

CobbWarren

SOCIAL HOUSING BULLETIN – FEBRUARY 2026



WHAT'S IN FEBRUARY'S EDITION?

Before we get into this month's updates, we're delighted to welcome **George Ufumwen** to the team.

George joins us as a solicitor and brings experience from his training contract at Lyons Davidson, where he worked in their Landlord and Tenant team. He's already been busy contributing to our social housing work – and you'll see his first article below.

Welcome aboard, George!

Here's what's coming up this month:

- [Form N215](#) gets an update (205 words)
- [New regulations](#) under the Renters' Rights Act (268 words)

- New [compensation guidance](#) from the Ombudsman (245 words)
- Consultation on the [Ombudsman's role in STAIRs](#) (174 words)
- Lessons from severe maladministration in [repairs cases](#) (238 words)
- The [Rent Standard 2026](#) (195 words)

FORM N215 GETS AN UPDATE

From 26 January 2026, the Certificate of Service (Form N215) has been updated. If you're still using the old version saved on your system, you need to stop now.

What's changed? The new form (marked "N215 Certificate of service (02.26)") is longer and now includes a Statement of Truth. This is your formal declaration that the information is accurate, with a reminder that proceedings for contempt of court can be brought against anyone who makes a false statement without an honest belief in its truth.

The new form also has clearer sections for recording how documents were served and what information you must provide.

Why this matters: Form N215 is used daily by social landlords in possession and injunction applications. It's your formal proof that you've served court documents properly – and getting it wrong can delay or derail your case.

What you need to do:

- Delete any saved copies of the old form from your system and precedent packs
- Download the current version from GOV.UK [here](#)
- Inform your colleagues and litigation teams about the update

The consequences of using an incorrect form or making false statements in court proceedings are serious. Make sure your team is using the right version.



NEW REGULATIONS UNDER THE RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT

New regulations have come into force as part of the Renters' Rights Act 2025. While to start with, these will only apply to non-social housing tenancies, they're likely to be extended to social housing next year.

The regulations require private landlords to provide two documents in addition to the tenancy agreement: a Written Statement of Terms and a Government-prescribed Information Sheet.

Who does this apply to now? Private landlords granting new assured tenancies from 1 May 2026. It doesn't apply to social housing landlords yet, but will in May 2026 if you have any market rent tenancies. However, the Renters' Rights Act states that these requirements will apply to private and social housing on different dates. So watch this space. While we don't have a commencement date for social housing yet, it's likely to be around May 2027.

What's the Written Statement? A document setting out prescribed information including party details, tenancy terms, rent, bills, safety obligations, and tenant rights. A draft has been published and is expected to be finalised in March 2026.

What's the Information Sheet? A Government document explaining how the Renters' Rights Act affects the tenancy. For existing tenancies on 1 May 2026 that already have a written agreement, landlords must provide this Information Sheet instead of the Written Statement.

Why social housing landlords should pay attention: If you have market rent tenancies, these regulations apply to you from 1 May 2026. And when the regulations extend to social housing in 2027, you'll need systems in place to comply.

George has written a full breakdown of the regulations on our website: [New Regulations - Written Statements and Information Sheets for Assured Tenancies](#)



NEW COMPENSATION GUIDANCE ISSUED

The Housing Ombudsman published new compensation guidance in January, alongside its latest severe maladministration report on compensation awards. The message: too many landlords aren't applying their own compensation policies consistently, and the gaps between what landlords offer and what the Ombudsman orders can be significant.

The three recurring patterns:

1. Landlords not following their own policies. In one case, a resident and her four-year-old child lived with damp and mould for three years. The landlord failed to offer any compensation despite its policy covering the situation.
2. Compensation increasing after stage 2. In several cases, landlords offered substantially more once complaints reached the Ombudsman. One offered over £2,000 more than at stage 2. This misses the opportunity to put things right earlier.
3. Large gaps between offers and orders. In one case, the Ombudsman ordered 10 times the landlord's compensation offer for a resident living with a leak for years because the original award was so low.

The new guidance takes effect from 1 April 2026.

Developed with input from landlords and residents, it sets out key principles for a fair, consistent approach.

The range of factors landlords should think about include:

- The circumstances of the household
- How long the issue has gone on for
- How unsuitable rooms can affect a resident's enjoyment of their home
- Missed appointments

- Communication failings

The report also highlights that sometimes landlords only compensate for complaint handling issues without considering fully the main issue behind the complaint.

What you need to do: Review your compensation policy now. Check that it's being applied consistently across your organisation and that your teams understand when and how much to offer. The Ombudsman will be measuring your responses against this guidance from April onwards.

The full report and guidance are available on the Housing Ombudsman's website [here](#).



CONSULTATION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Sticking with the Housing Ombudsman, it opened a consultation on 20 January about how it will handle complaints under the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs).

Remind me, what is STAIRs? STAIRs gives social housing tenants of Private Registered Providers (housing associations) the right to information about how their landlord manages their homes. It sets out what information you must share with tenants. The Government published a policy statement on STAIRs in September 2025 and named the Housing Ombudsman as the official complaints body.

What the consultation covers: The Ombudsman has updated its Scheme to include this new responsibility. The consultation asks:

- Is it clear who can complain?
- Are the time limits for complaints fair?
- Will the planned approach to STAIRs investigations provide fair outcomes?

Who can respond: The consultation is open to PRPs, their tenants, and anyone interested in social housing in England. Local authorities aren't covered by STAIRs because Freedom of Information laws already apply to them.

You can read and respond to the consultation [here](#).



LESSONS ON REPAIR CASES

And one more thing to be aware of from the Housing Ombudsman. Back in December, it published a severe maladministration report examining repairs cases involving vulnerable households. The focus: domestic abuse survivors, children, and residents requiring accessible housing.

The headline: When repairs go wrong for these groups, the impact is significant. The cases include a domestic abuse survivor living with a faulty entry door for 9 months, a ceiling collapsing on a child's bed while they were asleep, and a resident with disabilities having no functioning shower for 12 months.

The recurring issues: Landlords failing to recognise and adapt their service based on household circumstances. Not carrying out risk assessments to help prioritise repairs. Failing to consider temporary fixes or moves when complex works will take weeks or months. Poor communication and record-keeping throughout.

The key learning: Repairs that relate to security may need urgent treatment for domestic abuse survivors. Adaptations and accessible housing repairs are often complex – clear communication and early risk assessments are essential. Where major works will take time, landlords should consider temporary measures.

What you need to do: Review how you record and act on information about household circumstances. Use this information to make informed decisions about prioritisation and urgency. Consider whether mitigating measures or temporary moves are needed, particularly where essential facilities are affected.

The full report and online learning resources are available on the Housing Ombudsman's website [here](#).



THE RENT STANDARD 2026 IS HERE

The Regulator of Social Housing published the Rent Standard 2026 on 30 January. It applies to all social landlords (councils and housing associations) from 1 April 2026.

The headline: Social landlords can generally increase rents for social rent and affordable rent homes by up to CPI + 1% each year. This is part of a 10-year rent settlement designed to give long-term certainty to the sector.

Social rent convergence: For social rent housing currently below formula rent, the standard includes convergence provisions. Landlords can apply the usual CPI + 1% increase, then separately add limited further weekly amounts from 1 April 2027: up to £1 per week in 2027, then up to £2 per week from 2028. These amounts allow you to move gradually towards formula rent, as long as you don't breach the relevant rent caps.

What doesn't apply: The standard doesn't cover shared ownership low-cost rental accommodation, intermediate rent, specialised supported housing, student accommodation, PFI social housing, temporary social housing, or care homes.

What you need to do: Review the standard and the Government's Rent Policy Statement now. Ensure your rent-setting processes comply with the new requirements from 1 April, and check your systems can calculate and apply the convergence provisions correctly for homes below formula rent.

The full Rent Standard 2026 and guidance are available on GOV.UK [here](#).



A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Join us on 4 March at 10am for a webinar on the Mazur judgment and what it means for social landlords who conduct their own litigation.

We'll be examining *Julia Mazur & Ors v Charles Russell Speechlys LLP* [2025] EWHC 2341 and discussing whether employees of social landlords can still appear in court on behalf of their employer and sign claim forms and other court documents.

The good news: your employees can conduct litigation as exempt persons. But there's a proviso about written authorisation you need to know about.

Sign up on our website: [CobbWarren webinars](#)

And if you missed it last month: We recently launched **The Housing Officer's Blueprint for ASB Action** – a free five-day email course covering the five biggest mistakes in ASB casework and how to avoid them.

It's designed for housing officers managing ASB cases. Five emails across five days. Each taking no longer than five minutes to read.

Sign up here: [ASB Blueprint course](#)



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