
HOUSING ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2022

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Council Homeless Services are subject to scrutiny and inspection by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The Council must demonstrate that it is meeting the statutory requirements contained in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Argyll and Bute Council is no longer a social landlord but retains statutory duties to provide services to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Council submits an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). In 2019 the SHR introduced a requirement for all local authorities to submit an Annual Assurance Statement which will be published on the SHR website. This report details the proposed Statement for 2022.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council approve the Annual Assurance Statement contained in **Appendix 1** of this report.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 The SHR produced a document entitled Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland in February 2019. The regulatory requirements are set out in Section 3 of the document and even though Argyll and Bute Council is no longer a social landlord, there are requirements for the Council to ensuring that statutory duties are met in relation to preventing and alleviating homelessness.
- 3.2 The SHR issued an Engagement Plan to Argyll and Bute Council Housing Services in March 2019. This plan was not updated in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID 19 pandemic. In 2022 the SHR wrote to the Council to state that they would be engaging in general terms about the delivery of homeless services. As a result there continues to be 4 areas in which the SHR can engage with the Council in relation to homelessness services:-
- How people access the service;

- The assessment of homeless applications;
- Access to and quality of temporary accommodation; and
- Outcomes for people who are homeless.

The SHR are proposing to engage with Argyll and Bute Council in relation to Argyll and Bute's assessment of homeless applications and the outcomes for people who are homeless. The elements within these categories are detailed in the Annual Assurance Statement (**Appendix 1**) and the progress made in these areas of work.

- 3.3 In addition to the 4 areas of engagement, an update on the impact of COVID 19 on the homeless service has been included in the 2022 Annual Assurance Statement.
- 3.4 Members are kept informed of the Council's performance in relation to statutory and regulatory requirements in relation to housing in various ways:-
- Through the Corporate Pyramid Reporting System;
 - Through quarterly Housing Performance Reports submitted to Committee;
 - Through the quarterly reporting produced for the Strategic Housing Forum;
 - Through the Annual Updates on the Local Housing Strategy; and
 - Through an Annual Housing Activity report submitted to the 4 Area Committees
- 3.5 The Council has produced an Equalities and Human Rights statement in relation to homelessness. This includes a commitment to analyse data relevant to assessing the impact on services across all groups.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Development and Economic Growth Service's Housing Team will continue to improve services to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Housing Team will continue to engage with the SHR to report on progress on the housing and homeless services provided in Argyll and Bute.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – None.
- 5.2 Financial – Sufficient budget is required to deliver statutory services.
- 5.3 Legal – None.
- 5.4 HR – None.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:

- 5.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – access to services across the local authority area provided.
- 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – addressing and preventing homelessness enables households to address other issues such as income maximisation and exploring employment opportunities.
- 5.5.3 Islands – homeless advice and prevention services are provided on the islands.
- 5.6 Climate Change – None.
- 5.7 Risk – the Council will be subject to censure from the SHR and Scottish Government if statutory duties are not fulfilled.
- 5.8 Customer Service – Area teams provided the service across the local authority.

Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth

Councillor Robin Currie, Policy Lead for Economy and Rural Growth

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Housing Annual Assurance Statement 2022

APPENDIX 1 – HOUSING ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2022



Argyll and Bute Council

Housing Annual Assurance Statement 2022

Legislative Compliance

We can confirm that Argyll and Bute Council achieves all the standards and outcomes for people who are homeless and others who use our services:-

- All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework
- All relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Housing Social Charter
- All relevant legislative duties

Argyll and Bute Council can confirm that there were no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in 2021/22.

Argyll and Bute Council can confirm that there were no health and safety breaches in 2021/22 in relation to homelessness resulting in intervention by the Health and Safety Executive.

In 2021 the Council fulfilled its commitment from the previous Assurance Statement to produce an Equalities and Human Rights Statement with specific reference to Homelessness. This states that the Council will “Ensure that all households approaching the Council for housing advice including making homeless applications are treated fairly with dignity and respect.

Housing Services staff will work to understand the individual needs of service users and deliver services that recognise and meet these needs. Housing Services will assure the Scottish Housing Regulator that Housing Services comply with statutory obligations.

In addition, the Argyll & Bute Local Housing Strategy 2022-2027 was launched in April 2022. This incorporates a comprehensive equalities statement and is underpinned by a suite of impact assessments which encompass Homelessness amongst other related housing services and functions. As well as a full Equalities and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, the Council has carried out impact

assessments for the LHS in respect of Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Island and Rural Communities, as well as a Health Impact Assessment.

All materials are available on the council website at: [Local Housing Strategy and Housing Need and Demand Assessment \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk).

The LHS also includes a key action point to implement a detailed equalities data monitoring and reporting framework which will be reported annually to Housing Management Team, Area Committees and full Council, the Strategic Housing forum partnership and to the Scottish Government.

In 2019 The Scottish Housing Regulator notified Argyll and Bute Council that they would be engaging with the Council over 2 areas of work based on the Scottish Government national statistics for 2017/18 and the Annual Returns of the Charter :-

- Argyll and Bute's assessment of homeless applications
- Outcomes for people who are homeless

The tables below provide an update on the areas of engagement previously notified by the Regulator in 2019.

Argyll and Bute's Assessment of Homeless Applications

No.	Area of Engagement	Progress Made
1.	The percentage of households assessed as not homeless nor threatened with homelessness is above the Scottish average	Argyll and Bute figures – 4% of cases at the end of 2021/22 compared to 5% of cases at the end of 2020/21 compared to 5% of cases at the end of 2019/20. Scottish Average for 2021/22 – 3%
2.	The percentage of households assessed as intentionally homeless is the same as the Scottish average	Argyll and Bute figures – less than 1% at the end of 2021/22 compared to 1% of cases at the end of 2020/21 compared to 7% of cases at the end of 2019/20 Scottish Average for 2021/22 – 1%
3.	The percentage of households withdrawing their homeless application before decision is the	Argyll and Bute figures – 5% of cases at the end of 2021/22 compared to 5% of cases at the end of 2020/21 compared to 3% of cases at the end of 2019/20

	same as the Scottish average	Scottish Average for 2021/22 – 5%
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Outcomes for People who are Homeless

No.	Area of Engagement	Progress Made
1.	The percentage of people in Argyll and Bute assessed as unintentionally homeless which it provided with a Scottish Secure Tenancy is above the Scottish average	Argyll and Bute Figure for 2021/22 – 87% 2020/21 – 81% 2019/20 – 67% Scottish Figure for 2020/21 – 76% 86% of all unintentionally homeless cases secured settled accommodation in 2020/21 compared to 80% across Scotland
2.	There are a relatively high number of people waiting for more than one year for an outcome	Argyll and Bute Council continues to work with partners to implement a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) which will address this situation. The RRTP Annual Update was approved by Council and submitted to the Scottish Government in June 2022.

The Regulator contacted the Council in March 2022 to state that there will be engagement about the Council's services for people who are homeless. The Regulator will assess the risks to people who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness by engaging with the Council during 2022/23.

The Impact of COVID 19 on the Homeless Service in Argyll and Bute

As reported in the Annual Assurance Statement 2021 the Council continued to provide a service to households in need of accommodation during the COVID 19 pandemic. Regular contact continues to be maintained with households and housing support services continue to provide support to households to ensure that they are able to sustain their accommodation.

As a Stock Transfer authority the Council continues to work effectively with the Registered Social Landlords to secure permanent housing for statutory homeless households.

I can confirm that the Council has sufficient assurance and scrutiny processes in place to support this statement.

Signed

Kirsty Flanagan

Executive Director

Signed

Councillor Robin Currie

Leader of Argyll and Bute Council /

Policy Lead for Economy and Rural Growth