Consultation on a Review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter: An Analysis of Responses

social research

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

This publication is available at **www.gov.scot**

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-78652-583-3

Published by The Scottish Government, November 2016

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS82631 (11/16)

Consultation on a Review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter: An Analysis of Responses

Linda Nicholson, The Research Shop, 2016

Contents

1. Executive Summary 4
2. Introduction 9
3. Impact of the Current Charter 12
4. Current Outcomes and Standards: 18
Equalities (Charter outcome 1) 18
5. Current Outcomes and Standards: 21
Communication (Charter outcome 2) 21
6. Current Outcomes and Standards: 24
Participation (Charter outcome 3) 24
7. Current Outcomes and Standards: 27
Quality of Housing (Charter standard 4) 27
8. Current Outcomes and Standards: 29
Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements (Charter outcome 5) 29
9. Current Outcomes and Standards: 31
Estate Management, Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbour Nuisance and Tenancy Disputes (Charter outcome 6) 31
10. Current Outcomes and Standards: 34
Housing Options (Charter outcomes 7, 8 and 9) 34
11. Current Outcomes and Standards: 36
Access to Housing (Charter outcome 10) 36
12. Current Outcomes and Standards: 38
Tenancy Sustainment (Charter outcome 11) 38
13. Current Outcomes and Standards: 40
Homeless People (Charter outcome 12) 40
14. Current Outcomes and Standards: 42
Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges (Charter standard 13) 42
15. Current Outcomes and Standards: 44
Rents and Service Charges (Charter outcomes 14 and 15) 44
16. Other Customers: 46
Gypsies/Travellers (Charter outcome 16) 46
17. Views on additions to the Charter 48

Annex 1: List of Respondents **51**
Annex 2: Tables **53**
Question 1: Do you think the quality of landlord services has improved because of the Charter?. 53
Question 2: Do you think the way the Charter is reported on helps you judge whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards?..... 54
Charter outcome 1: Equalities 55
Charter outcome 2: Communication 56
Charter outcome 2: Participation 57
Charter standard 4: Quality of housing 58
Charter outcome 5: Repairs, maintenance and improvements 59
Charter outcome 6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes 60
Charter outcomes 7, 8 and 9: Housing options 61
Charter outcome 10: Access to housing 62
Charter outcome 11: Tenancy sustainment 63
Charter outcome 12: Homeless people 64
Charter standard 13: Getting good value from rents and service charges 65
Charter outcomes 14 and 15: Rent and service charges 66
Charter outcome 16: Gypsies/Travellers 67
Annex 3: Additional comments **68**
Chapter 6 68
Chapter 7 68
Chapter 8 69
Chapter 9 69
Chapter 12 70
Chapter 13 71
Chapter 14 72
Chapter 16 72
Chapter 17 Scrutiny and indicators 72

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Ministers are required to set standards and outcomes that social landlords should achieve for tenants and other customers through their housing activities. The purpose of the Charter is to:

- give tenants, homeless people and other customers a clear understanding of what they should expect from a social landlord;
- give landlords a clear understanding of what they should be delivering through their housing activities;
- provide the basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to monitor, assess and report on the performance of social landlords.

1.2 The Scottish Government wished to hear the views of stakeholders on the Charter to inform its first five-year review. It published a written consultation on 1 June 2016 and publicised this widely. A copy was sent to all local authorities, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and other stakeholders. In addition to this formal consultation the Scottish Government held 12 events to seek the views of tenants and landlords across Scotland. The Scottish Government also commissioned the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and Tenants Information Service to undertake an 'Involving All' programme to review the Charter and assess its impacts with tenants who might normally be excluded or find it difficult to get involved. 'Involving All' entailed working with support agencies, specialist organisations and specific landlords to target, consult and collect the views of tenants and staff.

1.3 106 responses to the written consultation were received, 73 from organisations and 33 from individuals. Some of the organisations represented the views of their wider membership. Views on the current Charter were generally positive with the majority of respondents largely in favour of keeping the current outcomes and standards unchanged. More specific views are summarised below.

Impact of the current Charter

1.4 Most of those who provided a view considered that the quality of landlord services had improved because of the Charter. They identified six key ways in which the Charter had improved services: better communication between landlords and tenants; landlords are more accountable for their service quality; general quality improvements; greater focus on tenant priorities; encouragement of tenant-led scrutiny; and enabling landlords to plan their services more effectively.

Reporting of the Charter

1.5 Around half of those who provided a view considered that the way in which the Charter is reported on helped them to judge whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards. A general view amongst them was that the way the Charter is reported enabled comparisons to be made across landlords, and

provided landlords and tenants with the information required to challenge poor performance and identify areas for improvement.

Views on current outcomes and standards

1.6 Respondents were asked for their views on each of the current outcomes and standards and their supporting narratives.

Equalities (Charter outcome 1)

1.7 Most of those providing a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. The outcome was perceived as being clear, explicit and easy to understand by landlords and tenants alike. Suggestions were made for additional characteristics to be added to the supporting narrative: location; mental health; mental and physical ability; looked-after children and care-leavers; pregnancy and maternity; and minority groups.

Communication (Charter outcome 2)

1.8 Most of those providing a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. Whilst the vast majority of RSLs and their representative bodies and most local authorities were in favour of keeping the outcome, the views of Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their representative bodies (TRGs) were more mixed.

1.9 Some respondents felt that the outcome as currently framed is too open and enables too much lee-way in interpretation; others considered that the supporting narrative should convey more explicitly what they felt was the importance of this outcome.

Participation (Charter outcome 3)

1.10 Around half of those providing a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. The majority of RSLs and local authorities were in favour of keeping the outcome unchanged; most of the TRGs recommended amending it.

1.11 The outcome was perceived by many to be clear and straightforward, working well and expressing commitment to participation without being overly prescriptive. Others, however, viewed the outcome as lacking in clarity over what constitutes "participation", and its relationship with "engagement" and "involvement". Some felt that the wording may raise tenants' expectations unduly as to the level of influence they could exert.

Quality of housing (Charter standard 4)

1.12 Just over half of those providing a view considered the standard should be changed. Most, however, did so on the basis that the standard should be revised to reflect the introduction of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH), rather than requesting broader changes. Several respondents highlighted that the reference to April 2015 for meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard

(SHQS) should be updated along with the supporting narrative to reflect the current position regarding SHQS and EESH.

Repairs, maintenance and improvements (Charter outcome 5)

1.13 Most of those providing a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. TRGs and local authorities in particular were supportive of the Charter outcome remaining as it is; RSLs had more mixed views.

1.14 Those in favour of keeping the outcome unchanged considered that it worked well and reflected a reasonable approach to giving tenants what they wanted. A prevailing theme amongst those recommending change was that tenants should be encouraged to be more pro-active in highlighting when preventative maintenance work should be done. Another recurring view was that the outcome should incorporate an aspect of customer satisfaction with the quality of service received.

Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes (Charter outcome 6)

1.15 Views were mixed on whether this outcome should be amended. There were differences in view between categories of respondent, with most of the RSLs in favour of change but other categories being more evenly balanced in view.

1.16 Whilst some respondents welcomed what they perceived to be the outcome's emphasis on partnership working, others considered that the outcome does not acknowledge the inter-reliance on different partners and the influence this has on landlords achieving the outcome.

Housing options (Charter outcomes 7, 8 and 9)

1.17 Most of those providing a view considered that these outcomes should remain unchanged. They were perceived to be clear, easy to understand, and explained concisely a social landlord's responsibility.

1.18 Several respondents considered that there may be a better way of grouping the outcomes. Some respondents called for grouping them with outcome 10 on access to housing; others advocated combining them into one overarching outcome.

Access to housing (Charter outcome 10)

1.19 Most of those providing a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. The outcome was seen by many to represent common sense, be straightforward, concise, easy to understand and it appeared to be working in practice.

1.20 A recurring view was that the outcome could be broadened to provide an approach to empowering people looking for housing, by giving them full information on allocations and prospects of being housed. Another theme was that landlords

should broaden the options for people seeking housing to include housing offered by other landlords, in order to find the most suitable housing in each case.

Tenancy sustainment (Charter outcome 11)

1.21 Most of those providing a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. Whilst most of the TRGs and local authorities were in favour of keeping the outcome as it is, only four out of 12 RSLs providing a view recommended keeping the outcome unchanged.

1.22 The most common issue raised, particularly amongst RSLs, was that they operate in a wider policy context and they are not able to "ensure" suitable support is available as this may be out of their control.

Homeless people (Charter outcome 12)

1.23 Most of those providing a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. The outcome was perceived to be relevant, clear, concise and easy to understand.

1.24 Amongst those suggesting change, a few thought that the outcome should not be limited to the statutory duties of councils, but be broadened to reflect the role all social landlords play in helping homeless households access permanent accommodation.

Value for money (Charter standard 13)

1.25 Most of those providing a view considered that this standard should remain unchanged. Whereas most of the TRGs perceived the standard to be acceptable as it is, less than half of RSLs agreed.

1.26 The standard was viewed by many to be straightforward and clear, reflect what social landlords and tenants want, and provide encouragement to landlords to be innovative.

1.27 One recurring view was that achieving "continual improvement" is impossible and reference to this may raise tenants' expectations unduly.

1.28 The most common suggestion relating to the supporting narrative was that it should include reference to tenants in their role in contributing to decisions on value for money.

Rents and service charges (Charter outcomes 14 and 15)

1.29 Just over half of those providing a view considered that these outcomes should remain unchanged. The issue of rents and services charges was perceived as being very important with these outcomes seen as detailed and clear.

1.30 Several TRGs, however, felt that landlords were not involving tenants sufficiently in consultation on rents and service charges in a meaningful way.

Gypsies/Travellers (Charter outcome 16)

1.31 Just over half of those who provided a view considered that this outcome should remain unchanged. Several respondents, however, questioned the need for this outcome, recommending that instead of standing alone, it should be incorporated into the outcome on equalities or simply addressed across all outcomes.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 (The Act) introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter). The Act requires Ministers to set standards and outcomes that social landlords should achieve for tenants and other customers through their housing activities. It also requires Ministers to review the Charter standards and outcomes.

2.2 The Charter is a framework to strengthen and underpin the housing activities of social landlords rather than add new duties. The Charter does not replace any of the legal duties that apply to social landlords, but in several cases the outcomes describe the results social landlords should achieve in meeting their legal duties. It aims to support tenants and landlords by making clear what can be expected and providing a benchmark for comparison for landlords (for example, to help them make continuous improvements). It enables the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to monitor performance against the Charter indicators they have developed and published. It also helps tenants and other customers to compare their respective landord's performance against others and hold them to account.

2.3 The Charter's standards and outcomes aim to

- give tenants, homeless people and other customers a clear understanding of what they should expect from a social landlord;
- give landlords a clear understanding of what they should be delivering through their housing activities;
- provide the basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to monitor, assess and report on the performance of social landlords.

Background to the consultation

2.4 The Scottish Government wished to hear the views of stakeholders on the Charter to inform its first five-year review. It published a written consultation on 1 June 2016 and publicised this widely. A copy was sent to all local authorities, RSLs, RTOs and other stakeholders. In addition to this formal consultation the Scottish Government held 12 events to seek the views of tenants and landlords across Scotland. The Scottish Government also commissioned the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and Tenants Information Service to undertake an 'Involving All' programme to review the Charter and assess its impacts with tenants who might normally be excluded or find it difficult to get involved. 'Involving All' entailed working with support agencies, specialist organisations and specific landlords to target, consult and collect the views of tenants and staff.

2.5 Responses to the written consultation paper on the existing outcomes and standards were invited by 24 August 2016. The consultation paper was set out in three parts. Section 1 asked for views on the impact of the current Charter; Section 2 sought views on the 16 current standards, outcomes and supporting narrative; and Section 3 invited views on anything else which should be added to the Charter.

2.6 This report presents the analysis of the responses to the written consultation.

Consultation responses

2.7 The Scottish Government received 106 responses to the consultation. Most respondents submitted their views via the online system Citizen Space. Where responses were submitted in email or hard copy, these were entered manually onto the Citizen Space system to create one complete database of responses and to aid comparison of views and analysis.

2.8 73 responses were received from organisations[1] and the remaining 33 were from individuals. The organisations which responded represented a range of stakeholder categories with the largest category of respondent, following individual respondents, being TRGs (32 responses). Table 2.1 shows the distribution of responses by category of respondent. A full list of the organisations which responded is in the Annex. The respondent category applied to each response was agreed with the Scottish Government policy team.

Table 2.1: Distribution of responses by category of respondent

Category	No. of respondents	% of all respondents
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	32	30
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	15	14
Local Authorities	13	12
Voluntary Groups	6	6
Public and Statutory Bodies	5	5
Private Companies	2	2
Total organisations	**73**	**69**
Individuals	**33**	**31**
Grand total of individuals and organisations	**106**	**100**

Analysis of responses

2.9 The analysis of responses is presented in the following 15 chapters which follow the order of the questions raised in the consultation paper. The analysis is based on the views of those who responded to the consultation and will not necessarily represent the views of the wider population.

[1] Two of the organisations provided the views of their wider membership. The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations gathered views from its membership regarding their experiences of the Charter; the Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations represented the views of its 68 member associations.

2.10 The Citizen Space database was exported to an Excel working database for detailed analysis. Where respondents have requested anonymity and/or confidentiality, their views have been taken into account in the analysis but quotations have not been taken from their responses. Quotations have been included where these illustrate a point of view clearly and have been selected from a range of respondent groups.

3. Impact of the Current Charter

Question 1: Do you think the quality of landlord services has improved because of the Charter? Please explain your answer and provide examples.

3.1 94 respondents answered this question with 89 providing a clear indication of whether or not they considered the quality of landlord services has improved as a result of the Charter. Of these, 59 (66%) considered that the quality of landlord services has improved because of the Charter. 17 respondents (19%) thought that the Charter has not improved the quality of such services. 13 respondents (15%) had mixed views or were not sure whether or not the Charter had impacted on quality of landlord services. A further five respondents provided general commentary without indicating whether or not the Charter had resulted in improvements to landlord services. Table 3.1 in Annex 2 provides a breakdown of views by respondent category.

3.2 Organisations were more likely than individuals to report positive impacts of the Charter on the quality of landlord services, with 73% holding this view compared with 52% of individuals.

Views on ways in which the Charter has improved the quality of landlord services

3.3 Respondents identified six key ways in which they considered that the Charter has improved the quality of landlord services.

The Charter has improved the communication between landlords and tenants

3.4 26 respondents across six different respondent categories identified improved communications between landlords and tenants as an impact of the Charter. Some commented that the Charter provided the impetus for a fresh and renewed approach to communication, with tenant participation encouraged through new opportunities to become involved. Communication was viewed as more meaningful than previously, for example, surveys with tenants were better planned and their findings taken into account by landlords. One individual reported that they are now represented by an active RTO and regularly take part in focus groups run by their landlord.

Rosehill Housing Co-operative Limited:

"The Charter has helped us manage tenants' expectations better and a good example of this is in relation to the development of improved Lettable Standards for Void Properties. We experienced low levels of satisfaction amongst new tenants with the condition of their home when they first moved in. Our comprehensive Satisfaction Survey of 2013 showed that only 58% of new tenants were satisfied with their home. Over the past 18 months we have engaged with new tenants to understand better what their expectations were in relation to the condition of their new home. During this period we also worked closely with our Tenants' Group to develop Lettable Standards for publication. Our latest comprehensive Tenant Satisfaction Survey (carried out in July 2016) has shown a significant improvement in the satisfaction levels of new tenants with 85% now being satisfied with the condition of their home when they moved in."

The Charter has made landlords more accountable for their service quality

3.5 25 respondents across six different respondent categories considered that the Charter has provided an open and transparent framework for monitoring and comparing quality of service. They welcomed what they perceived to be the clarity of the system which enables easier benchmarking of service quality across RSLs and over time. Improvements in data gathering and robustness of data were identified.

Link Group:

"The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has used the Charter as a basis for its regulatory approach and to develop indicators. This has resulted in the production of comparable information on social landlord performance. Social landlords and customers have been able to access this information to inform service improvements. For example, the Link Tenant Scrutiny Panel has referred to Charter outcomes and indicators in its scrutiny reports on communication, repairs and gas servicing."

East Lothian Council:

"We think that the Charter has helped us to focus on the outcomes that we need to deliver, the importance of performance information and on being accountable to our tenants. We can also now do meaningful comparisons and benchmark with other social landlords to a greater and more robust standard. The Charter has therefore helped us to enhance our services."

The Charter has generally led to improved quality of service

3.6 23 respondents across all seven respondent categories identified general improvements to landlord services as a result of the Charter. Examples provided included more money spent on improvements; repairs attended to promptly; and speedier re-letting of voids.

The Charter has prompted greater focus on key tenant priorities

3.7 16 respondents across six different respondent categories considered that as a result of the Charter, social landlords were more aware of, and focused on, key priorities for tenants.

3.8 Individual respondents reported that their needs were reflected to a greater extent in the strategies of their landlord, with the Charter highlighting areas that require improvement.

3.9 RSLs commented that the Charter had helped them identify key aspects of service delivery which would lead to customer satisfaction.

The Charter has encouraged tenant-led scrutiny

3.10 10 respondents across five different respondent categories described tenants as being more engaged in the scrutiny process in a meaningful way, leading to positive changes to service.

The Charter has helped social landlords to plan more effectively

3.11 Four respondents, all from different respondent categories, considered that the Charter has helped landlords plan their services better. RSLs were seen as being more aware of prioirities and able to provide explanations where outcomes are not reached.

Aberdeen City Council:

"One example has been around the re-balancing of Emergency and Non-Emergency work as well as the first time fixes and appointment regime. Given the improvement in our performance this year we feel that there has been a positive outcome for our customers with quicker repairs being achieved and more appointments being kept."

Views of those perceiving the Charter to have had no impact on the quality of landlord services

3.12 Two common themes emerged amongst those questioning the Charter's positive impact on quality of services. Firstly, some considered that as social landlords they were already performing well and would have continued to strive for improvement whether or not the Charter was in place. They reported that other factors drive service improvement such as internal and external benchmarking; efficiency reviews; audits; and customer complaints.

3.13 Secondly, there was a view amongst a few respondents that the Charter does not have the clarity, nor the teeth, to drive service improvement. Some felt that the Charter was open to interpretation which has led to patchy application. It was suggested that unscrupulous landlords could manipulate surveys and focus groups by selective or deliberate misrepresentation of findings.

3.14 Five TRGs considered that there was still more work to be done on encouraging social landlords to engage with and listen to their tenants in a face-to-face context; one individual perceived tenants to remain excluded from influencing key issues such as capital expenditure.

Question 2: Does the way the Charter is reported on help you judge whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards? Please explain your answer.

3.15 81 respondents answered this question with 77 providing a clear indication of their view on whether the way the Charter is reported on has helped them to judge whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards. Of these 45 (56%) considered that the reporting of the Charter has been beneficial in this respect. 23 respondents (30%) did not think that the reporting of the Charter had helped them judge whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards; and 9 respondents (12%) had mixed views. A further 4 respondents provided general commentary without being clear on whether the reporting of the Charter helped them judge. Table 3.2 in Annex 2 provides a breakdown of views by respondent category.

3.16 There was little difference between organisation and invidual views overall in terms of the percentage of respondents who thought that the Charter reporting helps judge whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards. A greater proportion of organisations had mixed views, however, with several identifying benefits to the way reporting is undertaken but also identifying ways to improve this.

3.17 RSLs and their representatives were least likely to perceive the way the Charter is reported on as helping with judgement of whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards, with nine of the 12 who provided a view having mixed views or perceiving the reporting of the Charter as not providing help with judging the performance of landlords.

Views of those who thought that the way the Charter is reported helps with judgement of landlords' performance

3.18 11 of the 13 local authorities were amongst those who stated explicitly that the reporting of the Charter enabled comparisons to be made across landlords, providing landlords and tenants alike with information required to challenge poor performance and identify areas for improvement

3.19 Tenants were reported as welcoming the information also.

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland:

"…many tenants like the tenant report card and the access to more information if they want it. Tenants like to be able to compare their landlord's services with others through the Housemark and SHR comparison tools. Many tenants have been instrumental with their landlord in determining the quality and content of information on how their landlord is performing."

3.20 A few respondents commented that comparisons were now meaningful as they were based around issues of importance to tenants. The information was viewed as easy to understand and presented in a clear manner.

Views of those who thought that the way the Charter is reported does not help with judgement of landlords' performance

Issues around validity of data

3.21 One key issue raised was that the information provided by social landlords to the SHR may not be valid, for example, may not be representative of tenants' views, may have been manipulated by the landlord or may be inaccurate. A recurring view was that self-reporting by landlords may not be the most reliable method to obtain robust data.

3.22 Examples were provided of how landlords might use percentages rather than absolute numbers in order to mask low response rates amongst tenants. Some respondents felt that tenants' views could be portrayed as prevailing whereas in reality they may have been provided by only a small number of tenants. Questions were raised over the validity of satisfaction surveys designed, analysed and reported by landlords. Some felt there was little evidence to date that tenants are being involved in verifying information submitted by landlords to the SHR.

Views on lack of contextual information

3.23 Another common theme was that the data reported does not present the context in which different landlords are operating and therefore the picture gained from statistical data does not provide the whole story. Examples were given of local circumstances and priorities impacting on performance statistics which could suggest weaker performance from a landlord compared with another in more favourable circumstances. Some influences were viewed as out of the landlord's control.

Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association:

"The Charter does not always sit very well in the context of the strategic and operational delivery of the services. There are core services where we have complete control which is relatively straightforward. And then there are areas of service where we must work with others e.g. local authorities which is more complex….."

3.24 A rural/urban dimension emerged with some commenting on the different contextual challenges faced in rural areas such as greater travel time and costs, and the likelihood of landlords in rural areas being compared unfavourably against others in urban areas

Views on limited usefulness to tenants

3.25 Related to the previous issue was the view of several TRGs in particular, that the way the Charter is reported on is meaningless as comparisons between landlords may not be like-for like. Others cautioned that many tenants are ignorant of the Charter or knew of it but did not understand how performance was reported and how to access the information.

Improvements suggested by respondents

3.26 Many respondents (largely RSLs and TRGs) made suggestions for improvements in the way the Charter is reported. The most frequently mentioned are presented below:

- More work is required to make tenants aware of the Charter and its reporting.
- Ways of making the information easier for tenants to access should be developed such as enabling online access to the data and explaining acronyms.
- Comparative information should be available across peer groups (e.g. landlords with similar stock; age of stock; locality).
- Qualitative and contextual information is required to support the statistical data collected, for example, providing details of type of stock, age of stock.

4. Current Outcomes and Standards: Equalities (Charter outcome 1)

The consultation questionnaire asked for views on all 16 current Charter outcomes and standards and the supporting narratives that describe them. The views submitted in relation to each are reported in this and the following chapters respectively. Each chapter commences with the Charter outcome or standard and supporting narrative before summarising views on whether or not the outcome or standard should be kept or changed and suggestions on how to improve the supporting narrative.

EQUALITIES (Charter outcome 1)

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Supporting Narrative

The outcome describes what social landlords, by complying with equalities legislation, should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. It includes landlords' responsibility for finding ways of understanding the needs of different customers and delivering services that recognise and meet these needs.

Question 3a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

4.1 Of the 94 respondents who answered this question 74% considered that the outcome should remain exactly as it is; 19% thought it should change; and 6% did not know. All of the local authority respondents favoured keeping the outcome exactly as it is. Table 4.1 in Annex 2 presents a breakdown of views by respondent category.

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

4.2 Most commonly, respondents across a range of sectors considered the outcome to be clear, explicit, and easy to understand by landlords and tenants alike.

4.3 A few respondents commented that the outcome had worked well in practice so far and therefore there was no reason to change it. It was considered to be fair; all-embracing; relevant to future in addition to current needs; and essential to underpin service delivery and improvement.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

4.4 An issue raised across a range of sectors was that although the outcome was clearly admirable, achievement of it may be difficult to measure and evidence and may be open to interpretation.

4.5 There were suggestions that guidance and examples could accompany the outcome; or that it could be re-written from the perspective of the customer in a series of statements along the lines of, “I am respected by the landlord”, “The landlord communicates clearly with me”; and so on.

4.6 A few respondents felt that the outcome was too broad to be meaningful and is already covered by legislation so perhaps not required explicitly in the Charter.

4.7 One local authority, whilst supporting the aim of the outcome, questioned whether the outcome was actually feasible in all circumstances. They cited an example of where common areas of work could be dependent on the agreement of co-owners in the tenement.

4.8 Two RSLs suggested that rather than standing alone, the outcome should be mainstreamed into all of the other outcomes so as so strengthen and underpin them.

4.9 The Scottish Human Rights Commission recommended that the outcome should reflect “rights” as well as “needs” of tenants and customers reflecting they are rights-holders rather than passive recipients of services.

Question 3b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

4.10 Eight respondents suggested that additional characteristics be added to the supportive narrative. These were:

- Location/rurality
- Mental health
- Mental and physical ability (to replace “disability”)
- Looked-after children and care leavers
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Minority groups (instead of “needs of different customers”, state “different customers and minority groups”).

4.11 Two individuals suggested that more emphasis should be given to landlords having to be pro-active to achieve this outcome, rather than regarding it as a box-ticking exercise. Three respondents suggested that a reporting element be added so landlords are required to verify and evidence their progress and actions. Two respondents, both social landlords, advocated mentioning Equality Impact Statements which they suggested were made mandatory for policy and service returns.

4.12 Three respondents, two local authorities and one individual, recognised challenges in achieving this outcome and reporting on it, and suggested wording be added to reflect this. For example, “where legally achievable, reasonable and affordable”.

5. Current Outcomes and Standards: Communication (Charter outcome 2)

COMMUNICATION (Charter outcome 2)

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome covers all aspects of landlords' communication with tenants and other customers. It is not just about how clearly and effectively a landlord gives information to those who want it. It also covers making it easy for tenants and other customers to make complaints and provide feedback on services, using that information to improve services and performance, and letting people know what they have done in response to complaints and feedback. It does not require landlords to provide legally protected, personal or commercial information.

Question 4a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

5.1 Of the 92 respondents who answered this question 63% considered that the outcome should remain exactly as it is; 33% thought it should change; and 4% did not know. There were differences in views between categories of respondent. The vast majority of RSLs (83%) and local authorities (77%) who provided a view were in favour of keeping the outcome as it is. TRGs had mixed views however, with around half favouring the status quo and half suggesting change. Table 5.1 in Annex 2 presents a breakdown of views by respondent category.

5.2 A few respondents referred to the wider context around the outcome. One individual argued for a broader culture of openness and honesty amongst social landlords which they considered would support this outcome.

5.3 The Scottish Information Commissioner outlined how the Charter focuses on tenants and customers, whereas Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation is concerned with universal rights and duties, making it important for social landlords to think about wider stakeholder groups over and above their own tenants. This, they suggested, may necessitate publishing information to a wider stakeholder group including third sector organisations which support and promote social housing to communities. The Commissioner suggested replacing "other customers" in the outcome wording to "other stakeholders", and "their landlord" to "a landlord" to address this.

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

5.4 Those in favour of retaining the outcome reported it as being easy to understand, working well and central to effective social housing management. One statutory body commented that the outcome reflected the statutory duties around tenant participation.

5.5 One RSL welcomed what they considered was the lack of over prescription, which enabled landlords to shape their communication strategy according to their particular circumstances and customers.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

5.6 A recurring view was that the outcome as framed is too open and enables too much lee-way in interpretation. Calls were made for more specificity in the type of information to be made available.

5.7 Four TRGs shared the view that the outcome does not portray sufficiently the need for a higher standard of communication than previously existed. An individual respondent perceived the outcome to sustain the current situation in which the landlord controls what information they communicate and how they frame that information. A rights-based approach to the outcome was recommended by the Scottish Human Rights Commissioner to address any power imbalance in participative processes.

5.8 Two respondents, one TRG and one voluntary body, argued for the outcome to be re-drafted to reflect the tenants' perspective. It was observed that every outcome begins currently with "social landlords…", and they considered that rephrasing this to focus on the point of view of the tenant would meet requirements of people with communication difficulties (perhaps following brain injury for example, or those whose first language is not English).

5.9 One local authority perceived the wording "how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides" to be overly prescriptive and suggested its removal, particularly as the supportive narrative does not refer to this.

5.10 Six respondents recommended that in line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the text of the Charter should include here and elsewhere, reference to RTOs. This point was also made by others in response to other questions.

Question 4b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

5.11 A few respondents suggested that the supporting narrative gives more emphasis to this outcome on account of its perceived importance. One individual recommended that the narrative clarifies that both positive and negative information should be provided by the landlord.

5.12 Suggestions were made that the narrative should emphasise that information should be provided in plain English and in a variety of formats to meet the needs of people with communication difficulties such as sight impairment, poor literacy or lack of access to the internet.

5.13 Two individual respondents recommended that the supporting narrative should include reference to timescales for giving information and dealing with complaints. It was argued that this will be important in the context of tenant scrutiny.

5.14 Whilst a few respondents (including one from a remote island community) called for the narrative to include greater encouragement for landlords to use information technology including social media for communication purposes, in contrast, one individual remarked that the landlords should not lose sight of the need of most people for hard copy information.

5.15 A local authority considered that the narrative should make it clearer that feedback could come in many forms including surveys, tenant participation and focus groups. One RSL suggested that examples could be provided of ways to provide feedback and examples of how a social landlord could provide evidence that they have taken the results of the feedback into account.

5.16 Other comments included those of two respondents who recommended that some mention is made of tenant scrutiny in this supporting narrative; calls were made for Registered Tenants' Organisations to be included along with tenants and other customers; the Scottish Information Commissioner once again requested that "stakeholders" be inserted along with tenants in the context of FOI; and an individual respondent suggested the insertion of "..to understand, make complaints…" in the third sentence of the supporting narrative.

6. Current Outcomes and Standards: Participation (Charter outcome 3)

PARTICIPATION (Charter outcome 3)

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decision at a level they feel comfortable with.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome describes what landlords should achieve by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation. It covers how social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants; how they shape their services to reflect these views; and how they help tenants and other customers to become more capable of involvement.

Question 5a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

6.1 Of the 95 respondents who answered this question 52% considered that the outcome should remain exactly as it is and 48% thought it should change. Whereas the majority (69%) of RSLs and local authorities who provided a view were in favour of keeping the outcome as it is, over half (59%) of TRGs thought that it should be amended. Table 6.1 in Annex 2 presents a breakdown of views by respondent category.

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

6.2 This outcome was perceived to clear, straightforward, and working well at present, although TRGs urged that landlords should not become complacent and should continue to aim for meaningful participation.

6.3 A few respondents considered the outcome as currently worded demonstrated commitment to participation without being overly prescriptive in how this should be undertaken. One local authority commented that the outcome met legislative requirements in encouraging accessibility of participation in a variety of formats.

Aberdeen City Council:

"This outcome has had a positive impact on tenants and other customer engagement. It has also influenced how services work across this organisation. The Charter and this outcome in particular have supported us to develop an effective tenant participation strategy."

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

6.4 A recurring view was that as presently worded the outcome does not make clear that tenants are under no obligation to participate. Several respondents called for the wording to be changed to read, "tenants and other customers shall be provided with the opportunity to participate". A few social landlords emphasised the challenges associated with achieving participation amongst tenants and urged that the outcome reflect reality.

6.5 Another strong theme was that words like "participation", "engagement", and "involvement" can be confused by landlord and tenant alike and the outcome provides the opportunity for clarification. A few respondents suggested that engagement rather than participation is more akin to what happens on the ground.

Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations:

"….we would observe that the proportion of tenants seeking active participation in their landlord's decision making processes may often be quite limited, whatever the efforts being made by the landlord to create opportunities for involvement. It might be more appropriate if this outcome talked about engagement with landlords – i.e. something broader (but no less important) than actual participation."

6.6 One individual respondent suggested that use of the word "participation" may actually put off tenants who associate it with giving up their time in face-to-face communication, whereas in reality it could comprise simply responding to a survey. A voluntary organisation questioned the measurability of "ease" of participation.

6.7 A few respondents suggested that the outcome should be more specific about the nature of the decisions which tenants will influence, for example, those on rents, repairs or strategic policy.

6.8 The outcome was viewed by a few respondents as having the potential to raise tenants' expectations about their level of influence unduly. Suggestions were made for wording to be added to the effect that social landlords will provide feedback on how views were or were not taken forward and the reasons for this. The importance of tenants perceiving their views to have been worthwhile was emphasised.

6.9 Two respondents considered that the outcome could go further to encourage landlords to pro-actively seek tenant participation and involve people beyond the usual suspects, that is, "hard to reach" tenants. A voluntary organisation suggested that the outcome could require landlords to build the capacity of their tenants to become more capable of involvement.

6.10 Scotland's Housing Network suggested that in the current climate of customers being empowered and supported to scrutinise the performance of their landlord, perhaps this outcome should make a clear statement about the role of scrutiny in achieving improved landlord performance.

6.11 More specific points are in Annex 3.

Question 5b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

6.12 A general view expressed by respondents from five different respondent categories was that the narrative should be framed to make it clearer that a wide range of participative approaches are available. A few respondents commented that tenants may perceive participation to involve meetings only, with one individual respondent remarking, “AGMs can be intimidating”.

6.13 The most common suggestion for change related to the final part of the supporting narrative and in particular the wording “more capable of involvement”. TRGs in particular perceived the phrase to hint of having to train tenants to make them more capable citizens; to put the onus on the tenant to become more capable rather than facilitate their involvement “at a level at which they are comfortable/wish to participate”. One TRG remarked that arranging training for tenants was beyond the remit of social landlords.

6.14 The difficulties facing social landlords in getting some tenants to engage were highlighted by RSLs and TRGs alike. Suggestions were made to allow for this by stating that participation should be shaped in line with tenant interest in involvement and only where tenants want to engage. One RSL felt that the narrative should reflect the resources required for meaningful participation by tenants.

6.15 Two RSLs considered that the narrative as it stands could inadvertently raise tenants’ expectations as to the influence their views will have on services. One commented that there was no recognition of how tenants’ views would shape services in terms of the financial, legal and practical implications arising.

6.16 A few respondents (two individuals and one statutory body) urged that the narrative reflect a more open culture involving landlords communicating openly with tenants, for example, making minutes of meetings available, providing information at local housing offices and making this openness more explicit.

7. Current Outcomes and Standards: Quality of Housing (Charter standard 4)

QUALITY OF HOUSING (Charter standard 4)

Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.[2]

Supporting Narrative

This standard describes what landlords should be achieving in all their properties. It covers all properties that social landlords let, unless a particular property does not have to meet part of the standard. Beyond SHQS, landlords should be looking for cost-effective ways of achieving higher energy-efficiency standards for their properties, to provide warmer homes for their tenants and help to meet climate change targets. During this Charter's lifetime, the Scottish Government will consult on higher standards. If adopted, these new standards will form part of the next Charter.

Question 6a): Would you keep this standard exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

7.1 Of the 95 respondents who answered this question 41% considered that the standard should remain exactly as it is; 55% thought it should change; and 4% did not know.

7.2 Individual respondents were evenly balanced between those who favoured the status quo (47%) and those favouring change (47%). Differences of opinion appeared amongst organisations, however, with most TRGs wanting to keep the standard unchanged, and most of the social landlords (RSLs and local authorities) suggesting change. It should be noted that many of those suggesting change did so on the basis that the revised standard should reflect the introduction of the EESH, and did not argue for broader changes. Table 7.1 in Annex 2 presents a breakdown of views by respondent category.

Views of those in favour of keeping the standard as it is

7.3 Very few comments were received. The standard was perceived to be relevant, concise and in plain English. A few respondents remarked that to maintain standards at this level as well as meeting future standards and EESH would be challenging and have cost and time implications.

[2] This will be updated in the revised Charter to reflect the introduction of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

Views of those in favour of changing the standard

7.4 25 respondents across a range of sectors recommended changing the standard to reflect the introduction of the EESH.

7.5 11 respondents noted that the reference to April 2015 for meeting SHQS needs updating, with some identifying the need to move onto a next stage or more demanding standard now that most landlords have achieved standard 4.

7.6 One theme to emerge across a range of sectors was that standards should address quality of life, and health and well-being in local areas. Quality of "place" was perceived to be significant, for example, to enable tenants to have access to outdoor exercise.

Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland:

"We acknowledge that this element of the charter refers specifically to the physical fabric of homes. However we think it is important to highlight here the importance of including quality of place in assessments of overall quality……..emphasise that this quality of place should not be treated as an 'add on', but integral to improving the service provided by RSLs."

7.7 Two respondents (a TRG and the Scottish Human Rights Commission) called for the standard to link to the international human rights' standards which address issues such as threats to health; protection from cold.

7.8 Other, more specific recommendations, each made by one or two respondents are listed in Annex 3.

Question 6b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

7.9 Several respondents called for the supporting narrative to be updated to the current position regarding SHQS and EESH. A local authority recommended that if further targets are anticipated beyond 2020 then these should be referred to. One individual respondent suggested that specific time targets should be included in the narrative. One RSL suggested updating the narrative to include health and safety standards. A few respondents requested that emphasis is placed on continuing to meet standards post the target date for achievement.

7.10 Two respondents suggested that the supporting narrative includes reference to place and quality in addition to the physical fabric of properties. One RSL recommended that the narrative be amended to reflect the contribution of social landlords to the national Health and Wellbeing outcomes.

7.11 More specific suggestions are in Annex 3.

8. Current Outcomes and Standards: Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements (Charter outcome 5)

REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS (Charter outcome 5)

Social landlords manage their businesses so that: tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome describes how landlords should meet their statutory duties on repairs and provide repairs, maintenance and improvement services that safeguard the value of their assets and take account of the wishes and preferences of their tenants. This could include setting repair priorities and timescales; setting repair standards such as getting repairs done right, on time, first time; and assessing tenant satisfaction with the quality of the services they receive.

Question 7a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

8.1 Of the 95 respondents who answered this question 67% considered that the standard should remain exactly as it is; 29% thought it should change; and 3% did not know.

8.2 Amongst the larger categories of respondent, a large majority of TRGs (83%) and local authorities (75%) favoured the status quo; RSLs' views were more evenly balanced between those in favour of retaining the outcome as it is (54%) and those who considered that it should be changed (46%). Table 8.1 in Annex 2 presents a breakdown of views by respondent category.

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

8.3 Those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is reported that it appeared to work well and reflected a reasonable approach to giving tenants what they wanted. Two respondents, one local authority and one TRG perceived the outcome to have contributed to significant improvements in landlords meeting their statutory duties on these services.

8.4 Two respondents, one TRG and one RSL, recommended that the outcome should take account of locality to allow for the potential challenges in getting work done promptly in rural and remote areas.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

8.5 Two main themes emerged amongst those recommending change to the outcome. Firstly, several respondents, from a range of sectors, emphasised their view that the outcome should reflect tenants being more pro-active in highlighting when preventative maintenance work should be done, and generally being able to request work, rather than be recipients of services at their landlords' control.

8.6 Secondly, a theme to emerge largely from individuals and TRGs was for the outcome to incorporate an aspect of customer satisfaction with the quality of service received. Improvements in the robustness of the satisfaction questionnaire were called for with one TRG suggesting more post-work inspections by landlords to check quality of service.

8.7 Other specific comments are in Annex 3.

Question 7b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

8.8 A few respondents suggested that the supporting narrative be supplemented with examples of good practice, one RSL specifying that it would be helpful to provide examples of where customers have been satisfied with the service.

8.9 A few respondents recommended that the language used in the supporting narrative in terms of "should" and "could", be made stronger and changed to "shall" and "will". One individual respondent perceived the sentences to be too long.

8.10 Other substantive comments each made by one respondent were:

- Incorporate the expectation that repairs will be carried out promptly into the supporting narrative to complement the reference in the outcome to tenants being involved in setting repairs priorities and timescales.
- There should be clear procedures communicated to tenants on how to raise concerns regarding repairs and maintenance which have not been carried out as expected to the tenants' satisfaction.
- The notion of "reasonable choice" highlighted in the outcome should be unpacked in the supporting narrative with some explanation of how this can be fair for both tenants and landlords.
- Health and safety should be referenced, for example; gas and fire safety; asbestos risks.

9. Current Outcomes and Standards:

Estate Management, Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbour Nuisance and Tenancy Disputes (Charter outcome 6)

ESTATE MANAGEMENT, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, NEIGHBOUR NUISANCE AND TENANCY DISPUTES (Charter outcome 6)

Social landlords, working in partnerships with other agencies, help to ensure that tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome covers a range of actions that social landlords can take on their own and in partnership with others. It covers action to enforce tenancy conditions on estate management and neighbour nuisance, to resolve neighbour disputes, and to arrange or provide tenancy support where this is needed. It also covers the role of landlords in working with others to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Question 8a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

9.1 Amongst the 90 respondents who answered this question, views were mixed with 50% of respondents considering that the outcome should remain as it is, and 47% recommending changing the outcome. 3% of respondents did not know whether or not the outcome should change.

9.2 Amongst the larger categories of organisations, there was a contrast between RSLs and others, with almost all RSLs (79%) in favour of changing the outcome compared with a more even balance of those for and against change amongst TRGs and local authorities. Table 9.1 in Annex 2 presents views broken down by category of respondent.

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

9.3 Many respondents from a range of sectors commented that the outcome is comprehensive, straightforward, clear and concise. A few welcomed in particular the use of the term, “working in partnership”.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

9.4 One prevailing theme, particularly amongst RSLs, was that the outcome should reflect that they are reliant on others, working in partnership with them, in achieving the outcome.

Rosehill Housing Co-operative Limited:

"We acknowledge that the ultimate objective would be well maintained neighbourhoods where people feel safe. However, we are not in a position to "ensure" this, as not all anti-social behaviour and environmental issues are within our control regardless of how effective the partnership working is. We would suggest that the outcome should read "… help to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that …"

9.5 One RSL commented that it is particularly difficult for RSLs with dispersed stock to have control over this outcome.

9.6 Another common concern was over terminology. Several respondents shared the view that "where they feel safe" is too subjective and vague to remain in the outcome. Suggestions were made for replacing this with "live in safe neighbourhoods" or "where well-being is protected".

Ardrossan Tenants' Association:

"Our group felt that measuring and demonstrating that tenants and customers feel safe in neighbourhoods is impossible and any results would not be meaningful. We agree with the intention of Landlords working with other agencies to help make neighbourhoods safer. But measuring this through peoples varying perceptions cannot accurately reflect the actual crime rate/anti-social behaviour within neighbourhoods".

9.7 The phrase "well-maintained neighbourhoods" was also questioned as being open to interpretation. A few respondents suggested that it may be more appropriate to refer to "well managed neighbourhoods", this being easier to understand for tenants and more in keeping with what happens on the ground.

9.8 A recurring view related to the issue of terminology and interpretation was that lack of clarity in meaning resulted in inconsistent reporting by landlords. Mention was made of indicators associated with this outcome (particularly indicator 19) needing to be reviewed to make them more meaningful.

9.9 A few respondents considered that the outcome could be strengthened by splitting it into two. Some perceived it to be complex at present, combining issues of estate management with neighbourhood disputes and nuisance, and recommendations were for a division into two different outcomes, with a sharper focus on what were perceived to be different domains.

9.10 Several of these respondents, some being RSLs, others being statutory bodies or TRGs, envisaged a renewed emphasis on creation of healthy communities through focus on effective housing and estate management, for example; providing opportunities for social interaction; providing green space. Such facilities were perceived as creating the context for reducing disputes and increasing well-being.

Question 8b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

9.11 Many comments on the supporting narrative were consistent with those relating to the outcome, in terms of suggesting that more emphasis should be placed on estate management to underpin strong and healthy communities.

9.12 Again, comments were made that social landlords could not control the outcome solely, but relied on partners who may have budget constraints and different priorities and agendas dictating their contribution. It was suggested that this be made more explicit so that expectations of tenants could be managed accordingly, with landlords' role in signposting to other agencies given greater prominence.

9.13 More specific suggestions are in Annex 3.

10. Current Outcomes and Standards: Housing Options (Charter outcomes 7, 8 and 9)

HOUSING OPTIONS (Charter outcomes 7, 8 and 9)

Social landlords work together to ensure that people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them. Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.

Social landlords ensure that people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

Supporting Narrative

These outcomes cover landlords' duties to provide information to people looking for housing and advice for those at risk of becoming homeless. These duties include helping tenants and people on housing lists to review their options to move within the social housing sector or to another sector.

Question 9a): Would you keep these outcomes exactly as they are or change them? Please explain your answer.

10.1 Amongst the 91 respondents who answered this question, 68% would keep these outcomes as they are; 27% considered that the outcomes should be changed; and 4% did not know (see Table 10.1 in Annex 2 for a breakdown of responses by category of respondent).

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcomes as they are

10.2 Recurring comments were that the outcomes were clear and easy to understand and clearly explain a social landlord's responsibility. Two TRGs commented that they had experienced these outcomes working very successfully.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcomes

10.3 The most common reason for recommending changing the outcomes was that respondents considered there was a better way of grouping outcomes 7, 8 and 9. Some respondents called for combining them with outcome 10.

10.4 Three RSLs and one individual respondent recommended combining outcomes 7, 8 and 9 together into one outcome as they all relate to providing advice.

Question 9b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

10.5 Very few substantive suggestions were made in relation to this supporting narrative, and of those submitted, most were from individual respondents.

10.6 Individual respondents recommended that the supporting narrative:

- Gives examples of ways in which information will be provided.
- Refers to the wider support available such as Citizens Advice Bureaux in relation to budgeting advice.
- Provides some indication of timeline in giving information.

11. Current Outcomes and Standards: Access to Housing (Charter outcome 10)

ACCESS TO HOUSING (Charter outcome 10)

Social landlords ensure that people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome covers what social landlords can do to make it easy for people to apply for the widest choice of social housing that is available and suitable and that meets their needs. It includes actions that social landlords can take on their own and in partnership with others, for example through Common Housing Registers or mutual exchange schemes, or through local information and advice schemes.

Question 10a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

11.1 Amongst the 89 respondents who answered this question, 71% would keep the outcome as it is; 27% would change the outcome; and 2% did not know whether or not they would change it.

11.2 Of the large categories of respondent, the majority of TRGs and local authorities would keep the outcome as it stands, compared with more mixed views and a more even balance amongst RSLs of those considering the outcome should be kept and those recommending changes (see Table 11.1 in Annex 2 for a breakdown of responses by category of respondent).

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

11.3 Views amongst those favouring the status quo were that the outcome represented common sense; was straightforward, concise and easy to understand; and appeared to be working.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

11.4 A few respondents repeated the views they provided in relation to previous outcomes, and called for outcome 10 to be combined with outcomes 7, 8 and 9 to create what they considered would be a more cohesive approach. One RSL called for combining outcome 10 with outcome 1 on equalities in order to be responsive to the needs of protected characteristic groups.

11.5 A recurring view emerging from three sectors of respondent (Individuals, RSLs and TRGs) was that the outcome should be broadened to provide an

approach to empowering people looking for housing, by giving them full information on allocations and their prospects of being housed.

11.6 Another theme related to broadening options across landlords to find the most suitable housing for people. Reference was made to use of Common Housing Registers (although one RSL argued that housing options lessened the need for these), and bringing in more information about other housing available, not just in the social housing sector (to reflect the absence of the word “social” in the outcome title).

11.7 A few respondents considered the outcome to be overly narrow and recommended broadening to include more of a dynamic dimension in which planning for housing (for example, for those leaving prison or other institutional care) and those needing more on-going dialogue over housing options, are catered for.

Question 10b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

11.8 Several respondents made suggestions for actions which social landlords can take to provide information for people to make choices such as open meetings, road shows, conversations. One RSL considered that it may be worth mentioning services which allow customers to apply for housing and track the progress of their application online.

12. Current Outcomes and Standards: Tenancy Sustainment (Charter outcome 11)

TENANCY SUSTAINMENT (Charter outcome 11)

Social landlords ensure that tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home, and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome covers how landlords can help tenants who may need support to maintain their tenancy. It includes tenants who may be at risk of falling into arrears with their rent, and tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability, or caring responsibilities.

Question 11a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

12.1 Amongst the 91 respondents who answered this question, 66% considered that the outcome should remain as it is; 29% would change the outcome; and 5% did not know whether or not they would change it.

12.2 Most of the TRGs and local authorities were in favour of keeping the outcome as it is, in contrast with only a third of RSLs who wished the outcome to remain as it is (see Table 12.1 in Annex 2 for a breakdown of views by category of respondent).

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

12.3 Views amongst those favouring the status quo were that the outcome made sense, was relevant, clear and concise and easy to understand. One individual respondent suggested that examples could be added to enhance understanding.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

12.4 The issue most frequently raised, particularly amongst RSLs, was that RSLs operate in a wider policy context and are not able to "ensure" suitable support is available as this may be out of their control. They commented that they could do whatever is within their powers to seek the support of other organisations, but ultimately, changes in relevant policy such as benefit cut-backs or different organisational priorities, curtailed their own scope of control. Suggestions were made for changing wording to reflect this, for example, stating that social landlords will *signpost* to other suitable support.

12.5 Further specific comments are provided in Annex 3.

Question 11b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

12.6 Requests were made for additions to the text and these are listed in Annex 3.

12.7 Very few other substantive comments were made. One TRG remarked that factors such as costs and ageing stock could hamper achievement of adaptations to homes. A local authority called for reference to the importance of partnership working within and outwith the housing sector. One RSL commented that in addition to ensuring landlords provide support, tenants need to engage with the support on offer. One public body recommended that support services should be fully accessible to those who require them.

13. Current Outcomes and Standards: Homeless People (Charter outcome 12)

HOMELESS PEOPLE (Charter outcome 12)

Local councils perform their duties on homelessness so that homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice; are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed; and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome describes what councils should achieve by meeting their statutory duties to homeless people.

Question 12a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

13.1 Amongst the 86 respondents who answered this question, 73% indicated that they would keep the outcome as it is; 20% would change the outcome; and 7% did not know whether not they would keep it as it stands.

13.2 The majority of TRGs, RSLs and local authorities were in favour of keeping the outcome as it stands (see Table 13.1 in Annex 2 for a breakdown of views by category of respondent).

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

13.3 Views amongst those favouring the status quo were that the outcome made sense, was relevant, clear and concise and easy to understand.

13.4 NHS Health Scotland welcomed the emphasis on homelessness in the Charter, and urged that this should be retained and strengthened further to reflect the importance of this issue for health and wellbeing.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

13.5 Amongst those favouring change, a few recommended that the outcome should not be limited to the statutory duties of councils, but broadened to reflect the role all social landlords play in helping homeless households access permanent accommodation. One local authority requested that the outcome and narrative be changed to reflect the requirement for councils to work with relevant partner services to help meet homeless people's needs.

13.6 Other comments are in Annex 3.

Question 12b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

13.7 Two respondents, one individual and one RSL, both perceived the supporting narrative to be acceptable but relatively "light" considering the significance of the topic of homelessness.

13.8 Consistent with comments in relation to the outcome, a few respondents (TRG and a local authority) recommended that the narrative should include reference to RSLs complying with their duties to help alleviate homelessness by working in support of local councils.

13.9 CELCIS and Who Cares? Scotland requested that the supporting narrative should contain acknowledgment that some vulnerable groups, such as care-leavers, can experience additional risk of homelessness, and suitable support should be in place to meet their particular needs. One individual concurred that the narrative appears appropriate for relatively straightforward cases but not in cases where there are also other issues such as anti-social behaviour.

13.10 One RSL called for the narrative to provide customers with a greater understanding of what they are entitled to through the council's statutory duties, for example, types of re-housing; timescales for re-housing; support to find suitable housing; access to benefits.

14. Current Outcomes and Standards: Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges (Charter standard 13)

VALUE FOR MONEY (Charter standard 13)

Social landlords manage all aspects of their business so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

Supporting Narrative

This standard covers the efficient and effective management of services. It includes minimising the time houses are empty; managing arrears and all resources effectively; controlling costs; getting value out of contracts; and giving better value for money by increasing the quality of services with minimum extra cost to tenants, owners and other customers.

Question 13a): Would you keep this standard exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

14.1 Amongst the 94 respondents who answered this question, 68% indicated that they would keep the standard as it is; 28% would change the standard; and 4% did not know whether or not it should be changed.

14.2 Whereas the vast majority of TRGs (82%) considered that the standard should remain as it is, less than half (43%) of RSLs agreed. Nine of the 13 local authorities who expressed a view thought that the standard should be retained exactly as it is. Table 14.1 in Annex 2 provides a breakdown of views by category of respondent.

Views of those in favour of keeping the standard as it is

14.3 Several respondents commented that the standard reflected what social landlords and tenants wanted; it was straightforward and clear; made sense; and encouraged landlords to be innovative.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

14.4 Amongst those in favour of changing the outcome, the most frequently occurring comment was that value for money is difficult to define and evidence. Value for money was perceived to be complex and associated with tensions, for example, between short term value and longer term maintenance and upkeep charges; between quality and value.

14.5 Another common theme was that the standard appears to be top-down in nature, with landlords defining value for money. There was a perception that tenants might have a different understanding of value for money. Greater transparency over costs was called for in order to enable tenant scrutiny relating to this standard.

14.6 A recurring view, particularly amongst RSLs, was that continual improvement is impossible and may unduly raise tenants' expectations.

Question 13b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

14.7 The most common suggestion from respondents across four sectors was that the narrative should include reference to tenants as informing decisions on value for money, for example, linking with customer satisfaction feedback.

14.8 Further suggestions are in Annex 3.

15. Current Outcomes and Standards: Rents and Service Charges (Charter outcomes 14 and 15)

RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES (Charter outcomes 14 and 15)

Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and other customers can afford them.

Supporting Narrative

These outcomes reflect a landlord's legal duty to consult tenants about rent setting; the importance of taking account of what current and prospective tenants and other customers are likely to be able to afford; and the importance that many tenants place on being able to find out how their money is spent. Each landlord must decide, in discussion with tenants and other customers, whether to publish information about expenditure above a particular level, and in what form and detail. What matters is that discussions take place and the decisions made reflect the views of tenants and other customers.

Question 14a): Would you keep these outcomes exactly as they are or change them? Please explain your answer.

15.1 Of the 91 respondents who answered this question 59% considered that the outcomes should remain exactly as they are; 36% thought they should change; and 4% did not know.

15.2 Amongst the larger categories of respondent, a majority of TRGs (62%) and local authorities (62%) favoured the status quo. RSLs' views were relatively mixed with half of those who provided a view considering the outcomes should be changed. Table 15.1 in Annex 2 provides a breakdown of views by category of respondent.

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcomes as they are

15.3 The issue of rents and services charges was perceived as being very important, with these outcomes viewed as detailed and clear by many respondents across a range of sectors. A few welcomed what they understood to be the explicit inclusion of tenants' voices in decision-making in this area.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcomes

15.4 Contrasting views emerged between some social landlords who perceived tenants not to be interested in getting information on how rent and other money is spent, particularly those on housing benefit, and many TRGs who felt that landlords were not involving tenants sufficiently in consultation in a meaningful way.

15.5 A recurring comment was that social landlords also need to comply with Housing Revenue Account guidelines when setting rent and service charges.

15.6 Individual respondents questioned the meaning of words and terms, one suggesting that "consultation" be amended to "discussion"; the other asking for clarity on what constituted "service charges".

15.7 The notion of affordability came under focus with four respondents in particular agreeing that the concept is important, but raising their concerns that there is not an accepted and practical method for assessing this.

Scotland's Housing Network:

"Affordability is obviously a key concept for current and future customers. The Charter should focus social landlords on delivering services that are affordable, and guidance and/or definitions around affordability would be welcome".

Question 14b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

15.8 Some respondents considered that the text could benefit from re-drafting to make the meaning clearer.

15.9 A few respondents considered that the supporting narrative could promote transparency of information to a greater extent, one RSL suggesting that it should outline a minimum requirement regarding provision of detail in order to promote consistency across social landlords.

15.10 An emerging view from TRGs was that the narrative would benefit from being strengthened in places to make it more explicit that tenants should be involved in decision-making. One suggested the insertion of "must" before "reflect a landlord's legal duty…".

16. Other Customers:

Gypsies/Travellers (Charter outcome 16)

GYPSIES/TRAVELLERS (Charter outcome 16)

Local councils and social landlords with responsibility for managing sites for Gypsies/Travellers should manage the sites so that sites are well maintained and managed.

Supporting Narrative

This outcome applies only to those councils and other social landlords that are responsible for managing these sites.

Question 15a): Would you keep this outcome exactly as it is or change it? Please explain your answer.

16.1 Of the 86 respondents who answered this question 58% considered that the outcome should remain exactly as it is; 28% thought it should change; and 14% did not know.

16.2 The largest categories of respondent had broadly similar views in their response to this question. Table 16.1 in Annex 2 provides a breakdown of views by category of respondent.

Views of those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is

16.3 Very few comments were made by those in favour of keeping the outcome as it is. A few respondents remarked that the outcome appeared to be reasonable and was clear and concise. One TRG stated that is was working well in their area.

Views of those in favour of changing the outcome

16.4 Several respondents questioned the need for this outcome at all, a few recommending that it be incorporated into the outcome on equalities, and others suggesting that gypsies/travellers could be addressed in the same way as other tenants across all of the outcomes. Clarity was requested on whether the other outcomes apply to this group.

16.5 Another recurring view was that the outcome is limited on detail and could be strengthened by referring to national standards for maintenance and management of such sites. Furthermore, the Scottish Human Rights Commission provided their view that the outcome appears to be comparatively weak in fulfilling the human rights of Gypsy/Traveller communities as it does not reflect the availability, accessibility or adequacy of sites for Gypsies/Travellers through maintenance or management.

16.6 Three respondents recommended that reference be made to the need to take into account the views of gypsies/travellers in the management of sites.

16.7 Three respondents argued for “safe” to be inserted to ensure health and safety considerations are covered.

16.8 Other comments are in Annex 3.

Question 15b): Please provide any suggestions on how we could improve the supporting narrative

16.9 Very little substantive comment was made on the supporting narrative. The most common view was that the narrative was relatively scant, and required more detail. A few respondents called for examples to be provided of what constitutes well maintained and managed. A local authority recommended expansion to refer to ensuring that gypsies/travellers are involved in planning site improvements and access to services. One view (RSL) was that the narrative should be comparative in detail with that for other outcomes in order to demonstrate council and social landlord commitment.

16.10 A local authority requested a reference to satisfaction in the supporting narrative given that the associated indicator is based on this.

17. Views on additions to the Charter

Question 16: Is there anything else you think the Charter should cover? If so, please tell us what and why you think it should be included

17.1 66 respondents provided further commentary in response to this question. Several others simply indicated that they had nothing else to add to their previous comments.

17.2 Amongst the many suggestions for additions to the Charter were several comments reflecting on the perceived value of the Charter to date. Examples are:

Link Group:

"We are not suggesting any radical changes to the Charter. We have recently submitted our third Annual Return on the Charter and are starting to benefit from trend and benchmarking information. To alter the Charter substantially would reduce these positive impacts".

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland:

"The outcomes and standards should remain largely the same, they are suitably broad and are not prescriptive and therefore enable tenants and landlords to agree local performance standards and local services. It encompasses all Scotland's diversity of landlords. Nothing to add".

17.3 Comments from respondents emerged under a number of broad themes.

Communication and consultation

17.4 TRGs in particular focused on this theme. A prevailing view was that whilst the Charter underpins the requirement for social landlords to consult with tenants, in practice this happens to varying degrees. TRGs recommended ways in which consultation can become more robust and consistent across landlords: by increasing awareness and understanding of the Charter amongst tenants; establishing a common definition for consultation for all to use; ensuring all documents are in plain English to encourage engagement by tenants; keeping the Charter document short in order to make it accessible to tenants; making the title of the Charter more engaging, for example, "What can I expect from my Social Landlord?"; and making the Charter more prescriptive on the topic of consultation.

17.5 A few respondents emphasised what they saw as the need for landlords to involve tenants, RTOs and other customers more in the production of their Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

West Strathclyde Registered Tenant Organisation Regional Network:

"Have an outcome that requires landlords to include tenants, RTOs and other customers in the development of the ARC. Generally unhappy with landlords writing their own report cards".

Interface with broader contexts

17.6 There were questions raised over how the Charter fits with broader legislative and regulatory frameworks. A local authority highlighted relevant context as health and social care integration, digital inclusion and welfare reform, with all of these potentially impacting on the scope of social landlords. Health and safety regulations were identified repeatedly as requiring consideration over and above the Charter outcomes. A public body identified related areas such as estate management, and suggested that a mapping of all of the broader standards and regulations which RSLs were subject to could be useful.

17.7 The role of the SHR as a "corporate parent"[3] was raised by CELCIS and Who Cares? Scotland; the Scottish Human Rights Commission called for a rights-based approach to be embedded into the framework of standards and outcomes.

Relevance of "place" and physical environment

17.8 A small number of respondents had raised the relevance of the wider physical environment in their previous comments. Once again, this issue emerged as a theme recommended for further attention. Seven respondents, most of them individuals, commented on the importance of good quality surrounds and accessible outdoor space on their quality of life and health and mental wellbeing. One individual highlighted air pollution as an issue to be considered in the Charter.

Additional topics suggested for the Charter

17.9 A number of further topics were suggested by one or two respondents:

- Address the needs of migrants and refugees.
- Include private landlords.
- Include sheltered housing.
- Include tied accommodation.

[3] Under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the Scottish Housing Regulator is a corporate parent to all looked after children, and to all care leavers who were looked after children at their 16th birthday, and whom are currently under the age of 26.

- Reference to new build programmes, perhaps in the supporting narrative for the value for money outcome.

- More emphasis and attention should be given to gender issues of women and social housing.

Annex 1: List of Respondents

Local Authorities

Aberdeen City Council
Angus Council
Argyll & Bute Council
City of Edinburgh Council (Officer response)
East Ayrshire Council
East Dunbartonshire Council
East Lothian Council
North Ayrshire Council
Orkney Islands Council
Renfrewshire Council
The Moray Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
West Lothian Council

Private Companies

Council of Mortgage Lenders
One Enterprise Ltd

Public/Statutory Bodies

CELCIS and Who Cares? Scotland joint response
NHS Health Scotland
Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland
Scottish Human Rights Commission
Scottish Information Commissioner

Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies

Ardrossan Tenants' Association
Borders, Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian Registered Tenant Organisation Regional Network
Central Regional Network
Dumfries & Galloway Federation of Tenants and Residents
Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations
East Ayrshire Tenants' and Residents' Federation
East Lothian Tenants' and Residents' Panel
Edinburgh Tenants' Federation
Glasgow and the Western Isles Registered Tenant Organisation Regional Network
Glenrothes Area Residents' Federation
Gretna and District Tenants and Residents' Association
Highland and Argyll and Bute Registered Tenant Organisation Regional Network
Highland Council Interested Tenants' Group
Kirkside Area Residents' Group
Mearns Village Community Association
Merrylee RTO & Jamieson Court Residents' Group
Milton Albyn Housing forum
Monmouthshire Housing Association Resident Scrutiny Panel
North East Fife Tenants' and Residents' Federation

Northern Court Tenants' Forum
Northern Lights Regional Network, Region 2
Orkney Tenants' Panel
Registered Tenant Organisation Regional Network North and South Lanarkshire and East Dunbartonshire
Scottish Borders Tenants' Organisation
Sheltered Housing Tenants' Forum
South West Scotland Regional Network
Stirling Tenants' Assembly
Tenants' and Residents' Association and Federation
Tayforth Regional Network
Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland
West Alness Residents' Association
West Strathclyde Registered Tenant Organisation Regional Network

Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies

Argyll Community Housing Association
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association
Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations
Link Group
Linstone Housing Association
Loreburn Housing Association
Home Group
Oak Tree Housing Association Ltd
Paisley South Housing Association
Paragon Housing Association
Pentland Housing Association Ltd
Pentland Housing Board Members
Port of Leith Housing Association
Rosehill Housing Co-Operative Limited
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations

Voluntary Groups

Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland & HouseMark Scotland
Electrical Safety First
Homeless Action Scotland
Scotland's Housing Network
Scottish Women's Convention
Shelter Scotland

Annex 2: Tables

Chapter 3

Question 1: Do you think the quality of landlord services has improved because of the Charter?

Table 3.1: Views on impact of the Charter on quality of landlord services by respondent category

Category	Improved		Not improved		Mixed/DK		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	22	71	6	19	3	10	31
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	9	64	3	21	2	14	14
Local Authorities	10	77	1	8	2	15	13
Voluntary Groups	2	100	0	0	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**45**	**73**	**10**	**16**	**7**	**11**	**62**
Individuals	14	52	7	26	6	22	27
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**59**	**66**	**17**	**19**	**13**	**15**	**89**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 3

Question 2: Do you think the way the Charter is reported on helps you judge whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards?

Table 3.2: Views on whether the way the Charter is reported on helps with judgement on whether landlords are meeting the Charter outcomes and standards by respondent category

Category	Helps with judgement		Does not help with judgement		Mixed views		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	15	62	8	33	1	4	24
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	3	25	5	42	4	33	12
Local Authorities	11	85	0	0	2	15	13
Voluntary Groups	1	50	0	0	1	50	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**31**	**60**	**13**	**25**	**8**	**15**	**52**
Individuals	14	56	10	40	1	4	25
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**45**	**58**	**23**	**30**	**9**	**12**	**77**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 4

Charter outcome 1: Equalities

Table 4.1: Views on whether Charter outcome 1 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	24	80	6	20	0	0	30
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	7	64	2	18	2	18	11
Local Authorities	13	100	0	0	0	0	13
Voluntary Groups	1	33	2	67	0	0	3
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	33	2	67	0	0	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**47**	**77**	**12**	**20**	**2**	**3**	**61**
Individuals	23	70	6	18	4	12	33
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**70**	**74**	**18**	**19**	**6**	**6**	**94**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 5

Charter outcome 2: Communication

Table 5.1: Views on whether Charter outcome 2 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	14	48	15	52	0	0	29
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	10	83	2	17	0	0	12
Local Authorities	10	77	3	23	0	0	13
Voluntary Groups	2	100		0	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	33	2	67	0	0	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**38**	**63**	**22**	**37**	**0**	**0**	**60**
Individuals	20	62	8	25	4	12	32
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**58**	**63**	**30**	**33**	**4**	**4**	**92**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 6

Charter outcome 3: Participation

Table 6.1: Views on whether Charter outcome 3 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	12	41	16	59	0	0	29
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	14	69	4	31	0	0	13
Local Authorities	9	69	4	31	0	0	13
Voluntary Groups	0	0	3	100	0	0	3
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	20	4	80	0	0	5
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**32**	**50**	**32**	**50**	**0**	**0**	**64**
Individuals	17	55	14	45	0	0	31
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**49**	**52**	**46**	**48**	**0**	**0**	**95**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 7

Charter standard 4: Quality of housing

Table 7.1: Views on whether Charter standard 4 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this standard		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	18	60	12	40	0	0	30
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	2	14	12	86	0	0	14
Local Authorities	3	23	9	69	1	8	13
Voluntary Groups	0	0	2	100	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	0	0	2	100	0	0	2
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**24**	**38**	**37**	**59**	**2**	**3**	**63**
Individuals	15	47	15	47	2	6	32
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**39**	**41**	**52**	**55**	**4**	**4**	**95**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 8

Charter outcome 5: Repairs, maintenance and improvements

Table 8.1 Views on whether Charter outcome 5 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	25	83	5	17	0	0	30
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	7	54	6	46	0	0	13
Local Authorities	9	75	3	25	0	0	12
Voluntary Groups	1	25	2	50	1	25	4
Public and Statutory Bodies	0	0	2	67	1	33	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**43**	**68**	**18**	**29**	**2**	**3**	**63**
Individuals	21	66	10	31	1	3	32
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**64**	**67**	**28**	**29**	**3**	**3**	**95**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 9

Charter outcome 6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Table 9.1 Views on whether Charter outcome 6 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	16	57	12	43	0	0	28
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	3	21	11	79	0	0	14
Local Authorities	7	58	5	42	0	0	12
Voluntary Groups	0	0	1	100	0	0	1
Public and Statutory Bodies	0	0	3	100	0	0	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**27**	**46**	**32**	**54**	**0**	**0**	**59**
Individuals	18	58	10	32	3	10	31
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**45**	**50**	**42**	**47**	**3**	**3**	**90**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 10

Charter outcomes 7, 8 and 9: Housing options

Table 10.1 Views on whether Charter outcomes 7, 8 and 9 should be kept exactly as they are or changed

Category	Keep exactly as they are		Change these outcomes		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	23	74	8	26	0	0	31
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	8	67	4	33	0	0	12
Local Authorities	9		4		0	0	13
Voluntary Groups	0	0	2	100	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	0	0	2	67	1	33	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**41**	**66**	**20**	**32**	**1**	**2**	**62**
Individuals	21	72	5	17	3	10	29
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**62**	**68**	**25**	**27**	**4**	**4**	**91**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 11

Charter outcome 10: Access to housing

Table 11.1 Views on whether Charter outcome 10 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	22	73	7	18	1	3	30
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	6	55	5	45	0	0	11
Local Authorities	9	82	2	18	0	0	11
Voluntary Groups	0	0	2	100	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	50	1	50	0	0	2
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**39**	**68**	**17**	**30**	**1**	**2**	**57**
Individuals	24	75	7	22	1	3	32
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**63**	**71**	**24**	**27**	**2**	**2**	**89**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 12

Charter outcome 11: Tenancy sustainment

Table 12.1 Views on whether Charter outcome 11 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	21	72	7	24	1	3	29
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	4	33	7	58	1	8	12
Local Authorities	9	75	2	17	1	8	12
Voluntary Groups	0	0	2	100	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	33	2	67	0	0	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**36**	**61**	**20**	**34**	**3**	**5**	**59**
Individuals	24	75	6	19	2	6	32
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**60**	**66**	**26**	**29**	**5**	**5**	**91**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 13

Charter outcome 12: Homeless people

Table 13.1 Views on whether Charter outcome 12 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	24	86	2	7	2	7	28
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	7	88	0	0	1	12	8
Local Authorities	9	69	4	31	0	0	13
Voluntary Groups	1	25	3	75	0	0	4
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	50	1	50	0	0	2
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**43**	**77**	**10**	**18**	**3**	**5**	**56**
Individuals	20	67	7	23	3	10	30
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**63**	**73**	**17**	**20**	**6**	**7**	**86**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 14

Charter standard 13: Getting good value from rents and service charges

Table 14.1 Views on whether Charter standard 13 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this standard		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	23	82	5	18	0	0	28
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	6	43	7	50	1	77	14
Local Authorities	9	69	3	23	1	7	13
Voluntary Groups	0	0	2	100	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	2	67	1	33	0	0	3
Private Companies	0	0	1	100	0	0	1
Total organisations	**40**	**66**	**19**	**31**	**2**	**3**	**61**
Individuals	24	73	7	21	2	6	33
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**64**	**68**	**26**	**28**	**4**	**4**	**94**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 15

Charter outcomes 14 and 15: Rent and service charges

Table 15.1 Views on whether Charter outcomes 14 and 15 should be kept exactly as they are or changed

Category	Keep exactly as they are		Change these outcomes		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	18	62	11	38	0	0	29
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	5	42	6	50	1	8	12
Local Authorities	8	62	4	31	1	8	13
Voluntary Groups	0	0	2	100	0	0	2
Public and Statutory Bodies	1	33	2	67	0	0	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**33**	**55**	**25**	**42**	**2**	**3**	**60**
Individuals	21	68	8	26	2	6	31
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**54**	**59**	**33**	**36**	**4**	**4**	**91**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Chapter 16

Charter outcome 16: Gypsies/Travellers

Table 16.1 Views on whether Charter outcome 16 should be kept exactly as it is or changed

Category	Keep exactly as it is		Change this outcome		Don't know		Total no.
	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	No. of respondents	%	
Tenants' and Residents' Groups and their Representative Bodies	17	63	7	26	3	11	27
Registered Social Landlords and their Representative Bodies	6	67	2	22	1	11	9
Local Authorities	9	69	3	23	1	8	13
Voluntary Groups	0	0	2	67	1	33	3
Public and Statutory Bodies	0	0	3	100	0	0	3
Private Companies	1	100	0	0	0	0	1
Total organisations	**33**	**59**	**17**	**30**	**6**	**11**	**56**
Individuals	17	57	7	23	6	20	30
Grand total of organisations and individuals	**50**	**58**	**24**	**28**	**12**	**14**	**86**

*Percentages may not total 100% exactly due to rounding

Annex 3: Additional comments

Chapter 6

Specific points on changing outcome 3:

- Insert “add value” between “participate in” and “influence”.
- Add at the end of the outcome “and in a way that suits them”.
- Replace “other customers” with “other stakeholders” and add “in a value-adding way” following “participate in”.
- Consider changing “at a level they feel comfortable with” as this sounds condescending.
- Reword the outcome as follows: The Customer experience shall be that: 1. Social landlords will comply with the legal requirement to include customers in the management of their businesses. 2. Customers are able to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Chapter 7

Suggestions made by one or two respondents regarding changing standard 4 on Quality of Housing:

- Standard should refer to the safety of homes.
- “subject to available utilities” should be inserted after SHQS.
- The standard should be broken down into two sentences with the first referring to the SHQS and the second referring to allocated homes being clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.
- Should be re-written from the customer perspective: “The customer experience shall be that……”
- Could be improved if it referred to the landlord’s duty to meet the minimum standard rather than focusing on the specific standards.
- Should incorporate minimum standards for temporary accommodation which would be enforced through the Charter and Regulator. Shelter Scotland stated that, “This is especially relevant considering the changes to the funding of temporary accommodation through housing benefit that is facing local authorities and they should be encouraged to explore options around future provision of these services while maintaining good quality properties and services.”

- Standards 4 and 5 should be more distinctly separate. One RSL suggested re-naming standard 4 to “Housing Quality and Investment” and transferring improvements from standard 5 to standard 4 as they perceived improvements to be part of investment in properties and not part of repairs and maintenance.

Suggestions made on changes to the supporting narrative for standard 4:

- 3rd sentence: replace “Beyond” with “Apart from”.
- 3rd sentence: replace “cost effective” with “value for money”.
- 3rd sentence: clarify what is meant by “higher” energy-efficiency standards”.
- Refer to evolving technology and appropriate sources of match-funding.
- Re-word to enable tenants to know what to expect from a property upon allocation to them.
- Need some acknowledgement that given the requirements for value for money, most landlords will be unable to continue to seek enhancements to energy-efficiency standards beyond the targets required by EESH.

Chapter 8

Additional comments of those in favour of changing outcome 5 on repairs, maintenance and improvements.

- The wording “reasonable choices” does not reflect the stronger wording in the supporting narrative.
- “Improvements” should be removed from this outcome and placed under outcome 4 to make the two more distinct.
- Add that the expectation is that repairs will be carried out quickly.
- Need to reference health and safety, for example, “Tenants’ homes and communal areas are safe and well maintained…”
- Households in temporary accommodation should have the same rights to repair and maintenance as those in social housing.
- Concern that from the landlords’ viewpoint, some repairs are for tenants to address and landlords should not be held to account for these.

Chapter 9

Additional suggestions on how the supporting narrative associated with outcome 6 can be improved.

- Include reference to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the local outcome improvement plan.

- Include the requirement for landlords to keep tenants informed on progress of actions, as it can take a long time for some of these in this area to come to fruition.

- Be more specific on what is meant by “range of actions”.

Chapter 12

Additional suggestions of a few respondents on changing outcome 11.

- Given the different size and financial position of RSLs, is a one-size-fits-all approach appropriate? Does the outcome refer to housing officers and income officers (and equivalent) providing tenancy/financial support, or bespoke and specialist teams/services?

- A few respondents considered that measurement of success should allow for tenancies terminating within one year due to personal choice rather than failure to sustain the tenancy. Indicator 20 was criticised for being too crude a measure in this respect and treating all such terminated tenancies as failures.

- Two respondents (one RSL and an individual) considered that the content of the outcome and the supporting narrative could be switched around to be more appropriate.

- Scotland’s Housing Network provided their view that the provision of care and support is a huge aspect of many social landlords’ work. They perceived the Charter to be light on the role of support provision by social landlord organisations to their customers and argued that such an important and prevalent function may justify Charter outcome(s) over and above this one relating to tenancy sustainment, important though this is in its own right.

- One TRG recommended that “accurate and current” precedes “information”.

- One TRG suggested the following text be added to the outcome:

“This is based on: - organisations “are available locally and nationally to provide information and support as well as the Council’s Housing Options Service; - some people do not want or agree to take the support available, however landlords need to highlight the support available and how to access it” (East Ayrshire Tenants’ & Residents’ Federation).

Suggestions were made for additions to the text of the supporting narrative relating to outcome 11.

- The explicit inclusion of looked-after children, their parents or carers, and care leavers, in the list of inclusions.
- Links with the health and wellbeing agenda including the Scottish Government's aim of supporting independent living.
- Further reflection of the standard set out by Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in that "suitable support" should reflect support to live independently in the community with choices equal to others.
- Greater specificity over support services, for example, "…money and debt advice, support with correspondence or other tenancy related issues or advice and support to understand tenancy management and tenants' rights and responsibilities and tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability, or caring responsibilities".
- Insert "can identify better and thereafter" before "can help tenants…"
- Insert reference to timeliness of provision of support.

Chapter 13

Additional suggestions in favour of changing outcome 12 were:

- Two respondents questioned the term "good-quality", one individual considering this to be subjective; and the other (a voluntary organisation) suggesting that factors such as time spent in temporary accommodation and quality of support during the time spent in temporary accommodation, should also be assessed by the Charter.
- Two respondents specifically raised concerns about the usefulness of the supporting indicators, with one local authority considering that indicator 26 should be changed so that it cannot exceed 100% (it was reported that this could happen due to the same household being offered more than one type of housing during their homeless application).
- Angus Council recommended that the outcome be re-written in plain English along the lines:

  "homeless people get help and advice quickly and easily; get suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when they need it; and are offered support to help them get and keep their home."
- Homeless Action Scotland commented that given the universally accepted move towards a housing options approach (linked with the legal duties on homelessness) they believe that this outcome should be rewritten to cover

prevention of homelessness, support and advice, tenancy sustainment as a preventative tool and the quality of service.

Chapter 14

Additional suggestions on how to improve the supporting narrative relating to standard 13.

- Should be an emphasis on continuing to achieve standards and overall aims whilst striving for value for money. Concerns were raised that the former may be lost in an effort to give better value for money. One public body commented that there should always be room for flexibility for arising circumstances, such as requiring more time for decisions in sensitive cases.

- The supporting narrative should promote openness and transparency, perhaps with annual reporting on value for money, in order to facilitate meaningful tenant scrutiny.

- The narrative omits recognition of the added value and social and economic impact which social landlords can bring to local communities.

- Begin the supporting narrative with a sentence which states 'Without compromising on quality of maintenance or repairs, and taking into account reasonable timescales for tenants'" (CELCIS and Who Cares? Scotland).

Chapter 16

Additional comments of those in favour of changing outcome 16.

- Change title of the outcome to "Gypsies'/Travellers' Sites" to reflect the focus of the outcome.

- Change "should manage the sites" to "will manage the sites".

- The Charter should take into account social landlords' responsibilities to their tenants in terms of the wider place context of homes.

Chapter 17 Scrutiny and indicators

Comments relating to scrutiny and indicators are summarised below.

- Several local authorities provided their view that some indicators may not present an accurate picture of performance. Circumstances were cited where social landlords may be unduly penalised by the current indicators, for example, where they had high standard properties which could never meet the SHQS on account of the way they were constructed.

- Some respondents requested that all outcomes have related indicators, for example:

  “We…….believe strongly that there needs to be a crossover between expected outcomes and indicators to ensure there is a consistent approach to accountability of social landlords” (Homeless Action Scotland).

- The importance of social landlords being grouped into peer groups of like-for-like organisations for comparative purposes was emphasised.

- Several respondents recommended a review of the indicators and the definitions underpinning them.

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

ISBN: 978-1-78652-583-3

This document is also available on The Scottish Government website:
www.gov.scot

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS82631 (11/16)