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Chapter Twelve

Regulating social housing: expectations for behaviour of tenants

Jenny McNeill

Introduction

Social housing has continued to be a site for regulation of behaviours under the previous and present UK Governments. Since the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition came to power in 2010 there have been a number of changes affecting access to and maintenance of tenancies in social housing. Notably, there have been deep cuts in public sector funding, changes to welfare benefits including the move towards a Universal Credit system, and the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 with changes to security of social housing tenancies and Local Authority treatment of homelessness claims. Under New Labour, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) were a key apparatus for controlling behaviours deemed 'unacceptable' in neighbourhoods, and, whilst such approaches were not abandoned under the Coalition Government, ideas of a 'Big Society' suggest ways of self-regulation of behaviours but also decentralisation in monitoring behaviours of tenants (and potential tenants) through the strengthening of powers for registered social landlords (RSLs). This chapter examines the barriers to accessing social housing in an overstretched housing market, as well as the pressures for certain groups to behave in 'acceptable' ways to sustain increasingly conditional tenancies, including 'vulnerable' groups such as young people, formerly homeless people and those with complex needs. A discussion is included on the selection process for social housing and on exclusionary policies as well as the on-going surveillance of tenants and their families. The consequences of 'non-compliance' in social housing contracts are also discussed. Social housing is explored in the context of its relationship to employment and the continued drive to get people into work, ideas of empowering communities and linked with this, notions of citizenship based on 'Big Society' values.

The backdrop of housing policy

The complex interaction between current housing policy, changes in welfare regulations and the economic downturn make this period of time in the UK an interesting juncture for analysis. This chapter will present a general overview of contemporary social housing in the UK and issues in accessing social housing. This moves towards a discussion of the barriers to social housing and ways in which

allocations policies exclude certain groups. A more detailed analysis follows on how behaviours of tenants and would-be tenants in social housing are regulated, controlled, empowered or liberated. This includes a critical analysis of the ongoing concern of both previous and successive governments to activate people to work, move away from (limited) social housing, behave in an appropriate manner, and actively participate in community in 'meaningful' ways.

Social housing has 'traditionally' been targeted as requiring intervention, and this chapter explores how access to social housing has been restricted and behaviours of tenants monitored and controlled, through housing allocation policies, welfare reform and the use of ASBOs. Social housing was viewed as a site for intervention to tackle social exclusion under New Labour's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and, from 2006, the Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF). The concern with tackling the problem of social exclusion in social housing has continued to be an interest during the Coalition government period. However, despite housing and neighbourhood regeneration policies actively pursued over the last decade, some research suggests that the impact on reducing social exclusion has been minimal (Tunstall, 2011).

Whilst it touches on New Labour approaches to social housing and welfare, this chapter focuses especially on new developments for social housing under the Coalition, and the potential impacts for tenants and potential tenants. More extensive historical overviews of social housing in the UK can be found elsewhere (see Cole and Furbey, 1994; Lund, 2011). The present chapter looks in particular at changes implemented under the Welfare Reform Act and Localism Act and what these mean for social housing tenants. The key message is that policy interventions reflect ideas of citizenship based on contractual agreements between citizens and governing bodies. Rights and responsibilities in social housing continue to be closely bound together, and social welfare in this policy domain remains a powerful means of social control.

Controlling access to and security of housing tenures

In recent decades social housing has conventionally been seen as housing for the poorest and most vulnerable people in society, and certain households have consistently been found to be over-represented there, including lone parents, older people, minority ethnic households and economically inactive groups (cf Hills, 2007; Shelter, 2012a). One main purpose of social housing, owned and run by local authorities and housing associations, is that dwellings are affordable to low income households compared to higher rented private sector accommodation.

Approximately eight million people live in social housing in England, and the Localism Act 2011 details reforms to allocations, housing tenure, and homelessness legislation, and regulation to change social housing (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2011b). Access to social housing often involves lengthy waiting periods and is based on certain needs-based criteria; social landlords draw up factors for determining preference in social housing allocations. A 'points-based' system has often applied to allocations, and policies which determine who is entitled and who is *not* entitled to social housing generate much debate. By law, certain groups are given 'reasonable preference' to social housing if they are: 1) legally classed as homeless; 2) in inadequate or inappropriate housing (as with overcrowding); 3) need to move for medical or welfare reasons; or 4) need to move to gain access to other support, without which there would be hardship (Shelter,

2012a). A 'choice-based' lettings system which allows potential tenants to bid for appropriate accommodation was introduced, but a points system to judge 'need' frequently determines who secures social housing (cf Van Ham and Manley, 2012 for historical overview). Under the Localism Act 2011 (Section 145), local authorities now have greater control over who joins the waiting list for social housing based on needs (thereby reducing false expectations of those 'without need' of social housing). Some research has also pointed to the potential for choice-based lettings to create and sustain segregation of neighbourhoods, although possible positive affects have also been noted for minority groups (see Law, 2007; Van Ham and Manley, 2012 for discussion). In this way there can be regulation of social housing, but also some shaping of neighbourhoods through the social housing allocations process.

A salient policy development under the Coalition Government has been the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. The localism agenda has been promoted under the new government as a means of enhancing power and accountability at a local level. This local level control has implications for the allocations of social housing. In terms of dealing with homelessness applications, for example, the Localism Act (Section 148) outlined new powers for local authorities to offer private rented accommodation, without the option for homeless households to refuse. Thus, the Localism Act gives powers to local authorities in handling homelessness to make greater use of the private rented sector and protect limited supplies of social housing. However, with local authorities able to discharge their duties of re-housing through greater use of private sector accommodation, there are concerns that local authorities may choose to do very little to take action to address single homelessness (cf Jones and Pleace, 2010).

In addition, some homeless people are perceived as 'difficult' or 'risky' tenants, bringing substantial housing management costs to providers (Pleace et al, 2011). Furthermore, some registered social landlords are reluctant to offer tenancies to those with poor rent payment histories, past 'nuisance' behaviour or complex support needs (Pleace et al, 2011). Rent arrears can provide a stubborn barrier for re-housing of some social housing tenants which precludes access to another social housing tenancy. Debts, including rent arrears, can also be an obstacle for gaining access to the private rented sector, and act as a disincentive for some homeless and vulnerable housed people to find paid work (McNeill, 2011).

The allocations system has been examined in terms of exclusion from social housing for particular people and especially migrant groups (cf Robinson, 2010). The introduction of the Housing Act 1996 signalled new limitations in accessing social housing for people with refugee status, asylum seekers granted leave to remain and those with settled status in the UK (Rutter and Latorre, 2009, for further discussion). The majority of recent migrants face restricted access to social housing based on their immigration status, legal rights and financial resources, so must rely on private rented accommodation (Shelter, 2008a). However, encouraging low income migrants to move to the private rented sector leaves them in insecure housing situations with few housing rights (O'Hara, 2008). A number of studies have found racist discrimination in social housing policies and practice, including limitations in access to quality homes and extended periods of time in temporary accommodation for some black and minority ethnic groups (cf Rutter and Latorre, 2009).

As well as changes over access to social housing, increased control has been given to local authorities in the length of tenancies they may now offer. The Localism Act 2011 means social landlords have greater 'flexibility' to grant tenancies for a fixed period of time, with the minimum of two years in exceptional circumstances, and five years more typically, but with no upper limit of length of tenancy. However, the determination of 'exceptional' circumstances will lie with local authorities. In this way housing policies have been developed to change the behaviour of tenants towards seeing social housing as short term with a view to moving on. With short supply of social housing stock, the Coalition government emphasises that there is an economic cost for allowing tenants to stay in these homes (especially if 'under-occupied') when their personal situations change, including household composition, income levels or relocation of work. From government's perspective, the move to shortening tenures is aimed at promoting social mobility.

However, the move away from secure tenancies towards flexible tenancies of a minimum fixed term of two years has raised concerns for the impact on social capital and individuals' and groups' attachments to community (Shelter, 2012b). With the shift away from 'homes for life' to fixed term tenancies, individuals may become displaced from supportive social networks and opportunities for paid work. Moreover, ideas for ending life-long tenancies and offering short term tenancies of five years or less have met with criticism that social housing tenants will be disincentivised to find work for fear of losing their homes. Limiting tenure length in social housing has also heightened concerns about contributing to or exacerbating homelessness (cf Shelter, 2012b).

Recent proposals to ensure that social housing is maintained for low income households have suggested 'pay to stay' plans, where rent increases for high earners in social housing encourage social mobility (cf Wintour, *The Guardian*, 19 May 2012). Whilst not yet implemented, this proposal suggests that social housing policy should be closely connected to employment, but also that social housing no longer represents a home for life. However, some critics have suggested that this policy proposal would be of 'limited value', affecting only a small minority of social housing tenants, and create a bureaucratic encumbrance for social landlords who would need to examine the incomes of tenants (Shelter, 2012b). Ideas encouraging social landlords to probe tenants' incomes show further evidence of how social housing is increasingly linked with employment.

With austerity cuts in public expenditure, housing allocations have been tightened by many local authorities. Coalition reforms in welfare and housing may be seen as an extension of the previous 'rights and responsibilities' agenda under New Labour. There are certain duties of social housing tenants, but not always balanced with rights to housing. A number of specific New Labour developments, such as the 'Respect' agenda, reflected ideas of the 'balancing' of rights and responsibilities, and under the Coalition there are both extensions to rights to social housing for certain groups (such as ex-service personnel) but also limitations on rights to secure, long-term tenancies for others. There are ongoing responsibilities placed on social housing tenants to behave in certain ways. The Localism Act will mean that local authorities will have greater control in determining who accesses social housing (with changes to waiting list selection) and the period of time for which tenants secure social housing.

Employment, welfare and social housing

The linking of social housing and employment is not new, but has been given increasing emphasis in recent periods. This section will first discuss New Labour and the Coalition's drive to get people into work and its links with social housing. Coverage will then move on to recent changes in welfare reform and the localism agenda which attempt to influence behaviours of many social housing tenants. Reference is made to changes in work-to-welfare schemes, the introduction of the Universal Credit system, and changes to housing benefit legislation, with the extension of single room rates for people under thirty-five years old and the new 'under occupancy' rules.

The use of welfare systems to control and influence citizens to behave in certain ways has a 'long history' (Dwyer, 2008). A number of changes were introduced under New Labour which strengthened conditionality in welfare, and as under New Labour, welfare reform is also at the core of the Coalition's plans to tackle worklessness (Finn, 2011). The foci of Coalition reforms have been to 'reduce social security spending, increase local control over housing and affect behaviour in seeking work and in housing and mobility' (Murie, 2012b, p 56). An 'over-representation' of working age people who are unemployed living in social housing drives Government policies to implement initiatives to get tenants into work. The expectation on unemployed tenants to seek and sustain paid work has remained a primary focus for Government interventions, and a raft of initiatives which link social housing and employment have been developed (cf Hills, 2007). Within homelessness policy the Transitional Spaces programme, for example, prioritised 'work-ready' people into the private rented sector. Thus the Transitional Spaces project can be seen as an incentivising approach to accessing housing through engagement in work related schemes. Moreover, the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme, succeeded by the Places of Change Programme in 2008 under New Labour, encouraged the take-up of work related opportunities for people living in homeless hostels as a means of breaking the cycle of homelessness and moving into resettlement. However, these programme priorities may be at odds with the priorities of some homeless groups deemed multiply excluded who face the greatest barriers to the paid labour market (Off the Streets and into Work, 2006; Bowpitt et al, 2011; McNeill, 2011). Furthermore, initiatives such as the Places for Change programme do not tackle the problem of a lack of affordable housing for homeless people (Broadway and Resource Information Service, 2006). Certainly, there are difficulties in combining access to housing and employment for some groups facing stubborn barriers to paid employment but also to resettlement.

As with New Labour, Coalition welfare-to-work programmes continue to use 'carrot' (incentivising) and 'stick' (sanction) approaches to work-related benefits. These extend New Labour's activation policies with the Coalition's introduction of a single Work Programme and proposed Universal Credit system to be rolled out from October 2013 (see Finn, 2011). Universal Credit will replace many of the existing welfare benefits for working age claimants and will incorporate housing costs. The proposed introduction of the universal credit system is expected to create further difficulties for low income households (Pawson and Wilcox, 2011). Whilst some low income households in low paid work are expected to be, on average, slightly better

off in terms of the amount of benefits they will receive (Pawson, 2011), other groups may fare less well, including lone parents (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2011). Cuts in welfare benefits will make it difficult for low income households to maintain their homes or move on to affordable accommodation, but the impact of the new Universal system on activating individuals to seek paid work is yet to be known. However, critics have in the past argued that sanctions and incentives approaches fail to recognise the diverse challenges facing particular groups in securing paid work (Flint, 2009), and thus may do little to help those 'hardest to help' into employment. 'Carrot and stick' approaches which tie together welfare and the take-up of paid employment have met with further criticism. In welfare-to-work schemes, conditions and sanctions have meant some individuals have been moved from disability-related benefits to job-seeking related benefits or have been unable to fulfil onerous job search obligations, with many of these changes disproportionately affecting disabled people and people with complex support needs (see also Chapter Two in this collection). The complexities of the benefits system arguably create a disincentive for some groups, including homeless people, looking to move into long-term accommodation and requiring housing benefit assistance, and present barriers for some homeless people seeking employment (Singh, 2005). Not only is the system complicated, but delays in the processing of housing benefit claims are also a major problem, and one which could lead to an individual's eviction from a property for non-payment of rent (Blake et al, 2008).

The Hills report (2008) estimated that a third of people out of work live in social housing, and highlighted a number of barriers in securing work which connect with deprivation in concentrated social housing areas, such as lack of employment opportunities, discrimination from employers, inadequate childcare and poor transportation. However, the report also acknowledges that rather than a disincentive to work, social housing offers a stable home from which people can move towards employment. Increasingly social landlords are encouraged to take a lead role in activating unemployed tenants into work. Under successive Governments there has been a salient shift in landlord functions; social housing landlords' roles have traditionally included collecting rent and maintaining properties but there has been an increased emphasis on encouraging tenants to seek employment. With tighter allocations policies for social housing there may be a move towards favouring those in or actively seeking paid work or other 'socially meaningful' activities such as volunteering, as seen in homelessness policies which increasingly link housing and employment (cf Dobson and McNeill, 2011). Proposals for greater conditionality on unemployed tenants being expected to seek paid work have entered political debates before. The former minister for Employment and Welfare Reform, Caroline Flint, had advocated contractual agreements for new tenants of social housing to seek paid employment as part of their tenancy arrangements (Flint, 2008). Although the matter did not lead to a legal clause in tenancy agreements, Housing Associations have increasingly developed new services to encourage tenants to take up job-related activities. The important role that housing associations can play in getting people into employment has been highlighted under successive governments (cf Housing Corporation, 2007). However, the Hills report (2008) suggested that such schemes to support unemployed people into work were not available to many tenants in social housing, suggesting that some groups continued to be excluded from employability schemes. Despite the various barriers to paid work, furthermore,

government policies continued to focus on the 'culture of worklessness' among social housing tenants (Shelter, 2008b).

Many low income households who can least afford to pay are likely to struggle maintaining their tenancies in the light of changes in housing and council tax benefits. Changes detailed in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012 will affect many low income working age households in both the social rented sector and private rented sector. In line with the localism agenda to give greater powers to local authorities, Council Tax Benefit will be abolished from April 2013, and local authorities will be responsible for setting up new Council Tax Support schemes in its place, but with 10% less funding. What this will mean for many local authorities devising and administering these new schemes is that current full Council Tax Benefit recipients may have to make some contribution towards their Council Tax bill although the amount will vary in different areas. Whilst the government plans to make savings of up to £480 million a year with the new scheme, it is also hoped that councils will create stronger incentives to get recipients into paid work.

However, the welfare reforms most directly concerning housing relate to changes in Housing Benefit legislation (Pawson, 2011). Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was introduced in Housing Benefit legislation in 2008 to determine the maximum amount of Housing Benefit that could be paid out for rent in private sector accommodation based on household size and composition and local rents. Some have pointed out that reductions in LHA rates could signal increased difficulties in accessing private rented accommodation (Pawson and Wilcox, 2011), reduce incomes of claimants and diminish housing availability (Fenton, 2010), and create financial hardship and rent arrears (cf Frost et al, 2009; Warnes et al, 2010). Housing benefit cuts have sorely affected many claimants in private rented accommodation who are unable to afford the shortfall in rents. Young people without dependants face particular difficulties accessing social housing (Stone et al, 2011), and the recent change to extend the age restriction in LHA rates to thirty-five years from twenty-five years presents barriers in accessing private rented accommodation. Age-related restrictions to Housing Benefit for single young people on low incomes mean that many young people are unable to afford their own home. Young people will be pressured to stay in the parental home for longer, which may create financial hardship to their families due to non-dependent deductions if their families claim Housing Benefits and are not in receipt of certain disability-related benefits. Thus, whilst some unemployed young people will feel forced to turn to their families for shelter it may be costly to some benefit recipients to house them.

In line with LHA rules for household sizes, the size criteria for households will also affect those in social housing from April 2013, with reductions in Housing Benefit for working age people in social housing deemed too big for their needs (Welfare Reform Act, 2012, The Housing Benefit [Amendment] Regulations 2012). Whilst increased Discretionary Housing Allowance (DHP) funding of £30M is expected to plug the gaps in rent shortfalls for some groups in these circumstances, it is likely to be specifically prioritised (but not ring-fenced) for foster carers and some disabled people in properties adapted for their needs (National Housing Federation, 2012). However, the challenge for many working age single occupiers without dependent children will be to obtain 'appropriately sized' accommodation in an already overstretched housing market with limited stock for one bedroom properties. Whilst

the impact of the new under-occupancy rules is as yet unclear, the 'bedroom tax', as it has been commonly referred to, may exacerbate risks of homelessness for certain groups who may face eviction for high levels of rent arrears leading to costly homelessness applications.

Cuts to welfare benefits and the introduction of the new Universal Credit system, which would incorporate housing benefit payments, will have impact on unemployed and low income households. Changes to welfare may mean that social housing tenants claiming housing benefits risk losing their homes if unable to meet the shortfall in rents, and could force migration to the private rented sector. However, challenges in accessing the private sector for certain marginalised groups have also been raised (cf Luby, 2008), including higher rents and rent deposits which act as barriers. The complex interaction of benefit systems with the housing market in both social housing and private sector housing generates problems of access for some marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and poses key questions on how social housing may be regulated for those most in need.

'Punishment' and 'empowerment' in social housing

As well as expectations of unemployed social housing tenants seeking work, tenants should be 'good neighbours' and behave in certain ways which promote community. The conditions of keeping a tenancy are therefore linked with forms of citizenship which emphasise behaving in ways that suggest being a 'good neighbour', including expectations of tenants maintaining a tidy home and garden (cf Saugeres, 2000). However, the duties of social tenants also extend to behaving in other socially responsible ways.

The use of ASBOs, introduced in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, was seen as a key tool under New Labour in managing (and monitoring) behaviours of tenants and punishing behaviours deemed socially unacceptable. Support for ASBOs may have been affected by hopes that they could enable action against owner-occupiers and those in the private rented sector, alongside social housing tenants. Anti-social behaviours encompass a broad range of actions, including annoyance of neighbours by children, racist harassment, and violence (cf Flint, 2002). The Housing Act 1996, Part Five, introduced legislation which tied social housing closer to certain behavioural responsibilities of tenants (Dwyer, 2000, p 70). Registered social landlords now have greater powers in the regulation and surveillance of the anti-social behaviour of tenants (see Flint and Nixon, 2006; Burney, 2009; Anderson, 2011). Thus, there has been a key shift in social landlord duties, which now incorporate more fully the management of 'problem' behaviours of tenants and their families. A potential consequence of not fulfilling obligations as a 'good tenant' is eviction. In the case of anti-social behaviour, some critics have argued against the use of ASBOs in housing contexts for non-housing related disorder, while also noting that eviction does not *actually* deal with the problems of anti-social behaviour (cf Shelter, 2011).

The preoccupation with anti-social behaviour under New Labour and the Coalition is driven by beliefs that anti-social behaviour is a growing issue which destroys communities (see for example Home Office, 2003, 2012). In this context, anti-social behaviour is something which can be controlled and that without intervention disrupts core values of the Coalition's notions of 'Big Society'. However, there may be a shift

in the key regulators of intervention, with a 2010 Home Office paper advocating that empowerment of the public and voluntary sector is crucial in combating crime and anti-social behaviour. This pivotal role for 'empowering Big Society' means that individuals and communities may have greater powers in enforcing rules, with neighbourhood policing teams acting as key players in tackling problem behaviour (Home Office, 2010, p 39). Hodgkinson and Tilley (2011) have suggested that the Coalition planned to abandon the ASBO in favour of more 'proactive community-based measures' (p 283). Under 'Big Society' discourses, interventions to control or stem anti-social behaviour may take place through other forms of control. New tools to replace ASBOs in tackling anti-social behaviour will see the introduction of the Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) and Crime Prevention Injunction (CPI) as outlined in the recent Draft Anti Social Behaviour Bill (2012). A recent Home Office report (2012) signals greater powers to empower communities in tackling the problem of anti-social behaviour. In line with localist ideas, anti-social behaviour is seen as a 'local' problem which 'looks and feels different in every area and to every victim' (Home Office, 2012, p 6). However, this places greater onus on the community to deal with anti-social behaviour.

As well as empowering communities to take a bigger role in addressing problems of anti-social behaviour, government expects communities to take a bigger lead in creating change in the delivery of housing-related objectives. This has been a key message of the Localism Act, and is an extension of New Labour policies concerned with neighbourhood empowerment (cf Jacobs and Manzi, 2012). The Localism Act has been proclaimed as a 'radical shift of power from the central state to local communities' (HM Government 2010a, p 2). Ideas of localism and 'Big Society' are declared by the government as the drivers behind initiatives which might put social tenants in greater control of managing housing-related services and decision making in housing stock. In line with the legislation has been the establishment of new guidelines and regulations for Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), with a reduced role for central government. The Tenant Services Authority was promoting a new framework for 'co-regulation' from 2010, encouraging participation of tenants in effective delivery of housing services, and from April 2012 the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has taken over responsibility for social housing regulation. New conditions on social landlords mean that they must meet new standards which include tenant involvement schemes (such as tenant panels). Co-regulation means that registered social landlords and providers are required to 'support tenants both to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold boards and councillors to account' (HCA, 2012, p 4). Guidance in the establishment of tenant panels has been developed, with examples of such UK groups and the ways in which they are run available to local authorities and RSLs (cf Bliss and Lambert, 2012). There is so far little research into the potential impact of these changes to the social housing sector, but also, specifically, on the effectiveness of tenant panel schemes, which is critical to help understand the benefits of co-regulation for all stakeholders involved. However, research on resident involvement in one housing association in England suggests that the government's 'localist ethic implying enhanced resident influence on services ... poses a particular challenge for many large housing associations' (Pawson et al, 2012, p 26).

A recent government consultation paper highlighted how tenant-led services, which give tenants a greater say in management of social housing, would promote Big Society principles (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2012b).

'Community' involvement includes tenant-run forums, where tenants are encouraged to take part and improve social housing and neighbourhoods and have a greater say in how neighbourhoods are run. However, the apparent shift in power to tenant groups and communities may also be interpreted as the Government abandoning responsibilities and duties in social housing. Relinquishing some control in favour of 'empowerment' of tenants may also be critically viewed as relying on alternative resources which are already over-stretched, and coercing tenants to act responsibly in terms of their judgements and actions.

Ideas of 'Big Society', a Coalition mantra, relate to a brand of citizenship thinking which emphasises power to the community. In terms of social housing this has been translated into active participation in improving housing services and neighbourhoods. Thus, a key means of changing behaviour is to 'empower' users or recipients of services and interventions. However, research by McKee (2009) showed that while non-participation could be viewed as apathy, the picture was far from straightforward. Many people living in social housing have unequal opportunities to 'participate' in tenant involvement groups. Inequalities in participation and access to schemes which promote tenant voices suggest that such schemes have some way to go to ensure fairness in regulation of social housing. Major concerns regarding tenant involvement include inequalities in capacity for some tenants to participate, including those with multiple complex needs or communication difficulties, or from other socially excluded groups (Shelter, 2011). Furthermore, tenant involvement groups may be unrepresentative or unapproachable in some sensitive cases where tenants are reluctant to disclose personal details to their neighbours.

However, with large cuts in public expenditure, there are other concerns that neighbourhood level services and charitable and voluntary sector involvement will be at risk (see Durose et al, 2011). Some critics have suggested that aspects of localism policy may act as camouflage to justify Government welfare spending cuts (cf Jacobs and Manzi, 2012). Others have minimised the idea of 'Big Society' altogether as 'essentially empty' and 'flawed', only serving as guidelines for communities to act responsibly or, at worst, 'dangerous' in its vision for charities and volunteers rather than the state providing key public services (Kisby, 2010). The concerns of Big Society thinking for 'empowering' communities to tackle anti-social behaviour in housing and effect change in the delivery of housing provision have far-reaching implications for the future of social housing. Box 12.1 summarises some of the key points on social control discussed in this chapter, and there then follows a brief conclusion.

Box 12.1

Controlling and influencing behaviours in social housing

- Social housing has long been a site for the regulation of behaviours and this continues under the Coalition.
- Access to tenancies is linked to needs-based criteria, but other factors also affect organisations' responses to households. Issues include rent payment histories, 'nuisance' behaviours, complex support needs and citizenship status.
- Links between employment and housing have taken on increased importance in governmental discourses in recent periods, with various incentives, contracts, conditionality and financial drivers to push people into paid work.
- Control of anti-social behaviour moved up the housing agenda from the mid-1990s onwards. Today it should be seen alongside Coalition Big Society and localism strategies. Perhaps tenants will be further 'responsibilised', at the same time as coming under pressure from benefits changes and funding cuts.

Conclusions

Clearly there are a number of Coalition housing and welfare reforms which are likely to impact upon vulnerable people in social housing. The allocations process for social housing is increasingly conditional on meeting particular criteria. At the time of writing the UK government is set to introduce new measures which will affect low income households in social housing and potentially deter others from accessing this housing. This chapter has examined how increased conditionality in welfare, rigid allocations policies, strengthened powers for RSLs and criminalisation of behaviours affect particularly 'vulnerable' groups. This review of the use of housing policies to affect and influence behaviour has shown how certain people are excluded from social housing, and social housing tenants are increasingly expected to behave in 'acceptable' ways, such as moving on from social housing rather than viewing social housing as a home for life, seeking paid employment, and participating in ways which promote ideas of 'Big Society' and community involvement.

The changing face of social landlords means that their roles have changed from limited ones centred on dealing with basic housing issues towards more complicated ones which encompass managing anti-social behaviour, encouraging tenants to find paid work but also working with tenants collaboratively in improving housing

services. The blend of coercive and incentivising measures to change behaviours of social housing tenants is arguably not new, and this chapter has explored examples under both the previous government and current Coalition government which demonstrate continuity (rather than completely distinctive changes) of policy responses to regulating behaviours of particular groups.