

## **East Lothian Housing Association Assurance Statement**

**30 September 2021**

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We have now completed our assessment of compliance with the Regulatory Framework and the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

In undertaking our assessment, we established a Governance Standards Working Group (GSWG) in May 2019. The GSWG has met twice (in August and September 2021) in preparing this Statement, and reports directly to our Management Committee. The GSWG also prepares quarterly reports for our Audit & Assurance Committee to consider whether any changes or updates are required to the Statement during the course of the year.

In gaining assurance, the GSWG has overseen the review and updating of our Evidence Bank, using the Toolkit produced by the SFHA to assist the process. The Evidence Bank combines reports, policies, advice and information which the Management Committee monitors and oversees on an ongoing basis throughout the year to provide continuous assurance that we remain compliant. Additionally, the Evidence Bank incorporates relevant documents and information that contribute to our assurance and which form the structure of our business and governance activities.

Using our cloud-based IT infrastructure, we have given secure access to the Evidence Bank, including access to all linked documents within it, to all the members of our GSWG. We have also provided refresher training to GSWG members about how to use the Evidence Bank. This means that all members of the GSWG can access every document within the Evidence Bank at any time of day, and from any location.

In addition, we also used the updated Supplementary Coronavirus Guidance by the SFHA to inform this year's assessment.

In considering our compliance with our legal and regulatory requirements in 2021, we have taken account of the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and consequent business, economic and social disruption. We have complied, and continue to comply fully, with the temporary changes to legislation, and continue to follow national requirements, for example in respect of Health & Safety, physical distancing, travel, office opening, use of PPE, and the application of Test and Protect requirements.

We are confident that the measures that we have put in place and the contingency planning that we have implemented have ensured that we are able to continue to meet our responsibilities to our tenants, service users, regulators and funders. We quickly restored services that had to be temporarily suspended as soon as restrictions were lifted and it was safe to do so. Our digital service provision ensured continuity of services for the 84% of tenants currently using their My Home accounts, whilst we extended opening hours of our online help and telephone repairs line services at the start of Lockdown, and maintained these extended opening hours until restrictions lifted. We have also continued to maintain all other telephone and postal services throughout the pandemic.

All our staff can login to our cloud-based IT from home, accessing their normal desktop and therefore all software and normal IT functionality associated with their role. Other than the obvious restrictions on visiting tenants and other service users at home, there has been little impact on the ability of staff to support normal service provision whilst working remotely using safe and secure IT systems.

We continue to monitor our Business Plan, Budget and financial assumptions in the context of the ongoing situation and associated business interruption.

In reviewing our compliance with the Regulatory Framework, we are assured that we are working towards having appropriate systems in place for the secure collection and storage of equality data. We are assured that 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.

In reviewing the evidence and assessing compliance, we have taken account of good practice advice. We have also obtained external support from Linda Ewart of Ask Linda Ewart consultancy to provide us with additional assurance that our approach is effective and robust. Linda reported to the Management Committee as follows:

*The process adopted by ELHA for the review of the Evidence Bank, periodic reporting to the Audit & Assurance Committee and onward reporting to the Management Committee demonstrates the implementation of practices designed to provide continuous assurance. The approach described is consistent with the advice and guidance contained in the Self Assurance Toolkit and takes account of the annual updates and revisions, including the specific provisions in 2021 relating to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and the introduction of new duties relating to equalities and human rights.*

Accordingly, having reviewed and assessed a comprehensive bank of evidence to support this Statement, the Management Committee confirms that East Lothian Housing Association is compliant with the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management and the requirements of Chapter Three of the Regulatory Framework.

We recognise that we are required to notify the SHR of any changes in our compliance during the course of 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 Management Committee at a meeting held on 30 September 2021 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator. I confirm that this Assurance Statement is being published on our website, elha.com, on the same date that it is submitted to the SHR.

Peter Ewart, Chair