



Milnbank Housing Association
Annual Assurance Statement 2020

This Annual Assurance Statement has been prepared by Milnbank Housing Association (MHA) in accordance with the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) as set out in published Statutory Guidance, the current Regulatory Framework and the temporary changes to SHRs regulatory approach in response to COVID-19.

The Management Committee confirms it has appropriate assurance that the Association complies with:

- All relevant regulatory requirements as set out in Section 3 of the Regulatory Framework and revised guidance issued by SHR in response to the Covid-19 pandemic
- All relevant standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- All relevant legislative duties
- The Standards of Governance and Financial Management

In considering compliance with legal and statutory responsibilities in 2020, the Management Committee has taken account of the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected the Association's ability to deliver the comprehensive range of services MHAs tenants and residents expect, but the Management Committee has ensured its pandemic contingency planning has continued to meet MHAs primary responsibilities to tenants, service users, regulators and funders.

The pandemic and associated temporary legislative changes have resulted in MHA adopting revised standards of service delivery. Where this has occurred, the Association has communicated changes to its tenants and is maintaining the necessary records to ensure a smooth resumption of normal service as soon as is practicable.

MHAs Management Committee adopted its revised Business Plan in June 2020. The Business Plan comprehensively sets out MHAs strategic objectives and fully reflects the potential impact that COVID-19 may have on MHAs activities over the next three years. In addition, it confirms that the Management Committee has worked through the Action Plan associated with the comprehensive Governance Review MHA undertook in 2019, details of which have been submitted to SHR.

The primary focus for MHA during the pandemic has been to ensure tenant safety and protect vulnerable residents. Consequently, the Association reviewed all relevant health & safety risk assessments and method statements and produced protocols to ensure all activities were Covid-19 secure. A detailed Tenant Safety Assurance Report was presented to MHAs Governing Body to provide evidence of tenant safety measures undertaken during the pandemic. The Management Committee noted the co-operation of tenants and the efforts of staff and contractors with regards to safety and protecting vulnerable residents.

The Management Committee is assured that programmes related to gas safety, electrical inspections, legionella, asbestos, fire safety and energy efficiency have continued. As a result of COVID-19, MHA was initially unable to maintain full compliance with gas safety obligations due to a combination of the contractor being unable to deliver the required service and tenant concerns about providing access to their home. However, this matter has subsequently been resolved and any remedial works arising from inspections related to tenant safety have been identified and incorporated into a planned work programme. The Management Committee is of the view, therefore, that issues of non-compliance related to COVID-19 are not material.

In addition to the required response to COVID-19, MHA has continued with ongoing processes to ensure compliance with the established Regulatory Framework. Where necessary, the Management Committee obtains assurance through regular monitoring of internal key performance indicators and through external advice and/or validation covering key aspects of MHA activity including:

- Financial Business Planning – external validation
- The Annual Return on the Charter – external validation
- Employment issues – external advisor
- Legislative, regulatory and general legal advice
- External Audit confirming Financial Statements for 2019/20 were unqualified with no management issues to address
- Scottish Housing Association Pension Scheme (SHAPS) confirmation that MHA deemed to be a “low risk” organisation
- Borrowing arrangements with GB Social Housing and Nationwide in place without onerous Covenant Compliance requirements. Additional funding obtained for future component replacements
- Comprehensive Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out following a procurement exercise indicating high levels of tenant satisfaction

Furthermore, a comprehensive range of established internal processes exist to regularly monitor key performance indicators covering all aspects of service delivery and risk management. Matters relating to Regulatory Standards covering issues such as committee skills, governance and financial management feature regularly in Management Committee considerations. On a continuous basis, the Management Committee will obtain assurance that Regulatory Standards are achieved through a robust strategic development, reporting and monitoring structure as it has attempted to do since standards were first introduced. This work sits alongside ensuring that the values, objectives and priorities of MHA as a charitable community based and controlled housing provider are achieved at all times.

The Annual Assurance Statement submitted on behalf of Milnbank Housing Association was agreed by the Management Committee at its meeting held on 24 November 2020 and 19 January 2021. The Statement is publicly available on Milnbank Housing Association’s website and displayed in all of its premises.

Louise Williams
Chair.