

Agenda Item	5
Report No	HP/09/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Housing and Property

Date: 10 June 2021

Report Title: Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

Report By: Executive Chief Officer (Housing and Property)

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides a summary of Housing Service performance for 2010/2021.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

Note the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - There are no resource implications arising from this report.

3.2 **Legal** - There are no legal implications arising from this report.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - There are no equality implications arising from this report.

3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** - There are no climate change/Carbon Clever implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Risk** - Risk is managed through regular review and reporting to allow corrective action to be taken if necessary.

3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

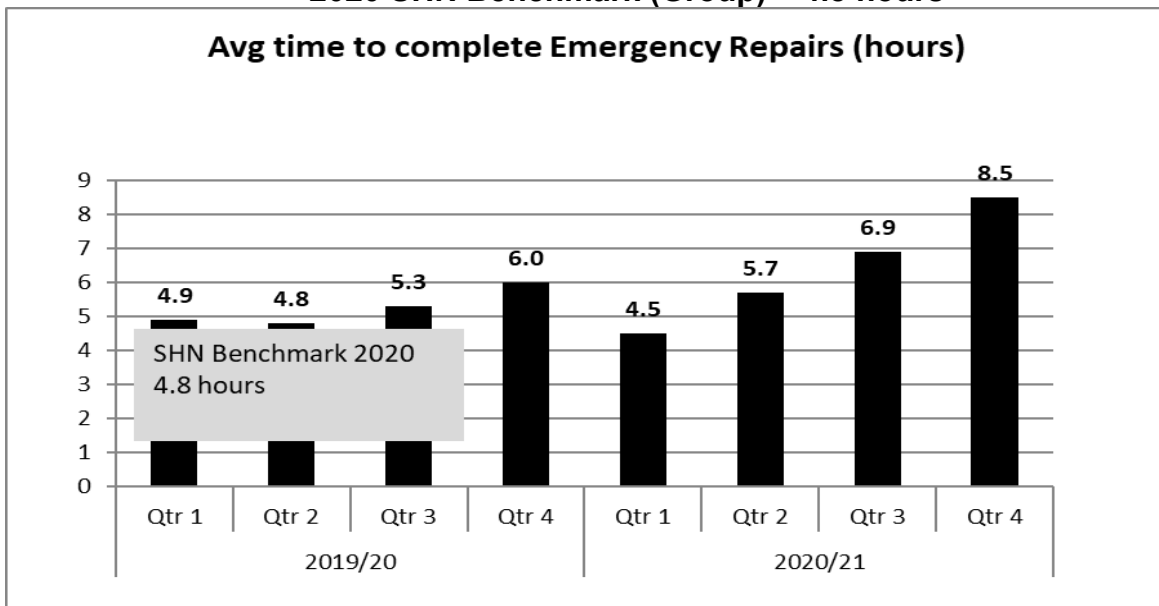
4. Background

- 4.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has set out the performance indicators that it will use in its scrutiny of landlords.
- 4.2 This report provides performance information based on the reporting framework recommended by the SHR. Further performance information by Council Ward can be found on the Highland Council Intranet ward reporting pages.
http://www.highland.gov.uk/staffsite/info/13/members_intranet/37/ward_reporting/2
- 4.3 In accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter guidance, the Repairs, Tenancy Management and Rent Arrears figures are cumulative, while the Homeless Presentations figures are given for each separate quarter.
- 4.4 Scottish Housing Network (SHN) benchmark information, derived from the performance of all Scottish Landlords, has also been provided where available.
- 4.5 The Coronavirus pandemic has continued to impact on how services are delivered. The Housing Performance Report to March Committee provided information on how the Service has responded to the challenges of the pandemic and in particular to the lockdown restrictions. The Service is continuing to adhere to the Scottish Government guidelines in regard to the delivery of services to clients and more details are provided at each section of this report.

5. Housing Repairs

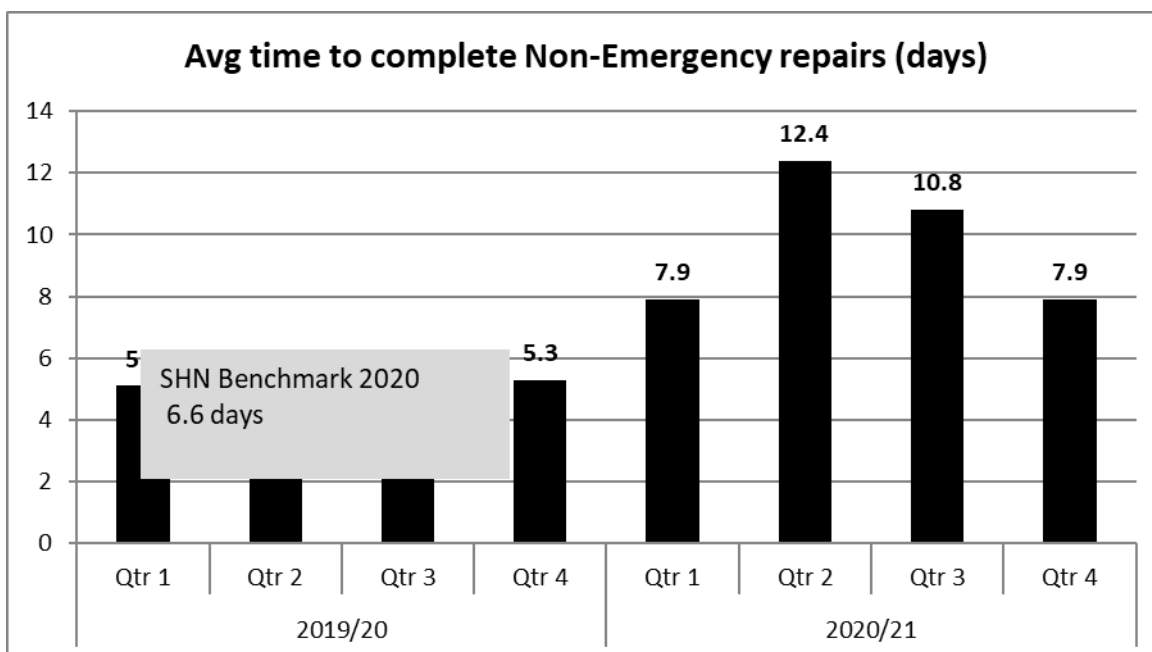
- 5.1 The key indicators for measuring repairs performance are the average time taken to complete Emergency repairs and Non-emergency repairs.
- 5.2 Table 1 details performance on the average time taken to complete emergency repairs and Table 2 details the average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs. Both graphs contain national benchmark figures for these indicators based on published 2019/20 figures.
- 5.3 **Table 1: Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)**

Target 14 hours
2020 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 4.8 hours



5.4 Performance on emergency repairs remains within the Highland target but emergency repairs have taken longer in the last two quarters. This reflects the impact of carrying out a higher proportion of non-emergency repairs to reduce the backlog of over 1,000 repairs from the first lockdown period and the restrictions on carrying out work in the second lockdown period earlier in 2021. Highland geography needs to be considered when comparing the Highland figure for the national benchmark on completing emergency repairs.

5.5 **Table 2: Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)**
Target 8 days
2020 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 6.6 days



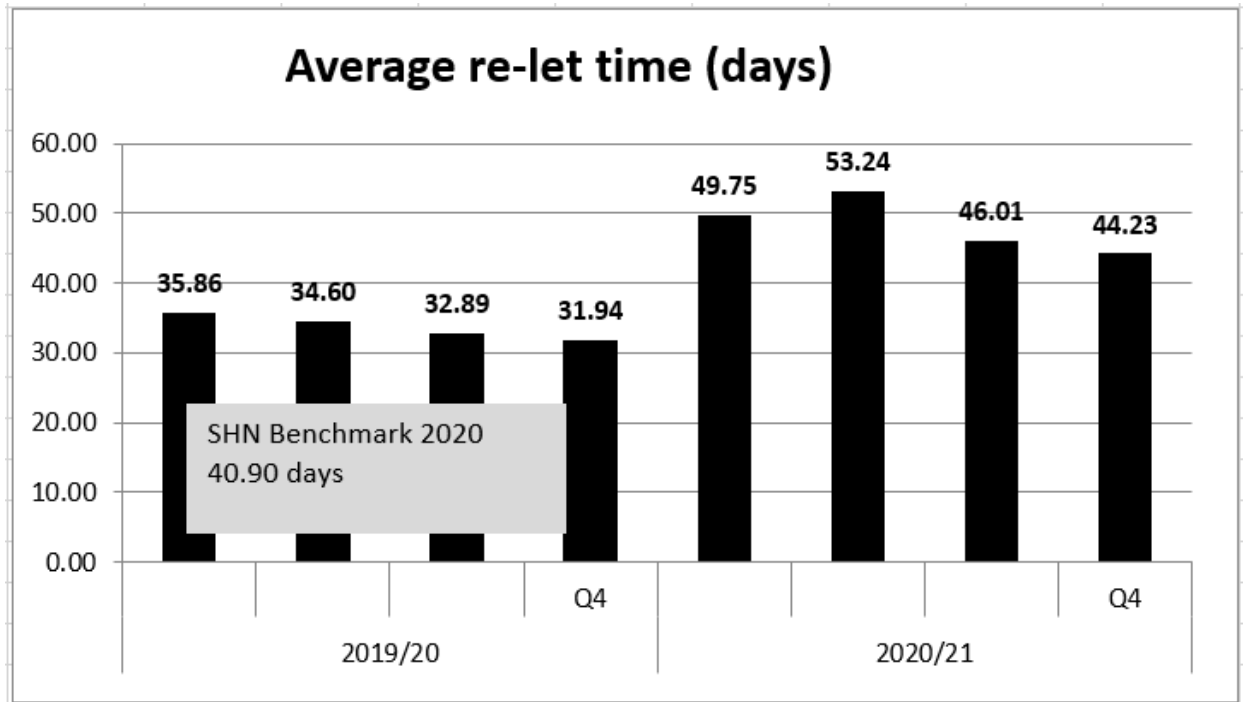
5.6 Average performance on non-emergency repairs is within the target timescales and reflects efforts to carry out essential repairs where safe to do so during the second lockdown period. Performance will continue to be impacted in future quarters as most non-essential repairs were suspended during the second lockdown period and a backlog of approximately 800 repairs was in place when the restrictions on non-essential domestic repairs were eased on 26 April 2021.

6. Tenancy Management

6.1 Table 3 below provides information on the average re-let time showing the trend over the last 2 years.

6.2

**Table 3: Average re-let time (days) Target 35 days
2020 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 40.90 days**



6.3 Performance on reletting times remains above our Highland target of 35 days although performance improved in quarter 4.

6.4 The graph shows the clear impact of the emergency on reletting activity and average reletting times. In line with national guidance, housing allocations during the lockdown period were happening at a greatly reduced level and were focused on homeless clients and other high needs cases. More detail is provided in the HHR Annual Allocations Monitoring Report presented to this Committee.

6.5 Repairs teams continued to undertake reletting repairs on a targeted basis during the lockdown period, however changes to working practices inevitably extended the time taken for repairs.

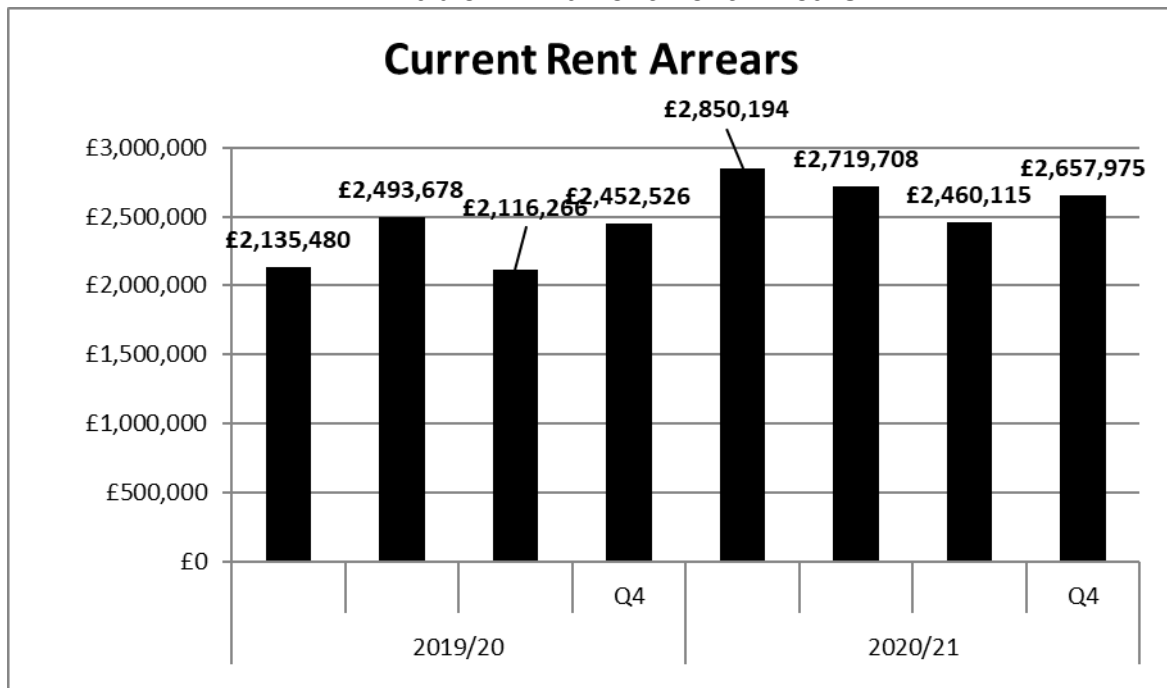
6.6 A large number of households still face complex housing issues and staff have continued to undertake housing options work and provide information and advice to people with housing problems through telephone or video calls rather than face to face. More doorstep and home visiting are now possible in line with the easing of restrictions under the Scottish Government's tier system.

7. Rent Arrears

7.1 The key performance indicator for rent arrears is the value of current arrears. Table 4 below provides information on current rent arrears over the last 2 years.

7.2

Table 4 – Current Rent Arrears



7.3 Previous reports to Committee have detailed the efforts of officers during the pandemic to provide a full service in relation to rent arrears and to adapt communication and engagement with tenants to help them maintain rent payments and to seek support required. Processes and correspondence have been adapted to increase tenant awareness of the support available to them.

7.4 Despite the efforts being made to contact people in arrears, rent arrears for quarter 4 are significantly higher than for the corresponding quarter in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

7.5 Engagement with tenants and partners has confirmed that tenants are experiencing the same issues of unemployment and/or reduced income like the rest of the population during the pandemic. Many tenants are claiming Universal Credit for the first time.

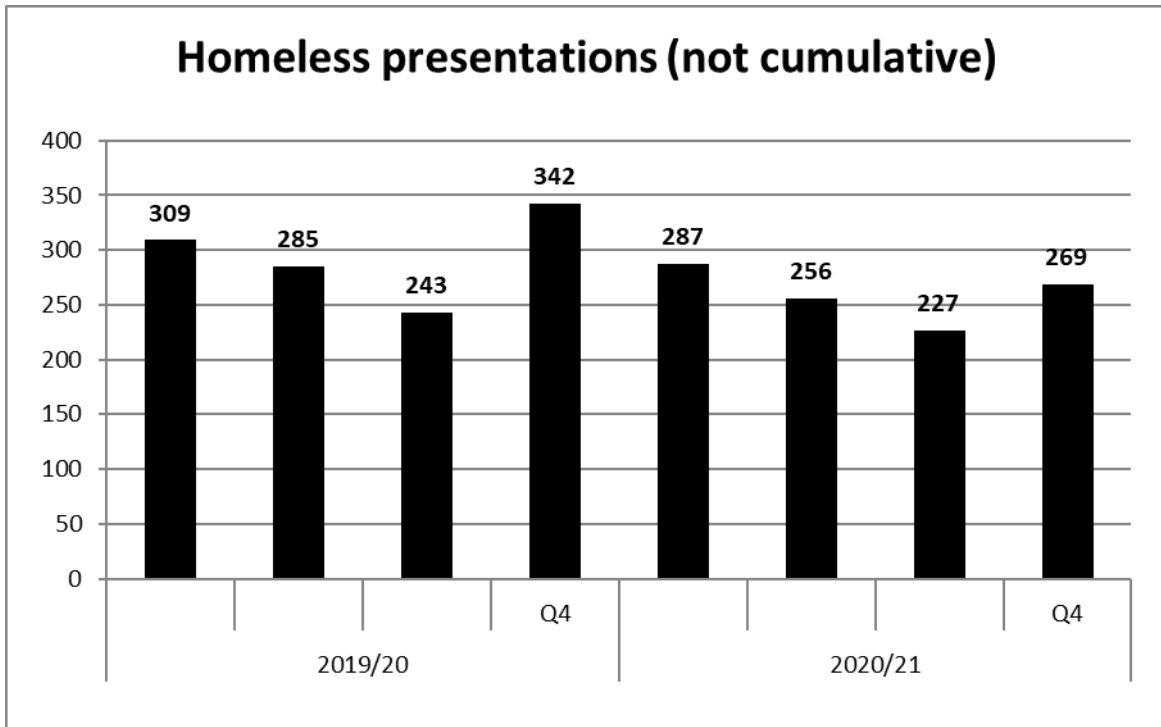
7.6 Under the emergency coronavirus legislation, there has been an extension to the notice period required to be given to tenants before landlords can start legal action to obtain an order for eviction. In line with this, Highland has not progressed any rent arrears cases to court during the emergency. We await further clarification as to whether the extended notice period will continue nationally.

8. Homelessness

8.1 Performance information on homelessness is noted in tables 5 and 6.

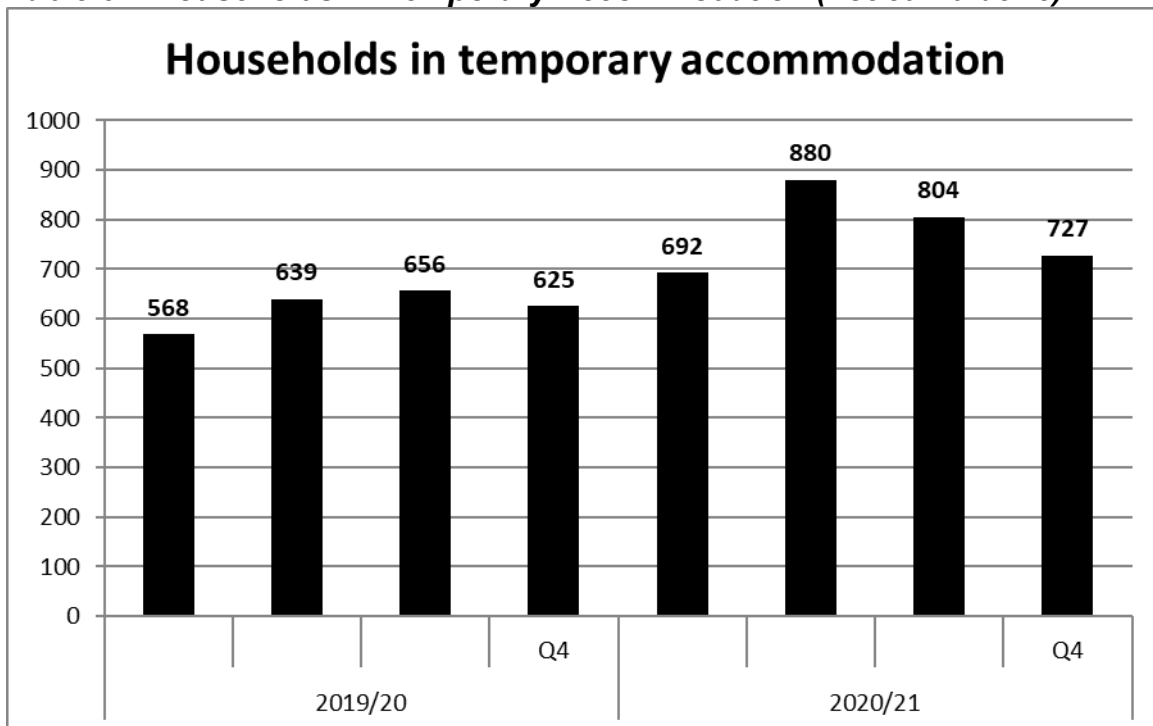
8.2

Table 5 - Homeless presentations per quarter (not cumulative)



8.3

Table 6 – Households in Temporary Accommodation (not cumulative)



8.4

Table 5 (above) shows that numbers of homeless presentations have been slightly lower than compared to quarter 4 for 2019/20 which may reflect the legislation concerning court action, particularly in regard to private sector housing. Table 6 (above) shows a decrease from quarters 2 and 3 in the numbers of homeless people in temporary accommodation.

However, this figure is still higher than in previous years and reflects the difficulty of moving clients into secure tenancies during the pandemic.

- 8.5 An update on homelessness services and Scottish Government funding allocations is reported elsewhere to this Committee as part of the Council's updated Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

9. Complaints and enquiry performance

- 9.1 Table 7 below provides information on performance against complaints, freedom of information requests and MSP enquiries. This demonstrates the volume of formal complaints and enquiries that the service is dealing with. Staff are dealing with much larger numbers of service requests and enquiries on a day to day basis which do not form part of formal reporting. Given the nature and volume of business involved in housing services the proportion of formal complaints received is relatively low. As well as complaints some tenants and housing customers also take the time to contact us to compliment staff or thank us for the services they have received. Information on compliments received is also provided below.

- 9.2 Following completion of stage 2 complaints customers are advised that they can contact the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman if they are not satisfied with the way the Council has dealt with their case. There have been no complaints upheld by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman to date in 2020-21.

Table 7 – complaint and enquiry performance

Complaints	Stage 1	Stage 1 Average Response Time (Days)	Stage 2	Stage 2 Average Response Time (Days)
Quarter 1 (Apr-Jun)	29	17	12	25
Quarter 2 (Jul-Sep)	75	11	23	23
Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec)	62	8	34	27
Quarter 4 (Jan - Mar)	44	9	32	19

FOIs	Number Logged	Number now closed
Quarter 1 (Apr-Jun)	13	13
Quarter 2 (Jul-Sep)	39	39
Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec)	24	23
Quarter 4 (Jan - Mar)	31	31

MP/MSP Enquiries	Number Logged	Number now closed
Quarter 1 (Apr-Jun)	55	55
Quarter 2 (Jul-Sep)	94	94
Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec)	89	89
Quarter 4 (Jan - Mar)	64	62

	Compliments
Quarter 1 (Apr-Jun)	6
Quarter 2 (Jul-Sep)	12
Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec)	13
Quarter 4 (Jan – Mar)	12

10 Scottish Housing Regulator Engagement Plan

- 10.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator has published Engagement Plans for all registered social landlords. Highland's Engagement Plan is attached at **Appendix 1** of this report.
- 10.2 The Scottish Housing Regulator has advised all local authorities that homelessness and gypsy traveller site management reflect the strategic importance of these issues to the Scottish Government rather than any performance concerns regarding performance. Highland will continue to liaise on a monthly basis with the Regulator in regard to the Engagement Plan.
- 10.3 In line with Regulator requirements, Highland will submit its Annual Return of the Scottish Housing Charter which details housing performance in 2020-21. It should also be noted that the annual Highland Annual Assurance Statement will be presented to this Committee for approval in September 2021.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property

Date: 25 May 2021

Author: David Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance;
Brian Cameron, Housing Policy & Investment Manager

Background Papers: Scottish Housing Regulator: The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information

Highland Council

Why we are engaging with Highland Council (Highland)

We are engaging with Highland about its **services for people who are homeless** and its **sites for Gypsy/Travellers**.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the services provided by social landlords in 2020 and will continue to influence how services are provided in 2021. We will continue to monitor, assess and report upon how each landlord is responding and we will keep our regulatory engagement under review so that we can continue to respond to the challenges of COVID-19.

We have reviewed the information on homelessness in the COVID-19 monthly returns. We will discuss with Highland the impact of the pandemic on outcomes for people who are threatened with, or are experiencing, homelessness, how it is working with its Registered Social Landlord partners to provide accommodation, and review our engagement.

Highland has told us that it does not meet all of its fire safety obligations at its Gypsy/Traveller sites.

What Highland must do

Highland must:

- provide us with the information we may require in relation to its homelessness service;
- provide us with bi-monthly reports showing progress in meeting all fire safety obligations for its Gypsy/Traveller sites as soon as possible; and
- confirm that its Gypsy/Traveller sites comply with all fire safety obligations as soon as possible.

What we will do

We will:

- meet with Highland to discuss its homelessness service and decide whether we require any additional assurance;
- monitor Highland's delivery of the fire safety obligations for its Gypsy/Traveller sites;
- consider our regulatory engagement with Highland if the fire obligations are not met as soon as possible;
- have on-going engagement with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service as the enforcing authority for fire safety at Gypsy/Traveller sites and with the Scottish Government about Highland's progress; and
- update our published engagement plan in light of any material change to our planned engagement with Highland.

Regulatory returns

Highland must provide us with the following annual regulatory returns and alert us to notifiable events as appropriate:

- Annual Assurance Statement; and
- Annual Return on the Charter.

It should also notify us of any material changes to its Annual Assurance Statement, and any tenant and resident safety matter which has been reported to or is being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive or reports from regulatory or statutory authorities or insurance providers, relating to safety concerns.



[Read more about Highland](#)

Our lead officer for Highland Council is:

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