

The background of the slide features a large, faint watermark of the Scottish Coat of Arms. It includes a crown at the top with four thistles, a shield divided into four quarters (quarterly), and a motto scroll at the bottom. The quarters contain a saltire (X-shaped cross), a stag's head, a sailing ship, and a crowned eagle. The motto scroll reads 'AN FUR A'.

## **Agenda Item 7**

### **Scottish Housing Regulator Annual Assurance Statement**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Scottish Housing Regulator Annual Assurance Statement  
**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 19 October 2021  
**Submitted By:** Director of Corporate & Housing Services

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report provides an Annual Assurance Statement on the activities of the Council's Housing Service for approval.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- (1) Approves the Annual Assurance Statement, prior to its submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator was formed as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. The Regulator has statutory powers to monitor, assess, report and, where they deem appropriate, intervene in the performance of housing activities of social landlords.
- 3.2 To comply with the Regulatory Framework, the Council has to submit their Annual Assurance Statement to the Regulator by the 31<sup>st</sup> October. This statement requires sign off by the delegated Local Authority Committee.
- 3.3 The Annual Assurance Statement confirms the extent to which the Housing Service complies with the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless, and others who use our services. Assurance is also provided on our compliance with our legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness, equalities and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.
- 3.4 The Regulator publicises their engagement plans for all social landlords in Scotland on an annual basis. Our Annual Assurance Statement is part of the evidence that the Regulator uses to assess the required level of engagement

with us. Other evidence used includes our Annual Return on the Charter and our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

#### **4. Considerations**

- 4.1 To prepare our Annual Assurance Statement, we considered:
- the required level of assurance;
  - sources of assurance, and the evidence to support this; and
  - the need for independent assurance from Internal Audit.
- 4.2 We undertook a self-assessment approach on compliance with our regulatory requirements. The evidence checklist relating to each of the requirements is set out at Appendix 2. An Internal Audit report, providing independent assurance on the statement, is at Appendix 3. Internal Audit awarded the evidence provided for the report “Substantial Assurance”.
- 4.3 The Regulator published guidance on the completion of the Annual Assurance Statement, including a template which was used to develop Falkirk Council’s submission (Appendix 1). There is no requirement to send any supporting evidence with the statement, however, this must be available should the Regulator ask to see it. It is therefore up to the Executive to decide whether they have seen sufficient evidence to be assured.
- 4.4 The evidence checklist provided (Appendix 2) builds on the information provided for last year’s statement. This includes evidence of the improvements we have made throughout the year, and the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on the service we provide to tenants. In June 2021, the Regulator advised that landlords should identify in their Annual Assurance Statement where they are not fully compliant and whether that was due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Appendix 4)
- 4.5 Despite the challenge of the pandemic, the service met the majority of our regulatory requirements and statutory responsibilities. We did not meet our full regulatory requirements for Quality of Housing and Repairs. This was due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Details of the standards/outcomes where we reported not being fully compliant can be viewed at the background paper [Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) under outcomes/standards 4 & 5. Further information on these challenges and the Services’ response can be found at Appendix 2. As restrictions ease, we are aiming to be fully compliant again in 2022.
- 4.6 The Annual Assurance Statement complements a number of internal and external reports that demonstrate the service’s commitment to performance reporting and scrutiny. These include the Annual Return to the Charter, which was tenant approved before submitting to the Regulator, and had also been subject to both internal and external audit checks. Performance is also reported to the Council’s Scrutiny Committee.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The Annual Assurance Statement is required to be confirmed and signed by the Executive exclusively.

## **6. Implications**

### **Financial**

- 6.1 No financial implications are anticipated.

### **Resources**

- 6.2 No additional resources are required.

### **Legal**

- 6.3 No legal implications are anticipated.

### **Risk**

- 6.4 No additional risk implications are anticipated.

### **Equalities**

- 6.5 The Regulator requested that landlords have a plan in place to meet their requirements for equalities collection, and for considering a human rights approach in housing. We have developed an action plan for equalities monitoring which will be expanded once human rights guidance is published, which is provided at Appendix 5.

### **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 6.6 No sustainability or environmental implications are anticipated.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 The Annual Assurance Statement confirms Falkirk Council's Housing Service compliance with the requirements set out under Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework published by the Scottish Housing Regulator. We did not fully meet our requirements in two areas, Quality of Housing and Repairs. This was due to the pandemic and we are working towards full compliance for 2022.

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Director of Corporate and Housing Services

**Author – Daniel Keast, Performance and Compliance Coordinator, 01324 590783, [daniel.keast@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.keast@falkirk.gov.uk)**

**List of Background Papers**

- 1 Our Regulation of Scottish Housing: Final Framework 2019**
- 2 Scottish Social Housing Charter**
- 3 Annual Assurance Statement: Statutory Guidance 2019**
- 4 Annual Assurance Statement: Frequently Asked Questions**

**APPENDICES:**

- 1 Copy of Annual Assurance Statement**
- 2 Evidence Checklist**
- 3 Internal Audit Report**
- 4 Letter to Landlords from Scottish Housing Regulator**
- 5 Equalities Action Plan**

**The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:**

None



## Falkirk Council

*Corporate & Housing Services*

### Our Annual Assurance Statement

The following statement confirms that:

We comply with the majority of regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. This includes that we:

- ✓ Are achieving standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services;
- ✓ Comply with our legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.

However, our review of outcomes 4 and 5 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, relating to quality of housing and repairs, have shown that we are not fully compliant with these outcomes in the following ways:

- Gas safety checks – we were unable to carry out 205 checks within the required timescales in 2019/20.
- We have been unable to carry out non-emergency repairs for substantial periods, meaning we could not maintain tenants homes to our normal standards
- The number of properties meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) reduced to 89.96%, as we were unable to carry out electrical safety checks

These have been as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions. As outlined in the evidence checklist, we anticipate that we will return to full compliance with these outcomes next year as Covid-19 restrictions are eased. This will be achieved by closely monitoring the backlogs of non-emergency repairs and electrical checks, to ensure these are appropriately prioritised. Additional contracting resource may require to be procured in order to accelerate the reduction in the backlog.

The Regulator has asked us to ensure we have appropriate plans in place for the collection of equalities data, and for considering a human rights approach in our work. It has been confirmed that this is in place, and will be progressed over the next year.

We confirm that we have seen and considered an appropriate level of evidence to give us this assurance. The evidence provided has been reviewed by our Internal Audit Team and was awarded 'Substantial Assurance'. The information required to provide the necessary level of assurance will continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis.

We approved our Annual Assurance Statement at the meeting of our Executive Committee on 19th October 2021.

I sign this statement on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Chairs signature:

Signed

*Director: Stuart Ritchie*  
Municipal Buildings,  
Falkirk FK1 5RS  
LP 1 Falkirk – 2.  
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## Housing Services

### Annual Assurance Statement: Evidence Checklist

**Performance Information Period: 2020/21**

<b>Annual Assurance Statement: Evidence Checklist</b>	<p>This checklist will set out and evidence where the Housing Service meets the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ all the relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;</li> <li>➤ all the relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter &amp;</li> <li>➤ all relevant legislative duties including those related to homeless people, equalities and human rights and tenant/resident's safety.</li> </ul> <p>All of the information provided has been subject to scrutiny by Internal Audit who reviewed the information. This achieved 'Substantial Assurance' status. A copy of Internal Audit's report is available at appendix 2.</p>
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#### Annual Assurance Statement Progress



Requirement is significantly behind target.



Requirement is slightly behind target or in danger of not achieving deadline.



Requirement is on target.





Requirement is completed.

## Annual Assurance Statement Checklist

### Assurance and Notification

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Prepare an Annual Assurance Statement in accordance with guidance & submit Annual Assurance Statement to Scottish Housing Regulator between April and October each year	ALL	October 2021 	<p>Last year's Annual Assurance Statement was presented at the meeting of the Executive on 27 October 2020, and submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) by 31 October 2020.</p> <p>We are on track to submit this year's statement to SHR by 31 October 2021.</p>	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator
Make Annual Assurance Statement available to tenants and other service users	ALL	October 2021 	There is a link on the Housing Services performance webpage ( <a href="http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance">www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance</a> ) to the SHR website, where the Annual Assurance Statement is held. Additionally, this has previously been discussed at the Tenants and	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance



Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			Residents Forum. Copies will be sent to our Registered Tenant's Organisations (RTO's). We will also provide an update in the winter edition of our Tenant Talk magazine.	Coordinator
Notify Scottish Housing Regulator during the year of any material changes to the assurance in the Annual Assurance Statement	ALL	On-going as required 	<p>This will be completed as required.</p> <p>We contacted the SHR in May 2021, to advise of the number of gas safety checks that had not been completed and to ascertain if it was considered a notifiable event. The SHR advised that as it was a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we would provide contextual information on our Charter return regarding this, it was not considered a notifiable event.</p>	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator
Have assurance and evidence that we are meeting all our legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights,	7, 8, 9, 11 & 12	Ongoing 	<p><u>Homelessness</u></p> <p>In terms of meeting our obligations associated with homelessness, this can be evidenced through the actions contained in the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) and the Local Housing Strategy (LHS).</p> <p>Our RRTP provides the foundations to ensure that we can build strong partnerships to meet the needs of homeless individuals</p>	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
and tenant and resident safety			<p>with complex and multiple needs. It has been a challenging few months for the service to ensure that we are still delivering our core and vital services whilst still trying to continue to move forward our RRTP. Whilst we have strived to keep to the core principles of Rapid Rehousing, the Covid-19 pandemic will no doubt have a lasting impact on our ambitions. We almost doubled our numbers in temporary accommodation and are now concentrating on reducing this backlog. Regular monitoring of the RRTP, it's spend and activities takes place through annual reviews and the action plan.</p> <p>In order to achieve the objectives of the RRTP, we need to increase access to settled accommodation for those who are homeless. Our Allocations Policy was revised in October 2020, and has increased the quota of properties advertised for Home Seekers to 45%. The number of offers for Home Seekers has also reduced from 2 to 1. This is to help maximise the chances of re-housing people in temporary accommodation, and to meet our statutory duties in rehousing people. This was extensively consulted on with both tenants and elected members as part of the review.</p>	

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>A wide range of actions are contained in the RRTP, with the intention of meeting the following five objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The prevention of homelessness in the first place</li> <li>2. Clear housing support pathways for at risk or who have experienced homelessness</li> <li>3. Increase access to settled accommodation</li> <li>4. Fit for the future temporary accommodation</li> <li>5. Improving the health and wellbeing of those affected by homelessness</li> </ol> <p>Progress against these actions are regularly monitored through the RRTP action plan, monitoring report and performance indicators. The updated RRTP, action plan and monitoring report were recently submitted to the Scottish Government for review and feedback was due to be provided at the end of August. This includes details of what has been achieved so far and also an updated action plan to include Covid-19 recovery work.</p> <p>The RRTP has a strong focus on prevention of homelessness in</p>	

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>the first place, including the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• launch of a Prevention Fund</li> <li>• the development of Benefits Calculator, using the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) Dashboard product. This enables Local Authorities to identify, target and track individuals, families and households who are, impacted by the Welfare Reform changes to the social security system, living in out-of-work poverty, those experiencing child poverty, and those at risk of becoming homeless</li> <li>• developing an engagement strategy to ensure that our we have a co-production approach to the delivery and improvement of our services going forward.</li> <li>• developing a working group with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to look at best practice</li> <li>• launch of Housing First - Working closely with our partners in Transform we launched our Housing First Service in February 2021. Due to the pressures within the Care Inspectorate during the pandemic, this was significantly delayed however good progress has been made to establish the project over the last six months and improve and develop the service.</li> </ul>	


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-2022 also states that:</p> <p><b><i>“Advice and information is provided on a range of affordable housing options in order to prevent homelessness</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• Family mediation service was established</i></li> <li><i>• Mainstream housing options advice introduced</i></li> <li><i>• Prison outreach worker in post</i></li> <li><i>• Bed and breakfast is no longer used as temporary homeless accommodation</i></li> <li><i>• Hospital discharge protocols developed in relation to homelessness “</i></li> </ul> <p>Under priority 3, 'Improving access to housing for all' (Local Housing Strategy (Page 30) the service clearly sets out how it will improve and monitor information on housing options provided to people.</p> <p>The most recent LHS Annual Review was approved at Committee on the 17 November 2020. This provides further</p>	

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>evidence of progress against the related actions and further shows compliance with this outcome. The next LHS Annual Review will be heard at Committee on 19 October 2021.</p> <p><u>Housing</u></p> <p>The whole Housing Service has now been accredited to the ISO 2015:9001 Standard. This is a first for a Housing Service in Scotland and reinforces the overall commitment of the Service to continuous improvement, self-assessment, and consistently high levels of service delivery. This approach is advocated by the SHR through its Regulatory Framework and Corporate Plan. As part of this project, we were externally audited during 2020 by the British Standards Institute (BSi) to confirm compliance with the ISO standard across the whole of the Housing Service.</p> <p>We are also continuing our work with the external organisation HouseMark to become the first Housing service in Scotland to be awarded with 'Embedding Excellence' accreditation. This is a great opportunity for the service to understand where we are on our journey to excellence and further demonstrates our commitment to self-awareness and continuous improvement.</p>	

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our ability to take this forward, but is now on track for delivery by the end of 2021/22.</p> <p><u>Equalities and Human Rights</u></p> <p>At a Corporate level, we have evidence of this through the Mainstreaming Report. This details where equalities and human rights information has been considered when making decisions on the design of services. The Fairer Falkirk Strategy 2019- 2024 also provides evidence of where we meet our obligations in terms of equalities and human rights. It sets out a vision for a fairer Falkirk, with equality and equity for all.</p> <p>Following publication of the Scottish Housing Regulator's guidance on collecting equalities information in August 2021, we have put in place an action plan for Housing to assess our current equalities collection, and how we can embed the use of equalities information in our service delivery. This will be progressed over the next year, to increase compliance with this requirement.</p>	


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>The Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework makes it clear that landlords must consider human rights in the provision of its service. Further detailed guidance is to be published on this shortly, and we will take full account of the recommendations in this, and act upon this as required. The current work of the service demonstrates several ways that we are already compliant with the human right to adequate housing, such as compliance with quality standards such as SHQS and EESSH, the work of the Local Housing Strategy and Strategic Housing Investment Plan, and support and advice provided to people in all housing tenures about their homes.</p> <p><u>Tenant and Resident Safety</u></p> <p>We are committed to ensuring the safety of our tenants and residents in our local areas. We have centralised the handling of antisocial behaviour complaints to our Conflict Resolution Service which has received positive feedback from service users. We are collecting information on feelings of safety in neighbourhoods, so we can act upon these findings, and are developing the use of mobile CCTV cameras for use in areas where needed. We also continue to respond to tenants</p>	




Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>concerns and requests about issues in their local areas as required.</p> <p>In terms of our properties, a five year Housing Investment Programme in place to ensure our stock continues to be maintained to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2 (ESSH2) by the key milestones of 2025 and 2032. To ensure this standard is maintained, we hold comprehensive information on the condition of all our properties our Housing Asset Management Plan 2019-2024. This also includes future investment plans to ensure that the condition of our housing stock is maintained to specified standards. The Housing Investment programme 2021/22 to 2025/26 sets out the level and specification for investment in the Housing stock. This includes window and door replacements, electrical works, estate improvements, and a programme of lift improvements in our high flats.</p>	
Have assurance and evidence that we are	4 & 5	Ongoing 	We have identified that, in relation to Repairs and Quality of Housing, that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected our	


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
meeting all our legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety (Repairs & Quality of Housing)			<p>compliance with these outcomes. pandemic has impacted on our ability to maintain homes to our usual standards since March 2020, as a result of restrictions preventing work being carried out in homes. There were two significant periods (April 2020 – July 2020, and 26 December 2020 to 26 April 2021) when the non-emergency repairs service was shut down, as non-essential repairs were not permitted to be carried out. As a result of this and resulting backlog of works, we have not been able to offer the same of level of service as previously provided. However, as restrictions are easing, we are now working through the backlog. The level of outstanding repairs is being closely monitored and, as necessary, additional contracting resource may require to be procured in order to accelerate the reduction in the backlog.</p> <p>Covid-19 restrictions also impacted our ability to carry out the required checks to maintain Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) compliance for all of our properties, leading to our performance in the 2020/21 ARC reducing to 89.96%, from 97.78% the year before. This was predominantly due to us not being able to carry out required Electrical Installation Condition</p>	


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>Reports (EICR) checks, as these were not deemed an essential repair under Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. These properties were then considered 'in abeyance' when calculating the number of properties meeting the SHQS. However, now that Covid-19 restrictions have lifted further, we aim to increase the amount of properties meeting the SHQS by the end of next year to 98.69%. The planned improvement measures and EICR checks for 2020/21 that were not carried out due to Covid-19 restrictions have been carried forward into 2021/22. EICR checks that are in abeyance are being prioritised and carried out as soon as Covid-19 restrictions allow. The Council has also put a programme in place to move to a five-year cycle of EICR checks to meet the new SHQS requirements.</p> <p>Up until 2019/20, we had reported each year in our ARC returns that we had no failures in our statutory obligations to carry out gas safety checks. In 2020/21, we reported 205 failures to carry out these checks, which was made up of 174 instances where we could not gain access, and 31 new build properties where our contractor did not carry out checks. These were predominantly due to the Covid-19 pandemic and difficulties in</p>	


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>gaining access to people's homes. We endeavoured to maintain ongoing contact with these tenants, to ensure the checks are carried out as soon as possible after the deadline, and only two remained outstanding at the end of the year. We had reported this issue to the Regulator in May 2021, but they were satisfied that it would be reported in the ARC.</p> <p>The above demonstrates that we have been unable to maintain our usual standards of tenant safety, as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we aim to return to normal service levels as restrictions lift and the backlog of repairs and checks are addressed.</p>	
Notify Scottish Housing Regulator of safety matters which have been reported to or investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), or reports from other regulatory or statutory authorities or insurance	4, 5 & 6	Ongoing 	<p>This will be done as required.</p> <p>Two members of the Housing Services Quality Team have gained health and safety qualifications. This complements the health safety and care team in providing direct advice to the service and identify risk.</p> <p>When carrying out site audits and risk assessments they have the knowledge and confidence to identify, health and safety</p>	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
providers, relating to safety concerns			risks and assist in creating corrective action to eliminate or reduce the risk.	
Make Engagement Plan easily available and accessible to tenants and service users, including online	ALL	On-Going (Yearly) 	We have included a link on our Housing Performance webpage ( <a href="http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance">www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance</a> ) to the SHR website where the Engagement Plan is located. This was also discussed at the Tenants and Residents Forum. We also sent copies to our RTOs.	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator

### Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Submit Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator in accordance to the published guidance.	ALL	May 2021 	This was submitted by 31 May 2021. This was reviewed and agreed by a group of tenants before being submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The supporting data is subject to integrity checks through both internal and external audits.	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
<p>Involve tenants, and where relevant, service users in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree an effective and meaningful approach with tenants</li> <li>• Publicise approach to tenants</li> <li>• Verify approach and evidence involving</li> </ul>	ALL	Ongoing 	<p>We have an active Tenant Scrutiny Panel, who have developed improvement plans for specific areas of the service.</p> <p>We involved tenant groups, including the Tenants' and Residents' Forum and Editorial Panel, in the development of our annual report, and consult with them annually on the content and design.</p> <p>We were awarded our Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) gold award, covering the period 2019 to 2022.</p> <p>The ARC was reviewed and agreed by a group of tenants before submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator. This was done using an online platform in 2020 and 2021, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>	Performance and Compliance Coordinator & Community Engagement Coordinator


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
<p>tenants has happened</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve other service users in an appropriate way</li> </ul>				
<p>Report performance to tenants and other service users no later than October each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree format of performance reporting with tenants and ensure accessible with plain and jargon free language</li> <li>Provide</li> </ul>	ALL	<p>October 2021</p> 	<p>Tenant groups have been involved in the design and content of our annual Landlord Report. This includes the design format, recommended improvements and level of comparative information provided. The Landlord Report contains information on the indicators that tenants advised were of most interest to them, along with comparisons to previous year's performance, Scottish average figures, and contextual information. We consult with tenant groups</p> <p>We have also previously consulted with tenant groups on a video format for our annual report, which also includes information on what rent money is spent on.</p> <p>This video was developed and posted online for the first time in</p>	<p>Performance and Compliance Coordinator &amp; Community Engagement Coordinator</p>

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
<p>assessment of performance in delivering Charter outcomes</p> <p>Include relevant comparison including previous years, other landlords and with national performance;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set out how we intend to address areas for improvement.</li> </ul> <p>Give tenants and service users a way to feedback views on style and form of reporting</p>			<p>2019 and went on to win a best practice award in performance reporting from TPAS in November 2019.</p> <p>The video was updated to reflect our 2019/20, and can be viewed from the following link:  <a href="https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/homes-property/policies-strategies/housing-performance.aspx">https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/homes-property/policies-strategies/housing-performance.aspx</a></p> <p>We provide information on the annual report detailing how people can feedback and get involved.</p> <p>All information is publicly available on the Housing Services performance webpage (<a href="http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance">www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance</a>).</p> <p>Information is available in hard copies, in different languages, Braille or other formats on request.</p>	
Make the Scottish Housing	ALL	Ongoing 	We provide a link within the Housing Service performance	Performance and




Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Regulator report on our performance easily available to tenants including online			webpage ( <a href="http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance">www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance</a> ) to the Scottish Housing Regulator's website containing their annual Landlord Report. We also discuss the report with our tenant's groups.	Compliance Coordinator & Community Engagement Coordinator


## Whistleblowing



Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Ensure effective arrangements and a policy for whistleblowing for staff and elected members  Make Whistleblowing policy easily available and promote its existence.	ALL	Ongoing 	Falkirk Council has a whistleblowing policy which is publicly available on the internet. Further to this, the Council also ran a 'See Something Say Something' campaign, which involved members of the Corporate Fraud team attending offices to inform staff about how and where they could report any concerns. This campaign is advertised through posters at offices and other related paraphernalia.  Elected Members have arrangements in place through their Code of Conduct.	Director of Corporate & Housing Services

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility


### Tenant and Service Users Redress


Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Make information on reporting our significant performance failures,	ALL	Ongoing 	A link to the Scottish Housing Regulator's webpage on how to report a significant failure is provided on the Housing Services performance webpage	Head of Housing Services & Performance and

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
including the Scottish Housing Regulator's leaflet, available to our tenants			<p>(<a href="http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance">www.falkirk.gov.uk/housingperformance</a>).</p> <p>We also provide a link on the Housing Service complaints webpage (<a href="#">Complaints   Falkirk Council</a>).</p> <p>We have hard copies of the significant performance failure leaflet at relevant reception areas.</p> <p>We sent copies of this leaflet to all RTO's.</p> <p>We updated tenant groups including the Tenant and Residents Forum on how and where to report a significant failure.</p> <p>We attended housing staff meetings to discuss this.</p>	Compliance Coordinator
Provide tenants and service users with the information they need to exercise their right to	1, 2, 3 & 5	Ongoing 	<p>We have a corporate complaints policy which is in line with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) guidance.</p> <p>We also publish an Annual Complaints Report which is</p>	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
complain and seek redress			<p>available online or as a hard copy if requested.</p> <p>Information is clearly available on the website for any customer wishing to complain, allowing a variety of contact methods to submit complaints. Training and guidance are available to support staff dealing with complaints.</p>	Coordinator
Respond to tenant complaints within our service standards timescales and in accordance with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman guidance	1, 2, 3 & 5	Ongoing 	We can confirm that the Housing Service works to the standards and timescales set out in the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure. All complaints are recorded on our Customer First system, which allows for management against timescales and sends out reminders to teams as required. We have a dedicated team for overseeing complaints, with performance against timescales reported to management on a regular basis. Although our average timescales for Stage 2 complaints were above the SPSO timescale of 20 days in 2020/21, due to the impact of Covid-19, we have now improved our timescales in 2021/22.	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator
Ensure we have effective arrangements to learn from complaints and other	2	Ongoing 	We recognise that complaints provide us with an invaluable source of feedback which can help us improve the quality of the services we provide. To ensure that we embed a culture of learning from	Head of Housing Services & Performance and



Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
tenant and service user feedback, in accordance with SPSO guidance			<p>complaints, in 2021/2022 we'll progress areas which were on hold due to the impact of the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. This will include progressing with improved internal reporting of complaints information, to make themes and trends emerging from them clear.</p> <p>We'll also establish a case review group, to review complaints where there has been a service failure to identify improvement actions resulting from those complaints. Through the group, a continuous loop of feedback will be established to ensure that the lessons learned from complaints are acted on.</p>	Compliance Coordinator

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Have assurance and evidence we consider equality and human rights issues properly when making decisions, in the design and review of internal and external policies, and in our day to day service delivery	1	Ongoing 	<p>At a Corporate level, we have evidence of this through the Mainstreaming Report. This details where equalities and human rights information has been considered when making decisions on the design of services. The Fairer Falkirk Strategy 2019- 2024 also provides evidence of where we meet our obligations in terms of equalities and human rights. It sets out a vision for a fairer Falkirk, with equality and equity for all.</p> <p>Following publication of the Scottish Housing Regulator's guidance on collecting equalities information in August 2021, we have put in place an action plan for Housing to assess our current equalities collection, and how we can embed the use of equalities information in our service delivery. This will be progressed over the next year, to increase compliance with this requirement.</p> <p>The Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory_Framework makes it clear that landlords must consider human rights in the provision of its service. Further detailed guidance is to be published on this shortly, and we will take full account of the recommendations in this, and act upon this as part of the above action plan.</p>	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Collect data relating to protected characteristics for existing tenants, new tenants, people on waiting lists and elected Members and staff	1	Ongoing 	<p>The Council's Mainstreaming Report details how we collect and use equalities and human right information in terms of staff.</p> <p>Until 2018/19, we had to report to the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) on the ethnic origins of our tenants, and the number who advised us that they have a disability. Whilst this is not uncommon amongst local authorities to have high numbers of equalities unrecorded, as historically this information was not collected, the new emphasis on equalities and human rights issues will mean this will need to be addressed.</p> <p>We have identified that there are still a number of tenants that we do not hold all equalities information on. In order to address this, we have begun to collect equalities data, including protected characteristics. We consulted with our tenants to inform them of our requirements to collect this data and also to ask them about the best way of doing this. It was agreed that using the annual tenant visit would be the best approach for the collection of this data.</p> <p>The programme of annual visits went live in February 2020, just before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic which then caused its</p>	Head of Housing Services & Performance and Compliance Coordinator

Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
			<p>suspension. Subsequently, virtual and telephone annual visits / discussions with tenants have been reinstated, resulting in referrals for support and practical assistance. Evidence of these is collated on a weekly basis and provided to senior management for information. Unfortunately, due to restrictions in place, we have been unable to complete visits to all tenants over the course of the year, which has impacted on the level of equalities information that can be collected over this time. As Covid-19 restrictions are eased, we aim to increase the numbers of visits completed.</p> <p>The new Housing Online platform, which will be introduced with the new integrated housing management system (IHMS) in early 2022, will allow users to update their own personal information, including protected characteristics, directly onto their tenancy records.</p> <p>For new tenants, we collect equalities information on the housing application form, which is then held on their person record on our integrated housing management system and transferred to their tenancy record once they are allocated a tenancy. Any changes to these details will then be kept up to date through the programme of annual tenancy visits.</p>	



Requirement	SSHC Outcome/Standard	Deadline	Progress	Responsibility
Collect data on protected characteristics of people who apply as homeless	1	Ongoing 	We collect equalities information at the homeless application stage, including the protected characteristics.	Housing Needs Manager & Performance and Compliance Coordinator
Collect data on protected characteristics of people who use our Gypsy / Traveller services	1	March 2022 	We had intended collecting this in the annual consultation, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to carry out this survey in person. We will therefore achieve this requirement by March 2022 as requested by the Scottish Housing Regulator.	Community Engagement Coordinator



**To:** Social Landlords

24 June 2021

Dear colleague

### **Annual Assurance Statement**

This letter gives you information to support you in your preparation of the Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) due to be submitted to us by 31 October 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact on social landlords and on the services they provide to their tenants and service users.

The Regulatory Framework requires social landlords to prepare and publish an AAS to confirm to their tenants and us that they are meeting regulatory requirements. It is important that the AAS reflects the context that landlords have to operate in. Given this, landlords should identify in this year's AAS any non-compliance with regulatory requirements that is directly due to the pandemic and distinguish this from non-compliance that is for other reasons.

In August last year, we published [advisory guidance](#) to assist landlords to adapt their approach to the submission of the AAS to reflect the impact of the pandemic. This guidance remains relevant and landlords should refer to it when producing their 2021 AAS.

We also said that we would ask each landlord to include an update on their position in relation to equalities and human rights in their 2021 AAS. At that time we had anticipated that the guidance on equalities data collection would have been available to landlords by now; however, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed the production of that guidance, and it is not yet available to support landlords in their work to comply with equalities and human rights requirements.

We continue to work with the SFHA, GWSF and ALACHO to produce guidance on equalities data collection, and we are working with the Scottish Human Rights Commission to develop a briefing on the right to housing. We anticipate that these guides will be published during this coming summer. In recognition of this position, we ask landlords to provide us with assurance in their AAS to be submitted to us by the end of October 2021 that they have appropriate plans to implement an effective approach to the collection of equalities

information and that they have started to consider how they can adopt a human rights approach in their work.

If you have already submitted this year's AAS, we will contact you to discuss an update to your AAS to reflect this advice.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions about your Annual Assurance Statement, please contact your Engagement Plan lead.

Best wishes and stay safe,

Michael Cameron  
Chief Executive



# MEMO

## Falkirk Council

*Corporate and Housing Services  
Finance*

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**To:** Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing and Communities

**Copy To:** Stuart Ritchie, Director of Corporate and Housing Services  
Bryan Smail, Chief Finance Officer  
Daniel Keast, Performance and Compliance Co-ordinator  
Christine Thomson, Performance and Information Officer  
Isabel Wright, Internal Audit, Risk, and Corporate Fraud Manager

**From:** David Macleod, Internal Auditor

**Date:** 14 September 2021

**Subject:** **INTERNAL AUDIT – SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR – ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT**

1. Internal Audit work on the Scottish Housing Regulator Annual Assurance Statement forms part of our Internal Audit coverage for 2021/22, agreed by the Audit Committee on 12 April 2021.

### Background

2. The Head of Housing and Communities is required to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The statement should provide assurance that the Council's Housing and Communities division is compliant with all the relevant requirements of Chapter 3 of the Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland ([https://www.pfhsotland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Regulatory-Framework-final-February-2019\\_1.pdf](https://www.pfhsotland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Regulatory-Framework-final-February-2019_1.pdf)). The statement is required to be submitted by the end of October each year and prior to that requires to be approved by the Council's Executive.
3. The approach taken by the Housing and Communities division has been to evidence compliance with the 16 standards and outcomes<sup>1</sup> in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC), and to highlight whether the Service meets the requirements of Chapter 3 of the Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland. A link to the SSHC is: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/>
4. The standard and outcome statements that have been subject to Internal Audit's validation work are summarised in **Table 1**. More detail on the SSHC standards and outcomes is at **Annex 1**.

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<sup>1</sup> The SSHC defines a standard as "a level of quality that every social landlord should achieve." The SSHC defines an outcome as "a result we want to happen. The Charter sets out the results that a social landlord should achieve for its tenants and other customers."

**Table 1**  
**Description of standard / outcome statements**

Standard / Outcome Number <sup>2</sup>	Description
1.	Equalities
2.	Communication
3.	Participation
4.	Quality of housing
5.	Repairs, maintenance, and improvements
6.	Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance, and tenancy disputes
7.	Housing options
8.	Housing options
9.	Housing options
10.	Access to social housing
11.	Tenancy sustainment
12.	Homeless people
13.	Value for money
14.	Rents and service charges
15.	Rents and service charges
16.	Gypsy / Travellers

### Internal Audit Work

5. Internal Audit has:

- reviewed the completeness and accuracy of the 16 draft statements, prepared by the Housing and Communities division, for each of the SSHC standards and outcomes that will support the Council's Annual Assurance submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator;
- ensured that the performance information reported in the draft standard and outcome statements is underpinned by adequate and robust supporting documentation by checking that the statements included valid links to this documentation (or references to where it can be found on Sharefile<sup>3</sup>); and
- checked the accuracy of all numerical information and percentages being reported in the draft standard and outcome statements by ensuring that these figures matched supporting data.

6. We found that performance and numerical information reported was accurate, and agreed to supporting documentation. We are content, therefore, with the standard and outcome statements that will be submitted to the Executive and then to the Scottish Housing Regulator in October 2021.

### Internal Audit Assurance

7. We can provide **SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE** in relation to the completeness and accuracy of the performance and numerical information in the standard and outcome statements (see **Annex 2** for assurance category definitions).

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 4 and 13 are standards, with all others being outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> A secure method for sharing documents and files.

**Scottish Social Housing Charter  
Standards and Outcomes**

Standard / Outcome Number <sup>4</sup>	Description
1.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The customer / landlord relationship Equalities</b></p> <p>Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.</li> </ul>
2.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The customer / landlord relationship Communication</b></p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions, and the services it provides.</li> </ul>
3.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The customer / landlord relationship Participation</b></p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in, and influence, their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.</li> </ul>
4.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Housing quality and maintenance Quality of housing</b></p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) when they are allocated; are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair; and also meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by December 2020.</li> </ul>
5.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Housing quality and maintenance Repairs, maintenance, and improvements</b></p> <p>Social landlords manage their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup>Numbers 4 and 13 are standards, with all others being outcomes.

Standard / Outcome Number <sup>4</sup>	Description
6.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Neighbourhood and community</b> <b>Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance, and tenancy disputes</b></p> <p>Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure as far as reasonably possible that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.</li> </ul>
7.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Access to housing and support</b> <b>Housing options</b></p> <p>Social landlords work together to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.</li> </ul>
8.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Access to housing and support</b> <b>Housing options</b></p> <p>Social landlords work together to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.</li> </ul>
9.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Access to housing and support</b> <b>Housing options</b></p> <p>Social landlords ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.</li> </ul>
10.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Access to housing and support</b> <b>Access to social housing</b></p> <p>Social landlords ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and on their prospects of being housed.</li> </ul>
11.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Access to housing and support</b> <b>Tenancy sustainment</b></p> <p>Social landlords ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.</li> </ul>

Standard / Outcome Number <sup>4</sup>	Description
12.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Access to housing and support Homeless People</b></p> <p>Local councils perform their duties on homelessness so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice; are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed; and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.</li> </ul>
13.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Getting good value from rents and service charges Value for money</b></p> <p>Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.</li> </ul>
14.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Getting good value from rents and service charges Rents and service charges</b></p> <p>Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and service users can afford them.</li> </ul>
15.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Getting good value from rents and service charges Rents and service charges</b></p> <p>Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including details of any individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.</li> </ul>
16.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Other Customers Gypsy / Travellers</b></p> <p>Local councils and social landlords with responsibility for managing sites for Gypsy / Travellers should manage the sites so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sites are well maintained and managed, and meet the minimum site standards set in Scottish Government guidance.</li> </ul>



## DEFINITION OF ASSURANCE CATEGORIES

Level of Assurance	Definition
<b>Substantial assurance</b>	The systems for risk, control, and governance are largely satisfactory, but there is some scope for improvement as the present arrangements could undermine the achievement of business and/or control objectives and/or leave them vulnerable to some risk of error/abuse.
<b>Limited assurance</b>	The systems for risk, control, and governance have some satisfactory aspects, but contain a number of significant weaknesses that are likely to undermine the achievement of business and/or control objectives and leave them vulnerable to an unacceptable risk of error/abuse.
<b>No assurance</b>	The systems for risk, control, and governance are ineffectively designed and/or are operated ineffectively such that business and/or control objectives are not being achieved and the risk of serious error/abuse is unacceptable. Significant improvements are required.

## EQUALITIES ACTION PLAN – SEPTEMBER 2021

Objective– To develop an Equalities First approach to the collection and use of equalities data, in compliance with Scottish Housing Regulator guidance

Scottish Housing Regulator Guidance - [New guide to support social landlords with equality data collection](#) | [Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

Action	Timescale	Responsible Officer/ Section	Progress/Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out audit to ensure that all nine protected characteristics are asked for at every point of collection, and ensure we are not duplicating collection unnecessarily</li> </ul>	March 2022	Performance & Information Officer	<p>Our equality data forms must cover all protected characteristics - age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.</p> <p>Must be collected for existing tenants, new tenants, waiting lists, staff, homeless applications and gypsy/traveller sites. Also for those that provide relevant support services under national health and social care standards.</p> <p>If we cannot comply with the above, this needs to be in exceptional circumstances and must be discussed with Scottish Housing Regulator.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of above audit, ensure that staff are provided with guidance and forms to collect equalities data</li> </ul>	March 2022	Performance & Information Officer / Training Coordinator	<p>SHR guidance contains equality collection form, and scripts for staff collecting this information. Consider where these could be used in the service.</p> <p>Training to be considered as part of this.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that revised Tenant &amp; Customer Participation Strategy 2021-25 takes into account the requirement for Customer Care Strategy and</li> </ul>	March 2022	Community Engagement Coordinator	<p>TP&amp;C Strategy is due to be updated this year, need to ensure it takes into account all elements of SHR's equalities guidance.</p>

<b>collection of equalities information</b>			SHR guidance recommends that equalities collection links in with Customer Care and Tenant Participation Strategies, so to consider how our strategies meet these requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ensure all equalities collection complies with GDPR guidance, and that privacy notices adequately reflect reasons for collection and use</b></li> </ul>	March 2022	Performance & Information Officer / Records Manager	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Collection of equalities information for the gypsy/traveller site will be collected in the next annual consultation (early 2022)</b></li> </ul>	March 2022	Senior Implementation & Monitoring Officer / Travelling Persons Officer	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consider and develop alternative ways to gather equalities data from our existing tenants, to increase the level of information held.</b></li> </ul>	March 2022	Performance & Information Officer / Senior Housing Coordinator	<p>Current numbers of Annual Tenant Visits being carried out are not sufficient to visit all tenants in the year. Potential to target visits to those tenants where we don't hold equalities information. Need to consider alongside Covid restrictions in place.</p> <p>Ensuring that we link in access to MyFalkirk/Housing Online for the new IHMS system.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff training – review existing training in line with SHR guidance, to ensure staff are fully informed and engaged in equalities requirements</b></li> </ul>	March 2022	Training Coordinator	Refer to SHR guidance for areas they feel are essential to be covered - Should include the law, collecting data, equality policy, and how to use this data to shape services.

			<p>Can also include information on how to handle questions about why collecting equalities data.</p> <p>Shelter provide an online Equalities &amp; Human Rights training course.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Raising awareness of the need for Equality &amp; Poverty Impact Assessments (EPIA) to be carried out for all relevant policy changes and service reviews.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Using equalities information to improve services – ensure that data is easily accessible to all teams.</b></p>	March 2022	Performance & Information Officer	<p>Ensuring knowledge of these in the service and how to complete these at an early stage.</p> <p>Online guidance is available, but may need to be updated at a corporate level.</p> <p>Use of Insight or other reports to provide this information easily.</p> <p>Lead officer to raise awareness of the use of equalities information – for example, with Property section for planning works, with Housing Ops for specific projects, etc.</p>