
To: Communities & Housing Policy Board

On: 21 March 2024

Report by: Director of Environment, Housing and Infrastructure

Heading: Scottish Housing Regulator Engagement Plan 2024/25

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make the Policy Board aware of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Engagement Plan from 31 March 2024 to 31 March 2025 for Renfrewshire Council, which this year relates to the Council's service provision for people who are homeless and to compliance with Electrical testing and smoke detection installation.
 - 1.2 It should be noted that all Scottish Local Authorities' provision of homeless services is included in their Engagement Plans and that Renfrewshire Council has not been identified as requiring particular scrutiny in this area.
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2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Communities and Housing Policy Board:

- 2.1 Note the content of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Engagement Plan from 31 March 2024 to 31 March 2025 for Renfrewshire Council – attached as appendix 1.
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3. Background

- 3.1 During 2023/24, the Regulator reviewed and compared the data for all local authorities from the Scottish Government's national homelessness statistics. They also spoke to all local authorities to gather further information and assurance about their homelessness services. They go on to say that to assess the risks to people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness they will engage with all local authorities during 2024/25 with a focus on the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation.

- 3.2 We advised the Regulator that a number of properties do not fully comply with electrical safety and fire detection requirements which came into force in early 2022 and form part of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. We further advised that we are progressing inspections to provide Electrical Installation Condition Reports and to install integrated smoke and heat alarms in all of our properties.
- 3.3 In light of this, the Regulator has asked for the following information:
- That we advise them if there are any emerging issues preventing the Service from fulfilling its statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation when it should and to comply with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, and
 - That we send them monthly updates on progress on achieving compliance with electrical safety and fire detection requirements.
- 3.4 As part of the Service Update report to Board on 12 March 2024, we advised that we expect full compliance with EICR by the end of the calendar year. Compliance with this currently stands at 86.3%. Our compliance rate with smoke and heat detectors is currently 89.7% and we expect full compliance by the end of the calendar year.
- 3.5 The service will provide the Regulator will monthly progress reports on electrical testing and fire detection requirements as well as advising on any issues in relation to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. We will advise the Communities and Housing Policy Board on progress with these matters at future meetings.
- 3.6 Like all Local Authorities and RSLs we are also required to notify the Regulator of any material changes to our Annual Assurance Statement or any tenant/resident safety matter which has been reported to or is being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive.
- 3.7 Members should note also that, separately, the Regulator advised that they planned to visit Renfrewshire (along with as number of other local authorities and RSLs) to discuss our approach to compiling our Annual Assurance Statement.

4 National context

- 4.1 In its annual Risk Assessment the Scottish Housing Regulator acknowledges the pressures that all social landlords are facing in the current climate, including:
- The delivery of homelessness services in some areas of Scotland. The SHR engages with all local authorities to gather further information and assurance about their homelessness services.
 - The current financial climate where many tenants and service users are in financial hardship.

- The significant demands for social landlords to invest in their existing homes, meet the net zero and decarbonisation targets as well as continue to deliver much needed new homes.

4.2 In this Annual Risk Assessment the Regulator summarises all the Engagement activity for the forthcoming years. They advise that they intend to engage with local authorities on a range of issues:

- Homelessness (all local authorities);
- Progress with ensuring that Gypsy/Travellers sites meet the Scottish Government Minimum Site Standards and/or requirements in relation to fire safety (four local authorities last year);
- Tenant and resident safety (seventeen local authorities including Renfrewshire Council);
- Service quality (six local authorities); and
- Stock quality (ten local authorities).

In certain cases, the regulator is engaging with some local authorities in more than one of these areas.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
 - **Our Renfrewshire is thriving** – Meeting the needs of housing applicants
 - **Building strong, safe and resilient communities** – Creating strong communities in our approach to allocating homes
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None

- 10. **Risk** – None
 - 11. **Privacy Impact** – None
 - 12. **COSLA Policy Position** – None
 - 13. **Climate Change** – None
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List of Background Papers

None

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Renfrewshire Council

Why we are engaging with Renfrewshire Council (Renfrewshire)

We are engaging with Renfrewshire about its **services for people who are homeless and tenant and resident safety**.

During 2023/24, we reviewed and compared the data for all local authorities from the Scottish Government's national homelessness statistics. We also spoke to all local authorities to gather further information and assurance about their homelessness services. To assess the risks to people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness we will engage with all local authorities during 2024/25 with a focus on the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation.

Renfrewshire has told us that a significant number of its tenants' homes do not fully comply with electrical safety and fire detection requirements which came into force in early 2022 and form part of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Renfrewshire is currently progressing inspections to provide Electrical Installation Condition Reports and to install integrated smoke and heat alarms in all of its tenants' homes.

Renfrewshire has told us about challenges it has faced, including accessing tenants' homes and the availability of contractors, which has delayed its progress to complete the outstanding works. We expect Renfrewshire to have appropriate plans in place to mitigate the delays in progressing these works.

What Renfrewshire must do

Renfrewshire must:

- send us the information we require in relation to its homelessness service;
- tell us about any emerging issues preventing it from fulfilling its statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation when it should and comply with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order; and
- send us monthly updates on progress on achieving compliance with electrical safety and fire detection requirements.

What we will do

We will:

- meet with Renfrewshire to discuss its homelessness service and decide whether we require any additional assurance;
- meet with Renfrewshire to seek assurance if it does not provide temporary accommodation when it should, or if it breaches the Unsuitable Accommodation Order;
- review Renfrewshire's progress on achieving compliance with electrical safety and fire detection requirements and engage as necessary; and
- update our published engagement plan in the light of any material change to our planned engagement with Renfrewshire.

Regulatory returns

Renfrewshire must provide us with the following annual regulatory returns:

- Annual Assurance Statement; and
- Annual Return on the Charter.

It should also notify us of any material changes to its Annual Assurance Statement, and any tenant and resident safety matter which has been reported to or is being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive or reports from regulatory or statutory authorities or insurance providers, relating to safety concerns.

Our lead officer for Renfrewshire Council is:

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