

Inspection report

Outlook Housing Association

April 2005

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Summary

The inspection of Outlook Housing Association took place in January 2005.

Inspection Findings

Outlook Housing Limited is based in Edinburgh. Its core business is providing very sheltered and care housing to older people. It owns 23 properties in Edinburgh with the capacity to provide accommodation to 152 people. Outlook was first registered with Scottish Homes (now Communities Scotland) in 1976 as Abbeyfield Edinburgh and changed its name to Outlook Housing Limited in 2001.

Outlook achieves high levels of satisfaction from its tenants. It is facing the challenge of reducing demand for its shared housing in Victorian villas by gradually improving or replacing its property to meet current expectations for self-contained housing. Outlook is run by a Management Committee that is well informed and well led. The organisation is financially viable in the medium term and has a strategy in place to address areas of weakness that have a financial impact. Although cash resources are good and the last two years show a small surplus, historically profitability has been poor as a result of high voids.

Services are managed by two co-Directors and this arrangement works well with clear lines of accountability and good communication. Outlook has responded well to the expectations of its new role as a small RSL. In the 5 years since its last inspection, Outlook has improved its: leadership and strategic direction; planning for the long term maintenance of its properties; and day to day maintenance and gas servicing. The Committee is actively pursuing a transfer of engagements to another RSL to promote and develop its support and care services within a stronger framework. That process has yet to be concluded and put to the shareholders. Overall Outlook demonstrates some strengths and several areas where improvement is needed.

Strengths in Outlook's services:

- it provides a safe, secure place for older people to live;
- it lets its housing to people who need housing and support or care;
- its standard of personal care;
- its management of rent arrears;
- its management of gas safety.

Key areas for improvement in Outlook's services:

- the proportion of difficult to let housing and the associated loss of rental income;
- the range and quality of information provided to tenants about the services and performance;
- performance monitoring and management, including reports to the Committee;

- the transparency and management of its letting process;
- the out-of-date life cycle costings;

Outlook will implement an improvement plan to address the areas for improvement we have identified. Since Outlook is already working with the Regulator towards a transfer of engagements to another RSL, we do not require Outlook to agree its improvement plan with us.

How to get more information and contact details

If you would like to see Outlook's improvement plan you should contact:

Outlook Housing Ltd
43 London Street
Edinburgh
EH3 6LX

Telephone: 0131 556 4511
Email: mail@outlookhousing.org.uk

The full report is on our website at www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk.
This Summary can also be made available on tape, in Braille, large print and community languages. For information please contact Janette Campbell on 0131 479 5163 or email: janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk.

1. Introduction

About this inspection

1.1 This inspection was carried out by Communities Scotland under section 69 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Our purpose in inspection is to provide an independent external assessment of the effectiveness of housing service delivery and make recommendations to help improvement. Inspections are conducted within a published framework of *Performance Standards*.

How we assessed performance

1.2 Our inspectors asked two key questions:

- how good are the services we have inspected?
- how well are these services being managed for improvement?

1.3 In order to answer these questions the inspectors:

- spoke to staff and members of the governing body;
- visited one of the very sheltered houses and spoke to tenants;
- tested first hand how well services were being delivered;
- examined key policies, publications, information and the organisation's self-assessment submitted for this inspection;
- analysed published performance and financial information.

The inspection team

1.4 The lead inspector on the Outlook's inspection was Carol Paton (Associate Inspector) supported by Jill Anderson (Financial Analyst). We were on site on 20 January 2005. We would like to thank everyone involved in the inspection, particularly the governing body, staff and tenants for their time and co-operation.

Responding to this inspection

1.5 We expect all inspected bodies to make the summary of this report available to anyone who wishes it, report our findings to tenants and other stakeholders and respond to the issues raised in this report.

2. Context

About the organisation

- 2.1 Outlook Housing Limited is based in Edinburgh and provides services to older people. It owns 23 properties in Edinburgh which provide a total of 152 places for residents and tenants. Core services are delivered through two care homes and eight shared very sheltered houses let on the basis of occupancy agreements, and 8 tenancies. For ease of reference the use of “tenant” in this report includes resident, unless a distinction is made.
- 2.2 Outlook was first registered in 1976 with Scottish Homes (now Communities Scotland) as Abbeyfield Edinburgh. It changed its name to Outlook Housing Limited in July 2001 and adopted the SFHA model rules. Outlook is an Industrial & Provident Society and a registered charity.
- 2.3 The Annual Performance and Statistical Return (APSR) asks RSLs to select a peer group which best describes their organisation. Outlook selected the group described as providing highly supported accommodation. This is the group we used to compare Outlook’s performance.
- 2.4 Outlook has both a new build and a refurbishment programme designed to address reducing demand for shared accommodation by developing integrated packaged support to individual accommodation together with person centred support. It aims to build new flats to replace 70% of its very sheltered properties over the next 3 years.

Key Facts

- 2.5 The table below gives background information about Outlook and shows trends over the last three financial years.

(Notes)	2002-2003	2003-2004	at 30.9.04
Properties owned (1)	23	23	23
Total number of occupancy agreements or tenancies (2)	152	152	152
Employees	49	47	47
Annual turnover (£'000's)	1,493	1,548	1,515
Total possible rental income (£'000's)	1,576	1,688	1,703
Rental income from housing benefit (%) (3)	-	-	3.6
Average weekly rent (£) (4)	25	47	53.79

(Notes)	2002-2003	2003-2004	at 30.9.04
Average rent increase (%)	6.3	5.5	4
Agreements/Tenancies re-let	19	22	19
Responsive repairs carried out	-	624	-
Maintenance spend per house (£) (5)	347	440	-
Right To Buy sales	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source (APSR / Annual Accounts) except for the most recent figures which reflect the position at the end of Outlook's financial year at 30 September.

Notes:

1. 11 Victorian houses owned and managed providing shared accommodation let through occupancy agreements; 2 Victorian houses leased to Social Work; 1 Victorian house part-leased to Social Work; 1 property leased to CEC for homeless accommodation; 8 studio flats let on a SST basis.
2. made up of 120 bedspaces/tenancies owned and directly managed and 34 owned and leased.
3. this reflects known housing benefit only. Many tenants handle their own benefit and no estimate of the amount can be accurately made.
4. this is the rent for SST tenancies.
5. direct labour and staffing costs allocated to the maintenance function. Excludes overheads not directly attributable to maintenance.

3. How Good is the Service?

Housing Management

Access

Social landlords should provide open, fair and equal access to their housing lists and should work with partners to simplify and maximise access to housing.

- 3.1 As a partner in EdIndex, Edinburgh's Common Housing Register, Outlook is simplifying and maximising access to its accommodation. No applicant has been suspended from the list.
- 3.2 The application process is administered centrally by EdIndex and Outlook should satisfy itself that it is administered fairly and with a high standard of communication with applicants. Housing needs points are allocated through the EdIndex system and support needs are assessed, and points awarded by Outlook.
- 3.3 There is no nominations agreement or section 5 homelessness protocol with the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) due to the specialised form of housing. Outlook should seek CEC's formal agreement to this approach.

Meeting need and maximising choice

Social landlords should meet housing need through lettings and should maximise choice for applicants.

- 3.4 Outlook's allocation policy is based on prioritising those in housing need. There were several weaknesses in the management of lettings. Prior to joining EdIndex the allocation criteria set out in policy were not reflected in the structure of the application form. The criteria are now integral to the application process. Case files were not managed consistently and Outlook could not demonstrate that applicants have always been prioritised in accordance with its allocations policy. In the cases we reviewed, since Outlook joined EdIndex, there is evidence that applicants with the greatest number of points are being considered. There remain some weaknesses in file management which means that the implementation of policy and the process of prioritisation are not sufficiently transparent.
- 3.5 No lets have been made directly to homeless people, but Outlook is making a positive contribution to housing the homeless by leasing 14 bed-spaces, which are no longer appropriate for its traditional client group, to CEC for use as homeless accommodation.

- 3.6 All lets in the last 3 years have been made to white applicants. However, there is a very small proportion of the black and minority ethnic (BME) community that comes within the age range of Outlook's client group. Although the particular nature of the accommodation means that demand for this type of housing might be expected to be low from the BME elderly, Outlook could do more to explore BME demand for its housing by, for example, consulting with BME representative organisations.

Sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness

Social landlords should maximise security of tenure for all residents of their accommodation, and should work to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness through their delivery of housing management services.

- 3.7 Where the accommodation is shared an appropriate occupancy agreement is provided. The strategy of replacing shared accommodation with independent units will increase security of tenure over time. There are 8 self-contained tenancies which all have a Scottish secure tenancy (SST) in place.
- 3.8 Outlook's commitment to sustaining tenancies is demonstrated by its core work in supporting people who would otherwise find it difficult to sustain a tenancy on their own. In addition, leases with the CEC Social Work and Housing Departments extend the client group to include those with mental health problems and those with autism syndrome disorder.
- 3.9 Outlook takes eviction action only as a last resort and only 1 eviction was carried out in the last 12 months. This case was handled well with regular and sustained contact and the provision of clear advice and contact with specialist services.

Quality of neighbourhoods

Social landlords should deliver services to ensure that neighbourhoods are attractive, well-maintained and safe places to live. They should deal appropriately with anti-social behaviour.

- 3.10 Outlook provides safe places to live with the additional security afforded by having staffed and shared environments. Only the 8 self-contained tenancies do not have support staff. There have been no nuisance or anti-social complaints received.

Property Maintenance

Access to the repairs service

Social landlords should have arrangements in place that make it easy for tenants to report repairs and have them carried out.

- 3.11 Tenants can report repairs easily and at any time, either through support staff or directly to the Buildings Manager. There is an emergency out-of-hours service available to the support staff and directly to the 8 tenants. An appointments system is in place and works well due to the staffed nature of the stock.

Speed and quality of responsive repairs service

Social landlords should set challenging targets for completing repairs, strive to achieve them and ensure repairs are completed to a high standard.

- 3.12 Outlook's targets for dealing with responsive repairs are challenging in comparison with many other RSLs but actual performance is not as good in comparison. Outlook has taken action to improve its past poor performance and management of the repairs service has been improving in the last year. Feedback on the standard of repairs carried out was positive.

	Outlook target response time	Performance				
		Outlook			National median 2003/04	RSL peer average 2003/04
		2001/02	2002/03	at 30/9/04		
Emergency Repairs	6 hours	-	-	95%	97%	98.2%
Urgent Repairs	2 days	-	-	95%	93%	95.2%
Routine Repairs	10 days	-	88%	92%	95%	94.7%

Source (APSR / Annual Accounts) except for the most recent figures which reflect the position at the end of Outlook's financial year at 30 September.

Physical quality of houses

Social landlords should have good information about the condition of their houses and should deliver effective maintenance programmes that take account of housing quality and home safety needs.

- 3.13 Outlook plans for the long-term maintenance of its properties. Its life cycle costing information is 5 years old and staff are aware this needs to be updated to ensure financial resources are planned for and work properly scheduled. During the 2003/04 financial year Outlook did not complete its major repairs programme as planned due to having to bring forward the replacement of fire doors unexpectedly. This was in response to the Fire

Master's recommendations and has been funded from the major repairs budget. It is important to have a long-term cash flow which is supported by an up-to-date life cycle costing to support such decision making.

- 3.14 Outlook has made an initial assessment of whether properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. The delivery plan due for April 2005 has yet to be finalised. Generally the assessment is favourable although upgrading to en suite facilities is necessary where the building layout allows. All properties are lead-free.
- 3.15 Outlook is not yet in a position to demonstrate compliance with The Control of Asbestos at Work 2002 Regulations. It has been slow to commission a programme of surveys, due for completion in 2005, which will enable it to compile a property register and complete its asbestos management policy and procedures.
- 3.16 Outlook meets its obligations for carrying out gas safety checks. All properties have hard-wired fire alarms and smoke detectors.

	at 30 September 2004	
	Number of houses	% of houses with gas
Houses with gas appliances	23	100%
Houses with current gas safety certificates	23	100%
Houses where safety check was carried out within 12 months of previous check	23	100%

Responsiveness to tenants

Social landlords should place the people they serve at the heart of their work, treat them with respect and be responsive to their views and priorities.

- 3.17 Outlook knows its client group and designs its services around their needs. Recent Care Commission Inspection Reports record many strengths in tenant satisfaction, personal care plans and risk assessment. An action plan is in hand to ensure implementation of the small number of recommendations and requirements.
- 3.18 In an independent survey in 2003, a high proportion of tenants (96%) recorded their satisfaction with the service. Results were fed back to tenants and appropriate action was planned to address the issues raised. Outlook measures satisfaction with the application and sign-up processes through a follow-up survey of new tenants. Satisfaction with the information and assistance provided was very high in the past 12 months and a significant improvement on the previous period. Twice as many (87.5%) found the explanation of the tenancy was clear. A smaller proportion of tenants (62%) found the Residents' Handbook useful.

- 3.19 There have been very few service complaints in recent years and none of a serious nature. The sole sample considered during the inspection showed that the incident was investigated and that appropriate and speedy action was taken. The monitoring of complaints could be improved by recording timescales compared with targets.
- 3.20 Outlook makes an effort to seek the views of tenants through a variety of mechanisms: new tenant surveys; a quarterly Residents Forum; and feedback on maintenance. The Residents Forum, although not well attended, also provides an opportunity for tenants from different areas to get together. It covers a good range of service areas and provides a mechanism for tenants to contribute their views.
- 3.21 A key issue for the Association and its tenants is the potential transfer of engagements. The tenants we met during the inspection were unaware of the proposals, despite their coverage at the Residents Forum and in a special newsletter. Outlook should review how best to achieve meaningful consultation with tenants on this key issue, prior to the need for a ballot.
- 3.22 The rent consultation was limited and only two responses were received. There was no figure given for the rent or service charge increases proposed, and little time or encouragement given for responses. A large majority of tenants (85%) have indicated that they are not interested in tenant participation. Outlook considers this to be because of the nature of the accommodation and the age of the tenants, but they should nevertheless seek to develop a participation strategy in line with statutory requirements. Outlook needs to demonstrate that it is proactive and encouraging in seeking the views and involvement of its tenants. However, the nature of the shared and supported accommodation does mean that Outlook's house staff are in constant contact with tenants and can respond to concerns and issues as they arise.
- 3.23 Tenants we met during the inspection were very positive about the quality of service. An on-going issue for the tenants has been the difficulty with hearing when gathered in groups. Outlook has yet to respond to this difficulty, which could also encourage participation.
- 3.24 The main written methods of communicating with tenants about the service are the Tenants Handbook and the newsletter which are supplemented by the day to day contact with house staff. The handbook provides adequate information and advice to tenants at the start of their tenancy but there are a number of weaknesses in the information, particularly for tenants who are not in supported housing. The following areas in particular are either missing or lacking in detail in the written information provided:
- repairs service
 - adaptations

- tenant participation
- rent payment methods and rent arrears prevention
- SST rights
- terminating an occupancy agreement or SST
- offer of information in alternative formats
- service standards and how the shared housing actually operates.

4. Is the Service managed for improvement?

Resource management and efficiency

Social landlords should maximise their income, in a way that is fair to service users, and manage costs effectively.

- 4.1 Rent levels for its 8 non-supported tenancies are comparable with peer RSLs. The Association finds it difficult to benchmark with others in rent setting and in demonstrating affordability in respect of its non-economically active tenants. This means the Committee is taking decisions about rent setting solely in the context of covering costs.
- 4.2 Benefiting from constant face-to-face contact with tenants, Outlook's performance in collecting rent is excellent in comparison with other RSLs. There has been a significant increase in the technical arrears figure, which reflects the inclusion of delayed receipt of Supporting People funding as a technical arrear.

	At March 2003	At March 2004			At Sept 2004
	Outlook	Outlook	Peer Average	National Median	Outlook
Total arrears as % of total gross rental income	0.45	0.32	9.6	6.38	1.8
Total current arrears as % of total gross rental income	0.4	0.3	6.47	4.56	1.79
Current arrears (non technical) as % of total gross rental income	0	0.1	1.17	3.43	0.3
Current arrears (technical) as % of total gross rental income	0.4	0.2	5.29	1.13	1.5
Total former tenant arrears (£)	168	481	-	-	0
As % of total gross rental income	0.01	0.03	3.13	1.81	0
Rent arrears written off	-	-	-	-	1,413

- 4.3 Outlook's performance in minimising the loss of rental income through empty houses is poor and significantly worse than the national averages and the median results for its peer RSLs. This reflects the combined effect of the reduced demand for the nature of the accommodation offered and of prioritising sensitivity over efficiency in encouraging older people to move into their Outlook home. Thirty percent of very sheltered and 18% of care accommodation is considered difficult to let. A quarter of the sheltered and more than half of the care accommodation do not have a private bath or shower. The accommodation is mostly bedsit, shared and has restrictions to physical accessibility.

	At March 2003	At March 2004			At Sept 2004/05
	Outlook	Outlook	Peer Average	National Median	Outlook
Rental income lost due to empty houses (£)	230,515	303,270			287,924
As % of total rental income	14.6	18	6.7	3.0	18.9
% of empty houses re-let in less than 2 weeks	10.5	18.2	23.7	27	11.7
% of empty houses re-let in 2-4 weeks	10.5	4.5	18.4	27.3	11.7
% of empty houses re-let in more than 4 weeks	78.9	77.3	57.9	45.7	76.5
Average time to re-let (days)	103	117	73	34	116

4.4 Central to the Association's strategy to improve this situation is to reduce its shared accommodation. Property is either being upgraded, replaced with new build, leased to another agency, or sold. This strategy is a positive move forward from the previous practice of selling difficult to let properties to fund short-term deficits. In addition to this are a number of housing management initiatives including a training programme for house staff to provide accompanied viewing and a 'selling' approach.

Social landlords should manage the cost of their services effectively and should procure repairs and maintenance services in a way that takes account of quality and cost.

4.5 The cost of providing a service is almost 10% higher than the peer group average and reflects the small stock base compared to its peers, and the heavily supported accommodation provided. However, the total management and direct maintenance costs (see paragraph 2.5) at £1,930 compare favourably with the peer average which is 30% higher. The Association's strategy for improving cost per unit is to manage its stock growth and transfer engagements to another RSL, gaining efficiencies from economies of scale and centralising core services.

2003/04 per unit costs	Outlook	Peer Group Average
Management costs (£)	1,392	1,163
Maintenance overheads (£)	99	194

Source APSR / appendix 2 operating cost statement financial year 2002/03 (year end 30 September 2003) on basis of 152 units.

Performance management

Social landlords should have clear objectives, standards and targets for housing management and property maintenance services, should monitor achievement of these, and should work to continuously improve services.

- 4.6 Outlook plans ahead and an annual internal management plan is produced which is adequate, with objectives related to strategic objectives. The plan is focused on compliance, control and re-provisioning and the planning framework should be improved with greater attention to service outcomes.
- 4.7 Performance is reported to the Committee. There are some strengths but many weaknesses in the frequency and presentation of the information:
- reporting is infrequent, with the performance of housing management and maintenance presented 3 times in the previous 12 month period;
 - there is no reporting on estate management, rent arrears, void turnaround, or rent loss through voids as a percentage of rental income;
 - despite gas servicing having been a problem in the past, there is no performance report;
 - there is no comparison of performance to targets;
 - in the development report, a recommendation regarding the addition of a contractor to the approved list was made without supporting information;
 - the information on development spend against programme.

5. Governance and Financial Management

Leadership and direction

A clear vision or purpose and an inclusive, well-informed planning process are key to effectively delivering the services that tenants want.

- 5.1 The leadership and direction of the Management Committee has strengthened over recent years and the Committee demonstrates confidence, a clear vision, and strategic awareness. There is an understanding of the issues that are important to tenants and the Committee works well with its two Directors. Evidence of the change in leadership is the move away from the strategy of selling assets in response to lettings difficulties and financial deficits, towards a strategy involving remodelling and replacement of property.
- 5.2 We looked at the process that led to the decision to transfer engagements to gauge the Committee's approach to strategic planning. There were strengths and some weaknesses in the approach taken. It was positive that, overall, the process was led by the Committee who devoted time to discussing Outlook's requirements and possible partners. Committee sought independent advice and carried out an option appraisal exercise. The option appraisal was not followed through in its entirety and a comprehensive business case has yet to be compiled. There was an element of business pragmatism in the decision to select a partner after a year of deliberations, to avoid the risk of further delay. The process would have benefited from more focused thinking earlier on and a greater level of comparison of the options. However, there is a rationale for the chosen way forward and clear business benefits.
- 5.3 The Committee has recently put a risk strategy in place which is satisfactory but could be improved further to provide a more reliable framework for the Committee to monitor the management of risk. There is limited information on how risks will be minimised and no allocation of tasks and responsibilities. There is a link to internal audit but no other indication of how the strategy will be monitored.
- 5.4 The Chair is due to stand down in April 2005 at the end of his 5-year term. The Committee has agreed that, given the proposed transfer of engagements, the Chair should continue for a further year. This is a sensible approach taken in the interests of the business and to ensure continuity in a period of change. But the Association must ensure that it obtains the agreement of the membership to this at the AGM, so as to avoid any breach of its rules.
- 5.5 There are no tenants on the Committee and only 7 tenants are members of the Association. This is not a key weakness given the age of the client

group and the lack of interest expressed so far in participating. The Committee ascertains the views of its clients in other ways, including the direct contact of staff with tenants in their homes and through the tenants forum, but it must make sure that tenants are given further opportunities to be involved in any decision on the future of the Association.

Financial viability and management

Social landlords should be financially viable in the short and medium term, and sustainable in the longer term. They should have a robust financial management framework.

- 5.6 Outlook is financially viable in the medium term. It has areas of weakness that have a financial impact and has a strategy in place to address these areas.
- 5.7 Although it has good liquidity and no debt, profitability has been poor historically with gross deficits for the last 4 years. High voids have continued to affect profitability and increased to 18% in 2004. The decreased operating costs in financial year 2003 resulted in lower losses and overall there were small surpluses in 2003 and 2004, in 2003 due to interest received and in 2004 due to interest received plus a gain from the sale of a commercial property.
- 5.8 Outlook recognises that being unable to generate sufficient income to meet its costs is a key risk to the organisation. A strategic business review was carried out in 1999 and resulted in a number of actions being taken including the sale of 3 loss-making houses. A replacement programme is in place for unsuitable properties.
- 5.9 Outlook is actively exploring a transfer of engagements to a national RSL with the aim of enabling it to promote and develop its support and care services within a stronger framework.

Financial performance	£000's 2000/01 Actual	£000's 2001/02 Actual	£000's 2002/03 Actual	£000's 2003/04 Actual	£000's 2004/05 *Actual
Turnover	1,493.8	1,508.6	1,492.5	1,548.0	1,651.7
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	(193.7)	(188.4)	(70.7)	(126.1)	(72.5)
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	1,006.9	(76.8)	35.5	2.3	(0.7)

*Year ending 30 September 2004 falls in financial year April 2004 to March 2005 therefore actual figures provided for 2004/05.

- 5.10 Outlook has a fair financial management framework with some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is needed. Budgets are prepared annually and approved by the Management Committee in advance of the start of the financial year. Quarterly management accounts are prepared but are only reviewed 2-3 months after the period

end. The frequency and content of these financial accounts should be improved to provide the Committee and senior management with more detailed financial information about the organisation.

- 5.11 Although viability of individual development projects is assessed, long-term financial projections are not available. These are a key tool for evaluating the organisation's long-term sustainability. The RSL is aware of the need to develop long-term forecasts which reflect up-to-date stock condition information. Outlook has 5-year projections, the content and reliability of which would be improved by having clear assumptions explaining the figures used.

6. Areas for Improvement Action

- 6.1 These are the key areas that need to be targeted for improvement action. They are broadly in order of priority within each of the key service areas.
- 6.2 Across all of its areas of activity, Outlook should:
- demonstrate it is promoting and encouraging tenant involvement and feedback;
 - improve the planning and performance management framework to demonstrate a focus on service outcomes.
- 6.3 In housing management, Outlook should:
- improve the range and quality of information provided to tenants on their tenancy and the services provided, making the different rights and responsibilities between occupancy and tenancy clear;
 - demonstrate transparency in the allocation of houses in line with policy by improving file management and audit trails at the point of letting;
 - demonstrate application of its equal opportunities policy and monitor access to its waiting list and lettings, in the context of equal opportunities;
 - monitor the management of its housing list by Edindex to ensure fair access and good communication with tenants is being achieved;
 - demonstrate through written confirmation from CEC that the Council does not seek a nominations agreement or section 5 protocol.
- 6.4 In property maintenance, Outlook should:
- demonstrate it meets its statutory duties on asbestos management;
 - review the stock condition survey information and update the life cycle costing plan.
- 6.5 In governance and financial management, Outlook should:
- produce long term financial projections informed by up-to-date stock condition and life cycle costing information;
 - further develop the assumptions that underpin its medium term financial planning;
 - improve the frequency and detail of its management accounts;
 - develop a way to demonstrate rent comparability and affordability so that the Committee can make more informed decisions on rent setting and rent increases;
 - strengthen its risk management systems to ensure that all activities are covered and responsibility allocated.

- 6.6 The Association should set out in the Improvement Plan it gives us the actions it intends to take to respond to the recommendations made above.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 This report highlights our findings following this housing inspection. We expect all organisations to respond effectively to our recommendations using their own improvement planning processes. The plan should show how the organisation intends to respond to our findings. As Outlook is already working with the Regulator towards a transfer of engagements to another RSL, we do not require Outlook to agree its improvement plan with us. If a transfer does not take place, we will follow up the improvement plan in 2 years and re-inspect Outlook in 5 years time.
- 7.2 If you would like to see Outlook's improvement plan you should contact:

Outlook Housing Ltd
43 London Street
Edinburgh EH3 6LX

Glossary

Annual Statistical and Performance Return (APSR)	Annual questionnaire completed by RSLs and sent to Communities Scotland. Used to keep the Register of Social Landlords up to date and to track the performance of RSLs.
Average	The arithmetic mean – the sum of all the values divided by the number of values.
Common housing register	A register of all applicants for social housing used by two or more landlords within an area.
Housing list	A list of applicants for housing which is used by the RSL to allocate its housing stock.
National Median	The central value of the ordered performance of all Scottish RSLs
Peer group	A group of organisations facing similar tasks and challenges with which comparisons can be made. RSLs choose which peer group they belong to when they submit their APSRs.
Performance Standards	Housing Standards for all social landlords in Scotland.
Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	A landlord providing social rented housing that is registered and regulated by Communities Scotland.
Right to buy	Many Scottish secure tenants have the right to buy their property at a discounted price subject to length of tenancy.
Scottish secure tenancy (SST)	The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 establishes the Scottish Secure Tenancy as the tenancy for all tenants of social landlords in Scotland

Regulation & Inspection

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