very little improvement since the pandemic. It is not acceptable that just under 430,000 social homes still fail to meet even this basic standard. Other hazards, including damp and overcrowding, have been increasing.

The Government's new Decent Homes Standard will not be implemented in full until 2035. We are concerned that this will mean too many tenants remain in poor quality, unsafe homes for too long. We recommend that the Government set interim targets specifying the percentage of social homes that will be upgraded to the revised standard in each year before the final implementation date.

The Government is also introducing new minimum energy efficiency standards that social landlords will need to meet by 2030. Progress at retrofitting social homes needs to accelerate if the sector is going to upgrade the remaining homes up to the required standard in time. We support bringing social homes up to a minimum standard of energy efficiency. However, we are worried that this will provide false assurance that tenants are protected from fuel poverty and the multiple harms that come from living in a cold home. High energy prices mean households living in homes that comply with the Government's new minimum energy efficiency standard may still be in fuel poverty, if they struggle to afford to heat their home sufficiently. In the forthcoming Fuel Poverty Strategy, we therefore recommend that the Government revise the official definition of fuel poverty to reflect this.

We agree with the Government's decision to rollout Awaab's Law in phases, focusing on tackling the most dangerous hazards first. However, social landlords and tenants need a much clearer roadmap or timeline for when the remaining phases of Awaab's Law will be introduced, and clarity on when official guidance will be provided. The Government must urgently set and publish the timeline for extending Awaab's Law to all remaining hazards, so that tenants and social landlords have clarity about when they can expect these new regulations to apply.

Alongside raising standards, the Government aims to dramatically increase investment in new social homes. The Government is pursuing these aims against a challenging backdrop, in which the housing sector's resources

have been thinly stretched. Providers' have seen costs rise above inflation throughout their supply chains. There is also a shortage of skills, especially in specialist roles. Even with the Government's investment in social homes and the changes to the rent settlement, we are concerned that the sector will not have sufficient resources to effectively meet the Government's new social homes target while also raising standards. New regulatory requirements could also result in social landlords choosing to sell homes that have reached, or are approaching, the end of their intended lifespan, at a time when social housing is desperately needed. Some registered providers may prefer to meet the new regulatory requirements by regenerating or replacing homes.

The first Decent Homes Programme between 2001 and 2010 led to dramatic improvements in the quality of social homes. Given the challenges facing the sector, we recommend that the Government establish a new modern Decent Homes Programme to oversee and support social housing providers to raise the quality and safety of homes over the next decade.

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# Introduction

1. The Government entered office with an ambition to drive the biggest boost to the supply of social and affordable homes in a generation.<sup>1</sup> The Spending Review, in June 2025, allocated £39billion for the Government’s new Social and Affordable Homes Programme over 10-years, with a target for 60% of homes delivered through this programme to be for social rent.<sup>2</sup> This equates to 180,000 new social homes over the next decade.<sup>3</sup> Outside of the programme, the Government also expects more new social homes will be supported through other means, such as Right to Buy receipts and Section 106 agreements.<sup>4</sup> At the same time as boosting supply, the Government aims to deliver a “transformational and lasting change” to the quality and safety of social homes, while also raising the standard of homes in the private rented sector.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The Labour Party, [Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024](#), June 2024, p39. Affordable housing is housing whose needs are not met by the market. This includes homes for social rent along with other affordable rented housing. Affordable housing also includes routes designed to make home ownership affordable, such as shared ownership, and discounted market sales housing, such as homes sold at 80% of market value. The definition of affordable housing used by the Social and Affordable Homes Programme comes from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), March 2012. Socially-rented homes have rents that are linked to local incomes. Social rents have historically been set at around 50% of the market rate. Conditions for socially rented homes are set by the National Planning Policy Framework. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), March 2012.
2. The Government has allocated £39billion to the Social and Affordable Homes Programme from 2026–27 to 2035–36. See [Social and Affordable Housing Renewal](#), HCWS771, 2 July 2025; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025, p.2; HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2025](#), CP 1336, June 2025, p75
3. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025, p2.
4. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025, p2.
5. In July, the Government published its plans to deliver a decade of renewal in social and affordable homes, in which the Government set out its plans to introduce new regulatory requirements on social landlords to improve the quality and safety of social homes (See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025,p1). Following the passage of the Renters’ Right Act 2025, the Government also has plans to extend new regulatory requirements to private landlords to raise the quality and safety of homes in the private rented sector (PRS) as well. The Government intends to extend the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab’s Law to the PRS and has consulted on proposed changes to the minimum energy

2. To improve the quality and safety of social housing, the Government is introducing new regulatory requirements on social landlords. These include:
  - requirements to address hazards within specific timescales. These requirements are known as Awaab's Law, in memory of Awaab Ishak, a 2-year-old boy who died from prolonged exposure to damp and mould in his parent's social home.<sup>6</sup>
  - a new minimum energy efficiency standard.
  - an updated Decent Homes Standard, the minimum quality standard for social homes.
  - new electrical safety regulations.<sup>7</sup>
3. The Government is aiming to drive investment into new and existing social homes to increase both the supply of new homes and raise the quality of existing ones.<sup>8</sup> When we heard from the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook MP, in July 2025, he was clear that the Government is giving equal weight to both priorities and is determined to "make progress on both fronts."<sup>9</sup> However, balancing improvements to existing homes with the need to invest in extra supply has been especially difficult over recent years, as registered providers of social housing have had to grapple with competing demands (see Chapter 3) within a financially constrained environment.<sup>10</sup>

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efficiency standards that apply to privately rented homes. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the Private Rented Sector](#), November 2025 and Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, [Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes in England and Wales: Domestic Private Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards](#), May 2025

6 Following campaigning from Shelter and Manchester Evening News, the then Government tabled an amendment to the Social Housing Regulation Bill to introduce Awaab's Law. (see Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, [Response to Prevent Future Deaths Report: Investigation and Inquests into the Death of Awaab Ishak](#), January 2023, p3)

7 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025, pages 6-7

8 [Social and Affordable Housing Renewal](#), HCWS771, 2 July 2025

9 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Oral evidence: Delivering 1.5 million new homes: land value capture](#), HC 672, Tuesday 15 July 2025 [Q166, Matthew Pennycook].

10 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 8; [Qq54-55](#) [Alistair Symth]; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 11; Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Oral evidence: Housing Associations: Development and Financing](#), HC 599, Tuesday 14 January 2025 [Q32 Fiona MacGregor]; VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 6.2

## Our inquiry

4. We launched our inquiry into Housing conditions in England in July 2025.<sup>11</sup> The inquiry is designed to look at the prevalence and severity of poor housing conditions in all tenures and assess the effectiveness of the Government's plans to address them. We are now just over halfway through the inquiry. Our focus to date has been on conditions in the rented sectors. This report is focused on the social housing sector and is the first in a series of outputs which will focus on conditions in other housing sectors, including the private rented sector and temporary accommodation. We have heard from tenants, charities, consumer groups, campaigners, housing associations, councils, professional bodies, trade associations, public bodies, academics and other experts. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to the inquiry.
5. Our inquiry was launched shortly after the Government began to consult on changes to the Decent Homes Standard and other regulatory reforms.<sup>12</sup> The details of the new Decent Homes Standard and the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard that social landlords will need to meet were announced on 28 January.<sup>13</sup> At an early point in the Government's plans, our inquiry has sought to understand the scale of the challenge facing the Government over the next decade. This report will act as a benchmark against which we will track the Government's progress, as it endeavours to improve the quality and safety of social homes while boosting supply.

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11 [Housing conditions in England – Housing Committee launches new inquiry looking at social housing & private rented sectors](#), Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, 3 July 2025

12 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), July 2025; The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, [Consultation on Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the Social Rented Sector in England](#), July 2025

13 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement](#), January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Improving the energy efficiency of socially rented homes in England: Summary of consultation responses](#), January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes: government response](#), January 2026

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# 1 State of social homes in England

## The prevalence and severity of poor housing conditions

6. Most social homes provide tenants with warm, safe and decent places to live. Poor conditions are less prevalent in social homes compared with other tenures.<sup>14</sup> Social homes, for example, have the lowest rate of the most serious health and safety hazards, known as Category 1 hazards.<sup>15</sup> Only 5% of social homes are estimated to contain Category 1 hazards, compared to 10% of homes in the private rented sector.<sup>16</sup> A greater proportion of social homes also meet the current Decent Homes Standard compared to homes in other tenures.<sup>17</sup>
7. Poor housing conditions, however, still exist in many social homes. These include:
  - **Overcrowding:** In 2024/25, just under 9% of social homes (365,000 social homes) were estimated to be overcrowded, more than in other tenures.<sup>18</sup> Overcrowded homes are a hazard that can negatively affect people's physical and mental health, and their wellbeing.<sup>19</sup> Due to

14 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

15 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

16 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

17 Unlike in other tenures, social landlords are required to ensure their homes meet a minimum standard of quality, known as the Decent Homes Standard. This standard also serves as the national benchmark that is used to assess the quality of homes in other tenures. In 2024, 10% of homes in the social rented sector were estimated to fail the Decent Homes Standard. This is compared to 22% of dwellings in the PRS and 15% of homes that are owner-occupied. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

18 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

19 Bright Blue (HCE0034); Health Foundation, [Relationship between living in overcrowded homes and mental health | The Health Foundation](#), December 2024; Housing and Ageing Alliance (HCE0036)

a lack of space, people in overcrowded homes often need to sleep in the living room and children may need to share a bed with an adult.<sup>20</sup> Overcrowding can impact the physical condition of homes and exacerbate other hazards, such as damp and mould.<sup>21</sup>

- **Damp and mould:** Around 7% of social homes are estimated to experience problems with damp.<sup>22</sup> Across the sector, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government pointed out that properties in urban areas are more likely to have a problem with damp, with the highest levels seen in London boroughs.<sup>23</sup> These problems are most common in council homes compared to those managed by housing associations.<sup>24</sup> Exposure to damp and mould can harm people's physical and mental health.<sup>25</sup> Tenants told us the cost implications of living in a damp and mouldy home are often ignored, but can include time off work, trips to the doctor, higher heating bills and the need for extra blankets.<sup>26</sup> We heard that providers often fail to tackle the root cause of the problem.<sup>27</sup>
- **Difficulty heating their home:** Social landlords have made good progress at improving energy efficiency (see Chapter 2). However, high energy costs mean even those living in energy efficient homes can still struggle to heat their homes sufficiently.<sup>28</sup> As well as being cold and unpleasant to live in, homes which are difficult to heat sufficiently can contribute to the development of damp and mould.<sup>29</sup>
- **Overheating:** Conversely, during the summer months, many social homes are already overheating to temperatures that are at best uncomfortable and at worse unsafe.<sup>30</sup> The extent to which a property is at a higher risk of overheating depends on a few factors. For

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20 Bright Blue ([HCE0034](#))

21 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 7; VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 1.2; G15 ([HCE0078](#))

22 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024-25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

23 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ([HCE0056](#)), para 1.4

24 In 2024/2025, the English Housing Survey estimated that 8% of local authority dwellings had damp compared with 6% of housing association dwellings. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024 to 2025 headline findings on housing quality and energy efficiency: Annex Table 1.10: Damp problems, by tenure, 2024](#), January 2026

25 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department of Health and Social Care and UK Health Security Agency, [Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home](#), August 2024

26 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

27 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

28 VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 1.5 and Chartered Institute of Housing, [CIH response to DESNZ review of the Fuel Poverty Strategy](#), April 2025

29 Switchee ([HCE0075](#)) VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 1.5

30 [Overheating: the silent crisis our systems are ignoring](#), Inside Housing, 22 October 2025

example, flats and smaller homes have a greater risk of overheating than other properties. Homes in dense urban areas are more prone to overheating too. Overcrowding also increases the risk of homes overheating.<sup>31</sup> The Resolution Foundation, a think-tank, pointed out that two-thirds of households in socially-rented accommodation have the highest risk of overheating.<sup>32</sup>

8. There are also inequities in social tenants' experience of poor conditions. For example, tenants from an ethnic minority background or with a disability are more likely to live in social homes with damp, mould and other Category 1 hazards.<sup>33</sup>
9. Over the last 25 years, substantial progress has been made at addressing poor conditions in social housing.<sup>34</sup> Registered providers of social housing are required to ensure their homes meet a minimum standard, known as the Decent Homes Standard (see Chapter 2). The standard was introduced in 2001 as part of the then Government's Decent Homes Programme.<sup>35</sup> This programme ran from 2001 to 2010.<sup>36</sup> Over this period, the proportion of social homes that failed to meet minimum standards fell significantly.<sup>37</sup> Over the last 15 years, progress at bringing social homes up to this minimum standard has continued under successive governments.<sup>38</sup>

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31 Resolution Foundation, [It's getting hot in here](#), August 2025, p2

32 Resolution Foundation, [It's getting hot in here](#), August 2025, p1

33 Chartered Institute of Housing, [CIH response to the Housing Ombudsman 'Repairing Trust' call for evidence](#), October 2025, p6-7

34 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, [Decent Homes Standard: Final Impact Assessment](#), January 2026; Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025

35 In 2000, the then Government set a target to "bring all social housing into decent condition" by 2010. To achieve this target, the then Government set a standard of decency, the Decent Homes Standard, that social homes should be improved to (See House of Commons ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, [Decent Homes](#), Fifth Report, HC 46-I, May 2004, paras 3-5 and National Audit Office, [The Decent Homes Programme](#), HC 212, January 2010)

36 House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, [Beyond Decent Homes](#), HC 60-I, March 2010, para 1.

37 In 2010, the National Audit Office published a report into the Decent Homes Standard. The NAO pointed out that over 1.6 million homes were estimated to be non-decent as of April 2001, equivalent to 39% of social homes at the time. By April 2009, the proportion of social homes estimated to be non-decent had fallen to 14.5% of social homes. However, updates to the standard in 2006 make it difficult to accurately compare performance before 2006 with progress since then (see National Audit Office, [The Decent Homes Programme](#), HC 212, January 2010, paras 2&5 and Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, p20)

38 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ([HCE0056](#)); Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025 p20).

10. However, there has been little progress since the pandemic.<sup>39</sup> The prevalence of non-decent homes fell by just over 1% in local authority-owned homes between 2020 and 2024, from 13.1% to 11.7%.<sup>40</sup> Over the same period, the prevalence of non-decent housing association homes fell from 10.1% to 9.2%.<sup>41</sup> The Housing Ombudsman also told us that there has been a “constant rise” in the number of complaints it receives about the condition of social homes.<sup>42</sup> In its investigations, the Ombudsman found that the level of failure by providers (the maladministration rate) has risen from 42% in 2021/22 to 74% in 2024/25.<sup>43</sup>

11. The latest findings from the English Housing Survey estimated that 1 in 10 socially rented homes in England in 2024/25 failed the Decent Homes Standard. This equates to just under 430,000 homes.<sup>44</sup> The standard has helped to drive improvements in the quality and safety of social homes, but it is very out-of-date and represents only a basic standard (see Chapter 2). The Government has acknowledged that progress at bringing homes up to a minimum standard has stagnated.<sup>45</sup> In January 2025, the Fabian Society noted that if the recent rate of progress is replicated it will be 15 years before all social homes meet even this basic standard. This is before factoring in the likelihood that buildings will continue to deteriorate.<sup>46</sup> The prevalence of some other hazards is increasing; overcrowding within

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39 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ([HCE0056](#))

40 The latest English Housing Survey has shown that 13.1% of local authority dwellings in 2020 were estimated to be non-decent. This rate fell to 9.1% in 2021 but then increased to 11.3% in 2022 and 12.1% in 2023 before falling again to 11.7% in 2024. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024 to 2025 headline findings on housing quality and energy efficiency: Annex Table 1.4: Non-decent homes, by tenure, 2006 to 2024](#), January 2026

41 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024 to 2025 headline findings on housing quality and energy efficiency: Annex Table 1.4: Non-decent homes, by tenure, 2006 to 2024](#), January 2026

42 Housing Ombudsman Service ([HCE0052](#)), para 6

43 The maladministration rate is particularly high in investigations into complaints about damp and mould at 81%, up from 46% four years ago. See Housing Ombudsman Service ([HCE0052](#)) paras 6–7

44 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024 to 2025 headline findings on housing quality and energy efficiency: Annex Table 1.4: Non-decent homes, by tenure, 2006 to 2024](#), January 2026

45 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, [Decent Homes Standard: Final Impact Assessment](#), January 2026, para 2

46 In January 2025, analysis by the Fabian Society suggested it would take 15 years for all social homes to meet the Decent Homes Standard if the rate of progress in reducing the absolute number of non-decent social homes between 2010 and 2002 is replicated. See Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England’s poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, p20

the sector continues to rise, which, as mentioned, can exacerbate other hazards.<sup>47</sup> Over recent years, there has also been an uptick in the presence of damp in the sector, especially within local authority dwellings.<sup>48</sup>

#### **Box 1: Tenants' experiences of poor conditions and services**

Underlying these national statistics are instances of social tenants living in intolerable, hazardous conditions, who are poorly treated by their landlords.

We heard from tenants who have struggled with persistent damp, mould, regular leaks and flooding. We were told, for example, of a case where a blind lady woke up one morning to find sewage coming into her bathroom. The landlord is only now resolving the problem, two years later.<sup>49</sup> Another tenant described how her 18-month-old daughter started getting chest infections due to the black mould behind her bed. She told us the mould spread everywhere, but complaining got her nowhere.<sup>50</sup>

The lack, and poor quality, of communal space was also highlighted by those we spoke to, while tenants also described feeling unsafe or vulnerable in their home.<sup>51</sup> One tenant told us he is living in a tower block where drugtaking is common. The police are often there, and he described seeing blood on the wall in communal areas.<sup>52</sup>

Tenants we spoke to described examples of complaints being ignored through to extreme instances of retaliation from their landlord.<sup>53</sup> For example, one tenant alleged that their landlord had deliberately flooded their property after they complained.<sup>54</sup>

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47 Over the last decade, overcrowding in social homes increased from 6% in 2014/15 to 9% in 2024/25. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

48 The percentage of local authority dwellings estimated to have a damp problem increased from 5% in 2019 to 9% in 2023, but fell to 8% in 2024. Over the same period, the proportion of housing association dwellings with a damp problem has increased from 4% to 6%. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2023–24, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2025 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Housing Quality](#), January 2026

49 [Q36](#) [Nic Bliss]

50 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

51 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

52 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

53 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

54 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

We heard that those living in social housing continue to feel stigmatised.<sup>55</sup> This is often because of how they are treated by their landlord.<sup>56</sup> The Housing Ombudsman told us that stigma can be overt or unconscious. He described a recent case where call centre staff were “not recording repairs if they took a dislike to the resident who phoned.”<sup>57</sup>

## 12. CONCLUSION

Most social homes provide tenants with warm, safe and decent places to live. The prevalence of poor conditions across the sector is generally lower than in other tenures. However, progress at bringing all social homes up to a minimum standard of decency has almost ground to a halt, with very little improvement since the pandemic. Over 25 years since the Decent Homes Standard was introduced, it is not acceptable that just under 430,000 social homes still fail to meet even this basic standard. Moreover, factors such as climate change, our country’s ageing population, and the inevitable deterioration of existing stock could lead to even more people living in poor quality, unsafe homes.

## Drivers of poor housing conditions in the social rented sector

### Difficulties maintaining older stock

13. Social landlords are maintaining some of the oldest stock in Europe, much of which has reached, or is shortly approaching, the end of its lifespan.<sup>58</sup> Clarion Housing Group, a housing association with over 125,000 homes, told us that this includes “lots of hard to heat homes and building fabric and construction that lends itself to leaks, condensation, damp and mould.”<sup>59</sup> We heard that if the Government is going to raise standards then some older homes need to be replaced.<sup>60</sup> Southwark Council told us that some council homes “can be cost-effectively refurbished”, but that a “sizeable proportion are approaching the end of their viable life without significant investment.”<sup>61</sup>

55 [Q32](#) [Kwajo Tweneboa], [Q36](#) [Nic Bliss], [Q37](#) [Richard Blakeway]

56 [Q36](#) [Nic Bliss]

57 [Q37](#) [Richard Blakeway]

58 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 35; G15 ([HCE0078](#)); VIVID ([HCE0017](#)) para 1.2

59 Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), p2

60 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)) para 35; G15 ([HCE0078](#)); Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

61 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#)), para B1

## Wider systemic pressures

14. The prevalence of poor conditions has also been affected by wider pressures. High energy costs have made it harder for households to heat their homes.<sup>62</sup> Rising overcrowding, both a symptom of a lack of supply and a health hazard, is associated with the presence of other hazards such as damp and mould.<sup>63</sup>

## Competing demands on the sector's finances

15. Competing demands on the sector's finances have also led to resources being diverted away from planned upgrades to homes.<sup>64</sup> These pressures are partly due to wider economic pressures.<sup>65</sup> However, the sector's finances have been constrained over the last 10–15 years by cuts to rent and reductions in grant funding by the previous Government.<sup>66</sup> The sector has also had to respond to new demands on its finances from essential building safety works to decarbonisation.<sup>67</sup> New building safety requirements, in particular, have required sustained investments and continue to consume a large proportion of some providers' resources.<sup>68</sup> Southwark Council, a large council landlord, told us that its “£70 million annual investment budget is almost entirely consumed by building and fire safety works for at least the next two to three years.”<sup>69</sup>

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62 VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 1.5

63 G15 ([HCE0078](#)); National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 7; Royal Institute of British Architects ([HCE0058](#)); VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 1.2

64 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 11

65 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 8; G15 ([HCE0078](#)) para 11; Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), p2

66 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 8; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 11; [Q54](#) [Alistair Smyth] [Q66](#) [Ian McDermott]

67 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), para 2.3; Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#)); G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 11

68 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#)); National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)); G15 ([HCE0078](#))

69 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#))

## Changing needs of social tenants

16. Social housing caters for some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society, including people who are more likely to be experiencing ill-health and disability. Clarion Housing Group told us more residents are reporting that they have a disability.<sup>70</sup> With the UK's ageing population, this trend shows little sign of abating.<sup>71</sup> Vivid, a housing association with 37,000 homes, said that it is:

[...] now serving a customer base featuring a greater proportion of vulnerable individuals or those with greater needs than before. The impact of this means that meeting regulatory and other requirements is harder than it's ever been. The environment we're now operating in and the roles we're now playing to a degree, have moved beyond what is arguably our core function.<sup>72</sup>

## Performance of social housing providers

17. A lot of the drivers of poor-quality homes are systemic pressures that are largely outside the control of social landlords. Ian McDermott, the Chief Executive of the housing association Peabody and Chair of the G15, told us that the sector is part of a wider “ecosystem that is under enormous strain.”<sup>73</sup> Systemic pressures, such as a lack of supply and ageing stock, can create complex situations for providers to manage, in which their options are limited. Mr McDermott, for example, told us that Peabody has a property in London built in the 1860s in which five people are living in one bedroom. Because of the age of the property the rooms are small. He explained that insulating the home internally is not possible because it would make the rooms “even smaller”, but they are unable to insulate the property externally either because it is protected. He said that ideally the family would be rehoused in a more suitably sized property, but the length of the local waiting list means that it would be “many years, if not decades,” before one becomes available.<sup>74</sup> These pressures, in part, reflect a failure of successive governments to invest in more social homes and in regeneration.<sup>75</sup>

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70 Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), page 3

71 Analysis by the Clarion Housing Group predicts that future tenants are likely to be “older, poorer and less physically able.” See Clarion Housing Group, [Resident of the Future](#), October 2024, page 35

72 VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 3.4

73 [Q56](#) [Ian McDermott]

74 [Q56](#) [Ian McDermott]

75 Our predecessors, in 2022, concluded that “the level of disrepair in some parts of the social housing sector can undoubtedly be attributed partly to the age and design of the housing stock, some of which was never built to last and is now approaching obsolescence. For this, some blame must attach to successive Governments for not

18. Despite these pressures, some of the responsibility for poor conditions does lie with registered providers. Poor performance against the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards often comes from failures to comply with health and safety regulations, failures in repair services, landlords demonstrating a lack of understanding of the condition of their stock, and landlords which have a significant number of properties that fail the Decent Homes Standard.<sup>76</sup>
19. Since April 2024, councils have made up most of the providers that have received poor judgements against the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards.<sup>77</sup> We heard that part of the reason is that councils often manage a greater proportion of older properties.<sup>78</sup> However, unlike housing associations, we heard that leadership capacity within councils is often more thinly spread.<sup>79</sup> The Housing Ombudsman told us that the relative poor performance of councils in relation to the condition of social homes is a risk given the wider reorganisation of local government, which may result in newly merged local authorities taking on portfolios of council homes.<sup>80</sup>

## Long-term housing strategy and the supply of social homes

20. The Government is developing a Long-Term Housing Strategy. This was due to be published alongside the Spending Review, but has been delayed.<sup>81</sup> A lot of demands have been placed on the strategy. Ministers have made commitments that the strategy will help address a wide range of housing policies.<sup>82</sup> Much of the evidence to our inquiry reinforces the need for a long-term strategy to boost supply, support the replacement of existing homes,

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investing enough in new social housing or providing funding specifically for regeneration.” See Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [The Regulation of Social Housing](#), First Report of Session 2022–23, HC 18, 20 July 2022, para 28

76 Regulator of Social Housing ([HCE0042](#)), page 4

77 Regulator of Social Housing, [Regulatory judgements and enforcement notices](#), last updated 28 January 2025

78 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#)); Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0083](#))

79 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0083](#))

80 [Q33](#) [Richard Blakeway]

81 In July 2024, the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced the Government was developing a Long-Term Housing Strategy, which would be published “in the coming months [...] alongside the Spending Review.” At this point, the Spending Review was expected in the Spring. See [Building the homes we need](#), HCWS48, 30 July 2024 and HM Treasury, [Fixing the foundations: Public spending audit 2024–25 \(July 2024\)](#), CP 1133, para 11.

82 HCLG Committee, Third Report of Session 2024–26, [Delivering 1.5 million new homes: Land Value Capture](#), HC 672, para 136

where necessary, and to ensure that those homes which remain can be adapted to ensure they are climate resilient and meet the needs of the UK's ageing population.

21. The Government is taking steps to boost supply. However, our predecessors, in 2020, pointed out that there is "compelling evidence" that England needs "at least 90,000 net additional social rent homes a year."<sup>83</sup> The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee later called on the Government to "support, regulate and invest in the social housing sector so that the country can increase delivery to 90,000 social rent homes a year."<sup>84</sup> The Government's target of 180,000 new social homes over the next decade therefore falls well short of the estimated number of social homes needed to keep up with demand. However, the Government plans to deliver more social homes through other means, such as Section 106 agreements. New regulatory requirements on social housing providers may also limit their ability to contribute to this target (see Chapter 3).
22. If the Government is serious about improving standards, then some homes need to be replaced. Funding will be needed to allow providers to regenerate or replace existing homes.<sup>85</sup> The Government has taken some steps to expand the extent to which grant funding through the Social and Affordable Homes Programme can be allocated towards the replacement and regeneration of social homes (see Chapter 3). However, there are no dedicated funds for this purpose.<sup>86</sup> The Fabian Society has recommended that the Government should invest at least £470m a year in a 10-year funding programme to support the regeneration and renewal of estates.<sup>87</sup>
23. The Government's approach to ensuring people can continue to live in safe, decent homes must also take account of changes to the population and environmental factors, such as climate change.<sup>88</sup> Such factors are already having an impact. Clarion, as noted earlier, expects that its residents will increasingly become "older, poorer and less physically able."<sup>89</sup> Part of this challenge will involve increasing the diversity of housing options

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83 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Third Report of Session 2019-21, [Building More Social Housing](#), HC 173, para 53

84 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector](#), Sixth Report of Session 2023-24 Report, HC 60, 6 May 2024, para 17

85 Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), p3; National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)) para 35-36; G15 ([HCE0078](#))

86 Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, p62

87 Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, p62

88 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), p1

89 Clarion Housing Group, [Resident of the Future](#), October 2025, page 35

available, such as housing for older people. However, there is also a need to adapt existing homes. Currently, around 1 in five social homes meet basic accessibility criteria.<sup>90</sup>

#### **24. CONCLUSION**

We support the Government's plans to raise the standard of social homes over the next decade, while boosting supply. These actions will go some way to improving the quality and safety of social homes. However, the Government's plans do not address some of the long-term systemic drivers of poor conditions, especially the need to replace some of the country's ageing stock of social homes, which, in some instances, are being used beyond their intended lifespan. The Long-term Housing Strategy represents an opportunity to address systemic drivers of poor conditions in the social housing sector.

#### **25. RECOMMENDATION**

The Long-term Housing Strategy must put in place a long-term approach for improving and maintaining social homes and addressing the systemic drivers of poor housing quality, especially a long-term approach to the regeneration of existing social homes. We reiterate our call for the Government to publish this strategy as soon as possible.

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90 Centre for Better Ageing, [The State of Ageing 2025](#), March 2025

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## 2 Raising the standard of social homes

26. The Government has begun work to introduce additional regulatory requirements on social landlords to improve the condition of homes.<sup>91</sup> These include new legal requirements on social landlords to investigate and resolve hazards within set timescales, minimum energy efficiency standards, updated minimum standards of decency and new electric safety regulations. These new regulatory requirements will come into force at different points over the next decade, as shown in Table 1.<sup>92</sup>

**Table 1: New regulatory requirements to improve housing conditions**

Standard	Description	Implementation date
Awaab's Law: timescales to address hazards	The Government has begun to introduce regulations in the social housing sector that require social landlords to address hazards within set timescales. The first phase of Awaab's Law was introduced in October 2025.	2025–2027
Electrical safety	The Government has extended electrical safety regulations to the social rented sector. These regulations require landlords to test electrical appliances that are provided as part of a tenancy (e.g. fridges, microwaves and ovens) every 5 years to ensure they are safe.	2025–2026
Minimum energy efficiency standards	By 2030, social landlords will be required to ensure their properties meet a minimum standard of energy efficiency.	2030

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91 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025

92 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025

Standard	Description	Implementation date
Decent Homes Standard	By 2035, social landlords will need to ensure their homes meet a revised Decent Homes Standard. More information on the details of the revised standard is set out in the annex.	2035

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [January 2026 progress update: Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), January 2026

## Awaab's Law: legal timescales to investigate and resolve hazards

27. The Government has begun a phased rollout of new regulations that require social landlords to investigate and resolve hazards within set timescales.<sup>93</sup> The Government explained that phasing-in these reforms is, in part, intended to allow time to see if the reforms are “being delivered in a way that benefits social tenants.”<sup>94</sup> The first phase of Awaab's Law applies to emergency hazards (hazards that require a response within 24 hours) and significant hazards from damp and mould.<sup>95</sup> Phase 2 will see legal timescales extended to a broader range of hazards this year, before they are eventually extended to all hazards covered by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (except overcrowding) in 2027.<sup>96</sup> The exact dates for the remaining stages have not been confirmed. Table 2 provides more details on the Government's phased approach to implementing Awaab's Law.

93 [Implementing Awaab's Law](#), HCWS995, 27 October 2025

94 [Improving the quality of social housing and strengthening tenant voice](#), HCWS423, 6 February 2025

95 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Awaab's Law: Guidance for social landlords - Timeframes for repairs in the social rented sector](#), October 2025

96 [Improving the quality of social housing and strengthening tenant voice](#), HCWS423, 6 February 2025

**Table 2: The implementation of Awaab's Law in social housing**

Rollout of Awaab's Law		
Phase	Coverage	Implementation date
1	Phase 1 of Awaab's Law applies to all emergency hazards and significant damp and mould. Social landlords are required to address significant damp and mould within fixed timescales and emergency repairs as soon as possible and within 24 hours.	27 October 2025
2	Phase 2 will see these regulations extended to a broader set of hazards that pose a significant risk of harm to tenants including excess cold, excess heat, falls (including on stairs and between levels, level surfaces, and associated with baths), structural collapse and explosions, fire and electrical hazards, domestic and personal hygiene, and food safety.	2026
3	Phase 3 will then see regulations extended to all remaining hazards defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, except overcrowding, when these pose a significant risk of harm to tenants.	2027

**Source:** Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Awaab's Law: Guidance for social landlords - Timeframes for repairs in the social rented sector](#), 27 October 2025

**28.** The decision to apply Awaab's Law in phases has been criticised by charities and campaigners for delaying protections for tenants.<sup>97</sup> Shelter told us that landlords have had “long enough to ensure they’re dealing swiftly” with significant hazards covered by existing legislation.<sup>98</sup> They warned that delays to extending Awaab's Law to other hazards “risks further fatalities.”<sup>99</sup> However, registered providers, while supportive of Awaab's Law, are in favour of the Government’s phased approach.<sup>100</sup> The G15, which represents major social landlords in London, told us the Government’s phased approach:

97 [Q38](#) [Kwajo Tweneboa]; Shelter ([HCE0068](#)), para 40

98 Shelter ([HCE0068](#)), para 40

99 Shelter ([HCE0068](#)), para 40

100 Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 26; Sanctuary ([HCE0047](#))

[...] ensures immediate action on the most pressing issues, while allowing landlords to build and adapt capacity to respond effectively over time. The test-and-learn approach MHCLG has adopted will be key in ensuring that new requirements have the desired outcomes for residents.<sup>101</sup>

## Potential risks and unintended consequences

29. There are potential problems surrounding how the regulations will work in practice, which a phased approach may help resolve or mitigate. We have heard there are risks that the regulations may:

- **divert resources away from vulnerable tenants.**<sup>102</sup> Clarion Housing Group, for example, told us that applying Awaab's Law to 28 hazards "risks crudely equalised" responses to fixed timescales that could make the "provision of an enhanced service for those most vulnerable hard to implement."<sup>103</sup>
- **be applied inconsistently across the social housing sector.** Social landlords have some discretion over the application of Awaab's Law. The Government's guidance outlines that the "application of Awaab's Law will be fact specific" and that social landlords "will need to make their own judgement as to what Awaab's Law may require in any particular case."<sup>104</sup> We heard that the Government's official guidance on what constitutes a 'significant' or 'emergency' hazards is vague and could be made clearer.<sup>105</sup> However, Sanctuary, a large housing association, warned that if the regulations are too prescriptive then this could adversely affect the delivery of services to residents.<sup>106</sup> There is no requirement for those investigating hazards to be trained in the use of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, a risk-based tool for assessing hazards.<sup>107</sup> Instead, social landlords must ensure investigations are carried out by those they consider to be competent to do so.<sup>108</sup>

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101 G15 ([HCE0078](#)) para 26

102 Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)); [Q61](#) [Sarah King]

103 Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#));

104 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Awaab's Law: Guidance for social landlords - Timeframes for repairs in the social rented sector](#), October 2025, para 1.3

105 [Q41](#) [Richard Blakeway] Chartered Institute of Environmental Health ([HCE0067](#)), para 15; Housing Ombudsman Service ([HCE0052](#)), para 17

106 Sanctuary ([HCE0047](#))

107 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health ([HCE0067](#)), para 17; [Q14](#) [Dr Dawson]

108 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Awaab's Law: Guidance for social landlords - Timeframes for repairs in the social rented sector](#), October 2025

- **significantly disrupt tenants' lives while works take place.**  
Landlords need to secure alternative accommodation for tenants if works take longer than the required timescales.<sup>109</sup> The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health warned that tenants could be required to move “long distances for unspecified periods of time.”<sup>110</sup> Dr Henry Dawson from Cardiff Metropolitan University told us that the shortage of accommodation means that providers will most likely rehouse tenants in “whatever is available,” including forms of temporary accommodation.<sup>111</sup>

30.

#### CONCLUSION

We agree with the Government’s decision to rollout Awaab’s Law in phases, focusing on tackling the most dangerous hazards first. There are risks that efforts to comply with these regulations result in providers diverting resources away from the services they provide to more vulnerable tenants. There is also a risk that these regulations are not applied consistently across the sector. A phased rollout may help mitigate such risks.

## Impact on social landlords

31. Social landlords have undertaken a substantial amount of work to prepare for the first phase of Awaab’s Law, including recruiting additional staff.<sup>112</sup> We heard that providers, in some cases, have established specialist teams to respond to damp and mould.<sup>113</sup> Peabody, a large housing association, told us it had invested £1.5 million in new technology to prepare for Awaab’s Law.<sup>114</sup> The provider has also established a separate supply chain so it is not competing for resource with the supply chain that deals with its day-to-day maintenance.<sup>115</sup> Providers have needed to meet the costs of complying with Awaab’s Law themselves.
32. The Government promised to “provide the sector with clarity” and the “necessary time to prepare” for the implementation of Phase 1 in October 2025.<sup>116</sup> Draft regulations for Phase 1 were laid in Parliament on 25 June

109 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Awaab’s Law: Guidance for social landlords - Timeframes for repairs in the social rented sector](#), October 2025

110 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health ([HCE0067](#)), para 19

111 [Q14](#) [Dr Dawson]

112 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 29; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 24; Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), para 39

113 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 29; [Q60](#) [Ian McDermott]; [Q61](#) [Cllr Sarah King]

114 [Q60](#) [Ian McDermott]

115 [Q60](#) [Ian McDermott]

116 Improving the quality of social housing and strengthening tenant voice, HCWS423, [6](#) February 2025

2025. Alongside this, the Government published draft guidance for social landlords.<sup>117</sup> This guidance was not updated until 17th October 2025, shortly before the regulations for Phase 1 came into effect.<sup>118</sup> Social housing providers we spoke to commented that the late timing of the Government's final guidance created uncertainty for providers who have had to introduce large system changes in preparation for Awaab's Law, at a substantial cost.<sup>119</sup> Changing such systems can take months for providers to work through. We heard that there is a risk that some providers have introduced various workarounds to be able to comply.<sup>120</sup> It may be a year or so before the impact of these workarounds materialises in the form of legal disrepair cases or Housing Ombudsman decisions that go against social landlords.<sup>121</sup> The lack of certainty around future dates is also causing a problem for providers; not knowing exactly when the remaining phases will come in is making it difficult for providers to budget.<sup>122</sup>

### **33. CONCLUSION**

Even though social landlords have been anticipating the introduction of Awaab's Law for some time, the way the Government managed the introduction of Phase 1 unnecessarily added to the uncertainty and complexity providers had to grapple with to ensure they were ready to comply. We are disappointed that the final guidance on Awaab's Law was published so close to when the regulations came into effect. The Government must learn from this for future phases. Social landlords and tenants need a much clearer roadmap or timeline for when the remaining phases of Awaab's Law will be introduced, and clarity on when official guidance will be provided.

### **34. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must urgently set and publish the timeline for extending Awaab's Law to all remaining hazards, so that tenants and social landlords have clarity about when they can expect these new regulations to apply. This should be produced no later than 1st March 2026 to enable social housing providers to factor the relevant costs into their budgets for the next financial year.

<sup>117</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Awaab's Law: Draft guidance for social landlords](#), 25 June 2025

<sup>118</sup> The Government published updated guidance for social landlords on 17 October 2025. See [Awaab's Law: Guidance for social landlords](#), GOV.UK [accessed on 11 January 2026]

<sup>119</sup> Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

<sup>120</sup> Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

<sup>121</sup> Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

<sup>122</sup> Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

# Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)

35. By 2030, social landlords will be required to ensure their homes meet a minimum standard of energy efficiency, which the Government hopes will lead to “warmer homes that are cheaper to heat” thereby reducing the sector’s carbon emissions and taking tenants out of fuel poverty.<sup>123</sup>
36. The sector has already made substantial progress on improving energy efficiency. Even in the absence of a formal regulatory framework, social landlords have been working towards bringing properties up to an Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) of at least Band C.<sup>124</sup> In 2024, over 75% of social homes had a rating of Band C or higher.<sup>125</sup> However, the National Housing Federation pointed out that the pace of retrofitting homes needs to speed up substantially if the sector is going to succeed in bringing all social homes up to the new standard by 2030.<sup>126</sup>
37. Alongside introducing minimum energy efficiency standards, the Government is reforming the methodology and metrics used to assess the energy performance of buildings, including the metrics used on Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs).<sup>127</sup> The Government is replacing the current headline metric of EPCs with a broader set of metrics designed to provide a more comprehensive picture of a building’s energy efficiency.<sup>128</sup> These reforms will affect how compliance with the Government’s new minimum

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123 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, [Consultation on Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the Social Rented Sector in England](#), July 2025, p8, para 1; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Improving the energy efficiency of socially rented homes in England: Summary of consultation responses](#), January 2026

124 The then Government’s Clean Growth Strategy in 2017 proposed that properties in rented sectors should be upgraded to an EPC Band C by 2030 where possible (see HM Government, [The Clean Growth Strategy Leading the way to a low carbon future](#), October 2017, page 13). Other policies have also reinforced a focus on bringing properties up to this level. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund has provided funding to bring stock up to a minimum of EPC Band C. See Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#))

125 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)),

126 The National Housing Federation pointed out that upgrading the remaining 700,000 homes to an EPC Band C by 2030 would require the pace of retrofitting to double. See National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 33

127 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, [Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime](#), December 2024 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime – partial government response](#), January 2026

128 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, [Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime](#), December 2024 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime – partial government response](#), January 2026

energy efficiency standard is assessed. While there are benefits to the Government's reforms to EPCs, we heard that the metrics the Government originally proposed to use to assess compliance would have been very disruptive as many registered providers have been working to bring their homes up to a different standard.<sup>129</sup> To avoid potential disruption, the Government has since introduced changes that give providers greater flexibility over the changes they need to make to comply with the standard.<sup>130</sup>

38. There are some challenges which could severely threaten the ability of the sector to comply with the new standards. These include:

- **a lack of clarity over future government support through the Warm Homes: Social Homes Fund.** While energy efficiency improvements can reduce tenants' energy bills, our predecessor Committee noted in 2024 that energy efficiency improvements "do not return savings to social housing providers or private investors" meaning "there is little, if any, scope for borrowing to fund decarbonisation measures".<sup>131</sup> Governments have provided financial support to the sector. The Government has allocated £1.29bn to Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund between 2025/26 and 2027/28.<sup>132</sup> The Chartered Institute of Housing called for the plan to deliver a substantial expansion of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund.<sup>133</sup> The National Housing Federation told us that "further certainty is needed through a clear, long-term funding roadmap under the Warm Homes Plan."<sup>134</sup>

The Government published the Warm Homes Plan in January 2026.<sup>135</sup> The Government has announced £5 billion to support low-incomes households, including those living in social housing. In the plan, the Government signalled that this funding will continue to be delivered through the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund and the Warm Homes:

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129 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), para 7.3; Letter from Craig Moule, Chief Executive of Sanctuary to the Chair regarding housing conditions in England, [4 November 2025](#)

130 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Improving the energy efficiency of socially rented homes in England: Summary of consultation responses](#), January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement](#), January 2026

131 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector](#), Sixth Report of Session 2023–24 Report, HC 60, 6 May 2024, para 37

132 Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, [Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3: budget allocation](#), 21 November 2024

133 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#))

134 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#))

135 UK Government, [Warm Homes Plan](#), CP1470, January 2026

Local Grant initially.<sup>136</sup> However, these schemes will be merged into a single scheme for low-income households from 2027/28, which will take an “area-based approach” to delivery. The Government plans to set out further plans on this scheme in the Spring 2026.<sup>137</sup> The G15 said it hopes “next wave of funding provides the flexibility and certainty needed to deliver this work effectively and at pace.”<sup>138</sup>

- **supply chain constraints.** The G15 told us “coordinated investment” is needed in training, accreditation and supply chain capacity, otherwise there are risks that these supply chain constraints could lead to works being delayed or becoming more expensive.<sup>139</sup>
- **difficulties in bringing older, hard-to-treat stock up to the new standard.** Improving the energy efficiency of homes can be difficult for a variety of reasons (e.g. the presence of certain technical characteristics such as solid walls, flat roofs and a lack of space).<sup>140</sup> Social landlords may choose to dispose of these properties if they consider that it is not commercially viable improve them, leading to a loss of essential social homes.<sup>141</sup> Shelter warned that the new standard must not inadvertently create an incentive for social landlords to “demolish and rebuild blocks or estates” because they deem that is “not cost effective or viable” upgrade certain buildings sufficiently.<sup>142</sup>

### 39. CONCLUSION

Progress at retrofitting social homes needs to accelerate if the sector is going to upgrade the remaining homes up to the required standard by 2030. The Government has not yet provided sufficient clarity to the sector on the funding available for retrofits over the Parliament.

### 40. RECOMMENDATION

The Government needs to urgently provide the sector with clarity on the funding that will be available over the remainder of this Parliament to help providers deliver the necessary improvements.

136 UK Government, [Warm Homes Plan](#), CP1470, January 2026, p55

137 UK Government, [Warm Homes Plan](#), CP1470, January 2026, p55

138 [G15 Chair has responded to the government’s announcement on the £15bn Warm Homes Plan](#), G15, 23 January 2026

139 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 30

140 Parity Projects, Local Government Association and National Housing Federation, [Hard to decarbonise social homes](#), July 2022, p10

141 Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), para 46; Shelter ([HCE0068](#)), para 35

142 Shelter ([HCE0068](#)), para 35

## Fuel poverty

41. The Government plans to publish a new Fuel Poverty Strategy next year.<sup>143</sup> Improving the energy efficiency of homes will help improve the health and wellbeing of tenants, reduce their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions from the sector. Under the official definition of fuel poverty, households are not classified as being fuel poor if they live in a home with a rating of Band C or above, irrespective of their incomes or the price of energy.<sup>144</sup> However, social tenants living in energy efficient homes can still struggle to afford to heat their homes sufficiently, especially if they are on low incomes or suffer from ill-health or disability.<sup>145</sup> The Government has acknowledged this.<sup>146</sup> The Green Alliance has recommended that the Government change the definition of fuel poverty to cover households that spend over 10% of their income on energy, regardless of whether their property is energy efficient or not.<sup>147</sup>

42. **CONCLUSION**

High energy costs mean that even tenants living in homes that have undergone energy efficiency improvements can struggle to afford to heat their homes sufficiently. The higher the standard of works, the greater the benefit. While we support the Government's plans to bring all social homes up to a minimum standard of energy efficiency, people can still live in an EPC C home and be in fuel poverty.

43. **RECOMMENDATION**

In the forthcoming Fuel Poverty Strategy, we recommend that the Government revise the official definition of fuel poverty to reflect the fact that those living in homes compliant with the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard may still struggle to heat their homes sufficiently.

## Decent Homes Standard (DHS)

44. The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) specifies the minimum standard social landlords need to meet to demonstrate their homes are of a decent standard.<sup>148</sup> Compliance with the standard is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The regulator's consumer standards require registered providers to ensure their homes meet the standard set out in the

143 HM Government, [Our Children, Our Future: Tackling Child Poverty](#), CP1449, December 2025, p67

144 House of Commons Library, [Fuel Poverty](#), Research Briefing 8730, 14 April 2025, p. 10

145 Chartered Institute of Housing, [CIH response to DESNZ review of the Fuel Poverty Strategy](#), April 2025

146 UK Government, [Warm Homes Plan](#), CP1470, January 2026, p60

147 Green Alliance, [Affording warm homes: The case for a social tariff](#), September 2025, p4

148 Department for Communities and Local Government, [A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation](#), June 2006

Government's guidance and are maintained at this level, unless they are exempted by the regulator.<sup>149</sup> To be considered decent under the current standard, a home must:

- be free from serious health and safety hazards (Criterion A) known as Category 1 hazards.<sup>150</sup>
- be in a “reasonable state” of repair (Criterion B).
- have “reasonably modern” facilities and services (Criterion C)
- offer a “reasonable degree” of thermal comfort (Criterion D).<sup>151</sup>

45. Shortly after the DHS was introduced in 2001, there were concerns that the Government had set the bar too low. Our predecessors in 2004, for example, concluded that the standard was “set at too basic a level.”<sup>152</sup> They pointed out that there was already a “considerable discrepancy between what tenants aspire to as being Decent, and what the Decent Homes Standard guarantees” and this discrepancy would “only grow over time.”<sup>153</sup> They recommended that the then Government should set a more aspirational Decent Homes Plus standard to be delivered at a later date, with more ambitious measures on thermal comfort, accessibility and the condition of communal areas.<sup>154</sup> The previous Government initiated work to update the standard, which had not been updated since 2006.<sup>155</sup> However, no changes were made before the General Election.<sup>156</sup>

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149 Regulator of Social Housing, [Safety and Quality Standard](#), April 2024, para 1.2.1; Department for Communities and Local Government, [A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation](#), June 2006, pages 14–20

150 Hazards are defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), a risk-based assessment tool for assessing the likelihood and severity of health and safety hazards in the home. Under the HHSRS, 29 hazards are scored from A–J. The most serious hazards (A–C) are known as Category 1 hazards.

151 Department for Communities and Local Government, [A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation](#), June 2006, paras 4.1–4.6

152 House of Commons Office of Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, [Decent Homes](#), HC 46-I, May 2004, p3

153 House of Commons Office of Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, [Decent Homes](#), HC 46-I, May 2004, para 78

154 House of Commons Office of Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, [Decent Homes](#), HC 46-I, May 2004, paras 91–92

155 [June 2023 - update on government's work to improve the quality of social housing](#), Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 30 June 2023; Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities, [Decent Homes Standard: review](#), February 2021

156 Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025

## The New Decent Homes Standard

46. In July 2025, the Government launched a consultation on reforms to the DHS. The Government's view is that the standard is outdated and needs to be revised to reflect the expectations of tenants and the needs of the country's ageing housing stock.<sup>157</sup> The Government published its response to the consultation and a statement on the new standard in January 2026.<sup>158</sup> A table summarising the Government's changes to the standard is included in the Annex.

47. Much of the evidence we have received broadly supports the need to modernise the DHS and the changes the Government has made.<sup>159</sup> Overall, we heard that the revised standard will help improve conditions in the social rented sector,<sup>160</sup> although there are areas where the Government could have gone further (e.g. digital connectivity, the prevention of overheating).<sup>161</sup> However, a significant concern we have heard is around the implementation of the revised standard, especially the speed at which the necessary works can be carried out and the costs of doing so.<sup>162</sup> The effectiveness of the standard will depend on how well it is implemented and enforced.<sup>163</sup> We also heard that there is a need for the DHS to be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure minimum standards continue to reflect modern expectations.<sup>164</sup> The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors suggested that the Government should:

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157 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), July 2025

158 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement](#), January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes: government response](#), January 2026

159 The Health Foundation ([HCE0007](#)); Crisis ([HCE0015](#)); Centre for Ageing Better ([HCE0031](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)); Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ([HCE0043](#)); Sanctuary ([HCE0047](#)); Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)); Independent Age ([HCE0054](#)); Royal Institute of British Architects ([HCE0058](#))

160 The Health Foundation ([HCE0007](#)); VIVID ([HCE0017](#)); Centre for Ageing Better ([HCE0031](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)); Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ([HCE0043](#)); Royal Institute of British Architects ([HCE0058](#))

161 The Health Foundation ([HCE0007](#)); Housing Ombudsman Service ([HCE0052](#)), para 9

162 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 18; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), paras 6–7; Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), paras 13&15; Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), para 2.3; Sanctuary ([HCE0047](#))

163 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)); The Health Foundation ([HCE0007](#)); Sanctuary ([HCE0047](#))

164 Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ([HCE0043](#)), Marshall, M., Hincks, S. and Ferrari, E. (2022) [Lessons from last time: a review of evidence on the first decent homes programme in the social and private rented sectors](#). Report. Northern Housing Consortium , Sunderland, p46

commit to regular review cycles of the DHS to provide regulatory certainty. This will help landlords plan investments and maintenance more effectively and ensure the standard remains responsive to evolving housing needs.<sup>165</sup>

#### 48. CONCLUSION

We welcome the Government's changes to the Decent Homes Standard. The current standard has been out-of-date for some time and is in urgent need of reform, given that it was last updated in 2006.

#### 49. RECOMMENDATION

The Government must introduce a process to periodically review and, if necessary, update the Decent Homes Standard at least every 10 years to ensure it reflects the changing needs of the population, environmental pressures, scientific evidence of the hazards to health from poor housing and societal expectations of what a decent home consists of.

## Implementation

50. The new standard will come into force in 2035.<sup>166</sup> The Government's deadline of 2035 aligns with the approach taken when the DHS was introduced in 2001, whereby social landlords had a nine-year implementation period.<sup>167</sup> The Government explained that the length of the implementation period is designed to give landlords time to "phase work, spread costs and support spending on routine repairs and new supply."<sup>168</sup> In the consultation, the Government said that by providing "clarity on the long-term future of regulation" it aims to "deliver a decade of sustained improvements in housing quality."<sup>169</sup> This is because social landlords are likely to integrate the new standard into cyclical improvement works, which the Government suggested would lead "to a steady ramp up in compliance over time."<sup>170</sup>

165 Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ([HCE0043](#))

166 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement](#), January 2026

167 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), July 2025;

168 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025, p7

169 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), July 2025

170 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Decent Homes Standard Interim Impact Assessment](#), July 2025, para 102

51. Registered providers we heard from are in favour of a long implementation period to give them the longest possible lead time.<sup>171</sup> Alistair Symth, Director of Policy and Research at the National Housing Federation, told us there is “simply not enough money in the system” to deliver improvements to the quality of homes and build new ones to “the fullest possible extent at once.”<sup>172</sup> The G15 told us a 2037 deadline is the “only deadline that provides landlords with the necessary time to prepare,” due to the need to survey their stock, organise strategic work programme and allocate the necessary budget.<sup>173</sup>

52. By contrast, tenants, and those acting on their behalf, stressed to us the urgency of raising the standard of social homes.<sup>174</sup> There is a concern that 2035 is too long for tenants to wait for these improvements.<sup>175</sup> Kwajo Tweneboa, a campaigner, described the Government’s proposed timeline as “absolutely disgraceful” and indicative of a lack of urgency from Government.<sup>176</sup> Some have called for an earlier deadline to be set and/or for the works to be accelerated.<sup>177</sup> This could be achieved by phasing-in aspects of the revised standard before the final implementation date, requiring properties to be upgraded once they become void and aligning works with the delivery of the new minimum energy efficiency standards.<sup>178</sup>

53. The Government is clear that landlords should not “delay all action” to meet the new standard “until the end of the implementation period.”<sup>179</sup> However, while the Government plans to monitor implementation, there has been no indication to date that the Government plans to set interim targets or milestones to prevent or discourage registered providers from

171 [Q66](#) [Alistair Smyth] Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), para 20; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 6; Local Government Association, [LGA Response to MHCLG Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), September 2025; L&Q, [Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), September 2025, para 40

172 [Q66](#) [Alistair Smyth]

173 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 6

174 Independent Age ([HCE0054](#)); Housing Ombudsman Service ([HCE0052](#)), para 10; Shelter, [Shelter response to the consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), September 2025, p11; [Q43](#) [Kwajo Tweneboa]

175 Shelter, [Shelter response to the consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), September 2025

176 [Q43](#) [Kwajo Tweneboa]

177 Housing Ombudsman Service ([HCE0052](#)), para 10; Shelter, [Shelter response to the consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), September 2025, p11; [Q43](#) [Kwajo Tweneboa]; Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

178 Housing Ombudsman Service ([HCE0052](#)), para 12; Shelter, [Shelter response to the consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes](#), September 2025, p11; Independent Age ([HCE0054](#))

179 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement](#), January 2026

delaying works until shortly before the deadline. In 2000, the then Labour Government set a target for all social homes to be of a decent standard by 2010, with the greatest improvements to be delivered in the most deprived areas.<sup>180</sup> This was supported by interim milestones. By 2004, the Government aimed to reduce the number of non-decent homes by a third, rising to 45–50 per cent by 2006 and then 65–70 per cent by 2008.<sup>181</sup> Even with these interim targets, a substantial proportion of homes failed to meet the minimum standard when the programme ended. The then Government estimated that it would take almost another decade to bring all social homes up to the minimum standard.<sup>182</sup>

#### **54. CONCLUSION**

The Government’s long implementation date for the revised Decent Homes Standard eases the burden on providers, but fails to deliver improvements with the urgency that social tenants deserve. Too many tenants will remain in poor quality, unsafe homes for too long under the implementation date that the Government has set. There is also a risk that many homes may fail to meet the revised Decent Homes Standard by the final implementation date.

#### **55. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must put in place interim targets to demonstrate to tenants and the public that progress is being made. We recommend that the Government introduce interim targets stipulating the percentage of social homes that should be upgraded to the revised Decent Homes Standard in each year before the final implementation date.

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<sup>180</sup> House of Commons Office of Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, [Decent Homes](#), HC 46-I, May 2004, paras 3–5

<sup>181</sup> National Audit Office, [The Decent Homes Programme](#), HC 212, January 2010, para 2.10

<sup>182</sup> House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, [The Decent Homes Programme](#), HC 350, March 2010, para 2

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### 3 The impact on the supply of social homes

56. The costs of meeting the Government’s additional regulatory requirements for social homes may limit the extent to which the sector can invest in new ones.<sup>183</sup> Competing financial pressures have already led some to stop or pause developments. Vivid, a housing association, told us the sector is “already in a period where housing providers have and/or are reducing their development activity.”<sup>184</sup> Councillor Sarah King from Southwark Council explained the local authority is “no longer able” to direct “investment and resourcing towards delivering new council homes.”<sup>185</sup> Southern Housing, a large housing association, also argued that the “substantial costs associated with bringing existing stock up to the new standards could divert resources away from new development programs.”<sup>186</sup> They added:

The combined effect of the several new and additional regulatory and legislative changes will mean the sector won’t be able to deliver on the new homes programme. Given the urgent need for additional social housing, there is a real risk that the sector will struggle to balance compliance costs with new home delivery targets.<sup>187</sup>

57. In addition to providing an expansion of grant funding through the Social and Affordable Homes Programme, the Government has taken steps to rebuild the sector’s financial capacity and provide more certainty over future rental income (see Chapter 4).<sup>188</sup> But we have heard that much of the additional rental income landlords receive could be absorbed by the costs of complying with Awaab’s Law, MEES and the revised Decent Homes

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183 Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), para 15; Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)) ; National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 18; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 4; VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 6.2

184 VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 6.2

185 [Q62](#) [Sarah King]

186 Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), para 15

187 Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), para 15

188 HMT, [Spending Review 2025](#), CP 1336, June 2025, para 5.71

Standard.<sup>189</sup> New homes, by contrast, are a discretionary spend.<sup>190</sup> The National Housing Federation, the G15 and others have called for additional funding to help them meet the costs of improvements to existing homes.<sup>191</sup>

58. Since the Spending Review, social housing providers have been assessing whether to invest more in new supply, based on the new funding that has been announced and the other competing pressures on their resources.<sup>192</sup> Alistair Smyth, Director of Policy and Research, National Housing Federation, told us that in some cases providers are of the view that their ability to invest is likely to remain the same whereas others will be able to invest more in new supply.<sup>193</sup> Some providers have been waiting for clarity on the new standards and further details of the rental income they can expect.<sup>194</sup> We heard, however, that there is appetite within the sector to build more social homes.<sup>195</sup> From February 2026, providers will be able to bid for funding through the Social and Affordable Homes Programme.<sup>196</sup> The speed at which these funds are drawn down will give an indication of the sector's ability to invest.<sup>197</sup>
59. Another risk is that the costs of meeting additional regulatory requirements could lead to the loss of existing social housing. As noted in Chapter 1, a lot of social housing has reached, or is shortly approaching, the end of its intended lifespan. Social landlords may decide it is not commercially viable to bring certain stock up to new standards and choose to sell off such properties rather than invest in them.<sup>198</sup> Around 10% of council landlords are already selling off properties to balance their housing accounts.<sup>199</sup> More are expected to do the same in the next few years.<sup>200</sup> The National Housing Federation told us that without support for regeneration there is a risk that providers will "increasingly make the difficult decision to sell homes which

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189 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)); Chartered Institute of Housing, [CIH's submission to the 2025 Autumn Budget: Building a housing system that works for everyone](#), October 2025

190 [Q163](#) [Fiona McGregor]

191 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 18; G15 ([HCE0078](#)) paras 4–5; Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#));

192 [Q67](#) [Alistair Symth]

193 [Q67](#) [Alistair Symth]

194 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0082](#))

195 [Q67](#) [Alistair Symth]; [Q68](#) [Craig Moule]

196 Homes England, [Social and Affordable Homes Programme \(SAHP\) 2026 to 2036](#), November 2025

197 [Q67](#) [Alistair Symth]

198 Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#)), para 46; [Q68](#) [Sarah King]; [Q68](#) [Craig Moule]

199 [Q68](#) [Sarah King];

200 [Q68](#) [Sarah King]; Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#));

would be too difficult or expensive to bring up to meet new standards.”<sup>201</sup> Some registered providers may prefer to meet the new regulatory requirements by regenerating or replacing homes.

60. Grants available through the Social and Affordable Homes Programme can be used to fund regeneration, including the replacement of existing social homes, but only when this leads to a net increase in the supply of social homes.<sup>202</sup> Funding for regeneration and the renewal of estates has been difficult to access.<sup>203</sup> Under the Social and Affordable Homes Programme, projects need to “provide net additional social and affordable homes alongside replacement social and affordable homes” to be eligible for funding.<sup>204</sup> However, the ways this ‘additionality’ can be demonstrated has been expanded compared to previous iterations of the programme. One of the ways projects can demonstrate additionality is by replacing homes that “are no longer fit for purpose, meet the needs of the intended client group, or otherwise in use as social and affordable housing.”<sup>205</sup> This appears to align with suggestions we heard. For example, the National Housing Federation suggested the application of net increase in supply could be broadened to cover homes that providers “either currently, or will shortly be, unable to be let because of their non-decency.”<sup>206</sup>
61. During our inquiry, we visited a large social housing block that the local council was considering whether to remediate or demolish. However, the council told us about the potential difficulties of successfully applying for grant funding to regenerate the site, due to the need to demonstrate net additionality. The block is already densely populated and built to a lower space standard than would apply to a new building, which would make achieving net additionality on this site difficult. However, council suggested that one option could be to combine multiple sites into a single SAHP grant application, which would enable them to demonstrate net additionality across multi sites, rather than one.<sup>207</sup>

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201 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 36

202 Funding from the Social and Affordable Homes Programme can be used to replace social homes and regenerate social housing estates. However, to be eligible projects need to “provide net additional social and affordable homes alongside replacement social and affordable homes.” See Homes England, [Social and Affordable Homes Programme \(SAHP\) 2026 to 2036](#), November 2025

203 Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England’s poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, p62

204 Homes England, [Social and Affordable Homes Programme \(SAHP\) 2026 to 2036](#), November 2025

205 Homes England, [Social and Affordable Homes Programme \(SAHP\) 2026 to 2036](#), November 2025

206 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 36

207 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee ([HCE0083](#))

62. The Government has published impact assessments for Awaab's Law, minimum energy efficiency standards and the Decent Homes Standard.<sup>208</sup> These assessments provide separate estimates of how each of these measures could impact the supply of new social homes. However, the Government has not published an assessment of the cumulative impact its proposals to raise standards could have on the social housing sector over this Parliament and the next decade.<sup>209</sup> Southern Housing told us that the “there appears to be insufficient appreciation of the combined overall impact on the social housing sector from implementing multiple complex changes within a compressed timeframe.”<sup>210</sup>

63. **CONCLUSION**

While we welcome the steps the Government has taken to rebuild the sector's financial capacity, a lot of the extra rental income social landlords receive could be absorbed by the new compliance costs placed on them, thereby limiting their ability to invest in new social homes. Even with the Government's investment in social homes and the changes to the rent settlement, we concerned that the sector will not have sufficient resources to effectively meet the Government's new social homes target while also raising standards over the decade.

64. **CONCLUSION**

There is a real risk that the costs of new regulatory requirements may lead to an increase in social landlords choosing to sell homes that have reached, or are approaching, the end of their intended lifespan, at a time when social housing is desperately needed. We welcome the changes to the Social and Affordable Homes Programme which will allow funds to be directed to replacing homes that “are no longer fit for purpose, meet the needs of the intended client group, or otherwise in use as social and affordable housing.” This is a useful immediate step to prevent the loss of much-need social housing. However, the Long-term Housing Strategy must set a long-term approach to the regeneration of social homes.

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208 Department of Energy Security and Net Zero and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Consultation on Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the Social Rented Sector: Consultation-Stage Impact Assessment](#), July 2025; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement](#), January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The Hazards in Social Housing \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) Regulations 2025 – 'Awaab's Law': final stage impact assessment](#), June 2025

209 Letter from the Chair to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning regarding housing conditions in England, [20 November 2025](#); Letter from the Minister of State for Housing and Planning to the Chair regarding housing conditions in England, [7 January 2026](#)

210 Southern Housing ([HCE0065](#))

65.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Government must publish an assessment of the cumulative impact the new regulatory requirements are likely to have on the supply of social homes over the next decade. This assessment should consider how the cumulative costs of the new regulatory requirements are likely to impact the sector's ability to invest in new supply and the extent to which providers may choose to dispose of social homes that they deem too expensive to bring up to new standards.

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## 4 Supporting social landlords to improve housing conditions

- 66. The Government’s plans to raise standards are set against a challenging backdrop, in which the housing sector’s resources have been thinly stretched.<sup>211</sup> Social housing providers have had to manage competing demands, including substantial unexpected costs on their finances, within a financially constrained environment. This has led to them needing to make difficult decisions about the best way to direct their resources.<sup>212</sup> A survey by Southwark Council found that 68% of councils are at risk of being unable to balance their Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) by 2029/30,<sup>213</sup> with 28% of councils expecting to sell homes to do so.<sup>214</sup> Cost pressures throughout providers’ supply chains have outpaced inflation.<sup>215</sup> The sector also struggles to access the skills needed to carry-out maintenance and improvements to homes.<sup>216</sup>
- 67. Social housing providers have expressed concern that the new regulatory standards the Government is introducing will add to the pressures providers are already grappling with, including need to meet net zero targets and improve building safety.<sup>217</sup>

### Financial capacity of social housing providers

- 68. The Government has acknowledged that the sector’s financial capacity has been “weakened” over the last decade and is taking steps (see Box 3) to rebuild registered providers’ capacity to borrow and invest in new

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211 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)) para 18; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), p1

212 Regulator of Social Housing ([HCE0042](#)), p7

213 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#))

214 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#))

215 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), page 1; Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), p2

216 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), para 2.5

217 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), para 2.3; G15 ([HCE0078](#))

and existing homes.<sup>218</sup> The reforms the Government plans to make reflect changes that the sector has called for and are likely to help ease the financial pressures on providers. However, as we noted in Chapter 3, there are still doubts as to whether providers will have sufficient resources to raise standards while also boosting the supply of social homes.

### Box 2: Rebuilding the sector's ability to borrow and invest

Rents charged to social tenants make up one of the main sources of income for social housing providers.<sup>219</sup> Providers use anticipated rental income to inform their business plans and attract investment.<sup>220</sup> The Government, however, sets the maximum rent social landlords can charge.<sup>221</sup> In doing so, the Government seeks to balance the need to ensure providers have sufficient income to maintain their properties, while also making sure rents remain affordable for tenants. While raising rents can generate income for providers it also has implications for tenants and for public expenditure on benefits.<sup>222</sup>

The Government has announced the following changes to give providers longer-term certainty over their rental income:

- **a longer-term rent settlement:** From April 2026, the Government will introduce a 10-year rent settlement that will allow social landlords to increase rents by CPI+1% annually.<sup>223</sup>
- **Rent convergence:** The Government is introducing a rent convergence mechanism to address historic differences in the rents charged for similar properties by gradually bringing rents up to the national formula rent.<sup>224</sup> The Government has decided to allow registered

218 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), July 2025, pages 4–5

219 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector](#), Sixth Report of Session 2023–24 Report, HC 60, 6 May 2024, para 63

220 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector](#), Sixth Report of Session 2023–24 Report, HC 60, 6 May 2024, para 64

221 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector](#), Sixth Report of Session 2023–24 Report, HC 60, 6 May 2024, para 64

222 Around two-thirds of social housing tenants receive help with their rent through Housing Benefit and the housing element of Universal Credit. The maximum amount tenants can receive through these benefits is set by actual rents, rather than being linked to local rents. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Future social housing rent policy](#), October 2024

223 PQ 76512 [Housing Associations: Finance] 16 September 2025

224 Social rents are set by a government formula. The rent charged for most socially-rented properties is calculated using a formula based on the value and the size of the property and the ratio of local to national levels of income. Our predecessors in 2024 explained

providers to the increase weekly rents on properties currently charged below the formula rent by an additional £1 plus CPI+1% from 1 April 2027 and an additional £2 plus CPI+1% from 1 April 2028 until the rents converge with the national formula rent.<sup>225</sup>

Social housing providers will also have equal access to remediation funds to remove cladding, which is expected to provide £1million of investment between 2026/27 and 2029/30.<sup>226</sup> Over the Spending Review period, a further £2.5billion has been allocated for low-interest loans to help improve providers' capacity to borrow for investments in new homes.<sup>227</sup>

## Barriers to raising standards

69. Beyond financial constraints, we heard that there are several other barriers that may make it difficult for providers to raise standards. These include, but are not limited to, supply chain constraints; workforce shortages, especially in technical roles such as damp and mould assessors; inflationary pressures, and difficulties accessing properties.<sup>228</sup>
70. We heard that there is a role for government to help address these barriers by providing:
  - **financial support with supply chain costs.** The National Housing Federation suggested that VAT reforms could help drive “strategic investment in existing homes.”<sup>229</sup> The Federation recommended that the Government should consider “mechanisms to better align and coordinate VAT reliefs across all refurbishment, safety, and decarbonisation works on existing homes.”<sup>230</sup>

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that the rents charged for similar properties have diverged due to “historic differences in development, subsidy and rent policy decisions.” The Government has consulted on plans to introduce a rent convergence mechanism that would enable rents for socially-rented properties below the ‘formula rent’ to increase by an additional amount each year, above the CPI+1% limit the Government has set, until rents for these properties align with the formula rent. See Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, [The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector](#), Sixth Report of Session 2023–24 Report, HC 60, 6 May 2024, p50 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [How to implement Social Rent convergence](#), July 2025

225 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [January 2026 progress update: Delivering a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing](#), January 2026

226 HMT, [Spending Review 2025](#), CP 1336, June 2025, para 5.71

227 HMT, [Spending Review 2025](#), CP 1336, June 2025, para 5.71

228 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 38; Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), para 2.5; Sanctuary ([HCE0047](#)); VIVID ([HCE0017](#)), para 9.1

229 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 38

230 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 40

- **coordination of skills and supply chains.** The G15 told us that government support is needed to help improve workforce and supply chain capacity.<sup>231</sup> They argued that a “coordinated approach to skills, apprenticeships, and training would ensure landlords can access the workforce needed to deliver works on time and to a high standard.”<sup>232</sup>
- **support for providers to adopt new technology and innovation.** There is a role for central government to play in supporting the sector to unlock the benefits of technology and innovation through grants to support the piloting of new technologies and guidance on their effectiveness.<sup>233</sup>

## An integrated approach to improving the quality and safety of social homes

71. There was an assumption that improvements delivered through the Decent Homes Programme would mean that a similar programme would not be needed in future.<sup>234</sup> However, we have heard suggestions that the Government should establish a new long-term, integrated programme to support the sector to raise the standard of social housing.<sup>235</sup> The Fabian Society has argued that “the UK government cannot, as it has done in the recent past, set a standard and expect landlords to meet it without providing concerted leadership, coordination and resources.”<sup>236</sup> The Chartered Institute of Housing argued that, in addition to minimum standards, the Government needs to provide “sustained support, clearer accountability, and better coordination across systems.”<sup>237</sup> The Chartered Institute of Housing has called for a modernised Decent Homes Programme that is expanded to cover not only quality and safety, but also the improvements social landlords will need to make to ensure their homes

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231 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 38

232 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 38

233 Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ([HCE0043](#)); Building Research Establishment (BRE) ([HCE0071](#))

234 Marshall, M., Hincks, S. and Ferrari, E. (2022) [Lessons from last time: a review of evidence on the first decent homes programme in the social and private rented sectors](#). Report. Northern Housing Consortium , Sunderland, page 46

235 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)) para 2.4, Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#)); Southwark Council, [Securing the Future of Council Housing: Five solutions from over 100 of England's council landlords](#), September 2024

236 Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, page 38

237 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), para 9.1

are climate resilient and are accessible enough to meet the needs of the country's ageing population.<sup>238</sup> Other organisations have made similar suggestions.<sup>239</sup> This programme would consist of:

- **A comprehensive national standard or strategy for improving housing quality:** The G15 told us that new (e.g. the Decent Homes Standard, Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard and Awaab's Law) and existing regulations (e.g. building safety regulations) "overlap without being fully joined up."<sup>240</sup> Registered providers, and other experts, have called for a more integrated approach that consolidates the regulatory requirements (e.g. safety, decency, energy efficiency, climate resilience and accessibility) on social landlords.<sup>241</sup> This could be achieved through consolidating existing standards into a single standard or through a more coherent plan or framework, which takes account of the cumulative impact of new regulatory requirements on the sector.<sup>242</sup> G15, for example, argued that "a cross-government strategy that integrates these standards, supported by clear guidance, would reduce duplication, streamline compliance, and allow providers to plan long-term programmes with confidence."<sup>243</sup>
- **Long-term funding to improve housing quality.** We heard very clearly that part of the success of the Decent Homes Programme came from the central government funding available.<sup>244</sup> In addition to extra capital funding, the sector has also suggested that existing resources should be pooled, which would allow providers to take a more holistic approach to improve the quality of homes.<sup>245</sup>

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238 Chartered Institute of Housing ([HCE0037](#)), p3

239 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#)); Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025; Southwark Council, [Securing the Future of Council Housing: Five solutions from over 100 of England's council landlords](#), September 2024

240 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 33

241 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#)); Southwark Council, [Securing the Future of Council Housing: Five solutions from over 100 of England's council landlords](#), September 2024; Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025; G15 ([HCE0078](#))

242 Southwark Council ([HCE0059](#)); Southwark Council, [Securing the Future of Council Housing: Five solutions from over 100 of England's council landlords](#), September 2024; Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, p; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 33

243 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 33

244 National Housing Federation ([HCE0046](#)), para 11; G15 ([HCE0078](#)), para 5; Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), p4

245 G15 ([HCE0078](#)), p1; Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, p61-62; Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#)), pages 3&7

- **Local coordination and collaboration:** There were examples in the first Decent Homes Programme in which providers collaborated to address supply chain constraints and skills gaps.<sup>246</sup> For example, providers established procurement consortia to achieve economies of scale and invested in shared training facilities.<sup>247</sup>

72.

## CONCLUSION

The steps the Government is taking to rebuild the sector's financial capacity to invest in new and existing homes will help providers to meet new regulatory standards. However, we are concerned that supply chain constraints, workforce shortages and the limited uptake of technologies will mean that providers may not have the necessary capacity and capability to deliver the improvements to social homes that the Government aims to achieve over the next decade.

73.

## RECOMMENDATION

There is a strong case for the Government to establish a new, modern Decent Homes Programme that supports social landlords to raise the standard of social homes. This programme should consist of:

- a. a single housing quality framework or strategy that consolidates, and aligns, the regulatory requirements on social landlords.
- b. a pooled fund that brings together existing funding for improvements to social homes and gives providers greater flexibility.
- c. local partnerships between local government, social landlords and the private rented sector to address skills and supply chain constraints.

246 Marshall, M., Hincks, S. and Ferrari, E. (2022) [Lessons from last time: a review of evidence on the first decent homes programme in the social and private rented sectors](#). Report. Northern Housing Consortium , Sunderland, page 46

247 Marshall, M., Hincks, S. and Ferrari, E. (2022) [Lessons from last time: a review of evidence on the first decent homes programme in the social and private rented sectors](#). Report. Northern Housing Consortium , Sunderland, page 46; Fabian Society, [Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing](#), January 2025, page 39

# Supporting the supply of new, high-quality social homes

74. Social landlords can purchase social homes delivered through Section 106 agreements. However, in recent years housebuilders have struggled to secure bids from social providers for affordable homes built under these agreements.<sup>248</sup> This is due to a variety of factors.<sup>249</sup> However, the National Audit Office pointed out that registered providers:

are cautious of buying from developers due to quality issues, in areas such as space standards, heating systems and sustainability requirements. Some also have concerns about high service charges and uncertainty around who is responsible for fixing faults.<sup>250</sup>

75. The New Homes Ombudsman Service (NHOS) was established in 2022 and currently operates on a voluntary basis, whereby participating developers sign up to a New Homes Quality Code.<sup>251</sup> However, the NHSOS told us that voluntary membership creates a two-tier system in the new-build market.<sup>252</sup> Despite the establishment of the NHOS, Clarion Housing Group told us that “routes for providing redress to occupants when their new homes are not well built are weak.”<sup>253</sup> In response to an investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority, the Government has committed to introduce a single, mandatory consumer code and a statutory New Homes Ombudsman that operates UK-wide.<sup>254</sup> A tender for the New Homes Ombudsman Scheme is due to open this month (February 2026), with a view to the contract commencing in September 2026.<sup>255</sup> However, the New Homes Ombudsman told us there is a lack of clarity on the Government’s plans for the statutory

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248 House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, [Improving local areas through developer funding](#), HC 886, October 2025, paras 24–27; NAO, [Improving local areas through developer funding](#), Session 2024–25, HC 945, June 2025, para 13; [Uncontracted Section 106 Affordable Homes: October 2025](#), Home Builders Federation, 1 October 2025

249 NAO, [Improving local areas through developer funding](#), Session 2024–25, HC 945, June 2025 p.32

250 NAO, [Improving local areas through developer funding](#), Session 2024–25, HC 945, June 2025 p.32 p.32

251 The New Homes Ombudsman Service ([HCE0040](#)), paras 1.1 and 1.2

252 The New Homes Ombudsman Service ([HCE0040](#)), para 4.11

253 Clarion Housing Group ([HCE0049](#))

254 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [UK government response to the Competition and Markets Authority’s \(CMA\) market study into housebuilding](#), October 2024.

255 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Ombudsman - New Homes](#), last updated 14 May 2025

scheme, including the “statutory Quality Code, the powers and remit of the Ombudsman, or how the transition from the voluntary scheme will be managed.”<sup>256</sup>

**76. CONCLUSION**

It is vital that there are robust measures of redress in place to resolve disputes about the quality of newly built social homes.

**77. RECOMMENDATION**

In response to this report, the Government must set out the timeframe for creating a statutory, UK-wide New Homes Ombudsman and the details of the mandatory consumer code developers will need to abide by.

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256 The New Homes Ombudsman Service ([HCE0040](#)), para 2.8

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# Conclusions and recommendations

## State of social homes in England

1. Most social homes provide tenants with warm, safe and decent places to live. The prevalence of poor conditions across the sector is generally lower than in other tenures. However, progress at bringing all social homes up to a minimum standard of decency has almost ground to a halt, with very little improvement since the pandemic. Over 25 years since the Decent Homes Standard was introduced, it is not acceptable that just under 430,000 social homes still fail to meet even this basic standard. Moreover, factors such as climate change, our country's ageing population, and the inevitable deterioration of existing stock could lead to even more people living in poor quality, unsafe homes. (Conclusion, Paragraph 12)
2. We support the Government's plans to raise the standard of social homes over the next decade, while boosting supply. These actions will go some way to improving the quality and safety of social homes. However, the Government's plans do not address some of the long-term systemic drivers of poor conditions, especially the need to replace some of the country's ageing stock of social homes, which, in some instances, are being used beyond their intended lifespan. The Long-term Housing Strategy represents an opportunity to address systemic drivers of poor conditions in the social housing sector. (Conclusion, Paragraph 24)
3. The Long-term Housing Strategy must put in place a long-term approach for improving and maintaining social homes and addressing the systemic drivers of poor housing quality, especially a long-term approach to the regeneration of existing social homes. We reiterate our call for the Government to publish this strategy as soon as possible. (Recommendation, Paragraph 25)

## Raising the standard of social homes

4. We agree with the Government's decision to rollout Awaab's Law in phases, focusing on tackling the most dangerous hazards first. There are risks that efforts to comply with these regulations result in providers diverting resources away from the services they provide to more vulnerable tenants. There is also a risk that these regulations are not applied consistently across the sector. A phased rollout may help mitigate such risks. (Conclusion, Paragraph 30)
5. Even though social landlords have been anticipating the introduction of Awaab's Law for some time, the way the Government managed the introduction of Phase 1 unnecessarily added to the uncertainty and complexity providers had to grapple with to ensure they were ready to comply. We are disappointed that the final guidance on Awaab's Law was published so close to when the regulations came into effect. The Government must learn from this for future phases. Social landlords and tenants need a much clearer roadmap or timeline for when the remaining phases of Awaab's Law will be introduced, and clarity on when official guidance will be provided. (Conclusion, Paragraph 33)
6. The Government must urgently set and publish the timeline for extending Awaab's Law to all remaining hazards, so that tenants and social landlords have clarity about when they can expect these new regulations to apply. This should be produced no later than 1st March 2026 to enable social housing providers to factor the relevant costs into their budgets for the next financial year. (Recommendation, Paragraph 34)
7. Progress at retrofitting social homes needs to accelerate if the sector is going to upgrade the remaining homes up to the required standard by 2030. The Government has not yet provided sufficient clarity to the sector on the funding available for retrofits over the Parliament. (Conclusion, Paragraph 39)
8. The Government needs to urgently provide the sector with clarity on the funding that will be available over the remainder of this Parliament to help providers deliver the necessary improvements. (Recommendation, Paragraph 40)
9. High energy costs mean that even tenants living in homes that have undergone energy efficiency improvements can struggle to afford to heat their homes sufficiently. The higher the standard of works, the greater the benefit. While we support the Government's plans to bring all social homes up to a minimum standard of energy efficiency, people can still live in an EPC C home and be in fuel poverty. (Conclusion, Paragraph 42)

10. In the forthcoming Fuel Poverty Strategy, we recommend that the Government revise the official definition of fuel poverty to reflect the fact that those living in homes compliant with the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard may still struggle to heat their homes sufficiently. (Recommendation, Paragraph 43)
11. We welcome the Government's changes to the Decent Homes Standard. The current standard has been out-of-date for some time and is in urgent need of reform, given that it was last updated in 2006. (Conclusion, Paragraph 48)
12. The Government must introduce a process to periodically review and, if necessary, update the Decent Homes Standard at least every 10 years to ensure it reflects the changing needs of the population, environmental pressures, scientific evidence of the hazards to health from poor housing and societal expectations of what a decent home consists of. (Recommendation, Paragraph 49)
13. The Government's long implementation date for the revised Decent Homes Standard eases the burden on providers, but fails to deliver improvements with the urgency that social tenants deserve. Too many tenants will remain in poor quality, unsafe homes for too long under the implementation date that the Government has set. There is also a risk that many homes may fail to meet the revised Decent Homes Standard by the final implementation date. (Conclusion, Paragraph 54)
14. The Government must put in place interim targets to demonstrate to tenants and the public that progress is being made. We recommend that the Government introduce interim targets stipulating the percentage of social homes that should be upgraded to the revised Decent Homes Standard in each year before the final implementation date. (Recommendation, Paragraph 55)

## The impact on the supply of social homes

15. While we welcome the steps the Government has taken to rebuild the sector's financial capacity, a lot of the extra rental income social landlords receive could be absorbed by the new compliance costs placed on them, thereby limiting their ability to invest in new social homes. Even with the Government's investment in social homes and the changes to the rent settlement, we concerned that the sector will not have sufficient resources to effectively meet the Government's new social homes target while also raising standards over the decade. (Conclusion, Paragraph 63)

16. There is a real risk that the costs of new regulatory requirements may lead to an increase in social landlords choosing to sell homes that have reached, or are approaching, the end of their intended lifespan, at a time when social housing is desperately needed. We welcome the changes to the Social and Affordable Homes Programme which will allow funds to be directed to replacing homes that “are no longer fit for purpose, meet the needs of the intended client group, or otherwise in use as social and affordable housing.” This is a useful immediate step to prevent the loss of much-needed social housing. However, the Long-term Housing Strategy must set a long-term approach to the regeneration of social homes. (Conclusion, Paragraph 64)
17. The Government must publish an assessment of the cumulative impact the new regulatory requirements are likely to have on the supply of social homes over the next decade. This assessment should consider how the cumulative costs of the new regulatory requirements are likely to impact the sector’s ability to invest in new supply and the extent to which providers may choose to dispose of social homes that they deem too expensive to bring up to new standards. (Recommendation, Paragraph 65)

## Supporting social landlords to improve housing conditions

18. The steps the Government is taking to rebuild the sector’s financial capacity to invest in new and existing homes will help providers to meet new regulatory standards. However, we are concerned that supply chain constraints, workforce shortages and the limited uptake of technologies will mean that providers may not have the necessary capacity and capability to deliver the improvements to social homes that the Government aims to achieve over the next decade. (Conclusion, Paragraph 72)
19. There is a strong case for the Government to establish a new, modern Decent Homes Programme that supports social landlords to raise the standard of social homes. This programme should consist of:
  - a. a single housing quality framework or strategy that consolidates, and aligns, the regulatory requirements on social landlords.
  - b. a pooled fund that brings together existing funding for improvements to social homes and gives providers greater flexibility.
  - c. local partnerships between local government, social landlords and the private rented sector to address skills and supply chain constraints. (Recommendation, Paragraph 73)

20. It is vital that there are robust measures of redress in place to resolve disputes about the quality of newly built social homes. (Conclusion, Paragraph 76)
21. In response to this report, the Government must set out the timeframe for creating a statutory, UK-wide New Homes Ombudsman and the details of the mandatory consumer code developers will need to abide by. (Recommendation, Paragraph 77)

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# Annex: Summary of changes to the Decent Homes Standard

Criterion	Current standard	New standard
<b>Criterion A: A home must be free from the most dangerous hazards</b>	A dwelling must be free of hazards at the most dangerous 'category 1' level	No changes
<b>Criterion B: A home must be in a reasonable state of repair</b>	A property fails if one or more key building components are old and in disrepair or two or more other building components are old and in disrepair.	The failure of key components will be based solely on the condition of components, not the condition and their age. This means that a home would fail the new standard if one or more key building components, or two or more other building components, are not in a reasonable state of repair.  The Government has also expanded the list of building components that must be kept in a reasonable state of repair.

Criterion	Current standard	New standard
<b>Criterion C: A home must provide core facilities and services</b>	<p>A property fails the standard if it lacks three or more of the following facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a kitchen which is 20 years old or less;</li> <li>a kitchen with adequate space and layout;</li> <li>a bathroom which is 30 years old or less;</li> <li>an appropriately located bathroom and WC;</li> <li>adequate external noise insulation; and</li> <li>adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government has removed the age requirements for kitchens and bathrooms. Under the new standard, a flat would fail if it lacks three or more key facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a kitchen with adequate space and layout;</li> <li>an appropriately located bathroom and WC;</li> <li>adequate insulation to protect against external noise;</li> <li>adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks and flats.</li> </ul> <p>Houses must have 2 of the first 3 facilities outlined above to meet the standard.</p> <p>Windows that present a fall risk to children must be fitted with child-resistant window restrictors.</p> <p>The Government has decided against introducing mandatory floor coverings in order to balance the costs of improving the quality of existing homes, with the need to boost supply.</p>
<b>Criterion D: A home must provide thermal comfort</b>	<p>A dwelling must have both efficient heating and effective insulation, including a primary heating system that is programmable and capable of providing sufficient heat to two or more rooms.</p>	<p>Under the new standard, registered providers will be required to ensure their homes meet the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard and have a primary heating system that is programmable and provides sufficient heat to every room in the home.</p>

Criterion	Current standard	New standard
<b>Criterion E: A home should be free from damp and mould</b>	No specific damp & mould requirement	Under this new criterion, landlords will need to ensure their properties are free from damp and mould. Under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, the severity of damp is assessed on a scale from A-J, with A being the most dangerous and J the safest. Homes will fail the standard if the hazard posed by damp and mould is assessed to be between bands A to H.

Sources: Department for Communities and Local Government, [A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation](#), June 2006 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement](#), January 2026

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# Formal minutes

**Tuesday 3 February 2026**

## Members present

Florence Eshalomi, in the Chair

Lewis Cocking

Mr Lee Dillion

Mr Will Forster

Andrew Lewin

Mr Gagan Mohindra

## Housing conditions in the social rented sector

The following declarations of interests relating to the inquiry were made:

9 September 2025

Mr Gagan Mohindra declared an interest in that he previously worked as a finance leader in a local authority.

14 October 2025

Mr Lee Dillion declared an interest in that his spouse works for a social housing provider.

Florence Eshalomi declared an interest in that her constituency is covered by Lambeth and Southwark councils.

Andrew Lewin declared an interest in that he previously worked for a housing association (Clarion).

25 November 2025

Lewis Cocking declared an interest in that the freeholder of the block of flats in which he is a resident is a social landlord.

Sarah Smith declared an interest in that she is a private landlord.

Draft Report (*Housing conditions in the social rented sector*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 77 read and agreed to.

Annex and Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

## Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 10 February at 9.30am.

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# Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Tuesday 9 September 2025

**Professor Sir Michael Marmot**, Director, Institute for Health Equity [Q1-10](#)

**Dr Henry Dawson**, Senior Lecturer in Housing and Public Health, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health; **Michael Erhardt**, Policy Lead, Disability Rights UK; **Millie Brown**, Deputy Director for Homes, Centre for Better Ageing; **Helen Garrett**, National Housing Data and Insights Lead, Building Research Establishment [Q11-31](#)

## Tuesday 14 October 2025

**Kwajo Tweneboa**, Social housing activist and writer; **Richard Blakeway**, Housing Ombudsman, Housing Ombudsman Service; **Nic Bliss**, Campaign Director, Stop Social Housing Stigma [Q32-50](#)

**Councillor Sarah King**, Leader, Southwark Council; **Ian McDermott**, Chief Executive of Peabody and Chair, G15; **Craig Moule**, Group Chief Executive, Sanctuary; **Alistair Smyth**, Director of Policy and Research, National Housing Federation [Q51-70](#)

## Tuesday 4 November 2025

**Deborah Garvie**, Policy Manager, Shelter; **Kate Markey**, Chief Executive, Nationwide Foundation; **Nye Jones**, Head of Campaigns, Generation Rent; **Anny Cullum**, Head of Politics, ACORN [Q71-86](#)

**Dr Jennifer Harris**, Head of Policy, Research and Social Impact, TDS Charitable Foundation; **Ben Beadle**, Chief Executive, National Residential Landlords Association; **Timothy Douglas**, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Propertymark [Q87-116](#)

## Tuesday 25 November 2025

**Fiona MacGregor**, Chief Executive, Regulator of Social Housing; **Jonathan Walters**, Deputy Chief Executive, Regulator of Social Housing [Q117-172](#)

**Joe Roberts**, Head of Building Control, Compliance & Housing Quality, Cornwall Council; **Ashlea Birch**, Neighbourhood Manager (Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Housing), Manchester City Council; **Ian Sanders**, Principal Environmental Health Officer Private Housing (Environmental Health), Hull City Council; **James Wilson**, Head of Environment and Sustainability, Environmental Services, Great Yarmouth Borough Council [Q173-188](#)

## Tuesday 27 January 2026

**Dr Laura Neilson**, CEO, Shared Health Foundation; **Joe Lane**, Deputy Director of Projects, Office of the Children's Commissioner; **Matt Downie**, Chief Executive, Crisis; **Christa Maciver**, Director of Campaigns and Social Change, Justlife Foundation [Q189-201](#)

**Stephen Philpott**, Director of City Housing Solutions & Support Services, Birmingham City Council; **Councillor Grace Williams**, Deputy Chair and Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration, London Councils; **Paul Kitson**, Corporate Director of Inclusive Economy, Housing and Culture, Newham Council; **Joseph Donohue**, Strategic Lead for Homelessness, Greater Manchester Combined Authority [Q202-219](#)

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# Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

HCE numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Absalom, Doctor Hannah (Teaching Fellow, University of Birmingham)	<a href="#">HCE0011</a>
2	Anonymised	<a href="#">HCE0002</a>
3	Barnard, Professor Catherine (Professor of EU Law, EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge); and Dr Fiona Costello (Research Associate, EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge)	<a href="#">HCE0010</a>
4	Barnardo's	<a href="#">HCE0070</a>
5	Bouchinet, Denis	<a href="#">HCE0081</a>
6	Bright Blue	<a href="#">HCE0034</a>
7	Bristol City Council	<a href="#">HCE0080</a>
8	Building Research Establishment (BRE)	<a href="#">HCE0071</a>
9	Carslaw, Professor Nicola (Professor of Indoor Air Chemistry, University of York)	<a href="#">HCE0006</a>
10	Centre for Ageing Better	<a href="#">HCE0031</a>
11	Charles, Dr Hannah (Academic Researcher, The University of Manchester)	<a href="#">HCE0026</a>
12	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	<a href="#">HCE0067</a>
13	Chartered Institute of Housing	<a href="#">HCE0037</a>
14	Citizens Advice	<a href="#">HCE0038</a>
15	Clarion Housing Group	<a href="#">HCE0049</a>
16	Country Land and Business Association (CLA)	<a href="#">HCE0050</a>
17	Crisis	<a href="#">HCE0015</a>
18	End Fuel Poverty Coalition	<a href="#">HCE0041</a>
19	Ericsson	<a href="#">HCE0035</a>

20	European Centre for Environment & Human Health, University of Exeter	<a href="#">HCE0044</a>
21	G15	<a href="#">HCE0078</a>
22	Gedikli, Dr Cigdem (Lecturer, Swansea University); Professor Robert Hill (University of Graz); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (University of Birmingham); and Dr Okan Yilmaz (Lecturer, Swansea University)	<a href="#">HCE0024</a>
23	Generation Rent	<a href="#">HCE0053</a>
24	Sarah Gibson MP	<a href="#">HCE0061</a>
25	Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity, University of Oxford	<a href="#">HCE0023</a>
26	Groundswell	<a href="#">HCE0032</a>
27	Habinteg	<a href="#">HCE0079</a>
28	Habinteg	<a href="#">HCE0073</a>
29	Home Builders Federation	<a href="#">HCE0009</a>
30	Housing Ombudsman Service	<a href="#">HCE0052</a>
31	Housing and Ageing Alliance	<a href="#">HCE0036</a>
32	Hull City Council – Neighbourhoods and Housing	<a href="#">HCE0021</a>
33	Independent Age	<a href="#">HCE0054</a>
34	Justlife	<a href="#">HCE0013</a>
35	King's College London; Shared Health Foundation; and Autistica	<a href="#">HCE0018</a>
36	LGSCO	<a href="#">HCE0060</a>
37	Little, Melissa	<a href="#">HCE0076</a>
38	Local Government Association (LGA)	<a href="#">HCE0069</a>
39	London Renters Union	<a href="#">HCE0077</a>
40	Mineral Products Association	<a href="#">HCE0048</a>
41	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	<a href="#">HCE0056</a>
42	National House Building Council (NHBC)	<a href="#">HCE0045</a>
43	National Housing Federation	<a href="#">HCE0046</a>
44	National Residential Landlords Association	<a href="#">HCE0039</a>
45	National Retrofit Hub	<a href="#">HCE0020</a>
46	Nationwide Foundation	<a href="#">HCE0022</a>
47	Okara, Goodtime (Lecturer in Law, University of Plymouth)	<a href="#">HCE0004</a>

48	People's Health Trust	<a href="#">HCE0019</a>
49	Portakabin	<a href="#">HCE0008</a>
50	Propertymark	<a href="#">HCE0062</a>
51	Rockwool UK	<a href="#">HCE0072</a>
52	Reapit	<a href="#">HCE0055</a>
53	Regulator of Social Housing	<a href="#">HCE0042</a>
54	Renters' Reform Coalition	<a href="#">HCE0057</a>
55	Renters' Rights London	<a href="#">HCE0066</a>
56	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors	<a href="#">HCE0043</a>
57	Royal Institute of British Architects	<a href="#">HCE0058</a>
58	Sanctuary	<a href="#">HCE0047</a>
59	Sanders, Faye (PhD Researcher, University of Bath)	<a href="#">HCE0003</a>
60	Shared Health Foundation	<a href="#">HCE0014</a>
61	Shelter	<a href="#">HCE0068</a>
62	Social Workers Union	<a href="#">HCE0016</a>
63	Southern Housing	<a href="#">HCE0065</a>
64	Southwark Council	<a href="#">HCE0059</a>
65	Switchee	<a href="#">HCE0075</a>
66	TDS Charitable Foundation	<a href="#">HCE0029</a>
67	The Almshouse Association	<a href="#">HCE0025</a>
68	The Health Foundation	<a href="#">HCE0007</a>
69	The New Homes Ombudsman Service	<a href="#">HCE0040</a>
70	The Town and Country Planning Association	<a href="#">HCE0030</a>
71	UK100	<a href="#">HCE0063</a>
72	Umar, Dr Tariq (Senior Lecturer, University of the West of England, UK)	<a href="#">HCE0001</a>
73	University of Bath	<a href="#">HCE0012</a>
74	University of Liverpool; University of Sheffield; University of Cambridge	<a href="#">HCE0027</a>
75	Vivid	<a href="#">HCE0017</a>
76	Vermandel, Eva	<a href="#">HCE0074</a>
77	Wilding, Dr Jo (Associate Professor in Law, University of Sussex)	<a href="#">HCE0005</a>

78 Zhang, Dr Liyun (Research Fellow in Economics, University of Birmingham); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (Professor in Financial Economics, University of Birmingham); and Haonan Tian (PhD Candidate, University of Birmingham) [HCE0028](#)

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# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
3rd	Delivering 1.5 million new homes: Land Value Capture	HC 672
2nd	The Funding and Sustainability of Local Government Finance	HC 514
1st	England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation	HC 338
5th Special	The Funding and Sustainability of Local Government Finance: Government Response	HC 1355
4th Special	England's Homeless Children: The Crisis in Temporary Accommodation: Government Response	HC 979
3rd Special	The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector: Government Response	HC 762
2nd Special	Disabled People in the Housing Sector: Government Response	HC 761
1st Special	The finances and sustainability of the social housing sector: Regulator of Social Housing response	HC 457