

CONSUMER STANDARDS SELF ASSESSMENT

Cheltenham Borough Council – Housing Services

August 2025

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1. Introduction

Cheltenham Borough Council is committed to preparing an annual self-assessment against the regulatory requirements for Registered Providers. This report provides an overview of regulatory content and observations on compliance.

The self-assessment identifies areas where our housing services are meeting the standards and makes recommendations for consideration to strengthen areas where further work is required.

2. Regulatory Context

The Regulator of Social Housing (“RSH”) is responsible for ensuring that social landlords deliver services against the consumer standards.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 brought in a proactive role for the RSH on regulating the consumer standards. With effect from 1st April 2024, it gave the RSH new powers to inspect and to intervene when they believe necessary. The regulator also has new enforcement powers and tools to do so.

The RSH will now regulate the consumer standards through a programme of inspection. Following inspection, the RSH will issue a consumer grading of between C1 and C4.

The council will be inspected within a four-year period (by April 2028). In addition to programmed inspections, the council is required to make self-referrals on all material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the consumer standards.

This self-assessment provides a comprehensive assessment against the regulatory standards and makes recommendations on areas of improvement which will be captured and monitored through our Housing Improvement Programme.

3. Self-Assessment Approach

This self-assessment has been conducted against the RSH consumer standards and the RSH Code of Practice that provides further guidance on the expectations and considerations for Registered Providers.

The self-assessment process has been directed by the Director of Governance, Housing and Communities.

The review has been conducted by the Housing Improvement Team, via a mixture of desktop reviews and facilitated workshops with relevant officers.

External support has been provided Pennington Choices Limited and the Housing Quality Network.

The self-assessment will be published and made available to our tenants.

4. Safety and Quality Standard

Overview

We have made good progress against this standard over the past twelve months, implementing new systems and monitoring regimes to ensure that safety standards are met. Where our compliance figures are not 100%, we are actively addressing this.

However, there remains several actions to bring us up to a fully compliant position, including completion of legacy fire actions.

The overall satisfaction with our repairs service remains positive, our tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) identified that 81.9% of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months were satisfied with the time taken and 81.8% satisfied with the overall repairs service. 78.8% of respondents reported that they are satisfied that their home is safe.

The following section provides an overview of how well we meet the standards.

Findings

Health and Safety

- A Compliance Monitoring Group meets monthly and oversees our performance against all statutory safety requirements. This is supported externally by Pennington Choices Limited and HQN. Our newly development compliance reports are also discussed at the monthly housing operations meeting and reported to the Cabinet Housing Committee on a quarterly basis.
- We have a compliance strategy place, and all of our policies are up to date, having been approved in July 2025. Our policies are supported by written procedures and process maps.
- Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) have now moved to a smoothed rolling programme meaning that we will no longer find ourselves in a position of large numbers of fire actions and one time. The assessments are conducted in accordance with current legislation & good practice guidance. The QL system has now been developed to ensure that we are able to effectively track actions, preventing the use of manually generated spreadsheets
- 99.63% of our stock has an EICR certificate within the last five-years with zero properties outside of ten-years. To achieve 100%, we have a fully funded Electrical Testing programme in operation to ensure that within the next 18 months, all homes will have been tested within a five-year period. Our HRA includes provision to maintain a five-year inspection cycle.
- We are 100% compliant with legislation regarding lifts in buildings and all statutory inspection requirements are met annually.
- Comprehensive gas safety inspections are in place with 99.91% of our homes compliant. The four outstanding properties are currently going through the legal process to secure access.
- We are 100% compliant on water safety.
- We have asbestos surveys for all required premises under the Duty to Manage and strong procedures support asbestos management during repair, refurbishment and demolition works. We separate contracts in place for surveyors and removal works as well as a third contractor for assurance.

- We have a Damp, Mould and Condensation policy in place and are working towards actively reporting on the number of live cases via our compliance report.

Stock Condition

- We are working through a programme of stock conditions surveys for all of our stock. 72% of our stock has had a condition survey within the past 12 months, with a target to reach 100% by December 2025.
- From 2026 we will move to a rolling stock condition programme, surveying 20% of our stock each year, ensuring that all properties will always have been surveyed within a 5-year period.
- The existing Asset management strategy is out of date and requires reviewing and updating. This work is in progress.
- The data from our stock condition surveys is now being used to develop our planned maintenance programme, upon which we will be seeking to engage our tenants.

Repairs, Planned Maintenance and Adaptations

- Our approach to damp, mould and condensation is defined through our policy. Performance is monitored using QL and datahub and will be reported as part of our compliance processes
- Our repairs and emergency out of hours service is easy to access 24/7, with a range of ways to report a repair available for all customers to meet their needs.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Complete the overdue fire actions as a priority.
- In consultation with our tenants develop a repairs policy
- Update our tenant handbook
- Complete a review of our DMC policy and reporting to ensure we are fully compliant with Awaabs law
- Conduct an appraisal of QL to explore its functionality and to understand the gap between where it is now, and where it needs to be to support the end-to-end delivery of all compliance programmes.
- Implement a rolling programme of stock condition surveys on at least a five-year basis to ensure that data remains up to date and accurate to allow you to address any issues of non-decency and assist in future planning.
- Ensure regular, documented contract management meetings take place to cover standard areas such as performance, competency, complaints and so on,
- Ensure competency checks are undertaken across all contracts (at least annually), to demonstrate that your contractors, and any subcontractors they use, continue to have the competencies and accreditations you expect.
- Implement a formal and coordinated approach to informing residents about each area of compliance by developing a communications plan which sets out how and when information will be provided.

5. Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Overview

An assessment against the standard demonstrates that the service is performing well in some areas. There is evidence of tenant engagement but in some places, this is not co-ordinated or fed back to tenants. Therefore, it is difficult to demonstrate that the council is truly ensuring that investment and service delivery is directed towards tenants' priorities.

Our TSMs indicate that 67% of respondents stated that they were satisfied that their landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them. Whilst this is above the sector average of 62% it's an indication that there is more we can do.

Findings

- Our Tenant Engagement Plan offers a wide range of ways to get involved and the level of tenant engagement continues to develop.
- Our Cabinet Housing Committee, live streamed via YouTube and available on our website provides an opportunity for tenants and elected members to provide scrutiny and challenge on areas such as performance, complaints, policies and working practices.
- We publish an Annual Tenants Report that provides an overview of how we spend tenant's rent and strategic priorities.
- TSMs are published in line with regulatory requirements. We are compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's recommended approach to complaint handling. Our complaints policy is published and easily accessible and our performance is scrutinised by our Cabinet Housing Committee.
- All our policies include an equality impact assessment
- Our corporate values and employee code of conduct clearly set out the councils' expectations regarding staff behaviour and conduct, including upholding the Nolan principles.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Finalise and publish our customer promise and customer charter
- Develop and publish service standards
- Update the single equality scheme
- Develop a contractor's code of conduct, clearly setting out our expectations for contractor's conduct
- Ensure that we follow up actions from our tenant scrutiny work and publish the outcomes
- Develop a communications and engagement calendar
- Develop a clear communications protocol so tenants are clear on the ways we can communicate with them.
- Update our tenant handbook to be more accessible
- Develop a repairs policy which clearly sets out our approach to repairs, including where these are rechargeable

- Actively publish our cleaning and grounds maintenance schedules

6. Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Overview

An assessment against the Neighbourhood and Community Standard shows that the service is performing well in many areas. Guided by tenant feedback we are actively undertaking a review of our ASB services.

We work well with a range of partners to keep our neighbourhoods safe and our work on the Home Office Clear, Hold, Build initiative (Endeavour) has been recognised as best practice across the south-west.

We are active partners in a wide range of partnerships, some examples include weekly multi agency meetings with the police and social care, facing hardship group, safeguarding boards, combatting drugs partnership, serious and organised crime group, community safety partnership and safe estates group.

Local lettings plans are used where appropriate as an effective neighbourhood management tool.

Findings

- An estate walkabouts programme operates monthly. This is supplemented with Housing Leadership Team walkabouts which also take place monthly.
- Our ASB team actively manage breaches of Tenancy through collaborative working with Housing Officers and in partnership with Gloucestershire Police.
- Our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy was updated in July 2025 and sets out our approach to dealing with ASB including Hate Crime and the range of enforcement actions tailored to risk.
- Our TSM score for satisfaction with ASB remains relatively static, but we hope to see an improvement in this next year as we progress with our ASB review
- Endeavour, Gloucestershire's approach to Clear, Hold, Build has been a huge success and has been recognised as best practice across the southwest of England.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Conclude our ASB review
- More proactively promote the use of advocates
- Develop a community cohesion policy

7. Tenancy Standard

Overview

Our assessment against the Tenancy Standard is that we are generally performing well, with good understanding of housing need. We can demonstrate a history of supporting tenants in their home and focusing on helping tenants sustain their tenancies.

There are many examples across the service where housing services have worked with a range of internal and external partners to support tenants.

Findings

- We allocate homes in a fair and transparent manner in line with Homeseeker Plus and work with other Registered Providers who operate within the borough.
- Our Tenancy Policy was updated in July 2025
- We have policies and process in place for tackling tenancy fraud and actively carry out fraud related activities such as NFI matches and reviewing the housing waiting list bandings
- We have an active downsizing scheme to encourage best use of our stock and to assist with dealing with overcrowding and under occupancy
- We are part of the county wide initiative to create a single accessible housing register, although we acknowledge that significant work is required to bring this to fruition
- A number of teams and initiatives are in place to support the sustainment of tenancies including specialist tenancy investment officers, our benefits and money advice team and our training and employment service
- Our tenancy audits provide a rolling tenancy review programme, based on level of risk, which enables housing officers to provide a support visit to all tenants in their home. These audits allow our team to provide support and advice to our tenants and where required to make appropriate referrals for tenants.
- With the exception of 5 affordable units, we only provide secure tenancies and at the time of sign up our empty properties team provide support to ensure tenants understand their Tenancy Agreement and provide information on a range of services and support mechanisms.
- The council provides a mutual exchange service through Home Swapper free of charge for all tenants.

Opportunities for further improvement

- Implement a programme for assessing all our properties to establish accessibility and grade them accordingly then ensure that this data is reflected in the lettings adverts on Homeseeker Plus
- Implement a process to ensure that all adaptations are accurately recorded on our QL housing management system
- Update the leaflet on downsizing initiatives
- Develop an annual report for the Cabinet Housing Committee demonstrating work done on sustaining tenancies
- More proactively promote the mutual exchange service

8. Conclusion

In conclusion there is evidence of good performance in many areas. However, where gaps exist these could result in the council receiving a lower consumer standards grade. It is therefore essential that we proactively work through the housing improvement programme, completing the identified actions as a matter of corporate priority.