

Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter

Consultation questions

We welcome your general feedback on our proposals as well as answers to the specific questions we have raised. You can read our consultation paper on our website at www.housingregulator.gov.scot

Please do not feel you have to answer every question unless you wish to do so.

Send your completed questionnaire to us by **Friday 8 November 2024**.

By email @: consultations@shr.gov.scot

Or post to: Scottish Housing Regulator
5th Floor, 220 High Street
Glasgow G4 0QW

Name/organisation name

How you would like your response to be handled

To help make this a transparent process we intend to publish on our website the responses we receive, as we receive them. Please let us know how you would like us to handle your response. If you are responding as an individual, we will not publish your contact details.

Are you happy for your response to be published on our website?

Yes No

If you are responding as an individual:

Please tell us how you would like your response to be published.	Pick 1
Publish my full response, including my name	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please publish my response, but not my name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1. There are some indicators which we do not routinely use in our regulatory assessment of social landlords' performance. As part of the consultation, we are proposing to stop collecting the following indicators **14, 20, 23, 24, C3 and C4**.

Do you agree with our proposals to remove these indicators?

2. Following feedback from stakeholders we propose to amend the following indicators **10, 15 and C2**.

Do you agree with our proposals to amend these indicators?

Agree

3. We also propose to introduce an additional indicator to monitor long term voids.

Do you agree that we should collect an additional indicator in relation to long term voids?

Agree

4. We propose to collect two new indicators in relation to tenant and resident safety. Do you agree with the additional indicators we propose to collect in relation electrical safety and fire detection?

We support these additional indicators and suggest that in addition to the new indicators, much of this data is now available in real-time allowing for more effective reporting and monitoring.

5. Do you agree with our proposed approach to collect landlords' performance in relation to compliance with tenant and resident safety duties as part of the Annual Assurance Statements?

Agree

6. Issues of damp and mould continue to be an important area of concern for tenants. We therefore propose three new indicators in relation to damp and mould. Do you agree with our proposals to introduce these indicators?

The proposed indicators are a welcome addition to the regulatory framework, as they reflect the increasing recognition of the significance of housing conditions on tenants' health and well-being.

Firstly, measuring the average time taken to resolve cases of damp and mould is of particular importance due to the direct and compounding health risks associated with prolonged exposure to such conditions. Damp and mould are not mere inconveniences; they are determinants of health, particularly in relation to respiratory issues such as asthma and chronic lung conditions, which disproportionately affect vulnerable populations including children, the elderly, and individuals with compromised immune systems. A protracted period of exposure to these conditions exacerbates these health risks, while also contributing to mental health challenges such as anxiety and stress, given the distress associated with living in substandard housing. By focusing on the time required to resolve these cases, this indicator will not only provide insight into the efficiency of landlords' response mechanisms but will also serve as an indirect measure of tenant protection against the compounding effects of these health risks.

The percentage of reopened cases within a 12-month period is an equally important metric, as it signals the quality and long-term effectiveness of interventions made by landlords. Reopened cases indicate that initial interventions may have been inadequate or that systemic issues within the property, such as persistent damp problems due to structural deficiencies, have not been fully addressed. This failure to permanently resolve cases prolongs tenants' exposure to the detrimental conditions, undermines trust in housing providers, and increases the likelihood of cumulative health and social harms. As such, this indicator provides a mechanism for evaluating whether landlords are successfully addressing the root causes of damp and mould or merely implementing temporary fixes that do not offer sustained relief for tenants.

The number of open cases at the end of the year serves as a barometer for assessing the scale and persistence of damp and mould issues within a housing provider's portfolio. Persistent open cases may indicate inefficiencies in landlords' systems for managing and addressing these issues or suggest that there is insufficient capacity to deal with the volume of cases being reported. The timing of this indicator, set at the end of March, is especially important as it comes after the winter months, when damp and mould problems are at their most severe. This ensures that cases which may appear to be resolved in the summer months—when warmer, drier conditions can temporarily mask underlying issues—are captured before they are misrepresented as resolved. In addition to providing an overall picture of the burden of unresolved damp and mould cases, this data can be cross-referenced with other housing and social indicators, such as health outcomes and socioeconomic vulnerability, to ensure that policy interventions are directed toward the populations and areas most affected. This intersectional approach is essential for targeting resources effectively and ensuring that those most vulnerable to the effects of poor housing conditions—both in terms of health and social outcomes—receive the necessary support.

The proposed indicators, and their accompanying reporting requirements are therefore essential for improving both the timeliness and quality of responses to damp and mould issues. By collecting and analysing this data, policymakers will be better equipped to monitor trends, assess the performance of landlords, and implement targeted interventions where necessary. This data-driven approach will enable more precise identification of areas where housing providers are underperforming, while also informing broader housing policy aimed at improving the living conditions of tenants, particularly those in socioeconomically disadvantaged or otherwise vulnerable groups.

7. Do you agree with the proposal to collect the “Average length of time taken to resolve cases of damp and/or mould” or would the “median” be more appropriate to measure the time to resolve cases of damp and/or mould?

The mean can give a sense of overall performance, but in cases where the distribution of resolution times is highly uneven, such as where a small number of cases take much longer than most others, the mean might present a figure that doesn't accurately represent the typical tenant experience. For example, if a small subset of cases takes an extremely long time to resolve, the mean could be artificially inflated, suggesting that all cases take longer than they actually do in most situations. Without further data on the range or distribution, the mean might lead to misinterpretation, especially if stakeholders assume it reflects the standard experience.

On the other hand, the median provides a much more stable and reliable indicator when the goal is to understand the "typical" resolution time. It is unaffected by extreme values and thus gives a more robust sense of what the majority of tenants can expect. While the

median doesn't account for the full range of experiences (particularly at the extremes), it is less prone to distortion from cases that are significantly longer or shorter than the norm.

In light of this, the median is likely to be the more reliable measure for this specific purpose, as it remains consistent even when there is significant variation in the data. While the mean can potentially offer more information if paired with additional data points like the range or standard deviation, on its own, it may not offer the clarity needed to accurately assess landlords' performance in resolving damp and mould issues.

8. Damp and mould is a complex area for landlords. Are the new indicators we propose on damp and mould clearly defined?

To assess the clarity of the proposed indicators, it is essential to consider both the specificity of the measures and their practical application for landlords. On the whole, the proposed indicators are clearly defined in terms of the outcomes they intend to measure. Each indicator focuses on a key aspect of how damp and mould issues are managed, providing useful metrics for both assessing performance and identifying areas that may require improvement.

However, given the complexity of damp and mould as an issue, often influenced by factors such as building age, climate, and tenant behaviour, it would be important to ensure that landlords have a shared understanding of what constitutes a "case" and when a case is deemed "resolved." For example, without clear guidance on what defines a resolution, there could be variability in how landlords interpret and report their performance, especially if some consider superficial fixes (such as cosmetic repairs) sufficient, while others might focus on structural repairs or long-term preventative measures. Additionally, clear protocols for determining when a case is "reopened" are crucial, as recurrence could result from deeper structural problems, changes in seasonal conditions, or a change in tenants.

To improve clarity, landlords could benefit from more specific definitions or guidelines that standardise these terms and ensure consistency across the board. This would help avoid discrepancies in reporting and allow for more reliable benchmarking between different landlords and regions.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback