

Appendix 1

Scottish Borders Council Annual Assurance Statement 2024/2025 to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Homelessness Service

Scottish Borders Council's Homelessness Service is responsible for the provision of housing and homelessness advice and assistance to customers throughout the Scottish Borders. As a stock transfer authority Scottish Borders Council does not operate a stock of housing, therefore, has developed close working relationships with the four main Registered Social Landlords across the region to ensure ability to discharge statutory duty to provide permanent accommodation to homeless households.

A trauma informed person-centred approach is at the core of our working practices, ensuring that we meet our legislative requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. Quarterly returns are provided to the Scottish Government and a yearly Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) is provided to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) encompasses the Council's strategy and approach to homelessness in the Scottish Borders, governed and led by the Borders Homelessness & Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP). RRTP actions have been incorporated into the Council's Housing Emergency Action Plan 2025/26.

We continue to meet the statutory obligation to provide temporary accommodation in mainstream furnished properties across a range of communities within the Scottish Borders.

- During the past year the service has seen an increasing demand for temporary accommodation, with 348 households requiring a temporary accommodation placement, an increase from 331 the previous year. To ensure availability we briefly increased our portfolio to 155 properties, while decommissioning a development which was no longer meeting SHQS standards at Maxmill Park, Kelso. We have had 1 breach of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order during 2024/25.
- As part of homelessness prevention activities and in preparation for the new duties in the forthcoming Housing (Scotland) Bill, we continue to work with RSL's, private sector landlords and other organisations to identify and work with customers who are at risk of losing their home.
- To support effective reporting our internal health and safety compliance group met on a regular basis during 2024/25, providing assurance on compliance to standards of tenant and resident safety. We have gained assurance from our Registered Social Landlord partners of compliance in respect of duties relating to gas, electrical, fire, and water safety and obligations relating to asbestos, damp and mould for our temporary accommodation properties.

In reviewing our compliance with the Regulatory Framework, we are satisfied that we meet all our duties in relation to homelessness services, equality and human rights and tenant and resident safety.

Gypsy Travellers

Gypsy/Traveller site – The Council’s designated site for Gypsy/Travellers within Scottish Borders at Tweedside Caravan Park, Innerleithen continues to meet the Scottish Government’s minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites. Provision for the collection of relevant data on protected characteristics for service users who use the Gypsy/Traveller site at Tweedside Caravan Park, Innerleithen is now collected in a feedback survey which is intended to give all Gypsy/Traveller households who stay on the site the opportunity to give their views on their experience of the service and to make suggestions for how the service can be improved.

Our Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer has been actively fostering positive relationships with the site operator in Innerleithen through regular face-to-face visits. Additionally, a new maintenance contract has been implemented, effective from 1st April 2025. Ongoing engagement with Gypsy Travellers at unauthorised encampments continues, supported by the development of a Good Neighbourhood Code. Welfare checks are also carried out to identify any educational, health, or other support needs, ensuring timely and appropriate referrals are made.

We confirm that in respect of landlord services provided by the Council we are assured that the Council complies with the regulatory requirements as laid out in Chapter 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator’s Regulatory Framework, including:

- All relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter in respect of any tenants, homeless persons, and other person who are in receipt of housing services;
- Legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.
- The Scottish Borders Council Annual Assurance Statement 2024/25 to the Scottish Housing Regulator is reported under section 8 of the 2024/25 Director – Resilient Communities Assurance Statement on Internal Control and Governance, which informs the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 by the Chief Executive which was considered by the Council’s Audit Committee at its meeting on 24th June 2025.

Signed: Jenni Craig, Director – Resilient Communities

Signed: Councillor Elaine Thornton-Nicol, Chair of Audit Committee