



# The latest views from Alistair McIntosh, Chief Executive, Housing Quality Network

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## The Charter for Social Housing Residents

So, we finally have the Grenfell White Paper. It comes as the Grenfell Inquiry shouts out to the rest of the world about how shambolic parts of our sector are. Personally, I've never felt so troubled.

Can this White Paper solve all the problems, or will the forces of darkness slow it down as it goes through parliament? Time will tell. Just so we can all get a grip on what we need to do, I've extracted the main jobs that come out of it.

Too much, too little, too late, or about right? What do you think?

### *Chapter one: To be safe in your home*

#### *Actions*

- Identify and train up your nominated person responsible for complying with health and safety for residents
- Get quotes for smoke and carbon monoxide alarms for all homes and fit these
- Ensure up to date survey data on electrics across all your homes and act on it
- Develop a programme of consulting residents on health and safety
- Meet the requirements of emerging legislation on building safety and fire safety.

### *Chapter two: To know how your landlord is performing*

#### *Actions*

- Identify and prime a senior person to be in charge of meeting the consumer standards
- Monitor how the RSH plans to gather satisfaction – the banking regulator appoints a contractor to run the surveys on their behalf (so you may well not be graded on a survey commissioned by yourself as the landlord)



- Nevertheless you ought to be checking how you are doing by way of surveys, focus groups and social media comments across the RSH's draft satisfaction measures, which cover keeping homes in good repair, maintaining building safety, effective handling of complaints, respectful and helpful engagement, and responsible neighbourhood management
- Improve services in the light of what residents are saying
- Benchmark your CEO's salary
- Benchmark your management costs
- Associations need to get ready for an access to information regime akin to the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Work out how you will give residents a "clear breakdown" of what you spend money on via an app.

### ***Chapter three: To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly***

#### *Actions*

- Comply with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code (self-assessment due 31 December 2020)
- Improve the speed and effectiveness of complaints handling to be more responsive to residents and avoid being named and shamed by the Housing Ombudsman with follow up action from the new arm of the RSH
- Track and implement good practice on complaints.

### ***Chapter four: To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants***

#### *Actions*

- Self-inspect your services against the consumer standards (you can see how to do [this via this link to HQN's guide](#) – we will update it to take account of the end of the "serious detriment" test)
- Set up a protocol for advising the RSH of breaches of the consumer standard
- Advise boards that the level of fines imposed by the RSH may be increased.



## ***Chapter five: To have your voice heard by your landlord***

### *Actions*

- Get better at listening to residents and giving them useful and timely information
- Show how residents influence your decisions, e.g. via surveys, focus groups, scrutiny panels, and board membership
- Improve staff training to get ready for new qualifications.

## ***Chapter six: To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in***

### *Actions*

- Plan to finance and deliver the de-carbonisation of your homes
- Train staff so they are equipped to work with people with mental health needs
- Allow domestic pets where possible – no blanket bans
- Clarify which agency does what on ASB to improve effectiveness of responses
- Work out what role you will play when a Community Trigger sets up a multi-agency case review on ASB in an area
- Ensure new developments are integrated with other tenures to avoid stigmatisation and improve access to green spaces
- Make sure your allocation policies remove barriers to homeless people and are easier to navigate for vulnerable people
- Get ready for a regulatory standard on tackling domestic abuse
- Improve access to your homes for the armed forces and veterans.

## ***Chapter seven: To be supported to take your first step to ownership***

### *Actions*

- Local authorities to assess viability of building more homes
- Assess viability of using new finance streams for supported housing
- Assess viability of new shared ownership model (10% stake and 10-year repair- free period)
- Assess viability of right to shared ownership on new grant funded homes

- Improve transparency of billing and VfM to leaseholders.

## Final thoughts

Your main job is to work with your residents to build more homes in a better sector. Let's do it. If you have any good ideas about taking the White Paper forwards, I'd be pleased to hear from you.

