Time for Change

A review of the social housing sector and summary of the regulatory changes since Grenfell.

By Dewbien Plummer

Dedication

This is dedicated to Jessica Urbano Ramirez, who died in the fire at Grenfell Tower on the 14th of June 2017, aged 12. After she was formally identified in August 2017, her family spoke of their heartbreak in a statement issued through the Metropolitan police,

"Jessica will leave a lasting legacy in the hearts of her family and friends and the many, many people who didn't know her personally but have come to know her since that night of 14 June... Her light will shine bright and will light our individual paths as we start to move forward into coming to terms with our loss and heartbreak."

I am one of the many people that came to know her since that fateful day. I was there the morning after the fire handing out flyers for Jessica, sick to my stomach, knowing there was no way she could have survived. We were all too late that day, but I promised then, as I do now, to do my best to try to make sure this never happens again.

For Jessica, for Awaab and for all the lives that have been lost.

Never Forget.

About the Author

Dewbien Plummer (she/her), is a strategist and social housing expert with over 20 years' experience working in the sector for local authorities and housing associations in London and Essex. A Kings College University graduate with a degree in Chemistry with Management, and a qualified yoga instructor, Dewbien now writes about social housing, digital transformation and inclusion.
You can find her on LinkedIn

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"The coroner was right to call this a "defining moment". Grenfell Tower, however, has shown that moments that should be defining are often not."

Executive Summary

Like most of us, I listened to the story of the Grenfell fire in horror on the news. The next morning, I went to the site. People from all cultures and ages came together in an outpouring of generosity. I prepared donations with other volunteers, everyone desperate to do something.

But we all knew it was too late.

Five years after Grenfell we hear the story of Awaab Ishak, the two-year old boy who died in December 2020 from extended exposure to damp and mould.

At the inquest, Coroner Joanne Kearsley said, *"The tragic death of Awaab will, and should, be a defining moment for the housing sector in terms of increasing knowledge, increasing awareness and a deepening of understanding surrounding the issue of damp and mould."*

Some will agree, but many are sceptical. In an article with the Guardian, the barrister representing the family said, *"The coroner was right to call this a "defining moment". Grenfell Tower, however, has shown that moments that should be defining are often not."*

We saw the same themes from the inquest for Grenfell as we did at Awaab's, an institutional indifference to the residents, discrimination, an alarming lack of professional training, competence and skills and a lack of accountability.

The outpouring that followed Grenfell gave the government the impetus it needed to reform the legal framework around social housing.

Social media activists like Kwajo Tweneboa have kept up the pressure on providers on social media.

The Secretary of State, Michael Gove has a renewed political vigour and is naming and shaming landlords. It's now up to the sector to take up the mantle and move things forward.

This is aimed primarily for people working in and around social housing. The intention is to create a valuable resource

for practitioners and interested parties to outline and summarise the changes to legislation following Grenfell and explore the next steps for the sector.

It is divided into **two sections**

Section 1: Time to Change:

This first part of this section provides a background into Awaab's story, the ruling and the outcome for the landlord, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing.

The second, looks at some areas of consideration for the sector:

• digital transformation
• developing the workforce and
• addressing stigma in social housing

- with some examples of good practice.

Section 2: Regulatory Reform

The final section looks at the regulatory changes since Grenfell and contains; a timeline of the social housing regulation reform since the Grenfell Tower fire, a summary of the Housing Ombudsman report into damp and mould and a summary of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Please Hurry Up...

On the night of the fire, Grenfell was with a group of 10 people trapped in a single bedroom in flat 201.

Her last conversation was with the emergency fire control room. A transcript of the phone call with the control room officer (CRO), Sarah Russell, shows Jessica repeatedly asked Russell :
"Please can you hurry up?"
Russell told Jessica: "They are hurrying up. Is there another room you can go into?"
Jessica replied: "No, can you hurry up please? I'm begging you."
Russell replied: "They are, they're right below you. But you need to keep yourself safe."

Despite Russell's reassurances no-one came.

It's time for the sector to hurry up, it's time for change.

Time for Change

Awaab's Story

Two-year old Awaab Ishak, tragically died in December 2020 after prolonged exposure to mould. He lived with his family, in a one-bed flat, rented from, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH), a housing association, located in Greater Manchester.

In November 2022, two years later, an inquest was held into Awaab's death, and the disturbing details began to emerge. We heard that Awaab's father, Faisal Abdullah, reported the issue repeatedly, first in 2017, before Awaab was born.

The association acknowledged there were issues but insisted that they were caused by the tenant's lifestyle- that the family were carrying out "ritual bathing" involving a "bucket" which was leading to excess water on the bathroom floor.

The 'ritual-bathing' was an assumption. No-one at RBH asked the family if this was the case and seemed to base this assumption on the fact that Abdullah and his wife were Sudanese refugees.

Abdullah was told by RBH to paint over the mould - which he did many times.

Legal Action Eventually, in 2020 frustrated with the lack of progress, Abdullah took legal action against RBH by way of a disrepair claim. RBH inspected the home that July.

At that inspection, the mould was so severe that the property met the definition of being "unfit for human habitation". Professional intervention and remedial works were recommended.

Despite these findings, no remedial action was taken. It was RBH's policy – as is common in the sector– not to

tackle disrepairs until there is an agreement from the claimant's solicitors.

So, between July and December of 2020, Awaab continued to have chronic exposure to harmful mould. The family's NHS health worker also wrote to RBH twice expressing their concerns about the impact on his health.

Awaab's parents watched on powerlessly as their child's health deteriorated until his death on 21 December 2020.

Ruling - It's Not Lifestyle

The coroner and expert witnesses at the inquest were clear that there was no evidence the family's lifestyle was the cause of the "excessive and unacceptably high amounts of mould in the home."

The senior coroner Joanne Kearsley

said, "Awaab Ishak died as a result of a severe respiratory condition caused due to prolonged exposure to mould in his home environment,". Action to treat and prevent the mould was not taken. His respiratory condition led to respiratory arrest."

Awaab's Law

Since the story broke, it has dominated the media. Manchester Evening News teamed up with housing charity Shelter to launch a petition calling for Awaab's Law.

The petition demands changes to the way landlords investigate the causes of damp and mould, making sure they are dealt with in a timely manner and are taken seriously. At last count, the petition had over 100,000 signatures.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing

Prior to the inquest into Awaab's death, RBH's line was that the tenants had caused the mould with their lifestyle and "ritual bathing" habits. They also said the family failed to take action to control the damp and mould.

The association went on however, to acknowledge their failings.
In a statement following the inquest, Gareth Swarbrick, the then-chief executive said;

"We didn't recognise the level of risk to a little boy's health from the mould in the family's home. We allowed a legal disrepair process, widely used in the housing sector, to get in the way of promptly tackling the mould. We must make sure this can never happen again. Awaab's death needs to be a wake-up call for everyone in housing, social care and health."

Sanctions Swarbrick, with the full support of the Board, initially rejected calls for his resignation including those from Rochdale Borough Council and the Secretary of State.

However, in the face of mounting public pressure he was removed from his post.

On the 19th of November, the Board issued a statement saying:

"Our original instincts were for Gareth to stay on to see the organisation through this difficult period and to make the necessary changes, but we all recognise that this is no longer tenable. "

On the 24th of November 2022, Michael Gove announced that RBH won't receive its expected £1m funding from the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP 2021-26) or receive any new AHP contracts for new homes, until the Regulator of Social Housing has concluded its investigation and can demonstrate it is a responsible landlord. They have since announced the appointment of the experienced, Yvonne Arrowsmith, as the new interim Chief Executive to take the organisation forward .

Wider Crackdown As part of a wider crackdown on poor standards, the Housing Secretary will also block any housing provider that breaches the Regulator's consumer standards from new or existing (unless already in progress), until they make improvements.

"We didn't recognise the level of risk to a little boy's health from the mould in the family's home. We allowed a legal disrepair process, widely used in the housing sector, to get in the way of promptly tackling the mould. We must make sure this can never happen again. Awaab's death needs to be a wake-up call for everyone in housing, social care and health."

Wake Up Call

Grenfell was a wakeup call. Social housing & its failings are now under the glare of public scrutiny in traditional and social media. The latest, is a TV show on Channel 4, by campaigner Kwajo Tweneboa called Help! My Home is Disgusting.

The show promises to expose "...the shocking conditions in private rentals and social housing, and the toll they take on tenants' mental health, and reveals a complaints process that's not working".

Social media is becoming the new way of getting complaints resolved faster and has reached the ears of the government.

The tragedy kickstarted wide ranging legislative reforms from the government including the Social Housing Regulation Bill & the Building Safety Act.

The regulatory body, the Regulator for Social Housing, has been strengthened and has reviewed & improved consumer standards in the sector.

From April 2023, all social landlords must report their performance annually to the Regulator on twenty-two metrics, known as the Tenant Satisfaction Measures .

The measures are divided into two categories: management information e.g., the number of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard and perception measures e.g., satisfaction with the landlords handling of complaints.

The Housing Ombudsman has also been strengthened, the process for raising issues with them has been made easier and they are on a campaign to raise awareness of their services. Their remit has been expanded to investigate systemic issues and there are calls for them to have the power to award compensation of up to £25,000.

"To tolerate a situation in which social housing tenants are not receiving the same levels of compensation as tenants in the PRS (private rented sector) would amount to blatant discrimination. Significantly increasing levels of compensation should also help to concentrate the minds of boards and senior management teams on improving service standards."

Decline in Standards

Decline in Standards The evidence points to a steady decline in

standards, in the way residents are treated and in the way that services are run. Residents are reporting the same problems up & down the country, and the sector seems slow to respond.

Traditionally, housing providers have been shielded from the competitive pressures that have forced other industries to innovate and embrace modern ways of working. Customers of social housing rarely have any choice about who will be their landlords. Regulation has been focused predominantly on financial viability, so there was limited recourse for residents when things went wrong.

Despite the lack of competitive pressure, the sector operates in a constant state of crisis. The combination of delivering services to a diverse client group, the economy, pandemic, budget cuts and a seemingly never- ending cycle of organisational restructures, have left people in a state of reflexive jumpiness. Rarely though, until Grenfell did this escalate into anything catastrophic. Overtime, leaders in the sector have come to rely too heavily on instinct and precedent, bouncing from one quick-fix to another, rather than get into the messy and difficult business of fixing the problems.

Digital Transformation

Technology will undoubtedly play a fundamental role in helping the housing sector improve, most if not all providers have digital transformation in their strategies to varying degrees. But what does this mean?

According to the authors of Digital Transformation at Scale: Why the Strategy Is Delivery, a guide to building a digital institution,

"...digital is about applying the culture, practices, business models and technologies of the internet era to respond to people's raised expectations. It is not a new function. It is not even a new way of running the existing functions of an organisation, whether those are IT or communications. It is a new way of running organisations. A successful digital transformation makes it possible not only to deliver products and services that are simpler, cheaper, and better, but for the organisation as a whole to operate effectively in the online era."

The book, now in its second edition, tells the story of the Government Digital Service and how a growing band of reformers in businesses and governments around the world have helped their organisations pivot to this new way of working. The authors reflect on the lessons other can learn from their experiences,

"Most of digital transformation is simple and obvious. That does not mean that it is easy. Getting it right means getting stuck into the foundations of the institution; the incentives that shape behaviour, the unspoken rules of the game. That is quite a bit more involved than just building a website."

Urgency Not Short-Termism.

Realising the opportunities available from digital transformation will not be easy, one cannot solve long-term problems over night.

Providers desperately need to 'fix the plumbing' when

it comes to having efficient processes for repairs and complaints handling, managing information, tackling problems with poor quality data, a lack of standardisation, and the use of legacy technology, all of which continue to impede progress. The gap between strategy, (what they say they do) & delivery (the service provided), grows ever wider.

The first step will be to understand the maturity of the organisation. In this context, maturity is about how consistent an organisation is in the way it thinks and operates.

Understanding maturity helps to see the current level of performance and where it could be if the organisation adopted best practices.
The maturity level of the organisation will determine the pace of change, you cannot run before you can walk.

The next will be to ensure the organisation has the infrastructure and skills needed to make that aspiration a reality. That is not only about hiring in new skills into the sector, but more importantly, build the data & digital literacy of your entire workforce.

Developing the Workforce

One of the most serious challenges facing the housing sector right now is skills shortage at all levels of the organisation.

There is also the longer-term challenge of an ageing workforce & succession planning.

Faced with years of rent freezes and budget cuts, organisations have chronically underinvested in learning and development, treating it as a luxury or a reward instead of an essential part of maintaining standards.

The long-term impact of this can be seen in service delivery. In the closing statement of the Phase 2 of the Grenfell Inquiry, it is noted,

"... The evidence in Phase 2 has displayed an alarming lack of training, competence and skills in the professional industries that were engaged with the Grenfell Tower refurbishment... Serious consideration must be given to how this can be rectified by the introduction of clear professional standards, mandatory requirements of knowledge and expertise and ongoing compulsory training. The current skills shortage across industry, which affects LFB as well as other organisations, is also a cause for concern and must be addressed - failure to do so risks undermining any positive changes introduced through the Building Safety Act 2022 and Fire Safety Act 2021."

The government have addressed this through the Social Housing Regulation Bill . Changes to the Bill announced in October 2022, mean that social housing providers will have to ensure that all their staff - from neighbourhood housing officers to senior management - have the right skills, experience and knowledge to deliver a high-quality service for residents.

The new standard will be set out and enforced by the Regulator of Social Housing. The sector must adopt a learning culture in practice,

embracing continuous development as fundamental part of maintaining standards.

Stigma in Social Housing in England

The treatment of social housing residents as 'second-class' citizens has been normalised in England since the post-1970s. Social housing stigma has the added complexity of being interwoven with other stigmas, e.g., poverty, crime, mental health, and race and immigration stigma. Of all of these, poverty stigma is the greatest, as it is intimately linked with being unemployed and on benefits.

The media have demonised social housing tenants ("benefit scroungers"), without any fear of being challenged. Government housing policies and investment have contributed to this through the depletion of the social housing stock through reduced investment and the right to buy scheme leaving an acute shortage of genuinely affordable homes to rent, as well as prioritising home ownership as the tenure of aspiration and choice with social housing being temporary and a last resort

In a recent study into understanding stigma in social housing by Dr. Mercy Denedo and Dr. Amanze Ejiogu called Stigma and Social Housing in England , the authors noted that social housing providers are a major contributor to the problem.

"Interestingly, our analysis shows that another major contributor to the stigmatization of social housing and its residents are the social housing providers. Participants highlight the prevalence amongst social housing providers of a paternalistic attitude towards their tenants…"

They observed this paternalistic – parent/child- attitude reflected in the providers' communications to their tenants, other stakeholders, politicians and the wider public saying,

, "…Indeed, in their communications, social housing landlords often portray themselves as heroes protecting the 'most needy and vulnerable' and 'turning people's lives around'. This type of communication is deeply stigmatizing of tenants as it characterises tenants as unable to take responsibility for themselves and therefore constructs them as 'others' who have to be cared for, controlled and governed in a manner different from the rest of society."

It's Not Okay

The Grenfell tragedy brought to the forefront the stigmatisation of social housing and its tenants, and the accountability problems emerging from the marginalisation of tenants' voices. Notably, stigma was the most consistent theme raised by tenants in engagement events organized by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) before it published its Green Paper "A New Deal for Social Housing'' in 2018 .

To try to tackle this stigmatisation, in September 2020. the

tenant-led See the Person campaign worked with the Chartered Institute for Housing to produce- "It's Not Okay - a guide to tackling stigma in social housing".

The guide encourages housing providers and their staff to reflect on their language, behaviour, and service design and delivery.

It stresses the importance of getting organisational culture right, being accessible, accountable, and avoiding complacency; communicating in a clear, positive, human and kind way; engaging in meaningful tenant and resident involvement; and making sure that homes, neighbourhoods, repairs and maintenance are all of the best possible standard.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is the ability to participate ethically and effectively in personal and professional intercultural settings.

It requires knowing and reflecting on one's own cultural values and world view and their implications for making respectful, reflective, and reasoned choices, including the capacity to imagine and collaborate in cross cultural contexts.

The sector needs to address the way that it treats its tenants and leaseholders because as the consequences of failing to do so are fatal and culturally competent leadership is needed to create a clear roadmap to embed the desired behavioural change.

Lessons from the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the move towards digital transformation that was already gathering pace. Organisations that had invested in their digital teams, platforms and ways of working responded better to the crisis than those that hadn't.

Before the pandemic, the benefits were focussed solely on improving efficiency & generating savings - cutting technology costs, shifting service users to cheaper online alternatives, and eliminating failure demand.

There is now an opportunity to explore using digital technology to redirect employees' energy from repetitive chores to tasks that require human qualities of empathy and creativity.

Working Sustainably

The sector feels as if it has been hit by one crisis after another. As providers are recovering from the effects of the lockdown on repairs, there will be a flurry of activity as providers review their damp and mould policies and procedures and assess their level of risk.

Crises, by definition, are temporary. Very few people, at any level of any organisation, can indefinitely maintain that heightened state of being – the adrenalin, the long hours, the lost sleep, the sharpness to constantly think on one's feet – eventually leads to burnout.

The task for those looking to digitally transform their organisations is to capture and accept the lessons learned, let go of the organisational baggage that has been shown up as inadequate, and embed the new practices that need to be kept.

Crucially, for a transformation to be successful, researchers at EY & Oxford University say, leaders need to prioritise their employee's wellbeing during the process. One of the authors' most important findings is that, in order for transformation to be successful,

"leaders must approach it in ways designed to mitigate emotional harm to — and drive emotional commitment from — employees. The workforce bears the brunt of failed transformations, and the emotional damage can be substantial as employees lose confidence in leaders and become sceptical of further attempts at transformation."

"A successful digital transformation makes it possible not only to deliver products and services that are simpler, cheaper, and better, but for the organisation as a whole to operate more efficiently"

Good Practice

Examples of Good Practice

Digital Solutions: Repairs Online DLUHC
Repairs Online is a collaborative local authority project, funded by the DLUHC Local Digital Fund.

The goal is to create a common service pattern for housing repairs that is designed around the needs of the user. The CSP will be a reusable platform that is easily adoptable by other councils.

The team are using design thinking principles to develop a service that is easy for tenants to use and configurable to work with different systems and repairs workforce set ups.

More information on the work they are doing can be found [here](.).

Cultural Competency: NHS North Kensington Services :
The work on cultural competence for NHS North Kensington, began when local communities and those impacted by the Grenfell Tower fire shared their experiences, concerns, and views on how services could be made more culturally relevant.

Over the last two years, the team have worked in partnership with the community to develop a whole systems approach that seeks to link together many of the influencing factors that lead to culturally appropriate services.

A key aspect has been the development of a training module on Developing a Culturally Competent General Practice. This module has been successfully piloted and has now secured CPD-accreditation from the Royal College of GPs (RCGPs) and will count towards the CPD-accreditation of GPs.
More information can be found [here](.).

Professional Standards - Social Work England

Published in July 2019, the professional standards are the threshold standards necessary for safe and effective practice. They are specialist to the social work profession and apply to registered social workers in all roles and settings.

[Social Work England](#) says, "our standards reflect the value and diversity of social work practice and the positive impact it has on people's lives, families and communities."

The Social Work Standards:

• Promote the rights, strengths and wellbeing of people, families and communities
• Establish and maintain the trust and confidence of people.
• Be accountable for the quality of my practice and the decisions I make.
• Maintain my continuing professional development.
Act safely, respectfully and with professional integrity

• Promote ethical practice and report concerns.

Reflective Practice

A key element of maintaining these standards is a practice called "Reflective Practice". Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning .

Reflection involves reviewing your experiences to help make positive changes for your future practice. It turns your experiences into learning and helps you improve your practice in a way that is right for you.

Critical reflection moves beyond this and encourages you to examine your approach, judgements, decisions, and interventions. It also involves looking at the steps taken to provide objective support, free from your own views and beliefs.

Being able to critically reflect on your practice will help you identify your learning needs and create a cycle of experience, reflection,

learning and change.

Workforce Development: Investors in People Accreditations

Over the last 30 years, Investors in People have accredited more than 50,000 organisations and their accreditation is recognised in 66 countries around the world, making it the global benchmark when it comes to people management.

They provide excellent ongoing support and as a non-profit organisation, a very cost-effective way to start to address the skills shortage in the sector.

More information on their services can be found here.

Further reading: [Stop talking about quiet quitting & start talking about investing in your people.](#)

Workforce Development: Coursera for Government :

[Coursera](#) is a global online learning platform that offers anyone, anywhere,

access to online courses and degrees from leading universities and companies. Coursera for Government helps governments and businesses provide in-demand skills and learning paths to new jobs for the entire workforce and implement large-scale/national learning programs.

They can also develop locally relevant career pathways and connect learners with regional employers.

Data & Evidence: Centre for Homelessness Impact

The What Works Network is made up of 10 centres and aims to improve the way government and other public sector organisations create, share and use high-quality evidence in decision-making.

The Network, and Centres that compose it, are designed to do this by ensuring that the best evidence of 'what works' is available to the people who actually make the decisions; not only government ministers and council leaders, but also doctors, headteachers, police chiefs, children's services professionals and many more.

The Centre for Homelessness Impact is one of the centres and exists to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness through better use of data and evidence.

They provide unparalleled expertise, technical assistance, and peer connections to equip local authority leaders at all levels with the tools and techniques needed to tackle their toughest homelessness challenges.

You can find out more about their work here.

Social Housing Regulation Reform
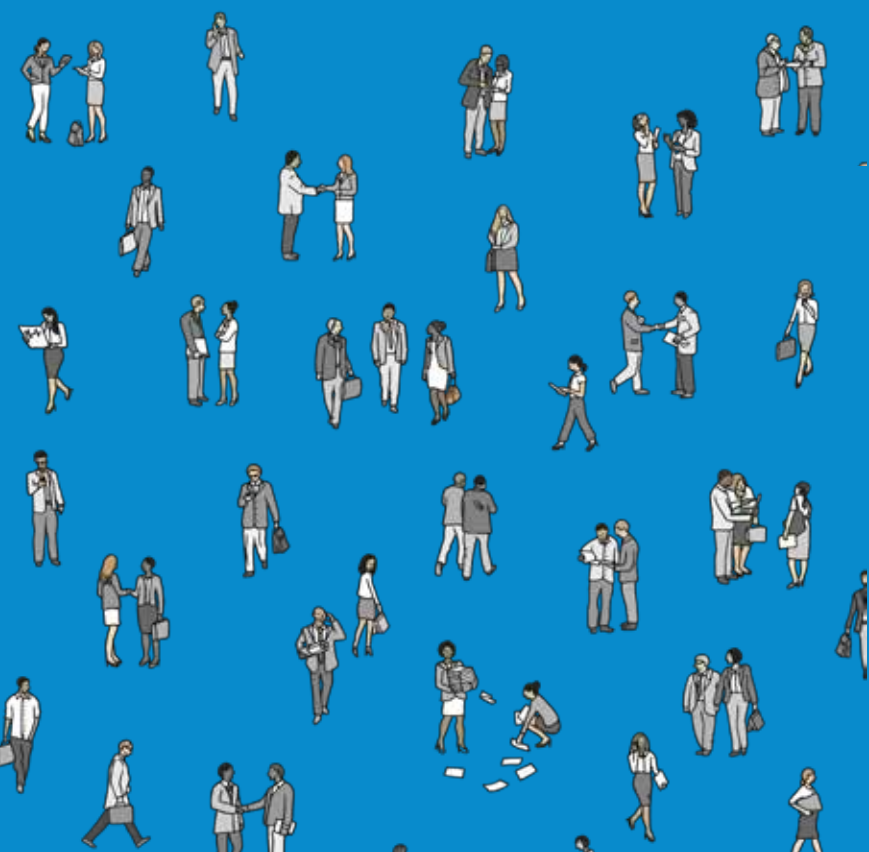
Timeline

2017	**GRENFELL TOWER FIRE**
	1. Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry Launched
	2. Hackitt Review Launched
2018	3. Phase 2 Grenfell Inquiry Launched
	4. Hackitt Review Findings Published
	5. Social Housing Green Paper Launched
	6. Cladding Ban
2019	7. Phase 1 Inquiry Published
2020	8. Draft Building Safety Bill
	9. Ombudsman Publish Complaint Handling Code
	10. Revised Ombudsman Scheme
	11. Social Housing White Paper
	12. Review of Decent Homes Standard Launched
2021	13. Ombudsman Publish Systemic Framework
	14. Ombudsman Publish Spotlight Report
2022	15. Building Safety Act
	16. Tenant Satisfaction Measures Launched
	17. Social Housing Regulation Bill

Regulation Summary

Summary of Regulatory Changes

1. Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry Launched June 2017.

By the then PM Theresa May. It is a public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower Fire. The inquiry was divided into two phases.

• *Phase 1* of the Inquiry covered what happened to Grenfell Tower on the night of 14 June 2017, and the immediate causes and effects of the fire on the night.

• *Phase 2* is the examination of the reasons why the fire happened and is divided into 8 modules.

2. Hackitt Review Launched July 2017.

The Government commissioned an independent review of fire building regulations and fire safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

Its purpose was to make recommendations that will ensure a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future and that residents feel that the buildings they live in are safe and remain so.

It examined building and fire safety regulations and related compliance and enforcement with the focus on multi-occupancy high-rise residential buildings.

3. Phase 1 Grenfell Inquiry Launched September 2017

4. May 2018 Hackitt Review Findings Published :

The report, *'Building a Safe Future'*, made recommendations for fundamental reforms to improve fire safety.

5. Social Housing Green Paper Launched August 2018.

The paper and consultation aimed to rebalance the relationship between residents and landlords, tackle stigma and ensure that social housing can be both a stable base that supports people when they need it and support social mobility.

6. Cladding Ban November 2018:

Ban on all flammable cladding on buildings over 18m, schools, care homes, student accommodation & hospitals.

7. Phase 1 Enquiry Published October 2019.

46 recommendations for improving fire safety in high-rise residential buildings

8. Draft Building Safety Bill . July 2020

Government mandate to hold builders and developers accountable for dangerous/ defective work.

9. Complaint Handling Code . July 2020

Published by Housing Ombudsman it sets out good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

10. Revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme September 2020.

Changes to the scheme include the ability to issue Complaint Handling Failure Orders', new powers to investigate further into issues, and help to raise awareness and improve accessibility to the service, speed up the resolution of complaints and support our plans to investigate systemic issues and share best practice.

These revised powers also strengthened the relationship with the Regulator of Social Housing, broadening the basis on which cases can be referred to them.

11. Social Housing White Paper November 2020.

The white paper "Fixing our broken housing market" sets out a broad range of reforms that government plans to introduce to help reform the housing market and increase the supply of new homes.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents The overarching themes are building and resident safety, and resident voice.

It also aims to deliver the improvements in transparency and accountability promised in the 2018 green paper.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents
• To be safe in your home. We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.

• To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.

• To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.

• To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.

• To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.

• To have a good quality home and neighbourhood

to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.

• To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

12. Decent Homes Review Launched November 2020

The Government are currently reviewing the Decent Homes Standard, - the minimum standards that social homes are required to meet – to ensure they are appropriate the challenging realities of modern life in social housing settings.

13. Systemic Framework March 2021

Housing Ombudsman published their systemic framework setting out how they look beyond individual disputes to identify key issues that impact on residents and landlords' services.

14. Spotlight on Damp & Mould October 2021

Housing Ombudsman published their first report into damp and mould in the rented sector. See next section for more details.

15. Building Safety Act April 2022

The Act makes ground-breaking reforms to give

residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections. – so homes across the country are safer.

It delivers far-reaching protections for qualifying leaseholders from the costs associated with remediating historical building safety defects, and an ambitious toolkit of measures that will allow those responsible for building safety defects to be held to account.

The Act overhauls existing regulations, creating lasting change and makes clear how residential buildings should be constructed, maintained and made safe.

The Act also creates three new bodies to provide effective oversight of the new regime: the Building Safety Regulator, the National Regulator of Construction Products, and the New Homes Ombudsman.

16. Tenant Satisfaction Measures September 2022

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures are a series of KPIs that all social landlords will be required to report against annually to the Regulator from April 2023.

There are 22 measures, 10 perception measures and 12 management information (two in development) covering five main themes;
Keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, respectful and helpful engagement, responsible neighbourhood management, and effective handling of complaints.

See next section for all 22 measures.

17. Social Housing Regulation Bill October 2022

Expands the scope of the Regulator to include safety, transparency and energy efficiency

The Main Themes of the Bill

•Co-Regulation
An ecosystem – Housing Ombudsman, residents, registered providers & the Regulator. Setting up an Advisory Panel, for energy efficiency, expectation that providers will engage actively in maintaining standards.

•Transparency
Expectation for providers to be proactive in coregulation (information sharing)
.
•Increased monitoring and enforcement powers. including Tenant Satisfaction Measures, inspections (reactive & planned).

Remedial actions & penalties.

•Introduce requirement for providers to have a named *Health & Safety lead.*

•New power for Regulator to *set standards* in the areas of competence & conduct, information & transparency and reducing energy demand in social housing properties.

Spotlight on Damp & Mould

Spotlight on Damp and Mould: A Summary

In October 2021, the Housing Ombudsman published Spotlight Report Damp & Mould – It's Not Lifestyle . Based on hundreds of investigations across 142 landlords, the report made 26 recommendations grouped around four themes.

A summary of the themes is listed below.

From reactive to proactive.

They recommend landlord implement a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to damp and mould.

This will reduce over reliance on residents to report issues, help them identify hidden issues and be able to anticipate and prioritise interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made.

From inferring blame to taking responsibility.

The Ombudsman wants landlords to stop automatically inferring blame on residents & stop using the term 'lifestyle' when referring to damp and mould complaints. The CEO, Richard Blakeway, went as far as saying it should be banned from use.

"I hope the word 'lifestyle', when it may be a consequence of limited choices, is banished from the vernacular."

From disrepair claims to resolution.
Is about landlords ensuring they can identify complex cases at an early stage and have a strategy for keeping residents informed, along with appropriate policies and procedures for effective resolution.

From a complaints to a learning culture
The Ombudsman noted "the distress and inconvenience experienced by residents in this area is some of the most profound the Ombudsman have seen, and this needs to be reflected in the tone and approach of the complaint handling... Landlords should ensure they treat residents reporting damp and mould with respect and empathy."

Practical Next Steps
The next steps for landlords can be summarised as;

Data & Record Keeping - Invest in the systems necessary to develop an effective proactive and risk-based approach to managing damp and mould across their homes.

Policies & Processes - Develop a clear, comprehensive, and consolidated framework, or policy, to respond to damp and mould.

Be Accountable - Stop inferring blame on residents & stop using the term 'lifestyle' when referring to damp and mould complaints.

Training - Identify and resolve any skills gaps ensuring staff & contractors have the appropriate amount of expertise.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Keeping Properties in Good Repair

RP01: Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard

RP02: Repairs completed within target timescale

TP01: Overall satisfaction

TP02: Satisfaction with repairs

TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

Maintaining Building Safety

BS01: Gas safety checks

BS02: Fire safety checks

BS03: Asbestos safety checks

BS04: Water safety checks

BS05: Lift safety checks

TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in

Effective Handling of Complaints

CH01: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord

CH02: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.

Responsible Neighbourhood Management

NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord

TP08: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained

TP09: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

TP10: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour

Respectful and Helpful Engagement

TP05: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them

TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them

TP07: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect

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https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/11/when-the-nerds-go-marching-in/265325/. Parallels can be drawn from a case study with the team of engineers from Facebook, Twitter and Google who built the software that drove Obama's re-election'. Michael Slaby, Obama's 2008 chief technology officer, put it like this. "Our supporters don't give a ✻✻✻ about our org chart. They just want to have a meaningful experience. We promise them they can play a meaningful role in politics and they don't care about the departments in the campaign. So we have to do the work on our side to look integrated and have our ✻✻✻ together," he said. "That took some time. You have to develop new trust with people. It's just change management. It's not complicated; it's just hard.

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