

The Regional Network SHR Liaison Group meeting

Meeting minutes

20 July 2021 via Zoom

Welcome and introductions

Kelda welcomed everyone to the meeting.

In attendance: Kelda McMichael (SHR), Stephen Lalley (SHR), Leonora Montgomery, John McKenzie, June Anderson, Margaret Dymond, Shona Gorman, John Duffy, Liz Richardson, Bill Campbell

Declaration of interests & minutes of last meeting

There were no declarations made which were relevant to the agenda items. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

1. National Panel of Tenants and Service Users report

Kelda summarised the headlines which emerged from the recently published report setting out the experiences of the National Panel of Tenants and Service Users. She explained that the research was undertaken in February and March 2021, with respondents asked to reflect on their experience since March 2020. This generated some discussion amongst group members, including on the geography and age profile of the panel. Kelda and Stephen highlighted that the profile of the panel was available as an appendix to the report, and that new members to the panel would be welcome to increase representation across age groups, ethnicities and geography.

2. Other SHR updates

Stephen spoke about the COVID-19 monthly return moving to quarterly, including the additional indicators which had been added to the return following discussions with the Social Housing Resilience Group. This had been confirmed with landlords shortly after the Liaison Group's last meeting in May. Given that the deadline for the first quarterly return was the same day as this meeting, Stephen explained that analysis of the data would be discussed at the next meeting, following publication of the dashboard in early August.

The recruitment process for the two vacancies on the SHR board was also launched after the May meeting, and so Kelda gave an overview of this, including the particular skills and experience which Scottish Ministers were looking for and therefore featured in the job advert. With applications now closed, Kelda reminded the group that Scottish Ministers are responsible for making the appointments, with an expected start date of early November 2021. In other SHR board news, Kelda told the group about the recent appointment of four board members to their second term: George Walker (chair), Siobhan White, Andrew Watson and Bob Gil.

Stephen gave a short summary of the latest SHR board minutes which have been published, which are from the March 2021 meeting. The group agreed to include this as a standing agenda item for future meetings.

Kelda mentioned that statutory action continues at Fairfield Housing Association, and that there have been updated engagement plans for both Faifley and Caledonia Housing Associations. This is following Caledonia being selected by Faifley as its preferred partner to transfer its homes to. Kelda highlighted that a tenant ballot will be required for this to go ahead.

In terms of recent publications, Kelda told the group about the most recent blog by Michael Cameron, Chief Executive, which focused on the importance of cyber security and digital engagement; and she also spoke about the letter sent to all social landlords in June about their approach to equalities and human rights when preparing this year's Annual Assurance Statement. Upcoming publications include the COVID quarterly return dashboard and National Report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

3. Scottish Social Housing Charter review

Kelda gave an overview of the Scottish Government's review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, which takes place every five years; highlighting that the consultation period was live and would run until 9 September. The consultation is being supported by TIS and TPAS, who are delivering sessions with tenants and landlords. This generated some discussion amongst the group members, including on the positives and negatives of having mixed consultation sessions with both tenants and landlords. Kelda encouraged members to articulate their thoughts on this as part of their consultation response. Each of the regional networks will be submitting its own response to the consultation.

4. Region updates

All of the regions recently held their respective AGMs.

Region 1 – Updates on individual landlords within the region were shared. This included the continued strike action by Aberdeen City Council's housing officers, various pieces of work which Castlehill's RTO has been involved in with the Association, and the amalgamation of Highland Council's RTOs' meetings.

Region 2 – Region 2's next meeting would be taking place the following week. Bill Campbell spoke about a revised anti-social behaviour policy at Fife Council, and the housing convenor's ambition for a separate court solely for housing cases.

Region 3 – Region 3 was due to meet the following week, and one of the items on the agenda is around mobility scooters, as Margaret had heard about another local authority having a particular policy on this. There is no representation from Inverclyde in region 3, and so members are hoping to encourage someone from that area to join. In East Ayrshire, an event was held on Housing to 2040, however attendance was fairly poor.

Region 4 – Updates on individual landlords were shared. This included North Lanarkshire Federation of Tenants and Residents Group (in partnership with North

Lanarkshire Council) successfully applying for grant funding to set up a lending library for tenants with no access to technology and Link Group's welcoming of Weslo Housing Management tenants. June also spoke about the recently published homelessness statistics, and the recent meeting of the rent focus group, which included a presentation by the Swedish Union of Tenants on rent setting systems in Sweden.

Any other business

The group wanted to raise the issue of the cost of supply materials going up, as there was concern among some tenants that this could have an impact on rent increases. Kelda explained that rent affordability is of high interest to SHR, and SHR has consistently highlighted to RSLs the importance of monitoring their costs. She spoke about SHR having sight of this through the five year financial projections, and that SHR's ongoing engagement with landlords and membership of the Social Housing Resilience Group provided opportunities to hear about and better understand how issues like that are affecting landlords. Stephen highlighted that the impact of Brexit on the cost of materials has been recognised by some landlords in their risk registers for example, and so it is on their radar.

Date of next meeting:

- 26 October 2021, which Colin Stewart and Helen Trouten-Torres from SHR board have been invited to. The group agreed to extend an invitation to Colin and Helen to attend every second meeting beyond 2021.