



# Workforce development and professionalism of the housing sector

## Discussion paper

### 1. Background

A new Housing Bill (the Bill) is set to be introduced by the end of this parliamentary year (2022-23) to begin to deliver the actions of the [New Deal for Tenants](#) and some other aspects of [Housing to 2040](#). The exact timings are still to be confirmed but a draft Bill is expected to be published after the summer recess which concludes on 3 September.

The Bill is expected to cover:

- **The New Deal for Tenants** – to deliver stronger rights for tenants, greater protection from eviction and a national system of rent controls for the private rented (PRS).
- **Domestic abuse** – a new requirement for all social landlords to have a domestic abuse policy in place.
- **Homelessness prevention duty** – a new duty will be applied to a range of public bodies and landlords requiring them to take specific actions to reduce the risk of homelessness.

We noted in our response to Housing to 2040 that we were disappointed with the lack of focus on developing and supporting the housing workforce in Scotland which we feel is a missed opportunity.

**This discussion paper will focus on workforce development and professionalism.** We have also published two further papers considering proposals on **the New Deal for Tenants and domestic abuse and the homelessness prevention duty.**

### 2. Workforce Development and professionalism

The vast majority of landlords and staff across the social and private sector engage well with their residents and listen to them with respect. However, unlike other similar professions such as care, planning, or construction, Scotland's housing profession has no dedicated workforce strategy. That is despite Scotland's

rented sector managing around one million homes and employing tens of thousands of practitioners to help manage these homes and support their tenants.

The publication of Housing to 2040 makes it clear there will be increasing expectations on landlords, letting agents and housing practitioners to deliver even more value for tenants in the services they provide over the coming years. As such, there is a responsibility on employers to ensure they have a skilled, knowledgeable and ethical workforce that can improve housing outcomes for their communities.

A principal component of this is the approach to staff recruitment, development and retention. How can housing organisations ensure they are employing candidates with the values, skills, behaviours and knowledge that they need?

While there is a responsibility on the sector, the Scottish Government and relevant agencies have a central role in raising awareness about what it means to be a housing professional - recognising that decisions made by housing professionals significantly affect people's lives.

We want the Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland to work with the housing sector to review the workforce development plans for the profession. This should consider the skills and capacity requirements of the sector over the next 20 years and how well placed it is to recruit the talent needed to meet the ambitions of Housing to 2040. As part of this review, we want the Scottish Government to consider how it can work with the profession to make a career in housing more aspirational and ensure that practitioners working across all housing tenures can uphold and visibly demonstrate their relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours on an ongoing basis.

We are also mindful of recent changes to the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Bill](#) that will require social housing managers in England to gain an appropriate-level housing management qualification regulated by Ofqual equivalent to a Level 4 certificate or Level 5 diploma in housing, or a foundation degree from CIH.

This will apply to senior housing executives and senior housing managers and is likely to lead to the welcome development of an even more professional approach to housing management in the English social sector.

A [review of mandatory letting agent qualifications and continuous professional development](#) (CPD) published by CIH Scotland shows that benefits of these have been experienced in the letting agency sector, improving professional practice and outcomes, alongside public trust and confidence.

The benefits of the qualification and CPD were evidenced as:

- Giving individual employees a foundation of knowledge and confidence to do their job well and providing opportunities for career development, with qualification in the sector now being far more common than it was three years ago.
- For businesses the qualification and CPD give ongoing assurance around compliance and consistency, and it is considered to improve reputation in the sector as a whole.

### 3. Risks of taking no action

The sector is dealing with a range of priorities from improving existing stock to delivering new homes and keeping rents affordable, all while inflation is eroding the value of the money it has. These exceptional pressures risk forcing landlords to slow down improvement programmes and drive down customer satisfaction rates as the sector struggles to meet customer expectations.

To ensure we do not enter a period of management decline we need a greater focus on investment in recruiting, developing, and supporting the retention of housing professionals. By investing in staff, in their skills and in their development through education, landlords can give themselves the best possible assurance that they are doing everything possible to improve customer and tenant satisfaction.

## 4. CIH Scotland workforce Development and Professionalism asks

To support a skilled, resilient and professional workforce, we are calling for:

- The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland to carry out a review into workforce need over the next 20 years.
- A Scottish Government review into improving practice and professionalism of the housing workforce.

## 5. Questions for CIH members to consider

1. **Does the housing sector need a national strategy on workforce development, professional development and careers?**
2. **If so, what are the likely benefits of such a strategy to tenants and landlords and who should be involved in its development?**
3. **What role should secondary schools, colleges and universities have in the promotion of a workforce development strategy?**
4. **Should the social housing sector replicate the approach taken in England to mandate housing qualifications for relevant practitioners?**
5. **Would there be any unintended consequences of mandating social housing qualifications in Scotland?**
6. **Should any approach to workforce development and professionalisation be applied equally across the sector, or focus on any specific tenure to begin with?**