

BRIEFING

Housing and Regeneration Bill update

Housing and Regeneration Bill

The Housing and Regeneration Bill has now completed its committee stage and is progressing towards its third reading. The Bill is seen by the government as a driver for its pledge to build 3 million more affordable new homes by 2020. The following two new agencies will be established and the Housing Corporation will be abolished.

The Homes and Community Agency (HCA) is tasked with the remit of improving the supply and quality of housing, securing the regeneration or development of land and supporting the creation of communities.

The Office for Tenants and Social Landlord (Oftenant) has been described as the new watchdog for social tenants. It has a number of objectives including regulating social landlords, giving more power to tenants to trigger inspection but also releasing 'good housing associations' from bureaucracy and routine inspections.

Sitra and Homeless Link have been lobbying Government to ensure that the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups are not overlooked in this important piece of law. To read a copy of their joint paper [click here](#).

The Parliamentary process

The passage of the Housing and Regeneration Bill through the parliamentary process provides a valuable opportunity to protect and enhance the position of people with support needs. We recognise that the Bill concentrates on the creation of bodies to provide and regulate social housing, and are concerned to ensure that the legal framework for those bodies recognises the housing needs of vulnerable and excluded groups. We are concerned that if vulnerable and/or socially excluded people are not specifically cited in the Bill this will further marginalise groups that are often on the periphery of housing provision. In order to ensure that people can successfully leave homelessness and other forms of social exclusion behind, it is imperative to allow them access to permanent housing. Groups in receipt of services under the *Supporting People* programme would greatly benefit from their integration into housing policy development, to enable a holistic approach to their housing needs. This would continue and build on the positive work of the Housing Corporation over many years in ensuring that the housing needs of vulnerable and socially excluded groups are met.

Housing Corporation statistics indicate that:

- Currently there are 405,076 units of supported housing being managed by Registered Social Landlords, (RSLs) the majority of these units being for older people.

- 24% of this provides supported housing for other groups, for example, people with substance misuse problems, learning disabilities, HIV, physical or sensory disabilities, at risk of offending, young parents and care leavers, and people experiencing domestic violence or sleeping rough.
- In the National Affordable Housing Programme for 2006-8 there are 6,724 units of supported housing being developed, however only 53% are for those groups identified above.

Recent empirical research on the need for supported housing for vulnerable and socially excluded groups identifies under-provision of supported housing in London¹. It identified that there is a need for 4,400 additional units in 2007 in London alone. If this need is not met this will rise to approximately 5,800 units by 2017. The research also found that by far the largest investment need – over 70 per cent – is for socially excluded groups.

A North London based project has produced statistics suggesting that 4,000 people in supported housing are seeking a permanent home in any one year². All this implies that people may either be spending extended periods in temporary accommodation or sleeping on the streets waiting for appropriate accommodation.

We would like to propose that members consider the following recommendations to ensure that the two newly created bodies have responsibilities for vulnerable and socially excluded people.

In part 1 The Homes and Communities Agency, Chapter 1, Section 2 (1), the objectives of the HCA should read:

To support in other ways the creation, regenerating or development of communities in England or their continued well-being, with a view to meeting the needs of people in England including those who are vulnerable and socially excluded.

Chapter 4 Other functions of the HCA 33 (1) *The HCA should include:*

to promote socially mixed and cohesive communities, including people of different age groups, types of household and ethnic groups.

Chapter 2 The Social Housing Regulator 86 Fundamental Objectives

Objective 2 to be amended to Objective 1: *is to encourage and support a supply of well-managed social housing, of appropriate quality, sufficient to meet reasonable demands including those of vulnerable and socially excluded groups.*

Or a separate objective to read: ****is to ensure that registered providers of social housing contribute to meeting the housing needs of those who are vulnerable and socially excluded.***

The above recommendations are intended to promote dialogue during the parliamentary process of the Housing and Regenerating Bill. We recognise that we will require more detailed discussion. We hope that what has been suggested will encourage members to consider and promote those with support needs during this unique opportunity to influence legislation.

Sitra is a voluntary agency and registered charity offering training, consultancy and advice on issues connected with the provision of supported housing and care. Our membership comprises over 950 practitioners in the field of housing with care and support. We are

¹ *Building for All: Identifying the need for supported housing in London* published by the London Housing Federation, the Mayors office and the Housing Corporation (2007)

² Move on alternative project

recognised and consulted by Government departments including Communities and Local Government, and other statutory bodies as a source of expertise on housing, care and support issues. We over have 20 years experience of providing technical support to providers and commissioners of supported housing and care.

Homeless Link is the national umbrella organisation for frontline homelessness agencies working to end homelessness together. We have around 450 members providing a range of services including hostels, advice centres, health projects and outreach work. For more information, please visit www.homeless.org.uk

