

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

Plain Talk – A Jargon buster explaining some commonly used terms in social housing

February 2026

Key Words and Abbreviations	Meaning
annual assurance statement (AAS)	<p>A yearly statement from social landlords to show they follow the rules. If they don't, they must explain how they'll fix it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social landlords must submit this to SHR providing assurance that they comply with SHR's regulatory requirements for all social landlords and the standards of governance and financial management that apply to registered social landlords (RSLs). Where a landlord does not fully comply with these, its statement should set out how and when the landlord will make the improvements necessary to ensure they comply. • The statement should be made and submitted by the RSL's governing body, or the relevant local authority committee which has been delegated authority to complete the statement by the local authority.
affordable housing	Homes to buy or rent that cost less than the usual market price. These can include low-cost home ownership, mid-market rented homes or homes that are rented from a local authority or registered social landlord
Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO)	A group representing senior housing and homelessness staff in Scotland's local authorities and health and social care partnerships.
annual financial statements	A yearly summary of all the money an organisation has spent and received.

annual general meeting (AGM)	<p>A mandatory yearly meeting where members review the organisation's progress and vote on important matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the procedure for holding this meeting and its agenda will usually be set out in the organisation's constitution. • usually at the AGM, an annual report will be presented containing information for members about the organisation's performance and strategy. • votes may be taken on certain matters such as appointments to the organisation's board or management committee. • the presentation of independently examined or audited accounts also normally takes place. • for some organisations, the election of office bearers will take place at the AGM, for others, office bearers will be elected at the first committee meeting after the AGM.
annual report	A summary of what an organisation did over the past year, often including performance and finances.
annual return on the charter (ARC) ("the Charter")	<p>A yearly report from social landlords showing how well they met housing standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each year, every social landlord must submit a return to SHR that details how they performed against each of the outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter in the past year.
annual risk assessment	Each year, SHR assesses risk in social landlords to check what assurance it needs from them and what they may need to improve.
antisocial behaviour (ASB)	<p>Actions that upset or harm others, like noise, threats, or damage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it covers a wide range of unacceptable activities that cause harm, distress, alarm, nuisance, or annoyance to an individual, the community or the environment. • a number of Acts of Parliament have set out specific remedies open to social landlords to deal with antisocial behaviour by tenants/members of their households, or their visitors.
arrears	Unpaid rent.
asset management	Looking after homes and buildings.

Audit Scotland	Audit Scotland is a Scottish public body responsible for checking how well local authorities and other public bodies deliver their services and spend their money. It checks whether local authorities get the best value for the money they spend. See: Home Audit Scotland
board	A group of people, elected to oversee and control the operation of an organisation. Can also be called a management committee or governing body
British sign language (BSL)	British Sign Language (BSL) is the preferred language of over 87,000 Deaf people in the UK. It uses handshapes, facial expressions, gestures and body language to convey meaning.
business plan	This is a formal statement of an organisation's business goals, the reasons they are achievable and its plans for reaching them.
Care Inspectorate	The Care Inspectorate is responsible for the regulation of care services in Scotland. It covers both adult and children services. See: Home Care Inspectorate
complaints procedure	The formal process that social landlords (and SHR) must have in place to handle and resolve complaints from tenants and service users. It provides a clear, structured way for individuals to raise concerns about various services. Find out more in this factsheet: Complaints and serious concerns - information for tenants and service users of social landlords Scottish Housing Regulator
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)	COSLA is a group that speaks for local authorities in Scotland. It helps them work together and talk about common concerns. COSLA listens to what they think and passes those views on to the Scottish Government, other organisations, and the public.
Co-operative and Community Benefit	The Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It updated existing legislation relating to (what were then called) industrial and provident societies, as well as introducing some changes. The act renamed industrial and provident societies as co-operative or community benefit societies. Many social landlords were established as industrial and provident societies.

Societies Act 2014	
cladding	<p>Cladding is a layer of material added to the outside of a building to help keep it warm, protect it from the weather, and/or make it look better.</p> <p>Also see: Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Act 2024</p>
Data Protection Act 2018	<p>The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK law that states how personal information must be handled. It is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It means that landlords, businesses, and government departments must keep your personal details safe and use them properly. For example, a landlord usually can't give your address or other private information to a company without your permission.</p>
electrical installation condition report (EICR)	<p>An EICR is a safety check for the electrical wiring and systems in a building. It's done by a qualified electrician to make sure everything is safe, working properly, and meets current regulations. Checks must be done every 5 years.</p>
energy efficiency standard for social housing in Scotland (EESSH)	<p>Launched in 2014, the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. It aims to encourage social landlords to help remove poor energy efficiency and contribute to achieving the Scottish Government's climate change goals. EESSH replaced the energy efficiency elements of SHQS. It was updated in 2018–19 with new targets for 2032 called EESSH2.</p>
Engagement	<p>The way that SHR will interact with a social landlord is set out in the social landlord's engagement plan.</p> <p>See: Engagement plans Scottish Housing Regulator</p>

engagement plan (EP)	A document published by the SHR for each social landlord, which outlines how and why the SHR will engage with the landlord over the coming year, based on its assessment of the landlord's performance, governance, and financial health. Each landlord's engagement plan will also include confirmation of their regulatory status.
Equalities	Making sure everyone is treated fairly and has the same chances, no matter their background, identity, or circumstances.
external audit	An independent check of an organisation's finances and operations, done by someone from outside the organisation.
factoring services	Factoring is the provision of a management service to the owners of properties. This usually relates to services that need to be carried out for the general maintenance or improvement of common aspects of property or land such as the cleaning of common areas and repairs and maintenance.
factored owners	Owners of properties that social landlords are responsible for providing factoring services to.
framework agreement	In the case of SHR, the framework agreement is a document that has been drawn up by the Scottish Government in consultation with SHR. It sets out how SHR will work with the Scottish Government and the key roles and responsibilities of each organisation.
freedom of information (FOI)	Freedom of Information means you have the right to ask public organisations—like local authorities, the NHS, SHR and other government departments—for information they hold. They usually have to give it to you unless there's a good reason not to. The Freedom of Information Act for Scotland is formally called the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA).
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)	This regulation came into force in the UK on 25 May 2018 via the Data Protection Act 2018. It changed how businesses and public sector organisations handle the information of customers.
governance	How decisions are made and who makes them in an organisation.
governing body	A group of elected people to oversee and control the operation of an organisation. It can also be called a management committee or board.

Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum (GWSF)	The Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF) is the membership body for community-controlled housing associations and co-operatives in west central Scotland.
gypsy/traveller	Gypsy/Travellers refers to distinct groups such as Scottish Travellers, Irish Travellers and Romany Gypsies - who consider the travelling lifestyle a core part of their culture. Gypsy/Travellers are a legally recognised ethnic minority. Not all Gypsy/Travellers live in a caravan or site as their permanent home.
homeless (homelessness)	<p>In Scotland, you don't have to be sleeping on the streets to be considered homeless. You are legally homeless if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have no home at all. • you're staying somewhere temporary (like a hotel or a friend's house) and don't have the right to stay there long-term • you have a home, but it's not safe or suitable - for example, if it's overcrowded, is not safe to live in, or you're facing abuse or harassment from someone who also lives there. • you can't get into your home, or it's a mobile home with nowhere legal to park it and live in. • you're about to lose your home within two months (this is called being "threatened with homelessness") and need help to avoid it.
Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Act 2024	This law gives Scottish Ministers the power to inspect and fix buildings with have unsafe cladding on them. If there's an urgent safety risk, they can order emergency repairs or evacuate people from the building. These powers are meant to protect public safety and make sure dangerous buildings are dealt with quickly.
Housing (Scotland) Act 2001	An Act of the Scottish Parliament. It sets out the law regarding specific aspects of housing.
Housing (Scotland) Act 2010	An Act of the Scottish Parliament to establish the Scottish Housing Regulator and to set out the arrangements regarding the performance and regulation of social landlords. This included the introduction of the Scottish Housing Charter.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2014	An Act of the Scottish Parliament. It changed the rules around "right to buy" in social housing as well as the allocation rules for social landlords.
Housing Association	A not-for-profit organisation that provides affordable rental housing. Most are registered with and monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and are also referred to as registered social landlords.
Housing Cooperative	A not-for-profit organisation that provides affordable rental housing where residents become members through £1 shares in the organisation. Similar to a housing association, they can be registered with and monitored by SHR.
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	HSE is the national regulator for workplace health and safety in the UK.
indicator	In the context of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, an indicator refers to a specific measure used to assess how well social landlords are achieving the Charter's outcomes and standards. These indicators are reported annually through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and are used by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to monitor and evaluate landlords' performance.
internal audit	Internal audit is a process where an organisation checks its own operations, finances, and controls to make sure that everything is working properly and it is following the rules.
Intervene	To step in to help or change what's happening. SHR may use its legal powers to intervene at a landlord; but will only do this if it is the only way to protect tenants and the risks are serious and / or urgent.
landlord directory	This directory on SHR's website allows you to find and compare landlords' performance, read engagement plans and see the public register of social landlords. This includes contact information for each landlord. Find a Landlord Scottish Housing Regulator
landlord report	Each year, SHR requires social landlords to report on their performance against the Charter and make this information available to tenants, homeless people and other service users. SHR provides a landlord report for every social landlord on its website which allows people to compare and understand their landlords' performance with those of other social landlords. Comparison Tool Scottish Housing Regulator

LD2 fire detection and warning system	These are the interlinked smoke and heat detectors/alarms within a property.
local authority	A local authority in Scotland is a council that runs public services in a specific area, like schools, social care, housing, roads, and waste collection. There are 32 councils across Scotland, and they are funded mainly by the Scottish Government. Each council is made up of elected councillors who make decisions on behalf of the local community.
management committee	A group of people, elected to oversee and control the operation of an organisation. It can also be called a governing body or board.
memorandum of understanding (MOU)	MOUs are drawn up by organisations who want to work together. They establish a framework for the joint working and co-operation, and set out the powers and responsibilities of each organisation involved.
mid market housing / rent	Mid-market rent (MMR) is a type of affordable housing, with rents being lower than in the private market, but higher than in the social housing sector.
minimum site standards	These are the minimum standards which every local authority and registered social landlord Gypsy/Traveller site should meet. The standards address energy efficiency, safety and security, and maintenance and repairs. They are objective indicators so that it is clear to everyone whether or not the standards have been met.
minutes	The official written records of meetings held by an organisation. They should provide a detailed account of the discussions, decisions and actions agreed upon during the meeting.
national panel of tenants and service users ("national panel")	A panel of more than 400 tenants and service users. If you're a tenant or you use the housing or homelessness services provided by local authorities, housing associations, co-operatives and other social landlords, you can join the SHR Panel. If you sign up, SHR may send you short surveys asking for your views and it may ask for your feedback in other ways too. Learn more at: National Panel of Tenants and Service Users Scottish Housing Regulator

net zero	Net zero means not adding more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than we take out. Scotland is working to balance the amount of harmful gases it produces—like carbon dioxide - with the amount it removes from the air. The goal is to reach this balance by 2045.
non executive members	A member of an organisation's board who is not a staff member.
non ministerial department	These departments or organisations are not part of the Scottish Government. They carry out administrative, commercial, executive or regulatory functions on behalf of Government and operate within a framework of governance and accountability set by Ministers. SHR is a non ministerial department.
notifiable events	A registered social landlord must tell SHR about material, significant or exceptional issues, events, or changes within its organisation and how it intends to deal with it or, where appropriate, give SHR a reasonably detailed explanation as to why a significant change has been implemented. SHR calls this a 'Notifiable Event'. Notifiable events Scottish Housing Regulator
Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)	The independent regulator and registrar of Scottish charities. See: OSCR Home
qualitative	Measuring something by its quality rather than its quantity; describing the quality of something in size, appearance, value, etc.
quantitative	Measuring, or measured by the quantity of something.
registered tenant organisations (RTOs)	An RTO is a group of tenants that has applied to become registered with a landlord and meets certain conditions as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
regulatory framework	The Regulatory Framework is SHR's Statement on Performance of Functions and sets out how SHR regulates both registered social landlords (RSLs) and the housing and homelessness services provided by local authorities.

	Regulatory Framework Scottish Housing Regulator How we regulate: A guide for tenants and service users Scottish Housing Regulator
regulate	SHR regulates social landlords by checking how well they do their job. SHR does this by monitoring, assessing, and reporting on landlords' work.
registered social landlord (RSL)	RSLs are independent housing organisations, including housing associations, housing co-operatives and co-ownership societies registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator
regulator	A person or organisation that supervises a particular industry or business activity.
regulatory decision	In the context of SHR, a regulatory decision refers to a formal action taken by SHR in relation to a social landlord's compliance, governance, financial management, or performance. These decisions are part of SHR's statutory role to safeguard and promote the interests of tenants, people who are homeless, and others who use housing services.
regulatory requirements	These refer to the mandatory standards and rules that registered social landlords (RSLs) and local authority landlords must meet to ensure good governance, financial health, and service delivery.
regulatory status	<p>This describes SHR's assessment of how a RSL is managing its responsibilities. There are three levels of regulatory status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliant – the RSL meets regulatory requirements • Non-compliant - Working towards compliance – the RSL does not meet regulatory requirements and is working to achieve compliance • Non-compliant - Statutory action – the RSL does not meet regulatory requirements and SHR is using statutory powers to address the non-compliance. <p>There is also a status of 'under review'. Here, SHR are considering what the regulatory status should be.</p>

reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC)	RAAC is a lightweight structural construction material used between the 1950s and 1990s in the floors, walls and roofs of some buildings in Scotland, including some residential properties. It is no longer used in building in Scotland. While RAAC is not widespread in homes provided by social landlords, several landlords have identified the presence of RAAC in some of the homes they provide. RAAC in Social Landlords Scottish Housing Regulator
rent consultation	Rent is a major household expense for most social housing tenants. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires social landlords to consult tenants and take account of their views when making decisions about proposed rent increases.
risk assessment	In SHR this means assessing risk in social landlords to determine what assurance SHR needs from them and information from them on what action they may need to take to improve.
safeguard	This means to protect.
Scottish housing quality standards (SHQS)	The SHQS was introduced in 2004 by the Scottish Government and is the main way to measure the quality of social housing. It is the minimum standard which all social landlords must ensure their properties meet.
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA)	SFHA is the representative body of housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland.
Scottish secure tenancy (SST)	A Scottish Secure Tenancy is the standard type of tenancy given by social landlords in Scotland. It gives tenants strong, long-term rights.
Scottish Government	The Scottish Government is made up of Ministers and civil servants who are responsible for bringing forward legislation and implementing the Parliament's policies. Officials and civil servants work with Scottish Ministers to improve the wellbeing of Scotland for its people.

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)	The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is the independent regulator of social housing services. It is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the interests of current and future tenants, people who are homeless, factored owners and Gypsy/Travellers.
Scottish Ministers	After a Scottish Parliamentary election, a First Minister is formally nominated by the Scottish Parliament and appointed by His Majesty the King. The First Minister then appoints the Scottish Ministers to make up the Cabinet with the agreement of the Scottish Parliament and the approval of The King.
Scottish Parliament	The Parliament is made of members called MSPs who debate and agree legislation. This includes legislation in relation to housing.
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)	The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about most public services in Scotland. See: Home SPSO
Scottish social housing charter (SSHC) "the charter"	This sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should be achieving for their customers. It was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and came into force in April 2012. It was reviewed in 2016 and again in 2021.
scrutiny	This means to examine or complete inquiries.
scrutiny bodies	These are organisations whose purpose is to examine or complete inquiries about a particular issue. As well as SHR, Scottish scrutiny bodies include Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), Audit Scotland and the Care Inspectorate.
serious concern	Previously known as 'significant performance failures'. A group of tenants can report a 'serious concern' to SHR. If SHR identifies a significant issue regarding a social landlord's performance, governance or financial health, these concerns can trigger closer scrutiny or intervention by the SHR. Find out more in this factsheet: Complaints and serious concerns - information for tenants and service users of social landlords Scottish Housing Regulator

short Scottish secure tenancy	A Short Scottish Secure Tenancy is a temporary or limited form of social housing tenancy used by social landlords in certain situations with a fixed term of at least 6 months. Your social landlord must tell you why you have this tenancy type instead of a Scottish Secure Tenancy.
significant performance failure (SPF)	SHR now call this a 'serious concern'.
social housing net zero standard (SHNZS)	This new housing quality standard replaces the second Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH2).
social housing	Housing at an affordable rent provided by local authorities and registered social landlords.
special general meeting (SGM)	A meeting held because the members of the organisation wish to discuss, and reach a decision about, an urgent matter that cannot wait for the annual general meeting.
standards of governance and financial management	Set by SHR, these are the basic rules that every registered social landlord (RSL) must follow to run their organisation properly and fairly.
stakeholder	A stakeholder is any person or group who has an interest in or is affected by what an organisation does.
statutory action	Where SHR uses its legal powers (as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010) to require action from a landlord where it is failing to provide services or manage its affairs to an appropriate standard. SHR has flexible and graduated interventions so it can respond in the most proportionate and effective way.
statutory appointment	Where SHR uses its legal powers (as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010) to appoint a manager or committee member to a social landlord.
statutory manager	Where SHR uses its legal powers (as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010) to appoint a manager to a social landlord.
systemic failure	A failure which affects a whole system or organisation.

systemically important	Some registered social landlords (RSLs) would present more significant challenges if they experienced business failure, for example because of how many tenants they provide homes for or the size of the debt they have. SHR considers these RSLs to have systemic importance and may ask them for more information and assurance.
tenant advisor	An independent, volunteer tenant who works with SHR to ensure that tenants' views are central to the regulation of social landlords in Scotland. Learn more at: Tenant Advisors Scottish Housing Regulator
Tenant Information Service (TIS)	TIS is a national membership organisation that helps tenants and housing organisations work together to make housing better. The organisation makes sure tenants' rights are at the heart of decisions and helps housing staff improve how they involve and engage with tenants. Home TIS
Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Scotland	TPAS Scotland is a national advisory service for tenant and landlord participation in Scotland. TPAS Scotland helps tenants, landlords, and communities have a strong say in the future of their homes and neighbourhoods. The organisation exists to make sure communities keep improving and thriving through community engagement. Home TPAS
Tenants Together Scotland (TTS)	Tenants Together (Scotland) (TTS) is a national network of tenants and was set up as a way to help Registered Tenant Organisations and interested tenants to engage with the Scottish Government on issues of national policy. Home Tenants Together (Scotland)
Tenants Together (Scotland) Scottish Housing Regulator liaison group (TTS SHR liaison group /	SHR meets regularly with tenants through its Tenants Together (Scotland) Scottish Housing Regulator Liaison Group. The group is made up of members of Tenants Together (Scotland). The liaison group discusses SHR's work and helps it focus on the important things. Learn more at: Liaison Group Scottish Housing Regulator

“the liaison group”)	
rent affordability	How affordable the rent is.
thematic	Relating to or based on specific subjects or a specific theme.
transfer of engagements (ToE)	This process transfers the whole of the business of one social landlord into another. This means any tenants also transfer from one landlord to the other.
voids	Empty homes