

**Title: Consumer Standards self-assessment – Tenancy Standard**

**Author: Simon Baker**

**Meeting Date: November 2023**

## **1. Background**

- 1.1. A key part of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act has been to empower the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) to renew the existing Consumer Standards.
- 1.2. The Consumer Standards set out the requirements that social housing providers are obligated to meet in the quality of the homes and services they provide their tenants.
- 1.3. The RSH consulted on proposed changes to the Consumer Standards in 2023. Once published, landlords will be expected to comply with these standards from 1 April 2024. The revised standards are as follows:
  - **Safety and Quality Standard** – requirement to provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.
  - **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** – requirement to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints, influence decision making and hold the landlord to account.
  - **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – requirement to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their home.
  - **Tenancy Standard** – requirement for the fair allocation and letting of homes and how tenancies are managed and ended by landlords.

## **2. Main Points**

- 2.1. In preparation for the introduction of the new updated Consumer Standards, Housing Leeds is planning to undertake self-assessments against each of these new standards ahead of the required compliance from 1 April.
- 2.2. In the first instance a self-assessment has been undertaken of the Tenancy Standard, piloting a self-assessment approach which will now be applied to the remaining consumer standards.
- 2.3. In completing the self-assessment of the Tenancy Standard, we have undertaken a detailed and challenging self-reflection, not just of our overall compliance with the standard, but also considering the extent that we are able to evidence our compliance on the following and opportunities for continuous improvement:
  - **Strategy/Policy/Process** – is there an approved strategy or policy and process is available to evidence our approach in complying with the required outcome, is it up to date, and are there clear processes / guidance available for staff to support them in meeting the expectation?

- **Quantitative and Qualitative Data** – what data is available to evidence our compliance with the expectation, what quality assurance arrangements are in place to evidence its accuracy, how is the data used and do we collect ongoing customer feedback and use this to improve?
  - **Openness and Transparency** – is the policy published and were customers involved in developing the policy development, how is the policy and our compliance communicated to tenants, how do we report our compliance within LCC governance frameworks.
  - **Overall Delivery** – consideration of our overall compliance with the required outcome.
- 2.4. Each specific expectation of the standard is assessed using a RAG rating to determine the extent of compliance as follows:
- Red – non compliant
  - Amber – compliant but with improvement opportunities
  - Green – fully compliant

### Tenancy Standard Self-Assessment

- 2.5. The self-assessment against the proposed new Tenancy Standard is attached at appendix 1 for the Board’s consideration and comment.
- 2.6. The self-assessment of the Tenancy Standard concluded that one expectation was red, four were amber and 11 were green. The expectation rated as red is a new expectation and we are working to ensure that the expectation is met by the end of March 2024, to ensure compliance with the standard is met as required from 1 April. Details of actions planned to address each of the red and amber assessed expectations are as follows:

<b>Specific Expectation</b>	<b>Action Underway to Achieve Robust Compliance</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Registered providers must record all lettings and sales as required by the Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) system	Refresher guidance shared with teams about completing CORE as part of tenancy sign up, importance of accurate completion  Quarterly monitoring of improved data quality – to pick up any concerns with individual officers	By end of March 2024
Registered providers must provide tenants required to move with timely advice and assistance about housing options before the tenancy or licence ends	Review of Tenancy Termination Procedures / communications to tenants to ensure advice on housing options consistently offered	By end of Sep 2024
Registered providers shall publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy	Approval of updated Tenancy Strategy and published on website / shared with partners	By end Jan 2024

management, including interventions to sustain tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions, and tackling tenancy fraud		
New - Registered providers must provide support for accessing mutual exchange services to relevant tenants who might otherwise be unable to use them	Review of MX policy and procedures to strengthen support provided Update tenant information to reflect support – website, letters, forms	By end of March 2024
NEW - Registered providers must offer tenants seeking to mutually exchange with information about the implications for tenure, rent and service charges	Review of MX policy and procedures to strengthen information on implicants  Update tenant information to reflect support – website, letters, forms	By end of March 2024

### **Framework for Completing / Ongoing Monitoring of Self Assessments**

- 2.7. Self-assessments will now be undertaken for each of the three other Consumer Standards, to be completed by the end of February 2024 using the self-assessment approach agreed by Leeds Housing Board. The outcome of the self assessments will be reported into the next Leeds Housing Board (Operations) in July.
- 2.8. Each Consumer Standards Self-Assessment will be owned by a relevant Head of Service who will be responsible for reviewing the self-assessment on a quarterly basis and updating the RAG rating, along with determining and overseeing delivery of actions to ensure more robust compliance with the standard.
- 2.9. Ongoing compliance with the standards will be reported into the Leeds Housing Board (Operations) on a quarterly basis, reporting only on red and amber assessed areas – providing quarterly updates explaining any changes to RAG ratings, on actions being taken to strengthen compliance and any arising risks to future compliance and how these are being mitigated.
- 2.10. It is important that tenants have the opportunity to input into the self assessments moving forward. During 2024/25 the service will consider along with Leeds Housing Board Tenant Members and Tenant Scrutiny Board the best way for tenants to have a genuine opportunity to influence the self assessments moving forward. The proposed approach will be reported into a future Leeds Housing meeting.
- 2.11. It is also important that there is some independent check and challenge of the self-assessment to ensure that it is sufficiently robust and self-

challenging. In the first instance this check and challenge will be performed by a different Head of Service to that who is responsible for completing the self-assessment. However, during 2024 consideration will be given to how this can be done with greater independence – peer challenge, internal audit, consultant etc.

- 2.12. BITMO will also be expected to complete self assessments against each of the standards, to evidence their compliance with the standards. Details of compliance will also be reported into the Leeds Housing Board on a periodic basis.

### **3. Recommendations**

The Leeds Housing Board is asked to comment on:

- 3.1. The proposed approach for undertaking the self-assessments.
- 3.2. The self-assessment of the new Tenancy Standard at appendix 1.
- 3.3. The proposed approach for ongoing monitoring of and reporting of Consumer Standards compliance.