



Sector Update – March 2022

Government to protect leaseholders with new laws to make industry pay for building safety

Tough new measures that will force industry to pay to remove cladding and protect leaseholders from exorbitant costs have been unveiled by Secretary of State for Levelling Up Michael Gove.

- Developers and product manufacturers that do not help fix the cladding scandal could be blocked from housing market
- Government guarantees that no leaseholder living in medium or high-rise buildings will have to pay for the removal of cladding
- New powers will allow cladding companies to be sued and subject to fines for defective products
- Protections for leaseholders extended to cover other fire safety defects

This package, alongside the duties in the wider Bill, will create an environment for tough, proportionate action on critical safety issues while preventing cost inflation and excessive work.

This follows the Secretary of State's statement in January, when he set out a 4-point plan to reset the approach to building safety and give leaseholders more protection against unfair costs.

Consultation on Joint Tenancies in Domestic Abuse cases

During the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, concerns were raised over the current rules on joint tenancies, which mean that victims of domestic abuse who are in a joint tenancy with their abuser can be vulnerable to the threat of being made homeless. Should the victim want to stay in the family home, there is currently no straightforward means to remove the abuser from the tenancy and remove the risk of homelessness.

The Government have launched a consultation which will enable them to better understand the complex legal and practical issues. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is seeking views on the impacts of the law on joint tenancies on victims of domestic abuse in the social rented sector.

Consultation on local connection requirements for social housing for victims of domestic abuse

Again, during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 concerns were raised relating to local connection tests for domestic abuse victims who apply for social housing.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities is seeking views on:

- Proposals to introduce regulations to enable victims of domestic abuse who need to move to another local authority district to qualify for an allocation of social housing in the new area, and;
- How local authorities are making use of the existing legislation and guidance to support victims of domestic abuse who wish to move within and across local authority boundaries.

Homes for Ukraine

The Government have launched a bespoke scheme which will offer a route to those who want to come to the UK who have someone here willing to provide them with a home. It will enable individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to volunteer accommodation and provide a route to safety for Ukrainians, and their immediate family members, forced to escape their homeland.

Sponsors should provide accommodation for as long as they are able, but a minimum expectation of 6 months.

Someone is eligible for the scheme if they are a Ukrainian national or the immediate family member of a Ukrainian national, and were resident in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022.

People arriving under this scheme will be able to:

- Live and work in the UK for up to three years
- Access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition

You can find out more [here](#)

Housing Ombudsman Annual Review

The HO have published their first annual review of complaints.

The introduction of the Complaint Handling Code and Complaint Handling Failure Orders, effective from 1 January 2021, has had a significant impact in the sector and on their service. Volumes for enquiries and complaints increased by 48% during the final quarter compared to the same period in 2019-20, while demand for formal investigations rose by 56%. The impact has continued unabated throughout 2021-22 with demand reaching unprecedented levels: an increase of 104% for all enquiries and complaints at the latest count; and an increase of 88% for formal investigations..

While they expect the rate of growth in demand to stabilise over the coming year, they do expect growth to continue because of increased resident awareness, combined with the strategic challenges facing the sector, such as net zero and building safety; as well as the change to proactive consumer regulation. Their new corporate plan sets out the work they will do to help landlords improve complaints handling, including targeted engagement where needed and the creation of a Centre for Learning to increase the number of tools available to help all landlords develop their services.

You can read the full report [here](#).

Four new members appointed to Homes England's Board

1. Pat Ritchie CBE is the former Chief Executive of Newcastle City Council and Chair of the Government Property Agency.
2. Lesley-Ann Nash is a non-executive director at Workspace Group Plc

3. Mark Henderson is the CEO of Home Group housing association and founder and former Chair of Homes for the North
4. Lord Ian Austin of Dudley was MP for Dudley North from 2005 until 2019. During this time, Lord Austin served as the Minister for Housing and Planning and Minister for the West Midlands. In 2020, he was appointed to the House of Lords as Lord Austin of Dudley.

Bank of England Summary Report

[This publication](#) summarises intelligence that was gathered by the Bank's Agents mostly between mid-January and late February – before the invasion of Ukraine. The Agents' scores published alongside this document generally represent developments over the past three months compared with a year ago.

Agency contacts in most sectors reported that demand was strong, and that impacts from the Covid-19 Omicron variant had subsided. However, rising materials and labour costs, and supply shortages continued to hold back growth in output. Contacts said that the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict had lowered their growth expectations, as it was putting further upward pressure on input costs, was expected to exacerbate shortages of some tradable goods, and weigh on sentiment.

Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot Statistics 2021

The Government have published the latest Rough Sleeping snapshot which showed that the number of people sleeping rough has fallen to an 8-year low and almost halved since 2017, with a reduction of 49%. The numbers have fallen by 9% since last year and reductions in rough sleeping were reflected across all regions in England.

Alongside the official snapshot statistics, they have published further monthly management information from February 2021 – December 2021. The number of people in emergency and short-term accommodation has fallen by 67% from its peak in May 2020, during the first lockdown. As at the end of December 2021, 40,240 individuals have been supported into long-term accommodation since they started collecting this data at the start of the pandemic.

The annual rough sleeping statistics and additional management information can be found [here](#).

DLUHC announces a preferred candidate for the role of Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing

Following an open competition, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has announced that Bernadette Conroy has been selected as the preferred candidate for the post of Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing.

Bernadette Conroy is an experienced Chair and Non-Executive Director (NED) operating across a number of sectors. These include financial services regulation, where she is a NED for the Financial Conduct Authority and housing, where she is Chair of Network Homes. She is also the Independent Chair of the Buildings and Estates Committee of Cambridge University with responsibility for the development and maintenance of the University's estate and its capital build programme and a NED for Milton Keynes Development Partnerships. Prior to taking on a non-executive portfolio, Bernadette held a number of executive roles in financial services, latterly as Global Head of Strategy and Planning for HSBC Corporate, Investment Banking and Markets. She has an MA in Mathematics from Cambridge University and an MBA from INSEAD. In 2020, Bernadette received the Sunday Times Not for Profit Non-Executive Director of the Year award.