

Dumfries & Galloway Annual Assurance Statement 2024/2025 to Scottish Housing Regulator

Housing Options and Homeless Service

Dumfries and Galloway Council's Social Work Services are responsible for the provision of Housing Options and Homeless Services to customers throughout Dumfries & Galloway. As a stock transfer authority Dumfries and Galloway Council has developed close working relationships with Registered Social Landlords across the region to ensure we are able to discharge our statutory duty to provide permanent accommodation which is sustainable and affordable. A person-centred approach is at the heart of our working practices to ensure that we meet our legislative requirements as set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. We ensure compliance with the relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Monthly and quarterly returns are provided to the Scottish Government and a yearly Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) is provided to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

During 2024/25 there was an increase of 5% in the number of homeless applications received in comparison to the previous year. The Service continues to experience pressures in relation to provision of Temporary Accommodation resulting in the utilisation of hotel accommodation to fulfil our statutory duty. Where hotel accommodation is provided, we are pro-active in ensuring a move to suitable furnished temporary accommodation as quickly as possible. The Service has access to furnished temporary accommodation and limited access to hotel resources in all areas of high demand. The high levels of demand remain a budgetary and resourcing pressure for the service which is being monitored and managed closely.

The Council recognises it is currently at high risk of systematic failure in their duty to provide temporary accommodation and acknowledges there has been an increase of 31% in the number of breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in relation to this. The ongoing pressures are regularly highlighted through the Council's Governance system to the relevant Committee(s). Dumfries & Galloway Council has always been able to offer temporary homeless accommodation to customers. This accommodation may be anywhere in the Region dependant on availability. We provide monthly reports to Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator on breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order and the impact of the removal of Local Connection. Through our engagement plan with the Scottish Housing Regulator and our quarterly meetings we will continue to monitor our "high risk of systematic failure" and our high level of Unsuitable Accommodation Breaches.

In relation to statutory regulations and requirements the service has:

RAAC compliance

- Leased properties within Dumfries and Galloway Council stock profile from the Registered Social Landlords is RAAC free.
- Leased properties from Private Sector landlords within our stock profile: The Service have been pro-active in engaging with our private landlords to seek confirmation the associated properties are RAAC free. We are now working with our Property Services team to inspect the 20 outstanding properties.

Gas Servicing

- We are fully compliant with gas servicing within all our leased properties

Dampness and Condensation

- A procedure is in place in relation to identifying dampness and condensation within leased properties and we work closely with our accommodation providers where required. Where issues are identified customers will be decanted as appropriate. We are currently reviewing this procedure to ensure that it will comply with the changes due for implementation in October 2025.

Smoke Alarm and Heat Detection Legislation 2022

- We are fully compliant with the Smoke Alarm and Heat Detection Legislation following its introduction

- We are fully compliant with Legionella checks in relation lease properties from RSL's. We are currently working on a programme of inspections for 14 properties which are privately leased to confirm if they are mains water or tank water fed properties. This will allow us to fully cost and undertake the necessary legionella checks, carry out a budgetary cost for undertaking legionella checks. During void inspections Dumfries & Galloway Council disinfect and clean shower heads where properties have showers installed in line with legionella requirements.

Asbestos

- We are fully compliant with Asbestos checks and reports in relation to properties we lease from RSL's. The Service has been pro-active in engaging with our Private Sector Landlords in seeking assurance in terms of asbestos checks. Where this information has not been forthcoming, we have engaged the Council's Reactive Repairs Team (MARS) to provide a costing for undertaking the outstanding checks. A paper is now being submitted to Social Works Senior Leadership Team for budgetary approval. This relates to 27 Private Rented Sector leased properties.

Lift Safety

- Dumfries and Galloway have one leased property within its portfolio where a communal lift is in situ, This is a Registered Social Landlord leased property, and the lift is serviced yearly – this is fully compliant.

In July 2023 the Service introduced a Prevention Team who work alongside the Welfare and Housing Options team. The purpose of this team is to provide early intervention to improve tenancy sustainment, improve customer outcomes and reduce the number of customers having to access the homeless route. During 2023/24 there were 97 tenancies saved from eviction due to the intervention of these teams.

Gypsy/Travellers

Responsibility for the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites at Barlockhart Park, Glenluce and Thistle Grove, Collin Dumfries was transferred to the Council's Economy and Infrastructure directorate from Communities directorate at the start of 2024/2025.

The refurbishment of the Council's Gypsy/Traveller site at Glenluce was completed in May 2021 and is now above the Scottish Governments Minimum Site Standards.

The Council's site at Collin does not currently meet these minimum standards. An options appraisal for the site was presented to Full Council on 14 December 2023. The Council's decision was **Option 1** to "agree to redevelop on current site as the preferred option".

A budget of £700k from the capital programme was agreed at Full Council on 27 February 2024 to support the design phase of the re-development of the Thistle Grove Gypsy/Travellers Site in 2024/25. The Capital investment Strategy for 2024/25 to 2033/34 was updated to include an allocation of £14.7 Million in year 10.

A design team, including architects, engineers, and cost consultants has brought the project to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) stage 2 concept design. This is required ahead of appointing a contractor and submitting a planning application. Prior to commencement of the next phase of design works, the Council's Gateway Review process will consider delivery to date and make recommendations to be considered by Elected Members.

To enable redevelopment of the Thistle Grove site, the Council will be required to put in place a 'decant' site for the duration of the works. Advice from the Scottish Government is that there is an expectation that this would meet the minimum site standards.

Dumfries and Galloway Council will continue to engage with the Scottish Housing Regulator regarding its management of the Council's Gypsy/Traveller sites and its approach to achieving the minimum site standards in addition to following the joint action plan by the Scottish Government and COSLA Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers 2: action plan 2024-2026.

Signed by Social Work Committee

Signature:

Councillor Andrew McFarlane
Chair of Social Work Committee