

Factsheet 1: The Housing Bill, a summary of the main provisions

The Housing Bill is a key piece of legislation that will protect the most vulnerable in society and help create a fairer and better housing market. It will also strengthen the Government's drive to meet its 2010 decent homes target.

Following the successful completion of its Commons stages, the Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on 13 May 2004 and had its 2nd Reading on 7 June 2004.

We have produced factsheets setting out information on the Bill's main provisions.

In summary, the Bill's main provisions are:

- new **Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)** to replace the current housing fitness standard. This will help local authorities target the worst-condition properties, often housing some of the most vulnerable people (*Factsheet 2*);
- **licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)** with mandatory licensing for larger, higher-risk HMOs and discretionary powers to license smaller, multiple-occupied properties (*Factsheets 3 and 4*);
- Enabling local authorities to tackle low housing demand and problems of anti-social behaviour through new powers to **selectively license private landlords** (*Factsheet 5*);
- Local authority's duties and powers to make **management orders** (*Factsheet 6*);
- The introduction of **Home Information Packs** to bring together, at the start of the home buying and selling process, important information (such as a home condition report) which, at present, is collected piecemeal in the weeks and months after an offer has been accepted (*Factsheet 7*);
- Enabling local authorities to tackle **anti-social behaviour** by: extending an **introductory tenancy** beyond a 12-month period; **refusing a mutual exchange** application because of ASB; and **preventing a tenant completing a RTB purchase** on ASB grounds.
- Changes to the **Right to Buy Scheme** to tackle profiteering, including **extending the initial qualification period** for right to buy from two to five years and extending from three to five years the period during which **discount must be repaid** when the property is resold (*Factsheet 8*);
- Six measures recommended by the **Park Homes Working Party** (*Factsheet 9*).
- A provision to update by order, the statutory overcrowding provisions. We expect to go out to consultation on this in October.
- Increasing the effectiveness of powers to **regulate Registered Social Landlords** (*Factsheet 10*);
- Provision for the Housing Corporation and National Assembly for Wales to pay **grants to companies that are not registered social landlords** (*Factsheet 11*)
- **Extending disabled facilities grant** to all those occupying caravans as their only or main residence.
- A **Social Housing Ombudsman for Wales** to investigate complaints against social landlords in Wales (Further information available from the National Assembly for Wales - housinginternet@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

We have also announced our intention to bring forward in the Lords amendments on **tenancy deposit protection** and the **compulsory leasing of empty homes**.

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The Bill is accompanied by explanatory notes and Regulatory Impact Assessments of each main element.

Our approach to legislation is informed by extensive research and consultation. The Housing Bill was published in draft in March 2003 for public consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny. The ODPM Select Committee's report and recommendations helped finalise the Bill ready for introduction.

There have been other earlier consultation exercises: on the home information pack (described then as the seller's pack) in 1998; on HMO licensing in 1999, and on the HHSRS and selective licensing of landlords in 2001. The draft Bill sets out in detail how the Government now intends to proceed on each of these, and in the case of Right to Buy, where the need to tackle abuses is pressing, provides the opportunity for Government to consult on its preferred approach in advance of legislation being introduced in Parliament.