



Southside Housing Association – Annual Assurance Statement

October 2022

Annual Assurance Statement 2022

Southside Housing Association is required by the Scottish Housing Regulator's revised Regulatory Framework to prepare and submit its Annual Assurance Statement by 31 October 2022. This document represents the statement that was considered and approved by the Association's Management Committee at its meeting on Thursday 27 October 2022.

Statement of the Southside Housing Association Management Committee:

We can advise that, to the best of our knowledge, we comply with:

1. All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;
2. All relevant standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
3. All relevant legislative duties; and,
4. The Standards of Governance and Financial Management

The Management Committee confirm that we have seen and considered appropriate evidence to support our assurance of compliance with the above. This includes an independent self-assessment against Regulatory Standards carried out in 2021, our annual programme of internal audit, external audit, tenant surveys, Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter 2021/22, Management Committee reports, financial reports and tenant health and safety reports, external validation of landlord safety compliance and risk management reports.

We would like to also highlight the following areas in our Annual Assurance Statement.

Cost of Living Crisis, economic pressures and rent affordability

We recognise the extremely challenging environment currently in terms of rising inflation and interest rates and escalating costs of living. This places extraordinary pressure on our tenants and we are exploring ways to help mitigate some of these concerns within our communities. As a business, the Association is also hugely affected by the current economic climate and we are changing assumptions in our Business Plan and carrying out robust sensitivity analysis to stress test our assumptions and cashflow throughout the plan. This will also take account of the potential challenges posed by any extension of the Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022 and any possible impacts upon our rental income. The outcomes from this will allow us to remodel our current Business Plan if necessary to ensure the Association maintains a positive cashflow while delivering on our responsibilities and obligations.

Equalities

In reviewing our compliance with the requirement to collect equalities data set out in the Regulatory Framework, we are assured that we have appropriate systems in place for the collection of equalities data. We are on the cusp of carrying out a specific Equalities Survey to capture an updated picture of the communities we serve, and will use the data we collect to ensure that we adequately consider equality and human rights in the decisions we take,

policy development and review, and in the way we deliver our services to our tenants and other customers.

Human Rights

We hope that the way we deliver services and develop policies would generally be consistent with a human rights based approach. We recognise however that this an emerging and developing agenda in terms of current social housing specific guidance. We recognise that the Scottish Housing Regulator, Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland and the Scottish Human Rights Commission are actively working to develop further detailed guidance on aspects of a human rights based approach in respect to social housing. We welcome this and any other relevant guidance with regard to human rights and undertake to use this guidance and best practice to inform our own approach to revising the human rights impact of our policies, processes and service delivery.

Landlord safety compliance

Management Committee has placed a particular focus over the past year in obtaining specific assurance around the Association's landlord safety compliance obligations. This has included specific consultancy work, internal audit of landlord safety compliance, quarterly reporting to Management Committee, development and review of procedures and regulatory reporting on landlord safety compliance. Management Committee is assured that the Association has adequate processes in place to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory obligations. Management Committee would like to specifically highlight the following:

Interlinked smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (Tolerable Standard) (Extension of Criteria) Order came into effect on 1 February 2022. This meant every home in Scotland must have interlinked smoke and heat alarms and carbon monoxide detectors installed in each room of the property. As at 30 September 2022 we have achieved 96.2% compliance within our social rented housing stock. We have an action plan in place to achieve installation of the interlinked alarms and detectors in the remaining 84 homes by 31 March 2023.

Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR)

There is a legal requirement for landlords to have an EICR carried out on all electrical installations, fixtures and fittings within their homes. As at 30 September 2022 we have achieved 83% compliance with EICR within our social rented housing stock. We have experienced issues with no-access, particularly as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, on-going tenant concerns with transmission of the virus and allowing contractors access to all rooms in their homes to complete an EICR, and loss of the main EICR contractor which have contributed to not achieving 100% compliance. We are appointing a contractor to carry out our EICR compliance programme, including those properties where obtaining access has been an issue previously. All outstanding inspections are scheduled to be completed by 31 March 2023. As reported in our Annual Return on the Charter submission for 2021/22 in relation to homes where access could not be obtained to complete an EICR - *these properties are currently categorised as 'in abeyance' for the purposes of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).*

As part of the Association's commitment to continuous improvement a Governance and Financial Management Improvement Plan has been developed which focuses on areas for improvement identified from the various ways we have assessed the level of our compliance. This includes improvement actions we have identified but which do not constitute material non-compliance with the Regulatory Standards and Requirements.

We will review the Association's continued compliance with all regulatory and legal requirements on an on-going basis throughout the year. In the event of any in-year incidences of material non-compliance which affects our level of assurance against any of the requirements of the Annual Assurance Statement we will notify the Scottish Housing Regulator and our tenants and other customers.

Signed by:-----

Alex Cameron, Chair, Southside Housing Association



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