

Inspection report

Glen Housing Association

June 2005

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Summary

The inspection of Glen took place in February 2005. We awarded Glen the following grades:

Housing management	B	Good	Many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed.
Property maintenance	C	Fair	Some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses.

Inspection Findings

Glen Housing Association owns 337 houses in Glenrothes, Leven and Methil. The Association has a strong community focus. Glen's committee consists of experienced and skilled members, including five tenants. The committee oversees the work of the Association effectively. The Association is financially viable in the medium term and has a fair financial management framework.

The Association's staff are very responsive to the needs of service users and are committed to achieving improvements in services. The Association's current approach to monitoring, managing and reporting on delivery of services to tenants and applicants has some strengths but could be further developed.

Key strengths in Glen's services:

- it maintains its houses and neighbourhoods to a high standard;
- it lets houses to people in housing need;
- it helps people with difficulties stay in their homes;
- it is responsive to the needs of service users;
- it re-lets empty houses very quickly;
- it communicates effectively and works with people in arrears; and
- it is improving the speed and quality of repairs it carries out.

Key areas for improvement in Glen's services:

- its management of gas safety in its houses;
- how it plans future maintenance work;
- meeting its statutory obligations under Right to Repair and asbestos management;
- demonstrating how and why it allocates houses; and
- its management of procurement.

Next steps

Glen should produce an improvement plan to show how it intends to respond to our findings for its property maintenance service. The plan will be agreed with us.

How to get more information and contact details

If you would like to see Glen's improvement plan you should contact:

Glen Housing Association Ltd
28 Heimdal Gardens
Glenrothes
Fife
KY7 6TZ
Telephone: 01592 621188
Email: info@glenhousing.co.uk

The full report is on our website at www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk.
This Summary can also be made available on tape, in Braille, large print and community languages. For information please contact Janette Campbell on 0131 479 5163 or email: janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk.

1. Introduction

About this inspection

1.1 This inspection was carried out by Communities Scotland under section 69 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Our purpose in inspection is to provide an independent external assessment of the effectiveness of housing service delivery and make recommendations to help improvement. Inspections are conducted within a published framework of Performance Standards.

How we assessed performance

1.2 Our inspectors asked two key questions:

- How good are the services we have inspected?
- How well are these services being managed for improvement?

1.3 In order to answer these questions inspectors:

- spoke to tenants, staff and members of the governing body;
- asked other partner organisations for their views;
- visited homes and local areas;
- saw and tested first hand how well services were being delivered;
- examined key policies, publications, information and the organisation's self-assessment submitted for this inspection; and
- analysed published performance and financial information.

1.4 We have awarded grades for housing management and property maintenance. This is what our grades mean:

A	Excellent	Major strengths.
B	Good	Many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed.
C	Fair	Some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses.
D	Poor	Major areas where improvement is needed or where a Number of very significant weaknesses are found.

The inspection team

- 1.5 The inspection team was managed by Hilary Third. The lead Inspector was Eleanor Sneddon, supported by Iain Fitheridge (Inspection Officer) and Lynne Bell (Financial Analyst). We were on site between 14 and 24 February 2005. We would like to thank everyone involved in the inspection, particularly the governing body, staff and tenants for their time and co-operation.

Responding to this inspection

- 1.6 We expect all inspected bodies to make the summary of the report available to anyone that wants it, report our findings to tenants and other stakeholders and respond to the issues raised in this report.

2. Context

About the organisation

- 2.1 Glen Housing Association is based in Glenrothes. It owns 337 houses in Glenrothes, Leven and Methil. In total, 96% of its houses (324) have been built since 1982. Of these, almost half (166) are houses or cottage flats and the rest are flats. The Association's office is based in Glenrothes and it operates a part-time satellite office in Leven.
- 2.2 The Annual Performance and Statistical Return asks Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to select a peer group which best describes their organisation. Glen selected the group described as RSLs that operate in post 1919 urban areas that have more than 250 houses. This is the group we use to compare Glen's performance.
- 2.3 The Association was first registered with Scottish Homes in 1992 as Collydean Community Housing Association. In 1998 Glen Housing Association was formed as the result of a merger with Glenfield Housing Association. It is an industrial and provident society and a registered charity, and its main purpose is to provide housing for the benefit of the community.
- 2.4 In addition to providing housing management and property maintenance services, Glen has a small development programme which restarted this year with the conversion of one properties. It has also received funding of £13,000 to support its wider role activities.

Key Facts

- 2.5 The table below presents a summary of key information for Glen showing trends over the last three financial years.

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Houses owned	322	336	337
Employees	6	7	7
Annual turnover	770,800	808,000	824,109
Total possible rental income	720,530	760,776	799,347
Rental income from housing benefit	52.0%	50.9%	52.7%
Average weekly rent	£42.55	£42.62	£44.11
Average rent increase	1.7%	2.9%	2.8%
Houses re-let	60	71	49
Responsive repairs carried out	759	700	765
Maintenance spend per house	n/a	£327.21	£595.52
Right To Buy sales	0	0	0

Source (APSR and Annual Accounts 2001-2004)

3. Housing management

3.1 The grade awarded for housing management is:

B	Good	Many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed.
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We explain at the end of this section how the assessments and judgements we have made result in this grade.

How good is the service?

Access

Social landlords should provide open, fair and equal access to their housing lists and should work with partners to maximise access to housing.

- 3.2 Glen operates an open housing list and gives access to all applicants aged 16 and over. It advertises its list in the offices of other housing providers and in local community facilities. However, the Association does not advertise access on its website. The number of people on its list increased by 77% in the last 2 years to 573 at the time of our inspection. The Association aims to let 50% of its houses to people nominated by Fife Council. In previous years it has not achieved this quota but following a review of the process with the Council this is now working more effectively. Glen is also working with other local landlords to develop a common housing register.
- 3.3 The Association has a target timescale of 25 days for adding new applications to its housing list. The housing manager uses a sample of applications each month to check performance against the target but does not record or report the outcomes. However, in the cases we reviewed we found the median time to complete this process was only 11 days. The Association aims to review each application after 12 months although it does not always achieve this.
- 3.4 A random sample of applications are checked by the housing manager each month to ensure they have been pointed correctly which is an effective quality control mechanism. The Association carries out spot checks to verify applicants' circumstances either by telephone call, home visit or interview in the office.
- 3.5 Seven applicants were suspended from receiving offers at the time of the inspection. The Association does not set out a consistent approach to suspensions in its relevant policies. While we found that Glen is using suspensions appropriately for external applicants, it was not clear that

transfer applicants were being treated in the same way particularly where they have rent arrears. Glen has some weaknesses in managing suspensions:

- it places the onus for having the suspensions lifted directly onto the applicant without signposting to appropriate advice and support;
- it does not always review the suspension when the period is ended; and
- it does not advise applicants of the right to appeal.

- 3.6 Glen collects basic information about the ethnicity of applicants and their households. From this, the Association has identified that it should increase the number of applications from households with a black and minority ethnic (BME) background. It is now working with other local housing associations to identify ways of increasing applications from BME groups.
- 3.7 Glen provides good access to its housing list although there are some weaknesses in its approach to managing suspensions.

Meeting need and maximising choice

Social landlords should meet housing need through lettings and should maximise choice for applicants.

- 3.8 Glen prioritises allocations based on a range of housing needs which clearly reflect the statutory preference categories, and 80% of the allocations we reviewed were to people with one or more of these needs. The Association is making a positive contribution to tackling homelessness and has a protocol in place with Fife Council to help both parties meet their duties to homeless people. Glen has housed three households referred under section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and refused one appropriately as it had no suitable housing available.
- 3.9 The Association gives applicants a written breakdown of their points level, basic information about their likelihood of being rehoused and some information about wider housing options. The Association provides useful extra advice when speaking to applicants by phone and during application interviews. However, we found that Glen does not provide any advice to applicants about their right to appeal.
- 3.10 Glen gives applicants a good level of choice. They can identify a preference to be housed in Glenrothes, Leven or Lower Methil and will be given an unlimited number of offers of housing. Where an applicant refuses two offers the Association will meet with them to refine their initial choices so that they are more likely to accept a subsequent offer.

- 3.11 We found that Glen's approach to matching applicants to empty properties has a number of weaknesses:
- its policy does not always have clear criteria to guide staff about how points are to be given;
 - it does not retain clear records of successful applicants' placing on the housing list or the reasons for bypassing other applicants;
 - it does not clearly record why it chooses to allocate to a particular group of applicant such as a nomination or transfer; and
 - the process is not checked by a second member of staff until after the offer has been made.

The Association has recognised that it needs to be more transparent about how it allocates houses and has recently introduced limited improvements in documenting allocation decisions.

- 3.12 While Glen is achieving good outcomes in meeting the housing needs of people on its waiting list, the weaknesses identified mean that it cannot always demonstrate how and why it makes allocation decisions.

Sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness

Social landlords should maximise security of tenure for all residents of their accommodation, and should work to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness through their delivery of housing management services.

- 3.13 Glen has signed up 99% of its tenants to Scottish secure tenancy (SST) agreements. It has not used the short SST.
- 3.14 The provision of good information and access to support are important ways in which landlords can help sustain tenancies. Glen gives new tenants an extensive range of helpful information about managing their tenancy at the sign-up meeting. The Association also carries out settling-in visits for all new tenants to provide any extra information needed and to help identify any difficulties at an early stage.
- 3.15 Glen is committed to helping people sustain their tenancies. An area of particular strength is its ability to identify and respond to individual needs appropriately. One area of positive practice is the use of "at risk" meetings where staff delivering different services to tenants (such as caretaking, rent collection and estate management) agree a joint approach to monitoring and supporting individual tenants. We saw evidence that the Association works well with a range of other agencies to get appropriate support where necessary to help its tenants stay in their homes.
- 3.16 Glen has a relatively low number of abandonments. Only four tenants abandoned their houses in 2003/04 which, in percentage terms at 1.19%,

is similar to the national average. At the time of the inspection there had been none in 2004/05.

- 3.17 Almost all the legal action that Glen takes to recover possession of its houses is in response to rent arrears. In 2004/05 the Association issued notice of proceedings for recovery of possession (NOP) to 26 tenants and qualifying occupiers. In the last two years Glen has started court action to recover vacant possession against four households and had orders for possession granted in all cases. In half of the cases where an order had been granted for repossession the tenants were still in their homes. While this is a positive outcome, we found some weaknesses in how the Association manages occupation in these circumstances:
- it does not clearly advise the tenant that their tenancy has ended;
 - it does not state its intentions when allowing tenants to stay after an order for possession is granted, including whether and when a new tenancy will be given; and
 - it continues to accept payments into the same rent account where an order for possession has been granted and continues to treat the tenant debt as a current arrear rather than former tenant debt.
- 3.18 The Association is committed to working with tenants to keep them in their homes even after it has received an order for possession. It seeks to recover vacant possession only as a last resort. In the cases we looked at we found that the Association uses recognised good practice techniques in its efforts to find alternative solutions to repossession such as extensive and early personal contact with tenants and advice and referral to other agencies.
- 3.19 Glen works to maximise security of tenure for its tenants and its approach to sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness has many strengths. The management of tenant occupation after an order for possession is granted is a weakness in the Association's approach to security of tenure.

Quality of Neighbourhoods

Social landlords should deliver services to ensure that neighbourhoods are attractive, well-maintained and safe places to live. They should deal appropriately with antisocial behaviour.

- 3.20 Glen has a number of strengths in its approach to estate management. The Association sets standards for the quality of its estates and clearly outlines what is expected from tenants in maintaining this. Glen's survey of tenants in 2001 found that 78% of its tenants were satisfied with the quality of their neighbourhoods. The main area of dissatisfaction highlighted was about children's play and the Association has since carried out work to tackle this with positive results. We visited a number of

estates and found them to be of a high standard with almost no evidence of graffiti, litter or vandalism.

- 3.21 The Association responds quickly to estate management and neighbour nuisance problems identified either through regular estate inspections or reported by tenants. Glen also uses preventative action. An example of this is a project to promote play, and work with young people. A recent independent evaluation of the project highlighted the very positive impact on the estate in terms of the reduction in vandalism and improved tolerance and co-operation among different age-groups in the community. We include this project as an example of positive practice in Appendix 2.
- 3.22 Glen outlines a good approach to dealing with complaints about antisocial behaviour in its policy and procedures. Although it has had relatively few cases to deal with, those we saw were mainly resolved at an early stage using a range of techniques such as a same day response to complaints raised, personal visits to those involved, joint working with other agencies and provision of advice and support to the complainant.
- 3.23 The Association does not routinely collect feedback from tenants about its estate management service. However, where it has carried out surveys of particular aspects of the service tenants have reported good levels of satisfaction.
- 3.24 Glen is achieving excellent outcomes in maintaining its neighbourhoods to a high standard and is using innovative methods to help achieve this. The Association is also responsive to individual and local needs in identifying appropriate solutions.

Responsiveness to tenants

Social landlords should place the people they serve at the heart of their work, treat them with respect and be responsive to their views and priorities.

- 3.25 The Association conducts a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey every five years. The most recent survey was in 2001 and the Association plans to update its survey next year. In this 85% of tenants reported they were satisfied with the Association as a landlord. The Association identifies trends from these surveys, takes action to tackle areas of concern and reviews the impact of the initiatives. We saw examples of this in estate management.
- 3.26 Glen is committed to encouraging tenant participation and updated its strategy in 2004. It has set up a register of tenants willing to be involved in consultation exercises and is working with Tenants Information Service (TIS) to help improve tenant participation. Glen consults all tenants on its rent setting every year and has also consulted on its estate management

- policy. However, we found the Association did not consult on recent changes to its allocation policy. While Glen got a low response to invitations to participate, we saw evidence that the Association had used feedback from the consultations to inform formulation of policy. The Association has also used estate or close based meetings and focus groups to help improve its knowledge about what tenants want.
- 3.27 Glen uses the regular, less formal contact it has with service users to gather feedback although it does not systematically collate or analyse the results. However, we saw evidence that the Association is very responsive to individual circumstances and has adapted the way it delivers the housing management service to make it more effective in estate management, arrears and managing antisocial behaviour.
- 3.28 The Association has a clear policy for dealing with complaints but does not routinely advise service users that they can complain or appeal a decision. The Association receives very few complaints about the housing management service and we found that they are handled appropriately and in line with policy.
- 3.29 Glen is committed to providing equal access to its housing management services. It provides a telephone interpreting service and makes a translation service available for written documents though this is not publicised in its handbook. Having recognised that the location of its main office in Glenrothes is not convenient to all its customers, Glen also provides a part time office in the Leven area. Both offices have level access.
- 3.30 Glen is responsive to the needs of its service users in the way it delivers housing management. Although there are some weaknesses around failure to publicise the complaints process fully, this is outweighed by strengths particularly in estate management and helping people to sustain tenancies. Glen has also begun to develop more formal ways to consult with its tenants.

Resource management and efficiency

Social landlords should maximise their income, in a way that is fair to service users, and manage costs effectively.

- 3.31 Glen offers tenants a good range of ways to pay their rent including Housing Benefit Direct, standing order, using a rent book at the bank and by cheque, or exceptionally cash, at the office. The tenants survey in 2001 found that 99% of tenants were satisfied with rent payment methods.

3.32 The table overleaf summarises Glen's reported performance in collecting rent arrears.

	At March 2003	At March 2004			At Sept. 2004
	Glen	Glen	Peer Average	National Median	Glen
Total arrears as % of total gross rental income	9.2%	7.6%	6.8%	6.2%	6.4%
Total current arrears as % of total gross rental income	7.2%	5.2%	4.9%	4.4%	5.6%
Current arrears (non technical) as % of total gross rental income	2.0%	1.6%	3.3%	3.0%	2.2%
Current arrears (technical) as % of total gross rental income	5.2%	3.6%	1.8%	1.4%	3.4%
% of current tenants in serious arrears	3.3%	2.4%	6.3%	-	2.6%
Total former tenant arrears	£15,063	£15,429	-	-	£8,827
As % of total gross rental income	2.0%	1.9%	1.9%	1.1%	1.1 %
Rent arrears written off	-	-	-	-	£9,703

3.33 The table shows that Glen's total arrears as a percentage of total rental income have decreased over the last two years but remain above both the average figure for its peer group and the national median. The trend continued into this year with total arrears decreasing further to 6.4% by the time of the inspection which is below the peer average for 2003/4. The proportion of Glen's tenants in serious arrears has decreased over the last two years and is well below its peer group average.

3.34 Glen's performance in total current tenant arrears shows a similar improvement which reverses slightly in this year. However the weakness in the Association's categorisation of current tenant debt (identified at 3.17) makes reported performance look poorer in this area. The figures for current non-technical arrears¹ have improved over the last two years and are significantly below the average figures for its peers, ranking 7 out of its 51 peer RSLs at March 2004. Glen's current technical arrears figures are significantly higher than the average for its peer group and the national median.

3.35 Glen's figure of £15,000 for former tenant arrears has remained static over the last two years at a level similar to all Scottish RSLs. The Association has written off almost half of this amount in this year. The Association recognises that its performance in recovering former tenant arrears is a weakness although it has no firm plans in place to improve this.

¹ Non-technical arrears exclude outstanding housing benefit not yet received by the landlord.

3.36 The Association has many strengths in its approach to working with tenants in arrears. It gives tenants every opportunity to make payments and its approach uses recognised good practice such as early personal contact with tenants. The first response by the Association is to visit the tenant after a payment is missed. We examined a sample of cases and found that on average staff try to speak to a tenant on a visit, by telephone or at the office about their arrears five times for every letter it sends to them and is successful in making contact on 76% of these occasions. The Association agrees tailored solutions with tenants to help them make payments. Clear records are kept of the actions taken and arrangements made.

3.37 The table below summarises Glen's reported performance in letting houses that have become empty.

	2002-03	2003-04			2004-05*
	Glen	Glen	Peer Average	National Median	Glen
Rental income lost due to empty houses	£2,599	£2,343	-	-	£1,103
As % of total rental income	0.3%	0.3%	1.6%	0.9%	0.1%
Total no. of re-lets	71	49	-	-	23
% re-let in <2 weeks	88.7%	81.6%	42.4%	39.1%	82.6%
% re-let in 2-4 weeks	8.5%	16.3%	30.4%	24.0%	8.6%
% re-let in >4 weeks	2.8%	2%	27.2%	36.6%	8.6%
Average time to re-let (days)	6	7	22	25	7

* For the period April to September 2004

3.38 Glen performs very well in minimising the rent it loses because of houses lying empty. In 2003/04 it lost only 0.3% of its rental income which is significantly lower than both its peer group average and the national median. The Association takes an average of only seven days to re-let its houses. This ranks 16 nationally and has remained well below its peer group average and the national median over the last two years.

3.39 Glen has a good approach to managing its re-let process. It uses a number of techniques to help ensure that it lets its houses quickly. These include:

- early identification of less desirable stock and taking a strategic approach to managing this;
- starting the allocation process as soon as it knows a house will be vacated;
- early pre-termination visits to assess what repairs may be needed; and
- quick repairs completion where these cannot be done with the house tenanted.

- 3.40 Glen's costs at £750 per house appear exceptionally high and approximately 41% higher than both its peer and national averages. However this is incorrect, as the Association includes all the organisation's staff costs and overheads under this heading. This means that Glen does not know accurately how much its housing management service is costing. We comment further on this in 5.16.
- 3.41 Glen has many strengths in the way it maximises its income, in particular its management of empty houses and use of positive practice when working with tenants in arrears. The Association's weakness in accurately costing the housing management service impacts on its ability to manage its costs.

Performance management

Social landlords should have clear objectives, standards and targets for housing management services, should monitor achievement of these and should work to continuously improve services.

- 3.42 Glen sets out broad objectives for housing management in its Internal Management Plan (IMP). It also outlines more detailed targets covering the key activities in the service. Although the objectives are not always SMART we saw that staff and committee have a clear awareness of how these relate to the housing management service.
- 3.43 The Association has basic systems for monitoring and managing performance in its housing management service. Staff are aware of the Association's targets and objectives and meet regularly to discuss performance. This is particularly strong in relation to managing outcomes for individual service users. While monthly reports to the sub-committees provide information on broader performance outcomes, some gaps in the information provided limit the effectiveness of these:
- they do not cover all areas and do not always clearly relate to the objectives and targets in the IMP;
 - there is no analysis of trends; and
 - they do not contain information on the quality of service user outcomes.
- 3.44 Glen is committed to improving its service and we saw evidence of improvements being made in estate management and letting empty homes. The committee is reviewing the Association's performance against Performance Standards as part of an ongoing self-assessment programme. The Association also sets service specific targets in its IMP. The committee reviews these annually using information about outturn over the previous two years and benchmarking with peer group associations for arrears and voids. This is a good approach although a

weak point is that the information it uses does not contain analysis of the performance against targets.

- 3.45 Glen has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures. The Association reviews these regularly taking account of legislation and Performance Standards. Generally these provide useful support to staff in delivering the housing management service although in allocations, transfers and evictions some areas are not always sufficiently well developed.
- 3.46 Glen has a good approach to managing its performance in housing management and there is evidence of improvements being achieved. We found some weaknesses in its use of performance information to help the Association identify areas for further improvement.

Grade and overall assessment of housing management

- 3.47 Our overall assessment is that Glen's housing management service is good. We found many strengths and some other areas where improvement is needed. We set out the factors we have taken account of in coming to our assessment below.
- 3.48 Many of Glen's areas of good performance in housing management impact directly on tenants and applicants. It is meeting housing need through allocations, maximising security of tenure, working hard to help people sustain their tenancies and achieving high standards in its estates. The Association is very responsive to individual service users and we saw examples of positive practice in the way it works with tenants in arrears and with young people.
- 3.49 The main areas for improvement are in the Association's approach to managing suspensions and demonstrating how and why it makes allocations decisions. There are also some weaknesses in Glen's management of tenant occupation after an order for possession is granted.
- 3.50 The Association also performs very well in letting houses quickly and is showing improving trends in collecting rental income. Glen has a good approach to performance management although there are some weaknesses in its use of information to help identify areas for further improvement and in the management of costs.

4. Property maintenance

4.1 The grade awarded for repairs & maintenance is:

C	Fair	Some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses.
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We explain at the end of this section how the assessments and judgements we have made result in this grade.

How good is the service?

Access to the repairs service

Social landlords should have arrangements in place that make it easy for tenants to report repairs and to have them carried out.

- 4.2 Glen provides a good range of ways for tenants to report repairs e.g. by telephone, by email, and in person at the office. Staff visiting tenants in their homes also collect repairs requests. The Association provides telephone numbers for tenants to report repairs emergency and heating repairs directly to the contractor, during office hours as well as out of hours.
- 4.3 Glen provides useful information to tenants on how to access its repair service. Tenant and landlord responsibilities are set out in its SST agreement, tenant handbook, leaflets and regular updates in newsletters. The Association can make this information available in community languages using a translating facility but does not widely publicise this.
- 4.4 Glen issues a repairs receipt to tenants who report repairs to the office. This contains information confirming the work needed, priority level and access arrangements but does not include the target date for completion or information about the contractor. The Association does not operate an appointment system although contractors are given tenants' phone numbers to arrange am or pm access.
- 4.5 Feedback we saw from tenants showed that they were generally happy with the access arrangements.

Speed and quality of response repairs service

Social landlords should set challenging targets for completing repairs, strive to achieve them and ensure repairs are completed to a high quality.

- 4.6 The two hour target the Association sets itself for making safe repairs it categorises as emergencies is more challenging than the national median

of six hours. Glen's target for urgent repairs is in line with the national median and in routine repairs is longer than the national median.

	Glen's target response time	Performance				
		Glen			National median 2003/04	Peer average 2003/04
		2001/02	2002/03	2003/04		
Emergency Repairs	2 hours	100%	100%	100%	99.2%	98%
Urgent Repairs	3 working days	92%	89%	99%	96.0%	96%
Routine Repairs	15 working days	92%	91%	92%	95.7%	96%

- 4.7 Glen reports good results over the last three years in completing emergency repairs, although we query the validity of these figures. Its performance in urgent repairs has improved and is now higher than the national median and peer average. The Association's reported performance for routine repairs has remained static at less than peer average and the national median.
- 4.8 We found a number of weaknesses in Glen's measurement of targets which mean that it does not have an accurate picture of its performance. The Association does not record information about when a repair is reported or completed for heating contractor and caretaker repairs. Also, it only records the date when an emergency repair is reported or completed rather than the time.
- 4.9 Tenants who have requested a repair are sent a postcard asking basic questions about satisfaction with the service received. We viewed those returned for this year and all except one reported a high level of satisfaction. The Association does not systematically collate and report the information but does use it to identify trends in satisfaction. As a result of dissatisfaction being reported for heating repairs the Association introduced a more detailed questionnaire to help it manage performance more closely in this area and there is early evidence of positive results.
- 4.10 Pre- and post-inspections are important tools for ensuring repairs are targeted accurately and carried out to a high standard. The Association has some weaknesses in how uses these techniques. It does not provide guidance for staff on when to pre-inspect repairs. In practice this is used where it is not clear what work is needed and does not include any heating repairs. Glen has exceeded its 10% target for carrying out post-inspections of its response repairs in the last 2 years. We saw some evidence that the information was being used to assess the quality of contractors' performance, but not in a systematic way.

- 4.11 Glen is not yet fully operating the statutory Right to Repair scheme. The Association provides general information to new tenants at their sign-up meeting and has leaflets available at the office. While the Association provides some information about the operation of the scheme to tenants who report repairs to the office, this does not include information about alternative contractors. Tenants who report repairs direct to a contractor are not given any information about the scheme. This is a significant weakness particularly as the Association has had to make payments to three tenants using the direct service.
- 4.12 Glen provides a fair response repairs service. While tenants are satisfied with the quality of repairs, there are weakness in the way it monitors performance and it is not yet fully operating Right to Repair.

Physical quality of houses

Social landlords should have good information about the condition of their houses and should deliver effective maintenance programmes that take account of housing quality and home safety needs.

- 4.13 Scottish Ministers have set a target that all social landlords' houses should meet the new Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015. Landlords are required to prepare a plan showing how they will achieve this by April 2005. As the Association had not completed its plan at the time of our inspection, it is too early to assess how it will be implemented. However, the Association's stock survey shows that the majority of its stock already meets the standards and Glen has begun considering how it can meet the standard in all its houses.
- 4.14 Glen has good information on the current condition of its houses and the future needs for cyclical and planned maintenance. It carried out a stock condition survey based on a representative sample of its houses in 2002. This was used to produce comprehensive 30 year projections for its maintenance work. Glen updates its these projections annually using information it collects from staff inspections of repairs and empty houses, and plans to carry out a full survey review of its houses every six years.
- 4.15 The Association uses the information in its maintenance plans effectively to schedule a programme of repairs. During the annual budget setting process Glen reviews any planned and cyclical maintenance work it needs to undertake in the coming year, assesses the most effective programming, and identifies how it will be funded. The Association then uses this information to adjust its assumptions underpinning its longer term plans. One area of weakness in this process is that Glen does not currently have firm plans for how it will pay for cyclical and planned repair work beyond 2009 when the Association begins to have deficits in its financing. At the time of the inspection the Association had developed an

outline strategy to tackle this issue and was about to start more detailed option analysis.

- 4.16 Glen has not yet carried out any planned maintenance contracts. It surveyed tenants affected by two recent cyclical maintenance contracts and the results showed 100% satisfaction levels.
- 4.17 Glen's houses are built and improved to high standards. All have smoke detectors, 99% of these are hard-wired, and no houses have internal lead pipes. In recent developments its houses:
- are built to Secured by Design standards;
 - are flexible to accommodate a range of housing needs; and
 - have good levels of energy efficiency.
- 4.18 Glen is required to carry out safety checks every 12 months on all gas appliances and flues which it provides for its tenants' use. In the last year, the Association did not carry out gas safety checks within one year of the previous check for 53% of its affected houses. We reviewed information for 24 houses and found, that for 8, checks were not carried out until more than a month after they should have been completed. Defects were found in a number of cases which is a risk for the association. . Glen's performance in this area is poor. The table below summarises the Association's performance in carrying out gas safety checks.

	September 2004	
	Number of houses	%
Houses with gas appliances	324	
Houses with current gas safety certificates	319	98%
Houses where safety check was carried out within 12 months of previous check	148	47%
Houses where safety check was up to 1 month late	103	32%
Houses where safety check was between 1 and 3 months late	61	19%
Houses where safety check was more than 3 months late	7	2%

- 4.19 The Association has procedures for carrying out gas safety checks. Glen was aware of its poor performance but it has significant weaknesses in how it manages this area:
- we found that the contractor's first contact with the tenant to request access was only seven days before the existing safety certificate expired;
 - it does not identify gas safety as a risk in its risk management strategy; and

- it does not use the information it collects about houses with certificates to review and improve its performance.
- 4.20 From April 2004 social landlords have had a statutory duty to manage asbestos in the common areas of their properties. Glen has a small number of properties where it does not have full information about the presence of asbestos. Although it is significantly late in doing so, It is working towards having a management plan in place by April 2005.
- 4.21 Glen re-lets its properties in a good condition. The Association sets out a basic re-let standard in its maintenance policy and where it considers the condition of the decoration is poorer, gives tenants a decoration allowance. We visited two flats and found these to be of a good standard. We did not see any evidence of tenants refusing property because of the condition. The Association checks tenant satisfaction with its homes during the settling-in visit but does not systematically collate and use this information.
- 4.22 The Association's performance in maintaining the physical quality of its houses has some areas of strength such as the condition of its houses but there are also some areas of weakness, including planning for funding maintenance work and management of gas safety checks which is a significant weakness.

Responsiveness to tenants in repairs and maintenance

Social landlords should place the people they serve at the heart of their work, treat them with respect and be responsive to their views and priorities.

- 4.23 We comment on how Glen uses its comprehensive survey results at 3.24. According to the 2001 survey, only 78% of respondents reported that they were satisfied with the repairs service. However, as noted at 4.9, the Association uses postcards to collect ongoing feedback from tenants who have had a repair carried out, and although the response rate is low this shows almost 100% satisfaction. We found that the Association responded positively to improve its service when problems were identified by tenants about a particular contractor.
- 4.24 Glen also asks tenants for their views when it completes cyclical maintenance projects and reports the results to the housing management sub-committee. Tenants reported 100% satisfaction levels with the work carried out under recent cyclical maintenance contracts.
- 4.25 We found the same outcomes for how Glen deals with complaints in property maintenance as we identify in housing management at 3.28.
- 4.26 As in housing management, the Association is committed to encouraging tenant participation. It has recognised that it needs to further develop its

tenant involvement in planning for its property maintenance service. We saw some early progress towards this:

- it asked for tenant views when planning a recent environmental scheme;
- it consulted with tenants about an energy efficiency contract; and
- it has firm plans to consult on its review of the maintenance policy.

4.27 Glen has a commitment to seeking tenants' views of its property maintenance service and has made some early progress towards achieving this. Although it does not always systematically collate and report on the results of its feedback it does use this in a positive way to improve its service.

Is the service managed for improvement?

Resource management and efficiency

Social landlords should manage the cost of their services effectively and procure repairs and maintenance services in a way that takes account of quality.

4.28 Glen's cost for managing its property maintenance service is artificially low. Costs per house in 2002/03 were £92 which is 54% lower than its peer and national averages. However the Association does not allocate any staff costs or overheads to this heading so it does not know accurately how much the service it provides costs. We comment further on this in 5.16.

4.29 Glen's cost per house for carrying out reactive repairs in 2002/03 at £266.86 is higher than its peer and national average. As noted in 4.14 this also includes costs for gas safety checks which are normally considered to be cyclical. The Association's cost per house for planned, cyclical and major repairs work in 2002/03 at £15.68 is substantially lower than peer and national averages. This spend figure rises to £248.84 in 2003/04. Glen has identified that reactive repairs costs are likely to increase until its planned maintenance programmes begin. It is monitoring trends in this area and uses this to inform its planned maintenance programme.

4.30 Glen is owed almost £10,000 by tenants for rechargeable repairs. Having recognised there were weaknesses in the way it pursued people for payment the Association introduced new procedures in April 2004 and intends to review performance at the end of the year. From the cases we looked at there was evidence that the Association was trying to recover the money owed from tenants, involving other support agencies where necessary. However outcomes have declined from a 10% to a 6% recovery rate during this period.

- 4.31 Glen has a positive approach to using different procurement methods to deliver improved quality in its property maintenance service but there are some weaknesses in the management of this approach:
- in a cyclical work contract the Association was unable to demonstrate clearly why it had chosen a particular contractor;
 - it extended the period of partnership agreements with contractors without a full review of costs;
 - it has not reviewed whether its approach to procurement will continue to be effective as its repairs profile changes; and
 - its practice is not always following policy.

Performance management

Social landlords should have clear objectives, standards and targets for property maintenance services, should monitor achievement of these, and should work to continuously improve services.

- 4.32 Glen sets out broad objectives for property maintenance in its Internal Management Plan (IMP). It also outlines more detailed actions covering the key activities in the service. Although the objectives are not always SMART² we saw that staff and committee have a clear awareness of how these relate to the property maintenance service.
- 4.33 There are weaknesses in the Association's systems for monitoring and reviewing performance in its property maintenance service. In particular there are gaps in information about response repairs, and the Association has failed to identify poor performance in gas safety as a significant issue. The housing sub-committee receives quarterly reports on performance but these are not comprehensive, contain only limited use of target or budget comparators, and present no analysis of performance or options. This makes it difficult for the Association to assess and manage its performance effectively.
- 4.34 The Association has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures in place which provide useful support for staff delivering the property maintenance service. The Association reviews these regularly although we saw some examples where they were not updated to match current practice.
- 4.35 The Association has a commitment to improving its service. We saw evidence where it had changed the way it provided the service to improve outcomes for service users. However weaknesses in the way it records and uses information mean that it is not always self-aware in recognising where this is necessary.

² SMART objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound.

Grade and overall assessment of repairs & maintenance

- 4.36 Our overall assessment is that Glen's property maintenance is fair. While there are some strengths there are also many areas where improvement is required, including one area of significant weakness. We set out below the key factors we have taken into account in coming to our overall assessment.
- 4.37 Glen's houses are in good condition and tenant satisfaction with the speed and quality of reactive repairs is improving. The Association is carrying out regular programmes of cyclical work to ensure that tenants' homes remain in good condition.
- 4.38 There are some weaknesses in the property maintenance service that impact on tenants. Glen does not know if all its repairs to tenants homes are completing within the targets it sets and it is not yet fully operating Right to Repair. The Association does not always systematically collect and use feedback from tenants to improve its services.
- 4.39 There are further weaknesses in the Association's planning for future cyclical and planned repair work and in its management of procurement. Glen's management of gas safety checks is a significant weakness.
- 4.40 The Association shows a clear commitment to improving its service. We saw evidence where it had changed the way it provides the service to improve outcomes for service users. However we also found weaknesses in its performance management systems which limit the Association's ability to monitor and manage the service and its costs effectively.

5. Governance and financial management

Leadership and direction

A clear vision or purpose and an inclusive, well-informed planning process are key to effectively delivering the services that tenants want.

- 5.1 Glen sets out its mission statement for the future in its IMP. This is reviewed by staff and committee jointly at an annual away day. It also uses the IMP to set out shorter term objectives across all its activities for the next two to three years. Glen uses the short term objectives in its IMP to inform the annual budget setting process. As part of its planning framework the Association has medium term financial plans which set out its investment priorities to 2009. The Association has projections for 30 years about what cyclical and planned maintenance are needed, and is developing firm plans for work required beyond 2009.
- 5.2 The Association translates some of its objectives in its IMP into more detailed actions for the next year. These do not cover all areas, do not use SMART targets or clearly show who is responsible for achieving them. However the Association also uses individual monthly staff meetings to review performance against the plan, and to keep staff well informed about what is expected. The sub-committees receive monthly reports to review progress towards the objectives. Generally this planning and monitoring process is achieving positive outcomes although there are some gaps for example in tenant satisfaction and gas safety. The organisation is aware that it will need to review this planning framework if plans to increase the number of houses in management are successful.

Clear functions and proper control

Social landlords should be clear about the functions of the governing body, and take informed, transparent decisions within a framework of controls.

- 5.3 Glen's committee has a very clear understanding of its role in dealing with strategic issues facing the organisation, exercising control and setting the overall policy direction. It has a positive and constructive relationship with staff. The committee meets every two months and is supported by five sub-committees. Three of these meet monthly and have responsibility for specific activity areas. The relationships both between the sub-committees and with the committee are clear and well managed.
- 5.4 Glen has an effective structure for managing its performance. The committee has overall responsibility for performance management. The sub-committees monitor the Association's performance using regular reports on key areas of its business. The results of these discussions are then reported to the committee and include recommendations for any action considered necessary.

- 5.5 There are some weaknesses in the way Glen uses reports, as noted earlier and at 5.23. These do not consistently include a full range of information about performance and good analysis to help committee members in their decision making. Staff provide extra information verbally at the meetings but this means that committee members do not always have all the relevant information about a topic to consider before the meeting. The minutes of the meetings do not fully record the additional verbal information making it difficult for Glen to always demonstrate clearly how and why decisions are made.

Developing capacity

Social landlords should ensure that their governing bodies have the skills and experience they need to perform well, develop their capacity and evaluate their performance.

- 5.6 Glen has a strong committee which oversees the organisation's activities effectively. It has members with a wide range of skills and considerable experience in housing and governance. The committee informally reviews its skills annually and has identified a gap in financial expertise. We found that the committee engages in a good level of constructive discussion at meetings.
- 5.7 The Association has an effective approach to ensuring committee members have access to training to support them in their role. It does this by :
- using external facilitators to help review performance;
 - providing accessible, good quality training; and
 - using a comprehensive induction programme and a mentoring system to support newer members.

Accountability

Engaging stakeholders, public reporting and making accountability real.

- 5.8 A strong membership and good levels of participation at AGMs are important ways for an RSL to ensure accountability. Glen allows a broad range of people to become members and uses a range of ways to promote membership. The membership level has dropped slightly over the last 3 years and currently 25% of its tenants are members. The Association provides free transport and childcare facilities to encourage people to attend its AGM but attendance has been low beyond those on the committee with an average of 18 people attending.
- 5.9 Having recognised that tenants were under-represented on its committee, Glen set an objective to improve this. The Association has achieved a positive outcome and over the last two years five tenants have been

elected to join the committee at the AGM. More than half of Glen's committee members are tenants.

- 5.10 Social landlords should place the people they serve at the heart of their work and be responsive to their views and priorities. Glen is clearly focused on meeting the needs of its communities. A key part of its approach is its responsiveness to individuals and we identify this as a major strength in housing management. Glen also has a positive approach to tenant participation in a more formal way through focus groups, working with broader community groups and policy consultation. It has recognised that responses from tenants have been low in this area and is working with advisors, TIS, to improve its effectiveness.
- 5.11 Social landlords should give stakeholders the information they need about the organisation and its plans, services and performance. Glen provides a range of information on its services through its newsletter, leaflets, website and annual report. It gives some information about its performance in its annual report but does not include information about how it is performing against its targets, trends in performance or the results from tenant feedback.

Ethical Standards

Staff and governing body members should promote values that underpin good governance and should act with honesty and integrity, focusing on the best interests of the organisation and its service users.

- 5.12 Glen has a code of conduct for committee members. The Association asks all committee members and staff every year to declare and record any interests or potential conflicts of interest that might arise from their involvement with the Association. This is a positive approach.
- 5.13 The committee is aware that payments and benefits to staff, committee members and their relatives may only be granted in accordance with schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. However we found some areas where the Association is not complying with statutory requirements:
- the Association has paid benefits to staff for health insurance which are not included in their terms and conditions,
 - in relation to granting tenancies there are three examples where approval to the granting of the benefit was given retrospectively after the tenancy had been signed; these are both breaches of the legislation; and
 - in one case the affected committee member did not declare an interest, and although they did not participate in the discussion, they did not leave the meeting when the decision was taken.

Managing risk

Social landlords should be aware of all the risks they face and put in place robust arrangements to minimise these risks and to deal with them if they do occur.

- 5.14 Glen is developing its approach to risk management but does not yet fully use it in all its activities. The Association developed a risk management strategy in 2003. This identifies a number of key risks and is reviewed annually. We saw evidence where the Association had assessed risk such as the withdrawal of funding for its wider role activities but the important area of gas safety had not been recognised. Risk assessment is not routinely included in reports to committee. The Association had identified these weaknesses but at the time of the inspection had not yet started to tackle them.
- 5.15 Glen uses internal audit effectively. It has an ongoing programme of internal audit and we saw evidence that it acted on the recommendations made.
- 5.16 Glen has some strengths in governance, particularly around the role of the committee, the clear direction and culture it sets for the organisation and the support that is given to committee members. However the Association's planning framework covers a relatively short period of four years and it is in the process of developing firm plans beyond this. There are areas for improvement in the reports which would help the committee in its decision-making processes and in monitoring performance. There is a significant weaknesses in the way the Association manages the granting of payment and benefits. A major strength is Glen's community focus and the way it is responsive to individuals in delivering its services.

Financial viability and management

Social landlords should be financially viable in the medium term, and sustainable in the longer term, and should have a robust financial management framework.

- 5.17 Historically Glen's financial performance has been good although surpluses have fallen in recent years, mainly as a result of increased management and maintenance administration costs. These costs are significantly higher than Glen's peers and are contributing to the Association's projection of deficits in the future.
- 5.18 Glen uses consultants to prepare detailed 10-year projections including income and expenditure, balance sheet and cashflow information. These projections show surpluses continuing to fall and net deficits from 2009/10 onwards as major repairs spend increases. However, the Association has been planning for this and enough cash will be available to fund the anticipated spending until 2013/14, after which time Glen will consider raising more private finance.

Financial performance	2000/01 (Actual)	2001/02 (Actual)	2002/03 (Actual)	2003/04 (Actual)	2004/05 (Budget)	2005/06 (Budget)
Turnover	689,796	770,780	807,960	824,109	823,056	845,909
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	287,066	283,508	294,154	164,232	157,241	140,766
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	89,669	111,498	103,397	30,991	35,241	20,766

- 5.19 Glen has a management agreement with a finance agent to provide all other financial services. The agreement lists the basic services to be provided but does not define the level of detail required, the length of the contract or the level of fees to be paid.
- 5.20 The finance agent has been providing this service to Glen for 10 years. The agreement is renewed informally on an annual basis and no formal evaluation of the service is undertaken. This is contrary to Glen's General Regulations and does not allow Glen to test the market and ensure that it receives the best possible service and value for money.
- 5.21 Glen has a fair budget setting process that allows enough time for the budget to be reviewed by the finance sub-committee and approved by the committee well in advance of the start of the financial year. However, the first draft of the budget is not made available to committee members in advance of the meeting at which it is discussed.
- 5.22 The budget is presented in a very basic format and has no narrative to explain what assumptions have been made or how the figures have been arrived at. This is a significant weakness. In addition, there is no comparison of the budgeted income and costs with the prior year's expected results which would give the committee useful context to see how the proposed budget compares to the previous year's performance. The budget information also excludes details of the cash requirements for the coming year and balance sheet projections, although it is Glen's intention to introduce this information in future budgets.
- 5.23 Glen's committee receives monthly financial reports comparing actual income and expenditure against budget. These reports provide a good level of detail with any variations highlighted. However, no narrative is provided to explain these variations and this weakens the usefulness of the reports. In addition, inclusion of the expected result for the full year would show the committee whether variations will have an impact on the expected outturn for the full year. The committee also receives monthly balance sheet information but does not receive information on cashflow.
- 5.24 Although Glen is financially viable in the medium term, there are some areas of weakness that may have a financial impact if not properly

managed. The financial management framework has some strengths but there are areas of weakness in relation to the quality of reports, adherence to good practice and the management agreement.

6. Recommendations for improvement action

These are the key areas that need to be targeted for improvement action. They are broadly in order of priority:

Across all of its activities Glen should:

- refine its performance management and reporting framework;
- improve the way it records and analyses the feedback it collects from tenants; and
- consistently advise service users about its complaints and appeals process.

In housing management, Glen should:

- create a consistent approach to its use of suspensions and improve the information it gives applicants about this;
- always demonstrate how and why it allocates its houses;
- set out its approach to how it will manage occupation after it has received an order for possession; and
- collect performance information for arrears more accurately.

In property maintenance, Glen should:

- ensure it complies with legislative duties relating to gas safety;
- ensure plans for medium to long future maintenance link with its financial planning;
- ensure that procurement decisions are taken in line with its stated policy and fully document the basis of procurement decisions;
- collect performance information for responsive repairs more accurately; and
- meet all of its statutory duties on Right to Repair and asbestos management.

In governance and financial management, Glen should:

- ensure it complies with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and that staff and committee have training to improve awareness;
- review its costs for providing services, balancing the needs for quality and long-term sustainability;
- provide the committee with fuller information for consideration before meetings and fully document the basis of its decisions;
- ensure its finance agreement fully meet the needs of the Association, is in line with good practice, and the service is procured in line with stated policy;
- expand its budget package and monthly financial reports in line with good practice; and
- give stakeholders more comprehensive information about how the organisation is performing.

7. Next steps

- 7.1 This report highlights our findings following this housing inspection. We expect all organisations to respond effectively to our recommendations using their own improvement planning processes. We ask organisations that receive fair or poor assessments overall in their housing management, property maintenance or governance and financial management to submit an improvement plan to us within eight weeks of the publication of this report.
- 7.2 Glen's improvement plan should show how the Association intends to respond to our findings in property maintenance. The plan will be agreed with us. We will inspect once every five years and follow up improvement plans at regular intervals.
- 7.2 If you would like to see Glen's improvement plan you should contact:

Glen Housing Association
28 Heimdall Gardens,
Glenrothes,
Fife, KY7 6TZ

Telephone: 01592 621188
Email: info@glenhousing.co.uk

Sources of evidence

Groups and third parties consulted

- Kingdom Housing Association
- Ore Valley Housing Association
- Play Project, Broom Estate
- Fife Council
- Cornerstone
- Broom Community Flat
- Magnus Drive Community Initiative
- First for Fife
- HomePoint, Communities Scotland
- Tenant Participation Development Team, Communities Scotland
- Communities Scotland Area Investment Team

Interviews / meetings

- Members of the Association's Committee
- Housing Manager
- Frontline Staff
- Discussions with a range of tenants and service users

Reality checks

- Review of arrears cases
- Review of legal actions against tenants
- Review of anti-social behaviour cases
- Review of gas safety documents
- Review of complaints
- Review of reported repairs
- Review of housing list applications and allocations
- Review of empty house management records
- Review of information for applicants and tenants
- Shadowing arrears visits and interviews
- Shadowing repairs post-inspection
- Shadowing tenancy sign-up
- Estate visits
- Observation of the provision of information and advice
- Observation of committee meeting
- Shadowing new applicant interview

Key documents reviewed

- Inspection submission
- Annual accounts for year ending 31 March 2004
- Budget 2004/05
- Management accounts
- Risk management strategy
- Register of benefits to committee members (schedule 7 Register)
- Internal Management Plan 2004-07
- Internal audit reports
- Tenant participation strategy
- Complaints policy
- Allocations policy
- Transfer Policy
- Estate Management policy
- Maintenance policy
- Arrears policy
- Annual Report 2003-04
- Annual performance and statistical returns to Communities Scotland
- Performance monitoring reports for finance, housing management and property maintenance
- Evaluation of the Broom Community Forum Play and Youth Project

Examples of positive practice

These are areas we would highlight as working particularly well, taking account of the organisation's operating context:

Quality of Neighbourhoods

Glen has developed an innovative way of working with young people and children to reduce levels of vandalism and antisocial behaviour. The wider role project uses activities such as arts, sports, excursions, play training and eating out to promote positive play and develop young people's social skills and confidence. The work was independently evaluated and reported good outcomes including a huge reduction in vandalism, improved confidence, skills, and co-operation between young people.

Resource Management and Efficiency

Glen uses personal contact very effectively in helping its tenants manage their rent arrears. It does this by using a personal visit as the first response when a payment is missed. The Association uses home visits, telephone calls and office interviews rather than letters as their main way to work with tenants in managing their arrears. On average five out of six contacts the Association makes uses one of these methods.

Sustaining Tenancies and Preventing Homelessness

Glen uses case review meetings for "at risk" tenants. These meetings include staff involved in the different services areas of housing management, rent collection, maintenance and estate management. At the meetings information about "at risk" tenancies is shared, a support strategy is agreed and progress is reviewed. This enables the Association to ensure a consistent approach by all services in helping to prevent problems occurring or escalating.

Glossary

Annual Statistical and Performance Return (APSR)	Annual questionnaire completed by RSLs and sent to Communities Scotland. Used to keep the Register of Social Landlords up to date and to track the performance of RSLs.
Average	The arithmetic mean – the sum of all the values divided by the number of values.
Benchmarking	A process used by organisations to systematically compare service processes and performance to identify best practice.
Common housing register	A register of all applicants for social housing used by two or more landlords within an area.
Cyclical maintenance	Planned programme of work to deal with predictable deterioration of building components, for example regular painting of window frames.
Focus group	A group of people brought together to have a structured discussion on a specific subject or set of subjects, facilitated by an independent person.
Housing list	A list of applicants for housing which is used by the RSL to allocate its housing stock.
Inspection submission	Documents submitted by the landlord at the start of the inspection to provide information on its performance, context and how it is structured.
Life cycle costing	A method of calculating the cost and timing of the repairs to, and replacement of, major building components.
National median	The central value of the ordered performance of all Scottish RSLs.
Peer group	A group of organisations facing similar tasks and challenges with which comparisons can be made. RSLs choose which peer group they belong to when they submit their APSRs.

Performance indicator	A measure of how a RSL is achieving its objectives. Performance Indicators can be compared with a pre-set standard (a benchmark) or with other organisations.
Performance Standards	Housing standards for all social landlords in Scotland.
Planned maintenance	The planned renewal or maintenance of key property components.
Quartile	The range represented by one quarter of the ordered performance of all Scottish RSLs. So for example, the upper quartile is the top 25% of RSLs.
Rechargeable repairs	Work that is the responsibility of the tenant but has been done by the landlord.
Registered social landlord (RSL)	A landlord providing social rented housing that is registered and regulated by Communities Scotland.
Re-lets	Lets made to the second or subsequent tenant. Distinguished from new lets that are made when the property is first built or modernised.
Right to Buy	Many Scottish secure tenants have the right to buy their property at a discounted price subject to length of tenancy.
Right to Repair	A scheme which gives tenants legal rights to have certain repairs in defined times.
Scottish secure tenancy (SST)	The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 creates the Scottish Secure Tenancy as the tenancy for all tenants of social landlords in Scotland.
Secured by Design	Design standards to create safe homes and minimise the risk of crime and antisocial behaviour.
Serious arrears	Where a tenant owes more than 13 weeks rent payments and this is more than £250.
Shadowing	An inspection technique that involves accompanying and observing staff while they carried out their day-to-day tasks.

SMART

Objectives and targets that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound.

Statutory reasonable preference categories

People who have one of these housing needs: homelessness, overcrowding, large families, living in below tolerable standard housing or unsatisfactory living conditions.

Regulation & Inspection

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