**Output from ARCH Tenants Conference 2014**

*This document was produced as a result of discussions with 120 tenant representatives at September 2014 ARCH tenants conference about the issues that were most important to them and discussions with the ARCH Tenants Group members. This information has fed into the ARCH manifesto which was launched in early February 2015.*

The main priorities from tenants:

1. Encourage and enable councils to build more homes, especially homes for letting at social rents.

More council housing would

* Help meet acute local need and slow the rise in house prices
* Sustain local communities by making it easier for people to find homes near family, friends, workplaces and amenities
* Rebuild the economy by creating more jobs in construction
* Improve the nation’s health by reducing overcrowding and insanitary housing, with savings to the NHS.

1. Reform the right to buy to end the incentive for speculative purchases and ensure sold homes are replaced so long as local need persists**.**

The Right to Buy was introduced to enable long-standing tenants to own the homes they lived in, not to encourage them to speculate in the housing market or set up as landlords. Councils should be enabled to set discounts that reflect local conditions and buyers required to repay the discount if they sell or rent out the property within 5 years. Receipts from sales should be used in full to help fund one-for-one replacement of sold homes wherever local need remains.

1. Scrap the “bedroom tax”.

This reform unfairly discriminates against tenants of working age receiving benefits. Under-occupation is a wasteful use of our national housing stock but it occurs in all tenures and is more prevalent among pensioners and owner-occupiers, to whom the bedroom tax does not apply. Action to tackle it should apply fairly among all those affected and include building more homes that are attractive for under-occupiers to move to.

1. Make payment direct to the landlord under Universal Credit a “tenant choice”.

Councils, along with other landlords, are worried that payment of Universal Credit direct to tenants will lead to an increase in rent arrears. The government has proposed complicated rules that will limit the circumstances under which payment of the housing element can be made direct to the landlord. Tenants have not been consulted on any of this. We propose that any tenant should be able to opt for direct payment to the landlord.

1. Ensure that councils continue to improve the energy efficiency of the homes they own.

Self-financing has enabled councils with housing to ensure that all their homes meet the Decent Homes standard. But they need to do more to improve the energy efficiency of the council housing stock and lower tenants’ heating bills. By 2020, we want to see an average SAP rating of at least 70 for every council’s housing, and no council home with a SAP rating of less than 40.