



The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

28 November 2022

Selective Licensing Schemes

Dear Secretary of State,

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is a charity and the professional membership body for Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs), representing over 7,000 members across the UK working in both the public and private sectors.

We are writing to raise with you some issues relating to the use of selective licensing schemes in England to drive up housing standards in privately rented homes. We know that improving housing conditions is at the top of your agenda, especially following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. We hope that our suggestions will make some contribution to your efforts to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

We believe that selective licensing schemes in the private rented sector have a crucial role to play in delivering the Government's levelling up agenda, especially in delivering the commitment to halving the number of non-decent homes across all tenures by 2030. We note that such schemes are already driving up housing standards in many areas including, for example, Liverpool and Manchester.

We are very pleased that the Government's White Paper 'A fairer private rented sector' recognises the role that these schemes can play in tackling local housing issues including poor housing quality. We welcome the inclusion of a case study referring to the role of Nottingham City Council's selective licensing scheme in driving up property conditions.

We would still be grateful for a response to the recommendations of the [independent review of the use and effectiveness of selective licensing](#) that was published by your department. We would also welcome a response to the recommendations in the

report [A licence to rent](#) that was produced by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

We would like to draw your attention, in particular, to the need to ensure that local authorities operating such schemes can improve property conditions through licence conditions. This vitally important issue, which is of considerable concern to our members, is discussed at page 17 of the CIH/CIEH report and pages 62-8 of the independent review. The independent review highlights a disconnect in the legislation whereby local authorities can introduce selective licensing to tackle poor property conditions but cannot include a directly enforceable requirement relating to property condition as a condition of the licence itself.

We believe there is a specific problem here that needs to be addressed through legislation. We are therefore seeking your assurance that the Government will find legislative means to address it. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss the issue further with you or with another member of your ministerial team.

We would also emphasise the role that national landlord registration could play in supporting selective licensing. The proposed property portal is a step in the right direction. We are unclear though whether it will provide local authorities with the information they need in order to check the suitability of landlords before issuing a licence.

We believe that the Government should make it easier to set up selective licensing schemes. We are concerned that some local authorities may be deterred from setting up such schemes by the bureaucracy and expense involved in doing so.

We hope that you will find these suggestions helpful and look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Phil James', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Phil James
Chief Executive
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health