

## **Our Annual Assurance Statement**

The Board of Trustees, having reviewed evidence and documentation made available to us throughout the year, made reasonable enquires of Senior Officers and relevant external agencies, and through our own experience and knowledge, confirm that Berwickshire Housing Association overall complies with the regulatory requirements, with some areas for improvement, as set out in Chapter 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework, which include;

- All relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services;
- Complying with our legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety; and
- The Standards of Governance and Financial Management for RSLs.

In reviewing compliance, we adopted an improvement focus and identified several improvement actions which forms an Improvement Action Plan which we will progress during the year.

In reviewing our compliance with the Regulatory Framework, we are assured that we are working towards having appropriate systems in place for the collection of equalities data. We recently commissioned an external organisation to collect customer insight data, which included protected characteristics. We are working towards using this data to take account of equality and human rights issues in our decisions, policy-making and day-to-day service delivery.

### Electrical Inspection Condition Report (EICR) Performance

We currently have 1,096 properties which do not have a valid EICR (at 31st March 2022). This is the result of:

- an inconsistent approach to EICR testing historically, which we have been addressing through an electrical testing programme
- the pandemic and understandable tenant concerns about potential transmission of Covid by inspecting contractors, who require access to every room in a property to carry out these inspections has affected progress with this
- Supply chain pressures, particularly over the past 18 months, where difficulties were experienced with electrician capacity at the same time as the new LD2 smoke alarm installation programme was in progress

We are in the process of completing a 100% stock condition survey, and as part of our comprehensive property data review had revised all our compliance data including a reconciliation of our Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) against the National EPC database and our EICR data so that our data is validated and current.

We have appointed two local electrical contractors and are working with the tenants concerned to reassure them that all necessary precautions continue to be employed. All outstanding inspections are scheduled to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Any essential safety works are being carried out by both contractors at the same time as the EICR tests. As reported in our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) correction, these properties are now categorised as failing the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) (rather than abeyances). Please note that our SHQS abeyances previously stood at 34 properties. This has reduced to 16 as 18 of

these addresses transfer to being SHQS non-compliant. Addresses non-compliant with SHQS has increased by 839 (from 398 to 1,237) after taking into account addresses which were already recorded as being SHQS non-compliant (mainly due to Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 1 (ESSH1)).

Progress of the EICR testing is being closely monitored and we are in the process of adding a further contractor in order to accelerate progress and cover off the additional properties where EICR's will expire during the current financial year.

We remain on target to achieve our target of 83.5% SHQS compliance by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

We recognise that we are required to notify the SHR of any changes in our compliance during the year and are assured that we have effective arrangements in place to enable us to do so. As Chair, I was authorised by the Board at a meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

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*Jim McDevitt, Chair*