

27 March 2023

PlaceShapers response to DLUHC open consultation

Implementing the new consumer regulatory regime: directions to the Social Housing Regulator on mutual exchange and tenant involvement

The following questions and responses refer to the proposed Directions from the Secretary of State to the Regulator of Social Housing, using powers under section 197 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 ("the 2008 Act").

The full scope of the consultation and full copy of the revised directions can be found at

1. Tenant Involvement: Do you agree with the strengthened outcomes we are setting in the direction, as set out in paragraphs 18-22 of the consultation document?

Response

PlaceShapers agree with the strengthened outcomes on tenant involvement. As the national network for place-based housing organisations, our members place tenant direction and scrutiny at the heart of their services. Strengthening this principle within the regulation will ensure better outcomes for residents and providers.

The regulation is right to require 'a wide range of meaningful opportunities' to influence their landlord's service. Effective consultation and input can be gathered in a wide range of ways and is dependent on the circumstances of both tenant and landlord.

We do believe that for a registered provider to ensure the widest range of opportunities to influence, and have meaningful impact, services and consultation should have a strong local, place based focus, which is often best achieved with a physical local presence.

2. Tenant Involvement: Do you agree with requirements that are being removed, as set out in paragraphs 23-24 of the consultation document?

Response

This response is written on behalf of PlaceShapers and its members. PlaceShapers is the national network of place-based housing organisations.

We agree with the removal of the existing requirements on the basis of them being overly prescriptive. Good tenant involvement can be conducted in multiple different ways, and one type of involvement should not be required above others.

Our expectation is that PlaceShapers members would continue to produce annual reports because they are an effective means of tenant engagement and scrutiny. Many of our members involve tenants in the production and substance of annual reports.

Removing the tick-box approach is welcome as it gives providers' more room to think creatively regarding means of engagement and scrutiny. The principle of wide ranging, good quality and effective involvement should be the requirement that is regulated on.

3. Mutual exchange: Do you agree with the additional requirement to offer support to tenants who would otherwise be unable to use the mutual exchange service, set out in paragraphs 28-29 of the consultation document?

Response

PlaceShapers agrees with this proposal and is supportive of the mutual exchange system more broadly. This system gives more power to tenants over their housing situation and can help alleviate problems that providers experience regarding allocations and housing suitability.

We also welcome efforts to not be overly prescriptive on levels of support. Firstly, the qualification that support is provided for those 'who might otherwise be unable to use a Mutual Exchange service' is an important qualification. A more prescriptive approach could result in an excessive responsibility to the housing provider.

Secondly, housing professionals, working locally and in partnership with other service providers, are best placed to assess the level of support a tenant requires. When housing professionals hold relationships with tenants, they are better able to identify and then provide support. We believe a place-based approach is the most effective way of developing these relationships and identifying those who may need support.

7. Mutual exchange: Do you agree with the proposed approach to remove procedural details, as set out in paragraph 30 of the consultation document?

Response

PlaceShapers agreed with the proposed approach and restate our support for the direction which states that tenants should not have to pay a fee to use such services. Given the relatively low frequency of internal moves within social housing stock, all efforts should be made to make the process as attractive and easy to use as possible.