House of Commons

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector: Government Response

Seventh Special Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1853

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

Florence Eshalomi (Labour; Vauxhall and Camberwell Green) (Chair)

Lewis Cocking (Conservative; Broxbourne)

Andrew Cooper (Labour; Mid Cheshire)

Chris Curtis (Labour; Milton Keynes North)

Mr Lee Dillon (Liberal Democrat; Newbury)

Maya Ellis (Labour; Ribble Valley)

Mr Will Forster (Liberal Democrat; Woking)

Andrew Lewin (Labour; Welwyn Hatfield)

Mr Gagan Mohindra (Conservative; South West Hertfordshire)

Sarah Smith (Labour; Hyndburn)

Sean Woodcock (Labour; Banbury)

The following Members were also members of the Committee during the inquiry:

Joe Powell (Labour; Kensington and Bayswater)

Naushabah Khan (Labour; Gillingham and Rainham)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

This Report, together with formal minutes relating to the Report, was Ordered by the House of Commons, on 21 April 2026, to be printed. It was published on 28 April 2026 by authority of the House of Commons.

Committee Reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/hclg and in print by Order of the House.

Contacts

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Seventh Special Report

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2024–26, Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector (HC 1154), on 9 February 2026. The Government response was received on 21 April 2026 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

1. The government welcomes the Housing, Communities and Local Government's inquiry into housing conditions in England and its report into housing conditions in the social rented sector. We thank the committee and all those who provided evidence.

2. As the committee recognises in its report, our plan to deliver a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing will mean the biggest increase in supply of social housing in a generation but also a transformational and lasting change in the safety and quality of homes.

3. We have set out our five steps to a decade of renewal:

   Step 1: Deliver the biggest boost to grant funding in a generation, so that providers are enabled to build the quality homes the country needs.

   Step 2: Rebuild the sector's capacity to borrow and invest in new and existing homes, so that providers can maintain their homes to a decent standard.

   Step 3: Establish an effective and stable regulatory regime, so that homes are safe, decent and warm for tenants.

   Step 4: Reinvigorate council housebuilding, supporting councils to build more quality homes.

Step 5: Forge a renewed partnership with the sector to build at scale, putting social housing back on track and responding to what the sector has said is needed.

4. Since committing to this plan in July 2025, we have driven forward these reforms working jointly with social housing providers across the country. We are grateful to the committee for the opportunity to set out the work we are doing to raise quality and increase new supply.

5. We agree with the committee that government must be ambitious when it comes to improving social housing in England. We are confident, however, that our commitments will put social and affordable housing back on track after years of neglect and we are calling on everyone with a role in social and affordable housing to step up and prove they can work with us to deliver at scale and at pace.

6. This section sets out the government's response to the recommendations contained within the select committee's report. There were 9 recommendations.

State of social homes in England

Recommendation 1: 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. (Paragraph 25)

Government Response

7. We will set out wider plans for housing in the Long-Term Housing Strategy, which we will publish shortly. It will bring together many of the changes that we have already announced, including our 5-step plan to deliver a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing, the recent announcements on rent convergence consultation, and providing long-term certainty on future regulatory requirements. The progress update, published in January, gave councils and social housing providers the certainty they need to increase their delivery of new social homes.

8. We confirmed the 10-year, £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) to kickstart social and affordable housebuilding at scale across the country, including regeneration where there is a net increase in homes. This means social landlords can plan investment further ahead and find efficiencies to make grant funding go further. This is in addition to recent confirmation on rent convergence, building safety funding, our low interest loan scheme and our roadmap on section 106 agreements.

9. We published the government response to the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) consultation and confirmed details of the new standard. An updated DHS will apply from 2035 across both the social and private rented sectors. The new DHS has been designed to reflect modern expectations of rented homes and improve health outcomes for tenants. It prioritises safety, decency and warmth and will act as a common standard for both private and social rented housing.

10. And we confirmed the details of the final Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and will publish a full government response to this consultation shortly. All social homes will need to meet EPC C by 1 April 2030 using one of three approved metrics (Fabric Performance, Smart Readiness or Heating System) with a requirement to meet a second metric by 1 April 2039 unless exempt. A transitional period will recognise EPC C ratings achieved by 2030 under the current EER methodology until each home's EPC certificate expires.

11. This builds on progress since July 2025:

- In July 2025 we confirmed the headline parameters of the new 10-year £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP), to kickstart social and affordable housebuilding at scale across the country.
- In November 2025 the Greater London Authority and Homes England published their detailed prospectuses for this fund, for London and the rest of England respectively alongside government's policy statement for the programme. This re-confirmed its core supply objectives – our ambition is to deliver around 300,000 social and affordable homes over the programme's lifetime, with at least 60% for Social Rent.
- Over £1 billion of building safety funding will be available between 2026/27 and 2029/30 to accelerate remediation of social housing.
- Just under £1.15 billion has been offered to retrofit social homes across 138 projects under Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 across England. This includes funding offered for 17 Strategic Partnership projects and 121 Challenge Fund projects.
- Phase 1 of Awaab's Law came into force in October 2025, requiring emergency hazards to be addressed within 24 hours, and will be expanded following a test-and-learn period.

- Five-yearly electrical safety checks are now mandatory for new lets and will be phased in for existing tenancies during 2026.
- Reforms to Right to Buy will increase the eligibility period, revise discounts and exempt newly built homes for 35 years. Councils will be able to combine Right to Buy receipts with SAHP grant from 2026/27 and retain the share previously returned to HM Treasury.
- We have introduced the Social Tenant Access to Information Scheme (STAIRs), designed to rebalance the tenant–landlord relationship, addressed information gaps for tenants living in homes managed by TMOs by extending the FOI and will introduce the new Competence and Conduct Standard from October 2026.

Raising the standard of social homes

Recommendation 2: 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. (Paragraph 34)

Government Response

12. Phase 1 of Awaab's Law came into force on 27 October 2025, specifying that social landlords must address damp and mould hazards within fixed timescales, and all emergency hazards within 24 hours. We are now undertaking our test and learn approach before extending the requirements to other hazards. We are working closely with stakeholders on next steps and will develop guidance and engagement activity to support them with implementation of phases 2 and 3 of Awaab's Law. Social landlords must continue to meet existing regulations to remedy disrepair, to keep their homes fit for human habitation and free from the most dangerous health and safety hazards.

13. Guidance to help tenants in social housing understand their rights and the responsibilities of their landlord under Awaab's Law has been published at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/awaabs-law-guidance-for-tenants-in-social-housing.

Recommendation 3: 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. (Paragraph 40)

Government Response

14. In July 2025, the government published a five-step plan to kickstart adecade of social and affordable housing renewal. This includes a new 10-year £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes Programme – the biggest boost to grant funding for new social and affordable housing in a generation – as well as £2.5 billion in low-interest loans for Private Registered Providers and the extension of the 'preferential' borrowing rate for council housebuilding from the Public Works Loan Board until March 2027.

15. The plan also sets out measures to rebuild social housing providers' financial capacity to borrow and invest in new and existing homes, including setting a long-term rent policy for social housing to support that investment. Over £1 billion of building safety funding will be available between 2026/27 and 2029/30 to accelerate remediation of social housing, and the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund has allocated £1.29 billion over 2025–28 to support social landlords make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

16. At the 2025 Spending Review, the government announced that there would be a 10-year social housing rent settlement from 1 April 2026 permitting rent increases of up to CPI+1% each year. Following our consultation over the summer, we can now confirm that providers will be able to increase weekly rents for their Social Rent properties that are below formula by up to an additional £1 each year over and above CPI+1% from 1 April 2027, and by up to an additional £2 each year over and above CPI+1% from 1 April 2028, until formula rent is reached.

17. In addition, the Warm Homes Plan is the biggest investment in home upgrades ever, with £15 billion of investment to cut energy bills, bring households out of fuel poverty, increase our energy security and make our homes warmer and more efficient. £5 billion of this support is targeted at low-income households.

Recommendation 4: 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. (Paragraph 43)

Government Response

18. The government has published a new Fuel Poverty Strategy for England which sets out our plan to lift up to a million households out of fuel poverty. The new fuel poverty strategy places a stronger emphasis on energy affordability with a new affordability indicator.

19. Fuel poverty is the issue of low-income households who are unable to keep warm at a reasonable cost. In England, we measure progress to the fuel poverty target using the Low-Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric. As LILEE is a measure of the number of homes below the fuel poverty target level this will be retained as the most effective measure of progress to 2030.

20. We recognise, however, that for too long households across England have paid the price for our nation's energy insecurity and energy bills remain too high. Many low-income households still need short term support, and some, especially those with high energy needs, such as disabled or medically dependent members, will always require additional protections. This new strategy therefore places a stronger emphasis on energy affordability. To do this we have developed a new affordability indicator, which will monitor the impact of energy affordability for all households and low-income households.

21. We will report annually on average (median) required energy costs as a proportion of household income (after housing costs) in the fuel poverty statistics. We will also continue to report on the number of households spending more than 10 per cent of their income after housing costs on the energy they need to heat their home.

22. New Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for social housing will allow social housing providers the freedom to choose which new style EPC metrics, from the choice of fabric, smart technology and heating system, to use to comply with the standard. This will allow providers to choose the measures that will be most suitable for their properties and deliver the biggest benefits to tenants in bill savings.

Recommendation 5: 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. (Paragraph 49)

Government Response

23. On 28 January 2026 we responded to our consultation on an updated and modernised Decent Homes Standard. The new, modernised DHS is designed to meet modern expectations of housing quality. By setting out in plain terms a series of ambitious yet proportionate standards for landlords, we will continue to drive down rates of non-decency across the country. We will support landlords by publishing best practice guidance to supplement

the DHS. This will cover topics that reflect the changing needs of social housing tenants such as climate adaptation, digital connectivity and water efficiency.

24. We recognise that expectations change so there will come a point where a review of the standard is necessary. It is vital, however, that we give providers the certainty they need to plan and spread costs long-term. That is why we have given landlords until 2035 to meet the modernised DHS. This means they can make plans to improve existing homes with confidence, whilst giving them the stability needed to invest in much needed new supply of social housing.

Recommendation 6: 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. (Paragraph 55)

Government Response

25. In the coming weeks, we will work with the National Housing Federation, Local Government Association and other sector bodies to agree a compact. Once agreed, that compact will be overseen by a taskforce comprising representatives from a range of sector organisations and interests. More detail about the terms of reference and membership of this group will be set out in the coming weeks.

26. At the heart of the compact will be ambitious social and affordable housebuilding commitments, evidencing how the grant funding support and regulatory certainty and stability that this government has provided has translated into ambitious delivery plans and bids into the SAHP from housing associations, councils and other Registered Providers. It will also be premised on strengthened joint governance and accountability mechanisms, with oversight provided by regular reporting back to the Secretary of State. The Regulator of Social Housing is developing its approach to seeking assurance from landlords that they are appropriately preparing for DHS2.

The impact on the supply of social homes

Recommendation 7: 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. (Paragraph 65)

Government Response

27. In order to deliver a 'Decade of Renewal for social and affordable housing', we are focused on delivering transformational and lasting change in the safety and quality of homes, alongside the biggest increase in supply in a generation. Within this, we are committed to rebuilding the financial capacity of housing associations and councils. We have set a long-term rent policy for social housing, announced over £1 billion of building safety funding between 2026/27 and 2029/30 to accelerate remediation of social housing, announced £2.5bn of low-interest loans for private registered providers and the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund has allocated £1.29 billion over 2025–28 to support social landlords make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

28. The Decent Homes Standard Final Impact Assessment, published on 28 January, and social housing MEES Impact Assessment, published on 1 April, set out potential impacts on the supply of new social housing. Reforms are expected to deliver meaningful improvements for tenants but will also place significant new obligations on landlords. That is why social landlords will be required to meet the new DHS by 2035 at the latest, an implementation timeline that gives them the time and the certainty they need to boost housing supply as well as drive up the quality of the homes they manage. Though we recognise that reforms are substantial, they are designed to be complementary, for example work done to meet MEES and the new DHS will reduce damp and mould in homes and therefore the need for emergency repairs to take place under Awaab's Law.

29. Government is of course aware that there will be some unavoidable cases where landlords either cannot or should not comply with the standard, for example where it is prohibitively hard or impossible. We have set out, in the response to the Decent Homes Standard consultation, how these circumstances will be addressed and will provide further guidance in due course. This proportionate approach will help mitigate the risk of disposal.

Supporting social landlords to improve housing conditions

Recommendation 8: 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. (Paragraph 73)**

Government Response

30. In April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing introduced its new consumer regulation regime. The Regulator proactively seeks evidence and assurances that registered providers of social housing are delivering the outcomes set out in strengthened consumer standards, including through inspections of large landlords.

31. We have set out above details of the commitment to deliver the biggest boost to grant funding in a generation. The 5-step plan to deliver a decade of renewal for social and affordable housing already provides long-term certainty on future regulatory requirements that social landlords need to meet. We are committed to developing detailed guidance on the revised Decent Homes Standard, which includes Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and further phases of Awaab's Law, to give landlords further clarity about regulatory requirements.

32. The government recognises the need for a skilled, competent and robust supply chain to deliver the improvements to buildings necessary to meet our net zero and fuel poverty targets. We are working closely with the industry to provide high-quality training opportunities and build a diverse workforce that is fit for the future.

Recommendation 9: 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. (Paragraph 77)

Government Response

33. The government remains committed to implementing a statutory New Homes Ombudsman scheme, which will enable individuals buying new-build homes to benefit from clearer means of redress. Social housing tenants can already access support from the Housing Ombudsman and we have committed to introduce a new Ombudsman for the private rented sector.