



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Janet Sharpe,
Director of Housing Services

Tel: 0114 2735493

Report of: *Ajman Ali (Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services)*

Report to: *Housing Policy Committee*

Date of Decision: *21st March 2024*

Subject: *Consultation on the Competence and Conduct Standard*

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input type="checkbox"/>	Full <input type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA		
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Purpose of Report:

This report seeks approval from the Housing Policy Committee to submit a response to the government consultation on a draft Competence and Conduct Standard for social housing staff.

The government is consulting on its proposals to introduce a new, regulatory standard relating to the competence and conduct of social housing staff. This standard will require senior managers and executives to have, or be working towards, a relevant qualification. It will ensure that staff have up-to-date skills, knowledge, and experience, and that they exhibit the right behaviours to deliver a high quality, professional service and treat residents with respect.

Recommendations:

That the Housing Policy Committee:

1. Provides feedback on the draft response attached at Appendix A.
2. Approves the consultation response for submission to government.

Background Papers:

(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)

Appendix 1 – Proposed response to the government consultation on Competence and Conduct for social housing staff.

Lead Officer to complete:-									
1	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Finance: <i>Helen Damon</i></p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Legal: <i>Rebecca Lambert</i></p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Equalities & Consultation: <i>N/A</i></p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Climate: <i>N/A</i></p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.</p>	<p>Finance: <i>Helen Damon</i></p>		<p>Legal: <i>Rebecca Lambert</i></p>		<p>Equalities & Consultation: <i>N/A</i></p>		<p>Climate: <i>N/A</i></p>
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	<p>Climate: <i>N/A</i></p>								
	<p><i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i></p>								
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4	<p>I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Lead Officer Name: Janet Sharpe</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Job Title: Director of Housing Services</td> </tr> </table> <p>Date: 8th March 2024</p>	Lead Officer Name: Janet Sharpe	Job Title: Director of Housing Services						
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1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 The government is consulting on its proposals to introduce a new, regulatory standard relating to the competence and conduct of social housing staff. This standard will require senior managers and executives to have, or be working towards, a relevant qualification. It will ensure that staff have up-to-date skills, knowledge, and experience, and that they exhibit the right behaviours to deliver a high quality, professional service and treat residents with respect.
- 1.2 This consultation ([Consultation on a direction to the Regulator of Social Housing to set a Competence and Conduct Standard for social housing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) sets out proposals for a new Competence and Conduct Standard relating to staff in the social rented sector, including qualification requirements for senior housing managers and executives. The proposals address the significant concerns which were raised following the Grenfell tragedy about the professionalism of staff working in social housing. The evidence from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry indicated that tenants living in the tower had not been listened to when they raised concerns and that some staff behaved unprofessionally, treated tenants with a lack of respect, and did not have the skills and knowledge they needed to carry out their roles effectively.
- 1.3 The consultation, which closes on 2nd April 2024, proposes that the Standard will require registered providers to:
- have an up-to-date written policy setting out their approach to managing and developing the skills, knowledge, experience and conduct of those of their staff who are relevant individual; and
 - adopt or develop an appropriate code of conduct for those of their staff who are relevant individuals and to ensure this is embedded within their organisation.
- 1.4 The proposed direction will also require the Regulator of Social Housing to include in their Standard a requirement for registered providers to comply with the government's policy statement on Qualifications Requirements for Social Housing. The draft policy statement sets out detailed information about the roles and qualifications in scope, time limits for staff to begin working towards qualifications, a transition period before requirements come fully into force, and a small number of flexibilities and exemptions which will apply in limited circumstances.
- 1.5 The proposals will require 'senior housing managers' to hold a Level 4 housing qualification (equivalent to a HNC or NVQ 4) and for 'senior housing executives' to have a Level 5 housing qualification (equivalent to a HND, NVQ 5 or foundation degree). These qualification requirements will apply to managers who provide services to council housing tenants. The current definition would include customer services and complaints managers in addition to housing management and maintenance

managers. It excludes managers in support services for example, HR and Finance.

- 1.6 Appendix A provides a draft response to the government consultation for members of this Committee to consider. The draft response broadly welcomes the direction of the proposals in promoting 'housing' as a profession alongside other services delivered by the Council such as social care and environmental health.
- 1.7 The draft response does highlight the challenges and financial cost to the Council of implementing these changes in the 2-year transition period. It would require 50% of Service Managers, Heads of Service and above to hold or be working towards a Level 4 or 5 qualification by 2026. All managers would need to be qualified by 2027. The broad definition of social housing means that colleagues in related services (Customer Services and Complaints) outside of the housing service extends that impact. This will undoubtedly be a challenge for the Council and the wider housing sector.
- 1.8 It is difficult to assess the overall impact on the service in the short-term as it will require qualification providers to review and update their training offer. However, it will mean additional cost to the Housing Revenue Account and a reduction in management capacity whilst managers undertake the required qualifications. The draft response attempts to balance this note of caution against the potential benefit of the proposed approach.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 The new Council Plan was approved by Full Council on 6th March 2024, "Together we get things done", in collaboration with our communities, partners, and stakeholders is a shared narrative that describes where we all want to be as a city. The Council plan sets out our City Goals, which will become a driving force to support our Council improvement journey and delivery planning. With the goals being developed collaboratively, a key aim is that this will promote a joined-up approach to delivering the goals.

One of the new Council Plan's strategic outcomes is 'Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home', with a specific priority around increasing the availability, quality, and range of housing in our neighbourhoods.

If adopted, these proposals would demonstrate to tenants the importance of having trained and qualified staff supporting the management of their homes and support the Council in creating quality housing in Sheffield.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 Consultation has taken place internally within the Council to develop our draft response to the proposals. The government in developing its proposals has consulted widely with tenants and social landlords across the country.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

- 4.1.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this consultation. If the government decides to proceed with implementing a new standard, then it is likely that there will be implications for the Council in the provision of additional training for staff. Access to this training and the training routes available to staff will be further considered from an equality's perspective at that time.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this consultation. If the government decides to proceed with implementing a new standard, then it is likely that there will be additional financial costs for the Council. These costs have been anticipated and a limited provision for additional training has been included in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 24/25 and 25/26.

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 In September 2023 section 21(1) of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 came into force. It amended the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 to include a new section 194A covering standards relating to competence and conduct. The new Section 194A of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 gives the regulator of Social Housing the power to set standards for registered providers in matters relating to the competence of individuals involved in the provision of services in connection with the management of social housing.
- 4.3.2 Section 24 of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which also came into force in September 2023, amends section 197 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 to introduce a new section 197(2A) which extends the directions that can be made by the Secretary of State to the Regulator of Social Housing to cover powers under S194A of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 as detailed in section 4.3.1 above.
- 4.3.3 Before the Secretary of State makes a direction under section 197(2A) the Government wishes to consult on what this should include. This consultation seeks views on a proposed draft direction from the Secretary of State to the Regulator of Social Housing using the abovementioned powers under section 197 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (amended by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023). The purpose of this direction will be to set a standard for

registered providers in matters relating to the competence and conduct of individuals involved in the provision of services connected with the management of social housing.

- 4.3.4 The decision to agree the Council's response to this consultation is reserved to the Housing Policy Committee in accordance with part 3.3 of the Council's Constitution.

4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 There are no direct climate implications arising from this consultation.

4.5 Other Implications

- 4.5.1 There are no other implications arising from this consultation.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The alternative option is not to provide a response to the consultation. However, on this occasion, given that there are implications for the Council, the recommendation is that a response is submitted.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 There are several financial and resource implications arising from the proposed implementation of a Competence and Conduct Standard for social housing. It is important for the Council to highlight these implications to government as part of this consultation.