

SOUTHSIDE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

QUALITY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT POLICY

Formally Adopted: May 2015

Next Review Due: May 2018

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Southside is committed to continuous improvement across all of its services, to ensure we provide the best possible services to our customers. Continuous improvement is about a drive to grow and develop capabilities, behaviours, and practices in line with the achievement of Business Plan goals and strategies. It is about achieving improved outputs and outcomes that are of benefit to our customers and other stakeholders. This policy sets out the wide variety of different mechanisms that Southside uses to improve its business, to achieve our desired standards and targets, and meet our customers' expectations.

2.0 PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all of Southside's staff, Board Members, customers and other stakeholders are aware of the range of business improvement tools used across the organisation to enhance service quality, performance and consistency.

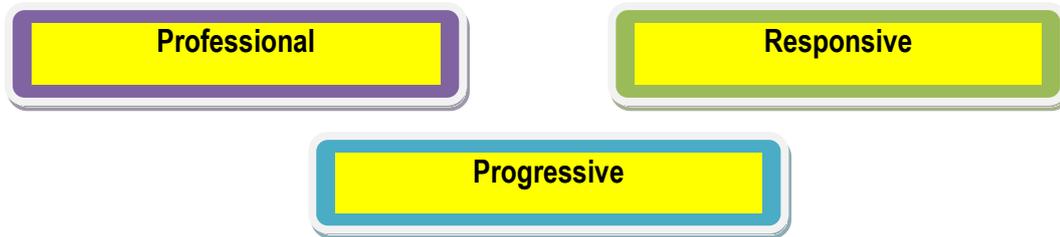
2.2 Our approach to continuous improvement is underpinned by the adoption of best practice, regular Improvement Reviews, and the production of Improvement Plans to deliver enhanced outcomes for customers. We promote an organisational culture that supports challenge, learning, empowerment and engagement.

2.3 Our improvement activities have been designed in support of Southside's overall Vision:

At Southside Housing Association we recognise that we operate in a constantly changing environment, and we currently face a number of difficult challenges in terms of the quality of some of our homes, service delivery constraints and resource considerations. Nevertheless we have a strong vision of where we want to be. At Southside Housing Association we want

- All our homes to be popular and affordable;
- All our customers to be delighted with the service they receive;
- All our staff to be well trained, highly motivated and professional;
- Strong engagement and participation from the communities we serve;
- To achieve excellent performance outcomes;
- To have sound Governance arrangements and to be well resourced and financially robust.
- To be respected by all who work with us;

- 2.4 They are also aligned with our core values. These values run through our organisation and should always be evident in the way Southside staff and volunteers approach their work:



3.0 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 Both the Scottish Housing Regulator and Care Inspectorate set quality standards and guidelines that Southside is required to follow. These are summarised below. Our quality assurance and continuous improvement processes not only ensure that we comply with these standards, but also allow us to go beyond regulatory requirements and take a proactive approach. They make sure we take a consistent approach across all of our services: housing, care, and central support.

Scottish Housing Regulator

- 3.2 In line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the Scottish Social Housing Charter sets standards and outcomes which social landlords should aim to achieve.

- 3.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords, individually and collectively, achieve the Charter's outcomes:

- Equalities
- Communication & Participation
- Quality of Housing
- Repairs, Maintenance & Improvement
- Estate Management
- Housing Options & Access to Housing
- Tenancy Sustainment
- Rents & Service Charges
- Value for Money

- 3.4 For each year ending on 31st March, landlords must:

- Measure and assess their performance in progressing towards or achieving the Charter outcomes and standards.
- Provide the Regulator with some key performance information through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

- Report their performance to their customers using a format and content that has been shaped by customers and that includes customer feedback, trends, and comparisons to peers.

3.5 The Regulator also carries out inspections of landlords where it feels there is a risk that they are not complying with regulations and progressing towards the agreed outcomes and standards. They also retain a range of intervention measures for failing landlords.

Care Inspectorate

3.6 The Care Inspectorate is the independent regulator of social care and social work services across Scotland, set up by the Scottish Government to provide assurance and protection for people who use these services.

3.7 The Care Inspectorate uses the National Care Standards when assessing care and support services. These standards were developed with people who use care services and outlines what a good quality care service should be like.

3.8 All care and support services must submit an annual self-assessment once a year that should draw on service user, family and staff feedback. Services are also inspected at least once per year against four quality themes:

- Quality of Care and Support
- Quality of Environment (*not applicable for care at home services*)
- Quality of Staffing
- Quality of Management and Leadership

3.9 The results of each inspection are published publicly on the Care Inspectorate website, with each service being given a grade for each theme, as outlined below. Southside aims to have all services graded as Very Good or Excellent.

6	Excellent
5	Very good
4	Good
3	Adequate
2	Weak
1	Unsatisfactory

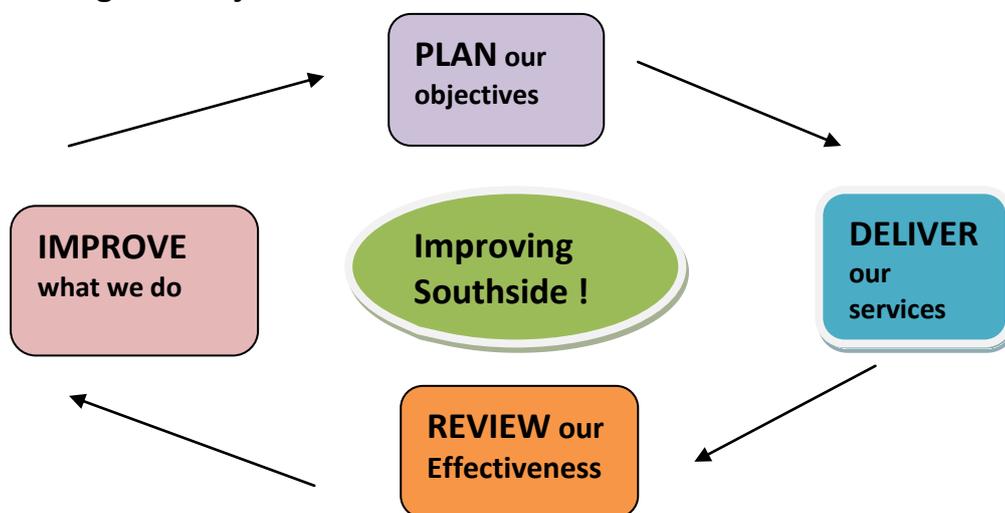
3.10 If the Inspectorate is concerned about a service they may make recommendations or requirements, which must be addressed by an improvement action plan.

4.0 IMPROVING SOUTHSIDE FRAMEWORK

4.1 Improving Southside is the name that has been given to Southside's continuous improvement framework.

- 4.2 This framework (see Appendix 1) is in the form of a 'plan, do, review, revise' cycle (Diagram below)
- Plan: clearly identify what you aim to achieve and how it will be measured.
 - Do: carry out services to the required standard within agreed processes.
 - Review: assess and evaluate performance against a variety of measures.
 - Revise: seek improvements where performance standards have not been achieved and make adjustments for the next planning round as necessary.

Planning Our Objectives



Vision & Values

- 4.3 The Southside Vision is included in the most recent Business Plan, as outlined in 2.3 above. This sits alongside our Values, as outlined in 2.4 above, to describe our high level strategic context and the kind of organisation that we aim to be. The Vision and Values are reviewed regularly and are clearly communicated to staff, customers and other stakeholders.

Business Plan

- 4.4 The Southside Business Plan runs for three years and sets the strategic direction and the implementation plan for all of our objectives, targets and initiatives involved with realising the Vision and Values. The Business Plan is monitored on an ongoing basis, with progress reports presented to the Management Committee annually.

Southside Internal Management Plan

- 4.5 At the beginning of each financial year the Management Committee agrees the Internal Management Plan, showing the key strategic areas that will be the focus of that year, in line with the Business Plan. The IMP also outlines how development of these areas will be delegated to specific Committees, with the Board at the centre of our decision making process.

Southside Strategies

- 4.6 Southside has a series of supporting strategies that set out how we will approach key areas of our business and what we aim to achieve within the short, medium or long term. Progress toward developing, reviewing or implementing appropriate strategies is reported via Committees in line with the Internal Management Plan.

Performance & Efficiency Targets

- 4.7 Each financial year a series of specific targets are set and approved by the Board. These relate to our key performance indicators and to our budget and spend, setting out what we aim to achieve in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness. Performance against these targets is measured as part of our monthly performance framework (see below), and is reported to Committee quarterly.

5.0 DELIVERING OUR SERVICES

Southside Policies

- 5.1 Southside has a range of policies in place which are regularly reviewed and updated. These policies communicate to our staff, customers and other stakeholders what Southside's stance is on a wide variety of key areas, outlining what is involved and why, who is responsible, what training and support is provided, and how this links to relevant legislation. The policies are accessible to all staff. Policies are usually reviewed on a three-yearly basis, and approved at the relevant Committee. Minor amendments can be approved by the Senior Management Team.

Operational Procedures

- 5.2 All of Southside's key policies are supported by detailed procedures for staff and management, giving step by step guidance on what is expected of them. Policies and procedures are rolled out via management cascades, team briefings, e-learning, or more formal training sessions as appropriate. They are also included in the induction process for new staff.

- 5.3 Southside is committed to ensuring value for money and making our processes as efficient as possible. Lean thinking principles are used to streamline processes through Rapid Improvement Events and smaller process reviews.
- 5.4 Operational processes and procedures are controlled by the Senior Management Team, although they may be presented to Committee for noting, if attached to a key policy.

Service Standards

- 5.5 Southside's services work to recognised National Standards which set out the commitments we make to our customers around the level and quality of services that we will deliver. Internally we have specific timescales for areas such as repairs, housing applications, care visits and assessments, and complaints.

Standards under which current services operate include:

- Scottish Social Housing Charter.
- National Standards for Housing Support
- National Standards for Information and Advice
- National Standards for Community Engagement
- National Code of Conduct for Property Managers

Our performance framework (see below) includes measures on the vast majority of our service standards, allowing us to monitor our strengths and areas for improvement throughout the year.

Customer Participation

- 5.6 Customer participation is key to how Southside delivers and develops its services. Customers are directly involved in the governance of the organisation through the Management Committee and local Neighbourhood Committees. The Association also uses a range of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate participation in key policy and service development. These include forums, a tenant scrutiny pilot, local tenant meetings etc.

For example, tenants are consulted annually on the rent levels. Within our housing support services, sheltered housing tenants are invited to quarterly meetings with senior staff and are asked to contribute to the service self assessments prepared for the Care Inspectorate.

Communication

- 5.7 Another crucial element to Southside's services is communication - with our staff, customers and other stakeholders. This covers every interaction between Southside and others, from one-to-one chats, telephone conversations and visits to our website through to events, annual reports and newsletters.

Internally we use team meetings, personal reviews, forums to inform and involve each other about our work. It is our intent to always communicate clearly, honestly, and positively, reinforcing our values and the Southside brand at all times.

Core Systems

- 5.8 Our IT systems are an important enabler in delivering our services. This includes service specific applications, such as Omniledger as well as cross-team systems such as Outlook, and our Compliments, Comments and Complaints database.

Our IT Development Plan sets out how we will develop and deliver a suite of fit for purpose systems across all Southside functions, which will deliver better information and reducing running costs and promoting efficiency.

Exciting new developments include the introduction of hand held devices that allow frontline staff to update customer and property records whilst out on site, and increasing our knowledge of how our customers use technology so we can look to provide equipment and training that helps them access other types of support networks.

6.0 REVIEWING OUR EFFECTIVENESS

Audit & Inspection

- 6.1 As outlined in the Regulatory Requirements section above, Southside is subject to annual inspections of its care and support services by the Care Inspectorate. The results of these inspections are monitored centrally, with strengths and areas for improvement shared across all services, so everyone can learn from the feedback that has been received.
- 6.2 We submit a number of annual returns to the Scottish Housing Regulator, including our return on the Social Housing Charter, our 5-year financial projections, and a statement on our loan portfolio, providing evidence of compliance with required covenants. It is also possible that the Regulator will choose to inspect Southside at some point in the future, or carry out a verification visit focused on our progress towards the Charter.
- 6.3 Southside also commissions an External Auditor to audit its statutory accounts at the end of each financial year, and an Internal Auditor to review specific areas of the business and check compliance with policies, procedures and other controls. This commitment to external audit is also extended to high risk areas e.g. a sample of all gas safety work is externally audited and validated.

- 6.4 Projects are also subject to monitoring and scrutiny from other funders, such as Glasgow City Council and the Big Lottery.
- 6.5 All of these external organisations assist Southside by providing an independent view of our quality and performance, and can draw from best practice they have seen elsewhere to make recommendations. Reports are presented to the relevant Committee.

Improvement Reviews

- 6.6 Our own internal Improvement Reviews are carried out by the Head of Service for each area of the Association. These can be compliance based, investigate an area where performance has deteriorated, research best practice externally, or compare practices across regions and teams as part of policy review and development.
- 6.7 The output from these reviews is similar to that of an audit or inspection – a report identifying areas for improvement and making recommendations. The Head of Service works with teams to come up with suitable improvement actions.

Key Performance Indicators

- 6.8 Key performance indicators are detailed in the Internal Management Plan and are used for reporting and reviewing performance. Performance reports are presented to relevant Committees and published to our customers at year end in the Annual Report.

Benchmarking

- 6.9 Southside is a member of a benchmarking group, Scottish Housing Best Value Network(SBVN) and other networks that enable comparison of our performance with that of other organisations. This allows Southside to compare performance figures with others, but also to enter into process benchmarking exercises, involving best practice visits to see how other people may be achieving better results.

Customer & Staff Feedback

- 6.10 As part of our Customer Participation Strategy Southside carries out several different surveys of customers throughout the year, including a full Tenant Survey and service-specific care and support satisfaction surveys. Feedback is also gathered through estate and individual visits, meetings with tenants, tenant consultation events, our Tenant Scrutiny Panel. Panel members are now being provided with further training so they can scrutinise the detail of our performance reports and challenge us on where we need to improve. Southside values customer feedback and has a number of feedback mechanisms to ensure we get a continuous flow of customer perspectives on service quality.

Examples include Welfare Rights, Care & Repair, Repairs and Estates management Feedback forms and annual Housing Support Service Surveys.

- 6.11 Our Compliments, Comments and Complaints system is also a very powerful way of using our customers' views to review our services. This system is a custom-built database that is used across the organisation and is fully compliant with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman model complaints handling procedure. Internally we carry out a survey of all staff at least once every two years.

Self Assessment

- 6.12 Self assessment is a developing area within Southside's business improvement framework. Launched as part of our response to the Scottish Social Housing Charter, several staff workshops have now taken place where frontline staff have been involved in discussing our performance and approaches, giving opinions on where our strengths lie, and agreeing areas for improvement.

Financial Monitoring

- 6.13 The final part of the ongoing review of our business is monitoring our financial performance – ensuring we are efficient as well as effective. Monthly budget updates are provided to Senior Management Team and other budget holders, with Finance Officers working closely with teams to stay within budget and make savings where possible. Quarterly reports are presented to Committee for review and approval.

7.0 IMPROVING WHAT WE DO

Internal Management Plan

- 7.1 All internal and external reviews, audits and feedback, complaints and reports are used to prepare action plans for service improvement. Service improvements and revised performance indicators then feed into the annual review of the Internal Management Plan, managed by the Senior Management Team and reported to the Management Committee on a twice yearly basis.

Service Action Plans

- 7.2 For those improvement actions that are service specific, service action plans are used to assign ownership and track progress. Examples include action plans coming from care inspections. If an action is to be implemented across the organisation it would be moved to the Internal Management Plan and assigned to the relevant function within the organisation.

Policy Reviews

- 7.3 Policies can be reviewed because three years has passed since the last review, or can be as a result of a recommendation from an improvement activity. New or significantly amended policies are presented to the relevant Committee for approval. Minor amendments can be approved by Senior Management Team.

Staff Development

- 7.4 Staff learning and development is a key approach that Southside uses to improve its services. This includes comprehensive induction, mandatory training, role specific training and regular refresher training, as well as other personal development activities. A Training Log is used to track what has been completed across all teams, with annual performance reviews and regular one to one meetings used to capture development needs and monitor the impact of training.

Sharing Learning

- 7.5 Sharing individual learning is always promoted within Southside, with staff encouraged to share information from training and seminars, and managers regularly circulating external reports and policy updates. Our Compliments, Comments and Complaints system demands that all complaints consider if there are learning points which can be shared with other staff and appropriate action taken across Southside.

Awards & Accreditation

- 7.6 Over recent years Southside has been successful in achieving the Investors in People Silver status. Consideration is also being given to what types of further accreditation may be of interest to Southside. It is important that we do not simply work towards 'getting the badge', but instead use accreditation to gain recognition for the excellent work we already have.

8.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 8.1 As per Southside's Scheme of Delegation, the Director has overall responsibility for quality and continuous improvement, with this being further delegated to the Heads of Services. This includes providing relevant Committees with regular reports, to allow them to scrutinise performance and ensure staff are proactively identifying and addressing areas for improvement.
- 8.2 The role of the Senior Management Team is to support business improvement activities, ensuring that reasons for any deterioration in performance are understood, and that action plans are put in place, progressed and reviewed.

8.3 It is the role of everyone within Southside to contribute to the continuous improvement approach by reviewing what we do and making suggestions on what could be done better, as well as getting involved in inspections and projects

8.4 All other responsibilities mentioned within this document are fully detailed in the Scheme of Delegation, including the specific remit of each Committee.

9.0 TRAINING

9.1 A range of business improvement related training and coaching is available. These include:

- Preparing for Inspection.
- Complaints Process & System.
- Performance Management.
- Project Management.
- Systems Reporting.