

Press release: Housing experts join forces to boost property agent standards

- Housing Minister Heather Wheeler announces plans to raise standards across the property agent sector.
- Chaired by Lord Best, a new working group will make recommendations to better support homebuyers, sellers, landlords, leaseholders and tenants.
- The group will report their findings to government by summer 2019.

Plans to raise standards across the entire property agent sector so home buyers, sellers, tenants, landlords and leaseholders receive the best service possible have been announced today (12 October 2018) by Housing Minister Heather Wheeler MP.

A new working group, chaired by Lord Best, and made up of experts from across the property sector will consider options. This will include the case for regulation and the introduction of mandatory qualifications for all property agents so tenants, homebuyers and sellers can be confident they are getting a professional service and are being charged fairly.

At the moment, anyone can operate as a property agent without any qualifications or professional oversight. Many take a professional approach and sign up to standards of practice through membership of a professional body, but others do not.

The working group will consider the entire property agent sector to ensure any new framework, including any professional qualifications requirements, a Code of Practice, and a proposed independent regulator, is consistent across letting, managing and estate agents.

Speaking following the announcement, Housing Minister, Heather Wheeler MP said:

For too long, many people have faced incurring fees and bad service from a number of property agents. People should have confidence when buying, selling or renting a home.

Lord Best's wealth of knowledge will provide a valuable insight and help us make necessary changes to ensure consumers have confidence when buying, selling, letting or renting their home.

Lord Best will be joined by representatives of agents and consumers, as well as independent experts, with the group instructed to report back to government in summer 2019.

Lord Best said:

There have been calls for tighter, fairer regulation of property agents from those representing tenants, landlords and agents themselves.

I am delighted to work with government, industry and consumers to advise on how we can accomplish this in practice, and I look forward to our working group achieving real progress together.

Other members of the group include representatives from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the National Landlords Association, Citizens Advice, the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA Propertymark) and the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA Propertymark). This is to ensure the entire sector is represented and the needs of both businesses and consumers are considered.

Lord Best is an independent cross bencher and social housing leader. See his [full biography](#).

The principal aim of the Regulating Property Agents Working Group will be to advise the government on a new regulatory approach to letting, managing and estate agents, in line with the government's responses to its calls for evidence on:

- protecting consumers in the letting and managing agent market
- and improving the home buying and selling process

In particular, the Working Group will be responsible for advising on:

- a model for an independent property-agent regulator, including how it will operate and how it will enforce compliance
- a single, mandatory and legally-enforceable Code of Practice for letting and managing agents, and whether similar could be provided for estate agents
- a system of minimum entry requirements and continuing professional development for letting, managing and estate agents
- a standardised approach for presenting transparent service charges to leaseholders and freeholders

- an easier statutory-backed process for consumers to challenge unfair service charges
- whether other fees and charges which affect both leaseholders and freeholders are justified; should be capped or banned
- further measures to professionalise estate agency
- as well as additional matters which in its opinion support the aims above

Recommendations are of relevance to the whole of the UK. Lettings and managing agents powers are devolved, but estate agency powers are reserved.

A [recent survey](#) by Which? found that 85% of landlords who use an agent are satisfied with the service and 67% of tenants were satisfied with the way their agent repairs and maintains their home.