

A voice for tenants

STEERING GROUP

Response to the Rents for Social Housing 2020-2021

1 A Voice for Tenants Steering Group

- 1.1 **A Voice for Tenants (AV4T)** was set up in 2017 in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy to seek the establishment of a national body in England to advocate for social housing tenants.
- 1.2 **AV4T** is not a tenant representative body. It is set up as a steering group with one aim – to establish a national body for tenants.
- 1.3 **AV4T** steering group includes representation from all the National Tenant Organisations¹ from the social housing sector alongside members of the former National Tenant Voice Board and other tenants who have played national roles. AV4T seeks as best it can to reflect the breadth of tenant opinion, but it currently does not purport to be a formally democratic or representative tenant body.
- 1.4 **AV4T** seeks constructive and positive dialogue with Government, with the national bodies that represent social housing landlords and with others.
- 1.5 **AV4T** worked in partnership with Government in Winter 2017 and early 2018 to carry out a series of 12 events to enable the two former Housing Ministers to engage with tenants. Over a thousand tenants participated in this dialogue. AV4T representatives have also attended current Ministerial events being held to enable dialogue with tenants about the Social Housing Green Paper.

¹ Association of Retained Council Housing Tenant Body, Confederation of Co-operative Housing, National Federation of TMOs, TAROE Trust, Tpas

2 Rents for social housing 2020 – 2021

2.1 AV4T Steering Group welcomes the opportunity to comment on the MHCLG consultation on directive regarding the rent standard. We wish to make the following comments:

2.2 **Publicising that the changed directive is a ceiling and not an expectation**

For the benefit of tenants everywhere, we propose that it be made very clear in the directive and it be publicised to tenants that rent increases are a ceiling and not an expectation. The regulator should make it absolutely clear to Registered Providers that the directive is a ceiling and not an expectation.

2.3 **Accountability for rent increases**

We propose that MHCLG make it clear to Registered Provider landlords and to the regulator that landlords should be required to be accountable to their tenants regarding their rent setting.

We propose that the regulator should require Registered Provider landlords:

- to provide tenants with a clear and understandable explanation and justification regarding their proposed approach to rent increases or decreases
- to hold meaningful consultation with tenants regarding rent increases based on three-year plans including planned increases and investment in new and existing properties
- to generally be accountable to tenants regarding the rents they pay and the services they receive.

2.4 There may be concern that tenants will always opt for lower rents and this will mean either that landlords will not be able to build new homes or that landlords will not have sufficient money for new services.

2.5 This will not necessarily be the case. In every consultation with tenants, tenants refer to the lack of homes for people on low incomes as being a high priority. Many tenants are also minded

that lower rents lead to poorer services. In any event, if a landlord wishes to raise the rents tenants pay, they should be able and willing to justify those increases and be accountable to their tenants for them.

For further information about this submission, please contact Nic Bliss (Secretary to AV4T Steering Group): nic@cch.coop 07947 019287