



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Mrs Heather Wheeler MP**  
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Clive Betts MP  
Chair of Housing, Communities and Local  
Government Select Committee

By email: [officeofclivebettsmp@parliament.uk](mailto:officeofclivebettsmp@parliament.uk)

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to update Honourable Members on our consultation *Strengthening Consumer Redress in the Housing Market*, which was published on 18 February 2018. As you will have seen in the letter from Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP we have today published our response to this consultation which outlines our proposals to strengthen redress for consumers across housing tenures.

Our White Paper *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market* highlighted the need to make the housing market work for everyone, and set out comprehensive plans to achieve this. We have been clear that we want to make the housing market fairer and more transparent for tenants, leaseholders and homeowners. This includes making sure consumers have straightforward routes for getting problems put right swiftly when things go wrong.

That is why my Department consulted on options for strengthening consumer redress in housing, including exploring the potential for streamlining housing redress services to make access to redress easier for consumers. The consultation sought views on the existing provision of redress for housing consumers in terms of improvements to existing services, increasing provision of services where there may be gaps, and how future services could be configured to serve consumers better.

We have already announced our intention for there to be a New Homes Ombudsman to ensure buyers of new build homes can access fair, fast and effective redress if things go wrong. Today's consultation response also sets out our ambition for a new **Housing Complaints Resolution Service**, working with housing redress schemes, that will provide a single point of help for consumers to get easy access to redress. The response also sets out proposals to improve redress across housing including our intention to:

- a) Bring forward legislation to underpin a **New Homes Ombudsman** in statute, following the establishment of an interim voluntary service. Developers of new build homes must belong to the **New Homes Ombudsman** to participate in the new Help to Buy scheme post 2021.
- b) Bring forward legislation to ensure access to redress for leaseholders, private tenants including residents of park homes and students in privately run accommodation, and buyers of new build homes. This includes delivering on the commitment to require private landlords to belong to a redress scheme. This will also include setting new conditions on the standards to which the redress schemes can be held.
- c) Work with each housing sector to develop guidance and **Codes of Practice** setting out the standards to which housing providers, such as landlords and developers, should be held, including complaints handling, with the intention as far as feasible to amalgamate these into a single **Code of Practice** on complaint handling underpinned in law. Work in the social housing sector will be carried forward separately following consideration of responses to the Social Housing Green Paper but will take account of this work.
- d) Establish a **Redress Reform Working Group** to work with the relevant sectors and consumers to inform development of the new **Housing Complaints Resolution Service**, review existing minimum standards for complaints handling for redress schemes and providers, and identify how they could be improved and developed including through legislation where necessary.

The response links to the *Building a Safer Future: an Implementation Plan*, which was published on 18 December and set out how we are taking forward the response to the Hackitt Review. It also links to the Social Housing Green Paper and the Call for Evidence for the Review of Social Housing Regulation.

As you are the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee I would like to offer my assurances that my Department is committed to ensuring that housing consumers can access the help they need if things go wrong. I assume you will share this with your members.

The policy proposals primarily relate to England. The UK Government will be discussing these issues with devolved administrations where existing legislation also has scope outside England.

The consultation response can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-consumer-redress-in-housing>



**MRS HEATHER WHEELER MP**