



Scottish Housing
Regulator

**How we involve
tenants and service users in our work
2016-18**

May 2016

About Us

We are the independent Regulator of just under 200 social landlords – around 160 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and 32 local authorities. We are led by a Board of non-executive members and directly accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

Our one objective is to safeguard and promote the interests of

- nearly 600,000 **tenants** who live in homes provided by social landlords
- around 118,000 **owners** who receive services from social landlords
- around 40,000 **people and their families** who may be homeless and seek help from local authorities
- over 2,000 **Gypsy/Travellers** who can use official sites provided by social landlords.

Our role is to gather, monitor, assess and report on social landlords' performance of housing activities and RSLs' financial well-being and standards of governance, and to intervene where appropriate to achieve our objective. We also keep a public register of social landlords.

You can see more on how we regulate social landlords in our published Regulatory Framework, available on our website at: www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk



Introduction

We want to actively involve tenants, homeless people, others who use social housing services and their representatives in our work. This document explains how we will do this from 2016 to 2018. It builds on our first strategy, which ran from 2012-2015.

Recap: what we did 2012-15

Between 2012 and 2015 we worked with tenants and service users in a variety of ways to help us to understand their views. For example, we:

Established a new **National Panel of Tenants and Service Users** and ran two annual programmes to help us understand views and priorities.

Set up a new **Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) liaison group** to help us involve tenants in our regulatory approach.

Worked with our **Tenant Assessors** to give a tenant perspective to our scrutiny.

Asked for feedback from all **tenant organisations**.



Involved **Regional Networks** and **RTOs** in regulatory consultations.

We set out some criteria for success back in 2012. You can see what we achieved against our criteria at the end of this document.

What we will do 2016-18

Our 2015-18 [corporate plan](#) expresses our continued commitment to involving tenants and service users in our work. We will continue in the same broad direction as our first strategy. We asked for feedback from the nine tenant regional networks, and we have taken account of this in our forward plans.

Our regulatory approach has evolved since 2012. This has influenced how we engage with tenants and service users and how tenants can engage with their landlords. One of the biggest changes has been the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Charter has made it easier for tenants and service users to scrutinise landlords' services.

To help this scrutiny, we now publish annual landlord performance reports and an annual assessment of national performance against the Charter outcomes. We have also created an online tool to let tenants compare performance across different landlords. This has directly empowered tenants to scrutinise their own landlord's performance, measure its success and hold their landlord to account. You can see all this on our [website](#).

Our 2016/17 budget is significantly less than in 2015/16. We will be a smaller Regulator in future and we will have to carefully consider our priorities. We will be doing less, so we need to make sure we are concentrating on the right things. But we will continue to put the interests of tenants and other service users at the heart of what we do.

We recognise that tenants and other service users are diverse with different needs and priorities. We aim to understand these and take account of them in our work. We have a legal duty to consider the equalities and environmental impacts of our work, and we will consider these fully in the activities we describe here. Our activities will also help us meet any future legal requirements relating to participation in public decision-making.

We have **two involvement objectives for 2016-18**:

1. Understand the priorities and views of tenants and service users

We will create opportunities for tenants and service users to engage directly and regularly with us. This will help make sure our work takes account of their views and priorities.

We will do this by:

- Gathering feedback from our **National Panel of Tenants and Service Users**.



The National Panel has almost 500 members from around Scotland.

We will use the National Panel to find out directly about the views, experiences and service priorities of a diverse range of tenants and other service users.

- Ongoing **engagement with tenant representatives**.



- » We will continue to meet regularly with the RTO Liaison group.



- » Our important engagement with the Regional Networks will continue, for example through meetings between Chairs/Secretaries and SHR Board members/staff.



- » We will explore the scope for further dialogue with individual Regional Networks, for example attending annual conferences.

- » We will invite tenant representatives to events such as round-table policy discussions or publication launches where these affect tenants.

- » We will look for opportunities to speak at the main tenant support agencies' conferences, resources permitting.

- **Involving tenants and service users** when we **consult** on new regulatory proposals that impact on people who use landlords' services.



Our main routes for dialogue for issues that affect tenants will be the Regional Networks and the RTO liaison group. We will offer briefings for Regional Network Chairs and Secretaries on relevant regulatory policy consultations, and discuss how best to promote the proposals more widely.

- Gathering and understanding **the views and interests of service users** from traditionally 'hard to reach' and equalities groups.

- » We will be flexible in our approach here, making use of opportunities as they arise, for example working with the National Panel or through dialogue with representative bodies.

- Using our **regular liaison with bodies who work on behalf of service users** to discuss our regulatory approach and to invite feedback

2. Involve tenants and other service users in our regulation of social landlords

We will involve tenants and other service users directly in our regulation work so that we have a service user perspective. **We will achieve this by:**

- **Involving tenants in our work to make sure that we stay focused on the issues that matter most** to them.



We have recruited a pool of **independent, volunteer tenant advisors** to perform this unique role. Our advisors will speak directly to other tenants to gather their views on landlords' services. This feedback provides us with a tenant perspective to add to the other regulatory evidence we gather.

- **Involving tenant advisors** in other regulation activities where they can add value, for instance in testing landlords' services by acting as mystery shoppers, and assessing information and materials produced by landlords for their tenants.
- **Asking our tenant advisors** to review our draft publications and website facilities, and help us to make sure our material is both accessible and user-friendly for tenants.
- **Asking for views from other service users** when we assess the quality of services provided by social landlords to us a direct, user perspective to add to other regulatory evidence.

Communicating our work

We want to communicate in the right way with tenants and other service users, and keep them informed about our work and opportunities to get involved. We will continue to communicate in a range of ways, because we know that is the best way to reach most people.

We asked tenant groups about their preferences. In response to feedback we have produced a number of short, summary versions of our publications. We will continue to do this, where relevant, in a targeted way.

All our publications and policies are available on our website. We will also use twitter to promote new publications and announcements and to direct readers to our website.

More than 100 tenant organisations already subscribe to our regular newsletter, which we circulate by email around six times a year. You can contact us direct to sign up or on our website www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

We know that not everyone has access to the internet. Our reduced budget and our environmental commitments mean that we have to consider carefully when to provide hard copies of our publications. Most of our publications are electronic-only. Where we can, we will make hard copies available on request.

How we will know we have been successful in 2016-18

We will know we have been successful if:

- we have engaged with our National Panel of Tenants and Service Users and used the feedback to inform our regulatory work and how we communicate
- we have used our tenant advisors to support our regulatory engagement and to bring us first-hand views from tenants on their landlord's services
- we have continued to meet regularly with the RTO Liaison Group and have made use of further opportunities to share information with, and gather views from RTOs and the Regional Networks
- we can demonstrate that our approach is representative and gives tenants and other service users meaningful opportunities to participate
- we have feedback from tenants and other service users and can demonstrate how our approach to consultation and involvement has contributed to how we regulate

This strategy is aligned with our current Corporate Plan and covers a two-year period from May 2016. We will monitor our achievements and report the outcomes in our annual reports.

Annex 1: Our achievements 2012-15

Criteria for success	Achievement in 2012-15
<p>We have established our National Tenants & Service Users Panel, used it to engage with members and considered and implemented changes to our regulatory approach where necessary.</p>	<p>We established the Panel in early 2013 and have over 480 tenants and service users to date (April 2016).</p> <p>We published two annual reports from our work with the Panel. These include findings from two full Panel surveys and in-depth qualitative feedback on a range of landlord services and issues that are important to tenants.</p> <p>Findings from the Panel have informed our annual regulatory risk assessment process, analysis of Charter data and our programme of thematic inquiries.</p>
<p>We have introduced our annual survey of RTOs, carried out the initial round of surveys, published the results and demonstrated how these have fed into our regulation of social housing.</p>	<p>We surveyed all our stakeholder groups in 2014, gathering views on our communications and engagement. This included a survey of all 600+ RTO groups and Regional Networks. In response to findings from RTOs specifically, we have produced tenant summaries of a range of publications and provided hard copies of specific publications and consultation materials to RTOs.</p>
<p>We have involved tenant assessors in our scrutiny activity and incorporated their findings into our assessment of landlords' services.</p>	<p>Tenant assessors routinely assist in our scrutiny work. Their activities have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ mystery shopping exercises in the Housing Options and other thematic inquiries; ○ visits to landlords to check availability of significant performance failure factsheet and tenant organisation register; ○ individual landlord scrutiny; ○ reviews of our tenant-focused publications.
<p>We can demonstrate that our approach is representative and gives tenants and other service users meaningful opportunities to participate.</p>	<p>Our National Panel membership is diverse and includes individuals with protected equalities characteristics, Gypsy/Travellers and factored owners. We have also engaged with people who are or are at risk of becoming homeless.</p> <p>We published a thematic inquiry report on sites and services for Gypsy/Travellers in November 2015. This included direct feedback from site residents on site management and service standards.</p> <p>Invited RTO/Regional Network members to SHR events and workshops (e.g. Value for Money and Risk workshops; launch of our National Panel reports at Dynamic Earth).</p> <p>We have refreshed our pool of tenant assessors with a view to aligning this group more closely with the broader tenant profile, and updated their role to work with us as tenant advisers.</p> <p>We have tailored our publications in response to feedback on the preferences of tenants and other service users, providing tenant summaries and hard copies of publications where appropriate.</p>

<p>We have sought feedback from tenants and other service users on our approach and can demonstrate how our approach to consultation and involvement has contributed to the delivery of our regulatory functions and to the development of our approach.</p>	<p>We established an RTO Liaison Group and used our quarterly liaison meetings to discuss our approach and invite feedback. Our CEO and Board members met with the RTO Liaison Group, had annual meetings with the Regional Networks Chairs and Secretaries Group and made use of other opportunities to engage with tenant representative bodies, such as SHR Chair's lunches, annual conferences.</p> <p>We launched Landlord Reports on the Charter, along with an online comparison tool. These provide a summary of landlords' Charter performance on the services that matter most to tenants and other service users.</p> <p>We developed the landlord report with tenants so that it included and reflected their priorities. And tenant feedback directed what we assessed and analysed in our national report on the Charter.</p> <p>We focused our first Performance Matters report on how landlords were involving and supporting tenants to become involved in tenant scrutiny and presented positive practice examples to encourage other landlords to develop their own approach.</p> <p>Our public consultations are open and accessible to all stakeholders. We have written directly to all RTO groups, providing hard copies of relevant formal consultation materials throughout 2012-15.</p> <p>We have responded directly to consultation feedback from tenants and other service users in developing our regulatory guidance and approach. This includes consultations on changes to our regulatory guidance and on developing a review and appeals process for regulatory decisions.</p>
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