

Housing Professionalism Commitment

Supporting guidance for social landlords



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Scotland

1. Context

1.1. Who is this commitment for and why?

Investing in housing staff is not only the right thing to do, it is essential in delivering sustainable results, especially in a crisis. Organisations that lead, support and develop their workforce effectively are more productive and more effective. But sometimes, housing organisations struggle to know the best way to develop their staff and create a culture of continuing professional development. This guidance is for social housing organisations to provide them with support and direction on how they can invest in their staff to deliver better performance and better outcomes for tenants and customers.

1.2 What are current requirements for CPD and qualifications?

Letting Agents

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 requires “appropriate people” in each letting agency to hold a “relevant qualification” and, where necessary, to undertake additional training on letting agency work. Relevant qualifications are required to be at Level 6 or above on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Letting agents are required to re-apply for registration every three years and therefore to keep their qualifications and training up to date, with the period for re-registrations now being imminent.

Social Landlords

Local authority and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) staff are not required to undertake training or qualifications, although performance is monitored annually using the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) which is completed by every social housing provider and covers a wide range of indicators against the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Additionally, social landlords are also required to submit an annual assurance statement to confirm that they are meeting all of the required regulatory standards, including the standard which states that “the governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective. ”


1.3 What is happening in England?

Changes to the Social Housing (Regulation) Act will require social housing managers in England to receive an appropriate-level housing management qualification, regulated by Ofqual, equivalent to a Level 4 Certificate or Level 5 Diploma in Housing, or a foundation degree from the CIH. This will apply to senior housing executives and senior housing managers.

It is estimated by the UK government that these changes may mean qualifications are required for around 20,000 housing professionals working in England. We expect the Social Housing Regulator in England to consult on the how the qualification requirement can be recognised and for it to then come into effect from late 2024.

1.4 Changing the discourse: Why invest in your staff?

The housing sector is dealing with a range of priorities, from improving existing stock to delivering new homes and keeping rents affordable - all while inflation is eroding the value of the money that we have.



If investing in staff was ever a 'nice to have', it is now an essential tool for housing organisations. By investing in your teams, in their skills and in their development through education, housing organisations can give themselves the best possible assurance that they are doing everything possible to improve customer and tenant satisfaction. We need a greater national and local focus on investment in recruiting, developing and supporting the retention of housing professionals, and this guidance will set out some of the main ways housing organisations can achieve this for staff at all levels of their business, not just the senior team.

2. The Commitment

This guidance will provide direction for housing organisations on how they can meet the CIH Housing Professionalism Commitment. This is focused on four main areas for landlords:

1. Review professional development of housing staff as part of your internal assurance process.
2. Ensure that training and qualifications for housing staff are written into your organisation's business plans.
3. Commit to regular engagement with schools and learners about housing sector careers.
4. Promotion of the value of CPD to both staff and customers.

3. Meeting the commitment and resources (how to)


How to... Commitment 1:

Social landlords have a requirement to develop a business plan, a key strategic document which communicates a landlord's vision and objectives, and how it will achieve those objectives. The business plan should be central to the organisation's strategic decisions and operational decisions should be consistent with the strategic decisions set out in the business plan.

Landlords are expected to comply with the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) regulatory standards, although it is for each landlord to determine how it meets these standards. This includes the standard that "the governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective."

We suggest that transparency and a commitment to being open about the steps taken to support skills development is in line with the spirit and intent of the regulatory standard and complements the approach of the Sector Score Card, developed by Housemark Scotland, to benchmark housing associations' performance and check they are providing value for money.

We would encourage all social landlords to consider the following questions as part of their business planning process:

- Have you conducted a skills and knowledge audit of senior officers and governing board/ committee members? What were the findings?
 - How have you responded to the findings of the audit?
 - What plans have you adopted to ensure skills and knowledge requirements are met over the course of the next year?
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Business planning process on skills and knowledge

Year 1: This year, we have undertaken an audit of senior staff and a governing board skills and knowledge review to ensure we can work effectively as a social landlord. The review identified a need for the following skills/knowledge on our board:

- housing management
- customer service.

While the following skills/knowledge gaps were identified among the senior team:

- HR
- Finance.

These skills and knowledge gaps are being addressed through targeted co-options at board level and membership of the Chartered Institute of Housing for the board as a whole.

We are addressing the skills and knowledge requirements of the senior team by appointing a recruitment consultant to identify viable candidates, as well as developing our own inhouse succession planning programme where we can better support internal candidates to take on senior roles.

We are undertaking a skills and knowledge audit across the rest of the staff team to ensure the whole business has the right workforce.

Year 2: Following the adoption of new board members, no skills/knowledge gaps have been identified among board members. All board members are encouraged and supported to attend industry events and conferences and commit to their own CPD to ensure they have a developed insight into housing management.

However, given the turnover in the senior team, a commercial skills requirement has been identified and steps are underway to make a senior appointment in this area in the coming weeks.

Following the company wide skills audit, the organisation has also decided to invest systemically in talent development with its own training academy. This will ensure that in future years, there is greater scope for senior succession planning from within the organisation.

Year 3: No skills/knowledge needs have been identified.

Year 4: No new skills/knowledge needs have been identified. However, over the last three years, we have taken the following steps to improve knowledge and skills of all staff and board and address gaps as and when they arise:

- Annual review of skills and knowledge of all staff
- Targeted co-options at board level
- Development of training academy for new talent
- Ringfenced learning and development budget for staff to access
- Access to industry events for all staff and board
- Senior team and board all supported to secure relevant qualifications
- Succession planning protocols now in place to support senior team capacity to step up

Over time, as social landlords commit to conducting their own skills and knowledge audit and if there is transparency and commitment to announce decisions, the sector can benchmark performance and good practice which will further showcase professionalism.



How to... Commitment 2:

Why it matters

This commitment to company-wide learning and development is crucial for three reasons:


- It builds capability. By identifying the skills needs of your team and giving them the support to achieve them, you are ensuring you have a more impactful organisation.
- It supports continuous improvement. With ongoing learning and development, your organisation is developing curious, resourceful staff who think more creatively, are developing their own skills and making a bigger impact in their careers. This will benefit them and your customers.
- Makes you an attractive employer. In a competitive environment, being able to stand out as an employer that invests in their own team will ensure that you attract the best talent.

A commitment to supporting and resourcing skills and knowledge needs should be set out in the organisational business plan by senior managers with the implementation of the commitment a decision for different teams and leaders.

How you do it

All staff should have access to training and learning, identified by them as part of regular reviews and one to ones. The use of the CIH Professional Standards self-assessment tool can help managers work with staff to identify their training needs, and aggregated across the business, can work as a business diagnostic service, identifying common issues where support and development is required.

Options for skills and knowledge development for staff include:

- Professional qualifications
 - Membership of a relevant professional body
 - Learning and development self-assessment tools
 - Training
 - Joining an industry committee/working group
 - Joining a board
 - Being a mentor/mentee
 - Project leadership
 - Event and conference attendance
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Strategic objective: Provide relevant, current professional development for a recognised and valued housing profession

Annual objective	Actions	Risks to success	Mitigations
<p>Implement an ongoing professional development strategy which encourages and supports personal and professional aspirations.</p>	<p>Developing or resourcing CPD infrastructure to allow all staff to map and monitor their individual training and development needs.</p> <p>Stand alone budget for staff and board learning and development.</p> <p>Support staff personal development with access to CIH Professional Standards Framework and menu of CPD options.</p>	<p>No CPD infrastructure is developed.</p> <p>Budget for learning and development is underused and allocated to other projects.</p> <p>No authoritative list of CPD exists in housing organisation.</p>	<p>Source CPD management platform.</p> <p>Budget to be protected and all managers responsible for ensuring proportionate spend.</p> <p>Use sector wide resources to provide options to staff for development needs.</p>
<p>Be a recognised leader in developing, upholding and assuring standards and practice for the housing sector.</p>	<p>Transparency about process to assess for skills and knowledge requirements.</p> <p>Work with sector partners to support our work and amplify our activity and learning.</p>	<p>Focus is only on senior team and/or board No consideration of reporting focus on staff across business.</p> <p>No demonstrable impact on performance in short term.</p>	<p>Staff lead on professionalism appointment to ensure companywide approach.</p> <p>Work with industry partners to develop more appropriate short/medium/long term metrics for success.</p>
<p>Offer staff access to education and training which prepares them for future requirements.</p>	<p>All staff to have regular one to one meeting and reviews where learning needs are captured and agreed. Outcomes to be reported to HR lead.</p> <p>All staff have realistic but stretching targets linked to the Business Plan, and that any additional learning and development needs are identified and addressed.</p>	<p>Fail targets to improve effectiveness, efficiency and deliver the Business Plan.</p> <p>Fail to identify and/or deliver/resource training requirements.</p>	<p>SMT lead to ensure all teams report on learning needs.</p> <p>SMT lead to report internally on staff progress on delivery of education and training needs.</p>
<p>Continue to recognise, attract, reward, and retain high performing people who bring skills, experience and passion to achieve our purpose and values.</p>	<p>Implementing a progressive performance management process which embeds our values in everything we do.</p> <p>Promote from within to senior positions.</p>	<p>Salaries do not meet market expectations.</p> <p>No viable internal candidates.</p>	<p>Ensure pay and reward strategy to ensure we can attract and retain talent.</p> <p>Develop a succession planning scheme where internal candidates are given best chance to prepare for senior posts.</p>

How to... Commitment 3:

Scotland's housing organisations have a responsibility to engage with schools, colleges, universities and the labour market about roles in the housing sector. Indeed, many have already proven successful in communicating the breadth of roles that exist in the housing sector and attracting a talented and skilled workforce. For example:

- **Kingdom Housing Association** has developed a graduate scheme that lasts for three years, during which time trainees complete tailored placements within Kingdom as well as completing external work placements with key stakeholder organisations. Kingdom Housing Association has developed a partnership with the University of Stirling to support graduates to develop into housing professionals and leaders for the future through a blend of practical work experience, including external work placements, underpinned by postgraduate study through the university.
- **PATH Scotland** helps to address the absence of people from black and minority ethnic communities working within the housing sector. PATH works alongside social landlords to develop specialist three-year traineeships which combine a structured work programme with a professional qualification. These traineeships are tailored to the needs of the organisation. Opportunities are advertised through the promotion of past successes and although full-time employment is not guaranteed, 90 per cent of trainees have gained employment in housing or related sectors post-placement. Between 2009 and 2017, PATH provided approximately 126 housing traineeships to people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Developing the young workforce

In addition, housing organisations bring in new talent through the Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), which operates across 21 regional groups in Scotland.

It is designed to facilitate meaningful partnerships between business and education to ignite opportunities for young people in each region and better prepare them for their future career. It brings together local schools, colleges and businesses to offer skills development and learning opportunities, advice and support for young people to flourish as they progress into the world of work and has some demonstrable engagement from the housing sector:


- **Orkney Housing Association** profiling roles and opportunities through the local DYW website.
- **Lochaber Housing Association** promoting apprenticeship opportunities through the West Highland DYW site.
- Hanover Housing Association has promoted opportunities through DYW.
- Careers in construction are profiled at **West Lothian** DYW.
- The **Glasgow** DYW has case studies of housing apprenticeships.

The decision on whether landlords work directly with young people at local schools and college or through the regional DYW partnership will be based on the existing networks and relationships they have. But regardless of the approach, it is important that housing organisations seek to directly work with young people and communicate the breadth of careers that exist in the housing sector.

Engaging with schools

The newly launched www.yourcareerinhousing.scot website sets out a range of resources for housing organisations so they can successfully build a relationship with schools. This includes:

- An overview of types of jobs and skills in housing and range of employers
- Case studies
- Guidance on how landlords can make a case study video
- How landlords can frame a careers talk
- Quizzes on careers in housing
- Employment statistics and trends
- Information on job security - conditions, salary guides
- CV advice - how and where to apply for a job in housing and a practical guide on how to get started in housing
- Mentoring/how to meet a housing professional
- Housing career videos.



However, social landlords must make promoting a career in housing just one part of their relationship with the school. Working with any school needs a light touch and involves landlords taking their time to get the trust of teachers and pupils early in their education. This for example could mean working with primary school pupils on litter picking, nature walks and setting up youth advisory panels. Once you have built this relationship, you can move towards working with teachers and asking how you could help them deliver on the curriculum, particularly in social subjects such as modern studies.

Collectively, these resources, when used as part of an ongoing engagement programme from housing organisations, will:

- Raise pupils' awareness of the job roles available in the Scottish housing sector
- Raise pupils' awareness of skills required in the Scottish housing sector
- Communicate a range of pathways for people to start a career in housing
- Align with Education Scotland's Career Education Standards
- Demonstrate the value of having diversity in the housing profession.


How to... Commitment 4:

Part of the value of CPD is how it meets the needs of different audiences. For regulators, it supports assurances about competency, for housing organisations, it can address skills and knowledge gaps, for tenants, where they are aware of it, it provides a standard by which they can determine the appropriate behaviour of practitioners and standards of service, and for practitioners, it helps improve skills and knowledge.

However, to be impactful, CPD must be relevant to the practice of a housing professional and ultimately improve housing outcomes for tenants. Relevant CPD should be designed around the skills and values that support high quality, respectful housing services and should focus on self-awareness and self-reflection.

However, to make CPD even more effective, it is important that housing organisations communicate its existence, its purpose and its utility across staff and customer boundaries.

This means housing organisations should where possible:

- Link CPD attainment to tenant outcomes, making it explicit that the development of staff skills and knowledge is a catalyst for better tenant outcomes.
 - Establish a process to monitor and report on outcomes achieved from CPD to tenants and customers and the wider housing sector. This should go beyond inclusion of a sentence or paragraph in an annual report but consider more dynamic engagement channels and set out why investing in skills matters to tenants.
 - Use tenant participation process to better understand customer needs. This can help identify new CPD channels that were previously not considered.
 - Use their commitment to CPD to attract staff from across and outwith the sector.
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4. Focus on professionalisation

How to use the Professional Standards Framework as an employer

The self-assessment tool supports all housing professionals in their use of our professional standards. It allows CIH members to assess themselves against the standards, identifying performance against the standards and, in turn, suggesting training, qualifications and content that will help support their professional progress in areas where there is a development need. This tool allows CIH members to take charge of their own housing career, allowing them to identify their own training needs.

However, beyond the personal utility, housing organisations can utilise the professional standards at a corporate level by:

- Identifying standards of professional excellence across your organisation
- Identifying the desired and existing skills, knowledge and behaviours across the business to make change happen
- Identifying team and organisational capability
- Building your competency frameworks
- Mapping against organisational values
- Focusing on behaviours needed for success
- Developing role profiles, job descriptions and personal specifications
- Identifying areas for development across the business.

5. Resources

Professional qualifications

Establish yourself as a professional in the housing sector and ensure you have the theoretical knowledge, essential skills, and learning to perform at the highest level in your day job.

Professional qualifications are designed with the housing sector, for the housing sector, giving you the expertise and support you need to thrive in your career. Qualifications are delivered through a range of approved study centres and the CIH Housing Academy.

www.cih.org/media/4sdjo10g/0474-what-housing-qualification-should-i-study-v1.pdf

Membership of relevant professional body

Depending on your role within the housing sector, a range of professional bodies exist that can support your learning and development. They range from specialist bodies such as CIH and RTPI to more generalist organisation like the Institute of Leadership and Management.

www.cih.org

www.rtpi.org.uk

www.i-l-m.com

CIH Professional Standards Framework

The CIH professional standards build on seven characteristics to enable practitioners to think about their professional development needs and how they can contribute to the professionalism of their organisation and the wider sector. CIH's self-assessment tool can be used to get a personalised report on your own professional profile.

www.cih.org/professional-standards



Explore your career in housing

The 'Your Career in Housing' website has been created by CIH Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) to provide young people with the skills and opportunities needed to get into a meaningful career in housing. The site gives practical guides on everything from writing a CV through to how to answer interview questions, and also includes resources for young jobseekers and employers on how to find work, different roles across the housing sector, and testimonials from young people who have already taken the first steps in their career.

www.yourcareerinhousing.scot

Training

Training is provided across the housing sector as a way to reinforce learning with specialist housing providers sitting alongside more generalist trainers in providing an offer to the sector.

www.cih.org/training-courses

www.share.org.uk/upcoming-courses/training-courses

Joining an industry committee/working group

Joining a sector wide working group can be an effective way to grow your network and develop skills and learning in an area outside your core role as a housing professional. There are a range of opportunities available for housing professionals with sector membership bodies across the UK.

www.cih.org/about-us/cih-futures

www.cih.org/policy

Joining a board

Joining the board of a housing association or housing intermediary can be an effective way to grow your network and develop skills and learning in an area outside your core role as a housing professional. There are a range of opportunities available for housing professionals with sector membership bodies across the UK. Most board opportunities are advertised on housing job boards.

www.scottishhousingnews.com/jobs

Becoming a mentor/mentee

Becoming a mentor or a mentee can support you in your career development. By sharing your insight and experience by working with someone outside your organisation, you can learn to challenge your traditional way of thinking.

www.cih.org/mentoring

Event and conference attendance

Attending events both online and in person is one of the best ways to learn more about changes in policy and practice and how it should inform your job. Housing events take place every week with much of the content free for housing professionals to access.

www.cih.org/events

www.housingevidence.ac.uk





Tenant participation

The below resources set out way to engage with tenants and can suggest channels and approaches on how to discuss the value of CPD:

- Scottish government guide that was originally developed in 2005 and updated in 2018 to provide advice to those working in tenant participation. It includes examples of how landlords have promoted tenant participation and tenant scrutiny: www.gov.scot/publications/guide-successful-tenant-participation
- **TPAS** (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Scotland - TPAS is one of the two premier organisations that work in Scotland to promote tenant participation and provides various services to upskill tenants and support landlords to make it happen. Its website contains helpful case studies.
- **TIS** (Tenant Information Service) - TIS is the other premier organisation that supports communities and housing organisations to work together to develop effective solutions. It has recently begun work on a Glasgow-wide project known as Engage Influence Change (EIC). This aims to enhance the capacity and resilience of communities within Glasgow through empowering communities to become involved and shape the social, economic, and cultural life of the city. TIS is also pursuing work to share learning around social landlords' experiences of promoting digital inclusion: <http://tis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TIS-DigitalStrategy-2021-2024.pdf>

¹<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/media/1871/regulatory-framework-regulation-of-social-housing-in-scotland-february-2019.pdf>

²<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/media/1871/regulatory-framework-regulation-of-social-housing-in-scotland-february-2019.pdf>

³All regional DYW websites accessed on 24/06/22

⁴<https://education.gov.scot/documents/dyw2-career-education-standard-0915.pdf>

