

Equalities Statement 2011/2012

1. Who we are

The Scottish Housing Regulator was established as an agency of the Scottish Government on 1 April 2008. We regulate registered social landlords and the landlord and homelessness services of local authorities.

Our purpose is to:

- protect the interests of current and future tenants and other service users;
- ensure the continuing provision of good quality social housing, in terms of decent homes, good services, value for money, and financial viability; and
- maintain the confidence of funders.

2. What we do

We register and regulate independent social landlords. We also inspect the housing and homeless services provided by local authorities.

One in four households in Scotland rents a house from a registered social landlord or local authority that we regulate.

We aim to use the combined tools of scrutiny, public reporting, information and analysis, financial scrutiny and, where appropriate, direct intervention, to protect the interests of current and future tenants, and other service users.

Our approach to regulating landlords is guided by a set of policies which we keep under review and is underpinned by a commitment to promoting equalities.

We publish Performance Standards jointly agreed with CoSLA and the SFHA which we expect landlords and service providers to meet. These provide a framework for us to assess performance and for landlords to self-assess their own performance.

To help regulated bodies meet Performance Standards, manage for improvement and comply with our expectations, we publish regulatory guidance and signpost to other good practice publications.

3. Our Commitment to Equalities

What we will do

There are various strands to our commitment to equality including:

- promoting equal opportunities across the social housing sector;
- monitoring and evaluating our own policies and the social housing sector's approach to equalities;
- being a good employer;
- establishing the right organisational culture; and
- meeting our corporate objectives.

As an agency of the Scottish Government, we are subject to the Equality Act 2010. The Act came into force in October 2010 and replaced the existing legislation covering race, equality and gender. The Act also extends legislative requirements to include age, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity.

The new Equality Act places duties on public authorities including the Scottish Government and its agencies, including SHR. These are in two parts. The first, a General Duty, states that those subject to the equality duty must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The second are specific duties, which can be placed on certain public authorities to ensure better performance of the general duty. The Scottish Government consulted on the scope of specific duties in September 2009 and again on detailed proposals in late 2010. It is currently considering specific duties for Scottish public authorities which will be laid before the Scottish Parliament in due course.

This statement and action plan sets out how we will comply with the general duty of the Equality Act 2010.

4. Promoting equal opportunities across the social housing sector

We expect all social landlords to embrace diversity, promote equal opportunities for all and eliminate unlawful discrimination in all areas of their work. To assist them we provide information and self-assessment questions on our website to help ensure that all areas of their work reflect these principles. Our self assessment information can be found here:

http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/shr_selfassessment.hcsp

We are committed to measuring the performance of RSLs both as employers and in the services they provide. We will continue to consider our information requirements in this area and the best way to capture this information from landlords.

This statement and accompanying action plan sets out the activities we will undertake to ensure we promote equal opportunities. We will revisit the action plan if new specific duties are endorsed by the Scottish Parliament.

5. Being a good employer

We are committed to promoting equal opportunities and being open and accessible to people with appropriate skills and abilities from all parts of the society we serve. This means valuing people as individuals and making the best use of everyone's talent and potential, as well as raising awareness of equality and diversity issues within the organisation.

We will follow the Scottish Government's diversity strategy and policy, ensuring equal opportunity to existing and potential employees. This can be found here:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Directorates/Services-Groups/HR/HR/policies-guidance/diversity>

We are committed to training all staff in equalities and our duties under the Act and to understand their rights and responsibilities. We will ensure that all staff receive equalities training at least once per year.

6. Getting the right organisational culture

We will ensure that our staff work in an open, supportive environment where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and understand the values and benefits of equality and diversity.

We will do this by building the following principles into all of our activities:

Mainstreaming: We are committed to mainstreaming equality. This means we will integrate equality into everything we do, including leadership, work plans and policy development, ensuring that equality principles are part of the process.

As part of this process we will impact assess all new policies and functions to ensure equalities issues are fully considered.

Effective Involvement: We will consult our staff and other stakeholders during the development of our processes and policies and throughout implementation.

Leadership: Strategic success requires commitment and drive at the highest level. Our Regulation Board, Chief Executive and Executive Management Team are committed to mainstreaming equality and developing and delivering an effective equality strategy. They will ensure that all of our policies and procedures reflect this.

7. Meeting our corporate objectives

Our six strategic objectives are:

- to hold regulated bodies to account for securing better service outcomes;
- to provide assurance about the financial viability of RSLs and challenge all landlords to deliver better asset management and value for money;
- to secure good governance and accountability;
- to engage tenants and other service users in our work;
- to inform, and respond to, the Scottish Government's policy and investment priorities; and
- to be a responsive and best value organisation.

We will build on our work with predecessor bodies by working together on areas of mutual concern and sharing information, where appropriate with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and/or other relevant bodies.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Our commitment to equal opportunities and diversity includes a monitoring role to ensure that our policies and practices are working and reflect current best practice and emerging policies.

We will maintain records on recruitment, training and employment and use this information as a means of assessing our diversity policies, identifying areas of inequality and monitoring our targets on employment and representation within the workforce.

We will continue to assess and monitor social landlords' commitment to equality through:

- the collection of appropriate equalities information in our Annual Performance Statistical Return from RSLs;
- embedding equalities within our regulatory activities;
- intervening where appropriate; and
- periodically reviewing existing engagement and MOUs with other regulators.

9. Future Changes

The Scottish Government is currently considering specific duties for Scottish public authorities to help meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 general duty. The proposals will be laid before the Scottish Parliament in due course. We will revisit this statement and action plan when these duties are agreed and in place.

In December 2010 the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 received Royal Assent. This Act establishes the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) as a body independent of Ministers. The Board of the new body will be appointed in April 2011 but for the first year will consult on the use of its regulatory powers. We anticipate that the Board's regulatory powers will begin in April 2012.

April 2011

EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2011/12

This plan sets out how we will promote equalities from 2011 – 2012. It covers what we will do and who is responsible for making sure the action is completed on time

Policy	Actions	By whom	Timeframe	Expected Outcome	Contribution towards SG National Outcomes
Promoting equal opportunities in the sector					
Continue to provide landlords with easy access to up to date & relevant information and self assessment material across all equalities duties	Publish and promote performance standards, provide landlords with self assessment material and thematic studies on equalities	Head of inspection Head of Policy & Corporate Services	Ongoing	Promote positive practice Providing landlords with information that helps them to continuously improve their services to equalities groups	Tackling inequalities Strong, resilient and supportive communities High quality public services
Being a good employer					
Staff Training	We will ensure that staff have appropriate diversity and equality training	Head of Policy & Corporate Services	Annually	Staff are fully aware of equalities issues and their responsibilities and are confident that they can engage the sector on these issues	Tackling inequalities High quality public services

Organisational culture					
Continue to mainstream equality issues in all of our scrutiny activity	Scrutiny activity to include a range of appropriate activities on equality issues which ensure that we respond appropriately when issues arise	Head of Inspection throughout the inspection programme Head of Business Analysis through information gathering Head of Support and Intervention during relevant regulatory engagement	Ongoing	By holding landlords to account on equalities, we will ensure that landlords' activities and policies accord to relevant equal opportunities legislation and promote opportunities for all equalities groups	Tackling inequalities Strong, resilient and supportive communities High quality public services
Ensure the SHR website and all publications are accessible	Provide a fully accessible website Show the 'Happy to Translate' logo on	Head of Policy & Corporate Services	Logo on website and publications Ongoing	Ensure maximum accessibility to our website and publications	Tackling inequalities



	the website and all hard copy publications				
Broaden participation by equality groups	<p>We will ensure that where appropriate we will promote membership of advisory groups to increase representation of equality groups</p> <p>We will ensure that any events which we organise, support the involvement of people with caring responsibilities by offering expenses for childcare etc and are accessible to those with disabilities</p>	Head of Policy & Corporate Services	Ongoing	Equality groups are given the opportunity to be involved in our participation activities and ensure the views, opinions and experiences of equality groups are reflected in our regulatory activities	<p>Tackling inequalities</p> <p>High quality public services</p>
Monitoring and evaluating this strategy					
Monitor and report progress	Annual reports to EMT in June each year	Head of Policy & Corporate Services	Annually	Ensure action plan being delivered	<p>Tackling inequalities</p> <p>High quality public services</p>



<p>Collect performance & statistical information on RSLs</p>	<p>We will continue to collect equalities information about RSLs, both as employers and in the services they provide. We will continually review our information needs in this area and how best to capture the information.</p>	<p>Head of Business Analysis</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>By monitoring equalities information we can identify those landlords who may need to address this issue in more detail and promote through our scrutiny activities that equalities groups are represented in RSL governance and staffing</p>	<p>Tackling inequalities High quality public services Realise full employment potential</p>
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