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What you need to know about the new Competence and Conduct Standard for social housing

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The Competence and Conduct Standard introduces a sector-wide, outcome-based framework for those working in social housing in England, while also requiring senior professionals who deliver social housing services to gain or work towards a housing management qualification. The standard will come into force in October 2026.

Background

In the [Charter for Social Housing Residents](#) (2020) white paper which followed the Grenfell Tower tragedy the (Conservative) government promised stronger professional standards to ensure residents receive a high level of customer service. The [Professionalisation Review](#) (2022) concluded change was needed to raise skills, culture and behaviours across the sector. The [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act](#) 2023 then gave the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) powers to set a new Competence and Conduct (C&C) Standard.

Following consultation in early 2024, the (Labour) government issued a [Direction](#) to the RSH on 30 September 2025, alongside a [Policy Statement](#) and updated [Impact Assessment](#), confirming how the new standard will work.

The standard aims to ensure that tenants have safe and decent homes, receive respectful, high-quality services, and have a strong voice. It sits alongside other interventions in the social housing sector designed to improve the quality of services, such as the introduction of proactive consumer regulation, the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, and Awaab's Law.

Recognising why the standard has been introduced

The [Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 Report](#) (September 2024) exposed serious failings in competence and oversight at the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) which managed the Grenfell Tower estate. Senior staff lacked appropriate training or qualifications, and some of the qualifications cited were irrelevant or even non-existent. There was no framework setting out the standards of training required, leaving staff unclear about their responsibilities and poorly supervised. KCTMO also failed to recognise or plan for the needs of disabled and vulnerable tenants, including safe evacuation. Contractors' staff were likewise found to lack the skills needed to carry out work effectively.

The tragedy of Awaab Ishak's death (2020) further underlined the consequences of poor competence and culture in housing services. Awaab died from prolonged exposure to damp and mould in his home, despite his family repeatedly raising concerns. The case highlighted a systemic failure to listen to tenants, act on health risks, and ensure staff had the knowledge and behaviours to deliver safe, decent housing.

Together, these events have driven the government's determination to embed competence, conduct, and qualifications as core requirements for social housing staff.



Overview

The Direction requires the RSH to ensure providers:

- Make sure relevant staff have the **skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours** to deliver good quality services – and take steps to secure the same in service providers' staff.
- Adopt a **written workforce policy**, covering learning and development, appraisals, and managing poor performance.
- Adopt or develop a **code of conduct** for staff and ensure it is embedded across the organisation.
- **Give tenants meaningful opportunities** to influence and scrutinise both the policy and code of conduct.
- Comply with **qualification requirements** for senior housing managers, senior housing executives, and relevant managers in service providers.

The broad standard for all social housing staff

The C&C standard introduces an outcome-focused duty that applies to all staff involved in housing management services. This part of the standard is about culture and behaviours, not just formal qualifications.

Registered providers must:

- Ensure all staff have the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours needed to deliver safe, high-quality, respectful services to tenants.
- Adopt a written workforce policy setting out how competence will be developed and maintained. This must cover learning and development, ongoing review of staff performance, and how poor performance will be managed.
- Regularly review and update the policy, ensuring it is tailored to different roles and functions within the organisation.
- Adopt and embed a code of conduct for staff, setting clear expectations around professional behaviour, ethics and tenant respect.

- Involve tenants meaningfully in shaping and scrutinising both the policy and the code of conduct, and make them accessible, up to date, and fit for purpose.

This broad standard applies immediately to all staff delivering housing management services - not just those in scope of the qualification rules - and is designed to drive a sector-wide culture change in how residents are treated.

Qualifications

A core part of the new C&C standard is the requirement for certain senior roles to hold, or be working towards, a relevant housing qualification. This is intended to raise professional standards, ensure consistency across the sector, and give tenants confidence that those leading and managing housing services have the right knowledge and expertise.

The government has now confirmed the specific qualifications that will meet the requirement, along with rules on equivalents, apprenticeships and minimum course standards:

- Senior housing managers: Ofqual-regulated Level 4 in housing management (or equivalent).
- Senior housing executives: Ofqual-regulated Level 5 in housing/foundation degree (or equivalent).
- Equivalent or higher qualifications (e.g. degrees, CIH PQ, DipHE, HND) recognised if they meet content criteria.
- Partially compliant qualifications: can be "topped up" with additional accredited training modules.
- Apprenticeships: now explicitly recognised where they meet content and assessment requirements.
- All qualifications must meet course-content criteria and a minimum TQT (Total Qualification Time) of 120 hours.

There is no requirement for staff to hold qualifications before being recruited. Staff already in post at the start of the transition must hold, or be working towards, an approved qualification by the end of the period. The transition period means that staff who are very close to retirement could retire before the end of the transition period, without needing to enrol on a qualification.

The guidance in [Annex A of the policy statement](#) has been expanded to provide more clarity and examples to help providers assess which roles fall in or out of scope. Volunteer/unpaid roles are explicitly excluded from needing a qualification.



What does “working towards” a qualification mean?

Staff who are identified as being in scope of the new requirements do not need to hold the relevant qualification on day one. Instead, they will be expected to register on an approved course and actively work towards achieving it within the timeframe set out in the legislation.

“Working towards” typically means:

- Enrolling on the relevant qualification programme within the required period.
- Engaging with learning and assessment activities as set out by the provider.
- Making satisfactory progress, as evidenced by attendance, coursework, or milestones.

This approach ensures flexibility while still building towards full compliance. By the end of the transition period staff must be qualified or actively working towards a qualification to be compliant.

Support for specific circumstances

The requirements recognise that some staff may face temporary barriers to immediate study or completion, for example:

- New starters – individuals who join in-scope roles will be expected to enrol promptly after appointment and begin their qualification at the earliest reasonable opportunity.
- Maternity, paternity or adoption leave – staff on leave will not be expected to continue their studies during this period. Providers should support them to re-engage and complete the qualification when they return.
- Long-term sickness or other exceptional circumstances – reasonable adjustments and extensions to completion deadlines should be considered where appropriate.

Employers should take a supportive and proportionate approach, ensuring staff are not disadvantaged due to circumstances beyond their control, while still maintaining progress towards compliance.

Scope

The standard applies to:

- Registered providers (housing associations and local authority landlords).
- Service providers and subcontractors delivering housing management through management agreements.

“In scope” roles for qualifications are those with substantive responsibility for housing management services, including:

- Senior housing managers (functions such as lettings, tenancy, income, ASB, repairs, asset management).
- Senior housing executives (strategic leadership, service quality, accountability, culture and performance).
- Relevant managers in service providers who manage delivery of comprehensive housing management.

(The Policy Statement defines this as someone spending the **majority** of their time on housing management OR having housing management as a **substantial** aspect of their role.)

Out of scope are back-office functions (finance, HR, IT), care/support-only roles, homelessness/housing register assessments, and development-only teams.

Registered providers must decide which of their roles meet the legal definitions of senior housing manager and senior housing executive.

Transition

The standard will come into force in October 2026, with transition periods as follows:

- Large providers (1,000+ homes) and their service providers: three years
- Small providers (<1,000 homes) and their service providers: four years

By the end of the relevant transition period, all staff in scope must hold or be working towards a qualification.

What’s changed since the consultation?

The final Direction and Policy Statement reflect feedback from across the sector. While the core proposals remain, the government has introduced a number of important changes to make the standard more workable in practice, to provide greater clarity, and to ease implementation pressures:

- Longer transition period: extended from two years (original proposal) to three/four years, in response to concerns about capacity.
- Partially compliant qualifications: transitional arrangements are now permanent, allowing staff with relevant technical qualifications to complete top-up modules.
- Apprenticeships: clearer rules confirm they count if they meet content/assessment standards.
- Scope for service providers: clarified exemption where providers deliver only narrow/single functions.
- Course requirements: new minimum TQT (120+ hours) and refined course-content criteria for consistency.



Course content requirements

A more flexible framework has been introduced, with different requirements for:

- **General housing management roles** – focus on professional practice, customer service, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), leadership, stakeholder engagement, and housing policy/law. Criteria simplified to avoid being too narrow or prescriptive.
- **Technical roles** – staff can hold a relevant technical qualification (e.g. construction, building safety, estate management) or a housing management qualification.
- **Cross-tenure roles** – can take qualifications in leasehold/residential property management or those meeting housing management/technical criteria. For cross-cutting roles, providers can decide which criteria best fit.

Requirements act as a **minimum baseline**; providers can exceed these. Aim is flexibility so staff gain the most relevant qualifications without needing multiple ones.

The government has revised the criterion previously framed as 'ensuring needs of tenants are met' to instead focus on 'equality, diversity and inclusion, and awareness of a range of needs and vulnerabilities (for example, disabilities)'.

Recognising existing knowledge and experience

Prior learning recognition is encouraged, so staff may be exempt from modules if outcomes are already met. However, professional memberships alone (e.g. CIH, CIOB, RICS) do not count unless gained through a recognised qualification.

Enforcement

The framework sets out clear mechanisms for ensuring compliance, combining contractual duties on service providers with provider accountability and regulatory oversight by the RSH. In summary:

- **Contractual obligations:** Implied terms in management agreements require service providers' managers to hold or work towards qualifications.
- **Provider accountability:** Registered providers must monitor compliance and use contractual remedies if needed.
- **Regulatory oversight:** The RSH will use its assurance-based approach to seek evidence of compliance.

CIH response

As the professional body for housing, CIH welcomes the government's focus on competence, conduct and qualifications. This is an important step in embedding professionalism across the sector.

We believe qualifications are an effective way to ensure knowledge and skills, but professionalism is more than that – it is about values, behaviours and culture. The inclusion of tenant influence, CPD, and conduct policies are therefore crucial.

What should I do next?

- Check whether your role falls in scope of the qualification requirement.
- Review your qualification status – are you already compliant, equivalent, or needing further study?
- Discuss with your employer about enrolment on relevant CIH or housing management courses.

Further information and support

Sign up for:

- A high level [member webinar](#) on 18 November 2025 (recording will be available afterwards)
- An interactive [online training course](#) to find out more about the new C&C standard – various dates available.

Email: Policyandpractice@cih.org



Annex - FAQs for housing professionals

Do I need a qualification on day one?

No. If you're in scope, you must enrol on the right qualification **within 12 months** of starting the role and then make steady progress.

Which qualifications count?

They must be Ofqual regulated (Level 4 or 5), or an equivalent/higher recognised qualification that meets the content rules. Apprenticeships can count too.

What does "working towards" mean?

Being properly enrolled and making progress. You must show engagement and progress within set timeframes.

Do volunteers or support-only staff need qualifications?

No. Volunteers and staff who only deliver care/support, back office or development functions are out of scope.

I already have a related qualification - do I need another one?

Not necessarily. If your qualification meets the criteria, it counts. If it only partially meets, you can do accredited top up modules.

What if I'm on maternity leave, sick leave or close to retirement?

You won't be expected to study during leave. Providers should support you to complete when you return. Those close to retirement may not need to enrol if they retire before the transition deadline.

Do technical managers (repairs, building safety, asset management) need to qualify?

Yes, if you manage delivery to tenants. You can meet the requirement via technical qualifications plus top up modules in customer service and equality/diversity.

When do I need to be compliant by?

- If you work for a **large provider (1,000+ homes)**: by **Oct 2029** (three years after go live).
- If you work for a **small provider (<1,000 homes)**: by **Oct 2030** (four years after go live).

