

Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

This Act is intended to be the catalyst for a new proactive approach to regulating social housing, ensuring standards are met and taking action against failing landlords. The Act itself describes its purpose as being to “reform the regulatory regime to drive significant change in landlord behaviour”. At its heart, it is about improving and promoting a more forward-thinking approach to handling everyday issues faced by social housing residents and making it easier for residents to hold their landlord to account when things don’t go to plan.

The Act brings forward the following ground-breaking changes:

- Strengthening the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to carry out regular inspections of the largest social housing providers and the power to issue unlimited fines to social landlords.
- Additional Housing Ombudsman powers to publish best practice guidance to landlords following investigations into resident complaints.
- Powers to set strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould.
- New qualification requirements for social housing managers.
- Introducing stronger economic powers to follow inappropriate money transactions outside of the sector.

The mandating of qualification requirements for social housing managers brings social housing closely into line with other sectors providing front line services, including social work, teaching, and health and care services. Any landlord who fails to meet the requirements of the new standards could be fined by the RSH.

So what’s next?

The RSH is currently consulting or due to consult on a number of areas:

- Revisions to the consumer standards which will apply from April 2024.
- Government will take forward consultations on Awaab’s Law, which requires landlords to investigate and fix damp and mould in their properties within specified timeframes.
- Changes to the Decent Homes Standard.
- The professionalisation of the sector and what qualifications are necessary or appropriate.
- The Access to Information Scheme, which will allow residents or their representatives time limited access to information related to the management of social housing held by their landlord, and also to relevant information that may be held by sub-contractors.