Leadership and culture

in the Scottish social housing sector

Practitioner and tenant surveys

Report commissioned by
Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland

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indigohouse

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Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report sets out the findings of parallel surveys undertaken with social housing sector practitioners and with tenants in Scotland, which were completed to review strengths and areas for development in relation to leadership and culture in Scotland's social housing sector. The aim of the review is to assess whether and how leadership and culture could be improved at an individual, organisational and systemic level within the sector.

1.2 Objectives

Practitioner survey

The practitioner survey addressed the following themes:

- Views on issues affecting the social housing sector in Scotland
- Perception of responsibility for culture and leadership at an organisational level
- Practitioners' views on common aspects of leadership within their current organisation and within the social housing sector as a whole
- Practitioners' views on common aspects of culture within their current organisation and within the social housing sector as a whole
- Rating of the effectiveness of recruitment, training and development practices at an organisational level
- Views on the current standard of leadership and culture at an organisational level
- Profile of housing-specific and leadership management qualifications amongst respondents
- Perception of the availability of housing-specific and leadership management training and qualifications within the social housing sector as a whole
- The effect that the availability of housing-specific and leadership management qualifications has on driving improvements in leadership and culture within organisations
- Rating of the importance for senior managers to have housing-specific and leadership management qualifications
- Respondent aspirations for leadership and management training and qualifications over the next few years.

Tenant survey

The tenant survey addressed the following themes:

- Perception of responsibility for culture and leadership within social landlord organisations
- Views on the current standard of leadership within the social housing sector
- Views on the current standard of organisational or wider culture within the social housing sector.

1.3 Methodology

Questionnaires for each of the surveys were developed by the consultancy team alongside the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Scotland as the client, and with input from the "sounding board" of stakeholders that was formed to provide input into the wider study.

Data gathering for each survey was by means of an online survey.

For the practitioner survey, invitations were issued to the organisation's database of contacts over June and July 2025, with further networking of the survey being undertaken by CIH members and sounding board members directly. This process resulted in a sample size of 201. This provides the following indicative margins of error:[1]

- 10%/90% answer - +/-4.13%
- 25%/75% answer - +/-5.96%
- 50% answer - +/-6.88%.

We would consider that this provides a robust picture of overall views, particularly where these views are more "extreme". Throughout the main body of the text on the practitioner survey we have commented on significant variations by respondent criteria.

The tenant survey was distributed by Tenants Information Service (TIS) and Tenants Together on behalf of CIH. This process secured 52 responses. We would not consider this a sufficient sample size for us to formally cite margins of error for this survey, but we do consider this to have been a valuable input to "taking the temperature" on these issues from a tenant perspective. Whilst we have provided a profile of respondents in the relevant section, we have not commented on any variations by respondent criteria.

In each case, not all respondents answered each question and so the specific base number for each question is set out in the body of the text.

1.4 Report format and associated outputs

- The structure of the remainder of the report is as follows:
- Section 3 details the results of the practitioner survey
- Section 4 details the results of the tenant survey
- Section 5 sets out a summary of findings for each survey.

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1   We have described these figures as "indicative" as they assume that the profile of respondents matches the overall population survey, which we cannot confirm given the nature of the survey.

2. Practitioner survey

2.1 Respondent profile

Current situation

As shown in table 2.1, the vast majority of respondents (88 per cent) were current practitioners within Scotland's social housing sector.[2]

Table 2.1: Which of the following best describes your current situation?

Current situation	%
Current practitioner within Scotland's social housing sector	88%
Former practitioner within Scotland's social housing sector	7%
Not a practitioner but have an interest in Scotland's social housing sector	2%
Other	2%
Base	201

Details of "other" responses are noted in the supporting material.

Type of organisation

The majority of respondents (65 per cent) work for a housing association or registered social landlord (RSL), with a further 27 per cent working for a local authority.[3]

Table 2.2: Which of the following best describes the organisation that you work in currently?

Type of organisation	%
Housing association/RSL	65%
Local authority	27%
Government department or agency	1%
Organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector	7%
Other	1%
Prefer not to say	1%
Base	176

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2   Throughout the report, figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
3   Only asked of current practitioners.

Position within organisation

Most commonly, respondents are middle management (26 per cent), followed by chief executives (22 per cent), executive directors (18 per cent) and employees at operational level (18 per cent).[4]

Table 2.3: Which of the following best describes your current position within your organisation?

Position within organisation	%
Local authority director of service (with responsibility for housing as well as other services)	1%
Chief executive of RSL/head of housing service within a local authority	22%
Executive director in RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority	18%
Middle manager	26%
Supervisor or team leader	9%
Operational level	18%
Other	6%
Prefer not to say	1%
Base	176

Role within organisation

Respondents are most commonly in leadership and management roles across functional areas (35 per cent) or within the role of housing management, tenancy services or rent and income management (34 per cent).[5]

Table 2.4: Which of the following functions best describes your role?

Role within organisation	%
Housing management/tenancy services/rent and income management	34%
Property services/asset management	2%
Development/new build	4%
Community engagement/tenant participation	6%
Finance and governance	5%
Leadership and management across functional areas	35%
Other (please say what below)	15%
Prefer not to say	-
Base	176

4   Only asked of current practitioners.
5   Only asked of current practitioners.

Length of time working in the Scottish social housing sector

The majority of respondents have worked in the Scottish social housing sector for more than 20 years (54 per cent) while a further 35 per cent have worked in the sector between five and 20 years. [6]

Table 2.5: How long have you worked in the Scottish social housing sector?

Length of time	%
Up to 2 years	2%
Between 2 and 5 years	9%
Between 5 and 10 years	14%
Between 10 and 20 years	21%
More than 20 years	54%
Prefer not to say	1%
Base	176

Respondent age

Most commonly, respondents are aged 55+ (41 per cent), followed by a further 34 per cent aged between 45 and 54.

Table 2.6: What age are you?

Age	%
24 or under	-
25 to 34	6%
35 to 44	17%
45 to 54	34%
55+	41%
Prefer not to say	1%
Base	201

Respondent gender

The majority of respondents were women (61 per cent) and 38 per cent were men.

Table 2.7: Please select the option that best describes you.

Gender	%
Man	38%
Woman	61%
Non-binary	-
Prefer to self-describe (please say what below)	-
Prefer not to say	1%
Base	201

6   Only asked of current practitioners.

2.2 Issues affecting the sector

Issues impacting the sector over the next few years

Most respondents believe that all of the issues listed below will impact the sector to some or a significant extent. The issues most expected to have significant impact are *"being able to invest in new social housing"* (84 per cent), *"meeting critical housing need including homelessness"* (84 per cent), and "maintaining the quality of housing stock" (77 per cent).

Table 2.8: We have listed below some issues that may impact on the sector in the coming years, which may involve leadership and cultural challenges. To what extent do you think these issues will impact on the sector over the next few years?

Issues impacting the sector	Not at all	To some extent	To a significant extent	Base
Maintaining the quality of housing stock	-	23%	77%	198
Being able to invest in new social housing	1%	16%	84%	198
Meeting critical housing need including homelessness	-	16%	84%	195
Changing housing needs	1%	45%	55%	200
Meeting regulatory requirements	2%	43%	56%	200
Financial position and sustainability of the sector	2%	32%	67%	199
Being able to attract the right employees to work in the sector	5%	52%	43%	201
Changes in the overall structure of the sector	6%	74%	20%	198

Where respondents are significantly more likely than average (by 10 per cent or more) to perceive that the sector will be impacted to a significant extent by each issue, the profile is as follows:[7]

Issues impacting the sector	To a significant extent		
	Average	Greater than average by 10%+	Characteristic
Maintaining the quality of housing stock	77%	93%	Former practitioner within Scotland's social housing sector (base: 14)
		92%	Organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (base: 12)
Being able to invest in new social housing	84%	100%	Organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (base: 12)
		95%	Chief executive of RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (base: 38)
Changing housing needs	55%	67%	Former practitioner within Scotland's social housing sector (base: 15)
Meeting regulatory requirements	56%	66%	Chief executive of RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (base: 38)
		73%	Supervisor or team leader (base: 15)
Financial position and sustainability of the sector	67%	83%	Organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (base: 12)
		84%	Chief executive of RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (base: 38)
		93%	Supervisor or team leader (base: 15)
Being able to attract the right employees to work in the sector	43%	67%	Organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (base: 12)

7   Throughout this report, we have only included breakdowns where the base is 10 respondents or more.

Other issues impacting the sector over the next few years

Respondents were asked to comment further on any of the above issues or to note other issues that they think will be important for the sector in the coming years, particularly in relation to leadership or culture challenges. In summary, these comments indicate that the housing sector is facing complex and interlinked challenges spanning workforce recruitment and retention, underinvestment in ageing stock, leadership and culture gaps, and rising financial and regulatory pressures. Staff shortages, particularly in specialist and community-facing roles, are exacerbated by poor pay, burnout, abuse from tenants, and the shift to remote working. Leadership concerns include inconsistent values in practice, lack of future-ready leaders, weak data, and decision-making divorced from frontline realities.

Meanwhile, the sector is struggling to meet competing demands: net zero and safety targets, increased tenant expectations, trauma-informed approaches, and new technological and legislative changes. A growing burden is being placed on housing providers to pick up the slack from other public services, while internal issues such as diversity deficits, stagnant organisational cultures and poor strategic planning persist. The cost of compliance, disjointed investment decisions and lack of clarity on the sector's long-term purpose are also affecting sustainability and service delivery. Overall, a shift toward values-led, collaborative and forward-thinking leadership is seen as critical to navigating these growing pressures. A selection of comments is listed below:

Housing association/RSL

> *"The sector is becoming more and more intense, and it may be difficult to attract people to it, with more scrutiny and regulatory restrictions."*

> *"There are significant challenges ahead for the sector regarding investment requirements in existing stock, both from a retention perspective and from the need to deliver regeneration/replacement of existing homes which are coming towards the end of their lifespan. Net zero is an additional challenge, with most, if not all, landlords unlikely to be in a position to deliver the required standard within existing stock due to both practical and financial constraints."*

Local authority

> *" Changing legislation and the move towards trauma-informed practice and catching up with other services in this area."*

> *"There are several cultural and leadership challenges that I believe will be increasingly important for the housing sector to address in the coming years. While many organisations have clear values and commitments on paper, these are not always consistently reflected in day-to-day service delivery. There remains a gap between stated values, such as compassion, fairness and accountability, and the way tenants are engaged in practice."*

While these comments indicate a somewhat negative picture, the above summary is based on comments from 56 individuals. A full list of verbatim comments is noted in the supporting material.

Responsibility for leadership and culture within organisations

Most respondents think that responsibility for leadership and culture should be shared between the senior executive management team or equivalent (81 per cent), all staff (80 per cent), the chief executive or equivalent (78 per cent), all managers and/or supervisors (76 per cent) and the board/management committee or similar (73 per cent).

A significant minority of respondents believe primary responsibility should rest with the chief executive or equivalent (35 per cent), the senior executive management team or equivalent (30 per cent) or all staff (18 per cent).

Table 2.9: Which of the following do you consider to have at least SOME RESPONSIBILITY for LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE in your organisation? And which of the following do you consider to have PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY for LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE in your organisation?

Qualification	Some responsibility	Primary responsibility
Board/management committee or similar	73%	5%
An external body such as a regulator or government department	40%	1%
Chief executive or equivalent	78%	35%
Senior executive management team or equivalent	81%	30%
All managers and/or supervisors	76%	8%
All staff	80%	18%
Other	5%	3%
Base	176	176

Where respondents are significantly more likely than average (by 10 per cent or more) to perceive that primary responsibility for leadership and culture rests with a particular position, the profile for each position is as follows:

- **Board/management committee or similar**: organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (25 per cent)
- **An external body such as a regulator or government department**: no significant differences
- **Chief executive or equivalent**: chief executive of an RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (61 per cent); supervisor or team leader (47 per cent)
- **Senior executive management team or equivalent**: executive director in an RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority (55 per cent); middle manager (41 per cent)
- **All managers and/or supervisors**: operational level (19 per cent)
- **All staff**: no significant differences.

2.3 Leadership

Level of agreement with statements about common aspects of leadership within organisation

Most respondents agree to some extent or agree strongly with all statements about common aspects of leadership within their own organisation, particularly in relation to the statements *"leaders support people's professional development and growth"* (84 per cent), *"leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future"* (84 per cent), *"leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users"* (83 per cent), *"leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them"* (83 per cent), *"leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions"* (82 per cent) and *"leaders communicate how people's role contributes to overall goals"* (82 per cent).[8]

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8   Figures are expressed as a percentage of the whole sample of respondents, although "Don't know/not relevant" responses have been removed from the base.

Table 2.10: We have set out below some statements about common aspects of LEADERSHIP. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to YOUR CURRENT ORGANISATION.

Common aspects of leadership	Disagree strongly	Disagree to some extent	Agree to some extent	Agree strongly	Base
Leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future	4%	12%	34%	50%	195
Leaders communicate how people's role contributes to overall goals	4%	14%	37%	45%	194
Leaders lead by example and act according to shared values	5%	17%	23%	56%	196
Leaders hold themselves accountable for their actions	6%	15%	30%	49%	192
Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them	7%	11%	42%	41%	195
Leaders empower people to make decisions in their role	5%	18%	27%	50%	193
Leaders support people's professional development and growth	6%	10%	24%	60%	189
Leaders provide regular and constructive feedback	4%	17%	39%	40%	193
Leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions	6%	12%	31%	51%	188
Leaders actively engage stakeholders such as staff and service users in decision making	6%	16%	37%	42%	195
Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users	8%	9%	26%	57%	190

Chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority were significantly more likely than average to agree to some extent or strongly agree with each statement. Similarly, executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely to agree that *"leaders actively engage stakeholders such as staff and service users in decision making"* and that *"leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users"*.

Level of agreement with statements about common aspects of leadership within the social housing sector as a whole

Figures are generally lower for the social housing sector as a whole, although the majority of respondents still agree to some extent or agree strongly with all statements about common aspects of leadership within the sector, particularly in relation to the statements: *"leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future"* (78 per cent), *"leaders lead by example and act according to shared values"* (77 per cent), *"leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions"* (74 per cent) and *"leaders communicate how people's role contributes to overall goals"* (74 per cent).[9]

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9   Figures are expressed as a percentage of the whole sample of respondents, although "Don't know/not relevant" responses have been removed from the base.

Table 2.11: Now, please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR AS A WHOLE.

Common aspects of leadership	Disagree strongly	Disagree to some extent	Agree to some extent	Agree strongly	Base
Leaders clearly articulate a compelling vision for the future	3%	19%	58%	20%	172
Leaders communicate how people's role contributes to overall goals	3%	24%	60%	14%	159
Leaders lead by example and act according to shared values	5%	18%	57%	20%	164
Leaders hold themselves accountable for their actions	6%	31%	48%	15%	155
Leaders ensure that people have the resources to meet the expectations set for them	6%	31%	51%	12%	154
Leaders empower people to make decisions in their role	5%	26%	56%	13%	147
Leaders support people's professional development and growth	5%	20%	51%	24%	152
Leaders provide regular and constructive feedback	6%	26%	55%	13%	138
Leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions	6%	19%	51%	23%	146
Leaders actively engage stakeholders such as staff and service users in decision making	7%	27%	49%	17%	150
Leaders show genuine care and concern for the wellbeing of staff and service users	7%	24%	48%	21%	153

Again, chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority were significantly more likely than average to agree to some extent or strongly agree with each statement. Similarly, executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely to agree that *"leaders acknowledge and celebrate employee contributions"*.

Other important leadership attributes

Respondents were asked to comment further on any leadership attributes that they think will be particularly important for the sector in the future. In summary, the comments provided reveal deep concerns about leadership inconsistency, outdated cultural norms and a disconnect between stated organisational values and lived staff experiences across the housing sector. While some organisations demonstrate inclusive, values-led leadership with strong staff engagement and collaborative cultures, many report toxic, hierarchical environments where decisions are made without consulting frontline staff.

A culture of nepotism, poor succession planning, lack of diversity and resistance to innovation is noted by several respondents. There's a strong call for leaders to genuinely model values such as empathy, adaptability and integrity, rather than simply communicating them. There's also a call to foster trauma-informed, tenant-focused services.

The sector suffers from poor middle management development, limited strategic vision and an over-reliance on outdated leadership models. Staff wellbeing is often neglected, with burnout widespread and tokenistic approaches to support. Many believe leadership quality diminishes as organisations grow, and that bureaucracy, regulatory pressures and reputational management often take precedence over people and purpose. There is a plea for leadership that listens, learns and empowers staff, and that re-centres housing's social mission by moving away from performative action towards real accountability and inclusive change. A selection of comments is listed below:

Housing association/RSL

> *"Understanding organisational culture is vital, and understanding the board and customers' views on purpose and impact is also critical."*

> *"There has been a body of leadership across the sector in Scotland for some time, and they tend to dominate the narrative. I have not witnessed new voices and influence with innovative ideas for some time."*

Local authority

> *"Looking ahead, one of the most important leadership attributes for the housing sector will be the ability to clearly communicate and model organisational values, vision and goals, ensuring these are fully aligned with the overarching service vision."*

> *"Key leadership requirements for the future will be partnership working with a wider range of partners; increasing skills in supporting staff/tenant wellbeing; and better understanding of technology and how it can help organisations."*

Despite an overall positive view of common aspects of leadership within organisations and the sector as a whole, the additional comments did highlight some perceived negative areas and issues for improvement. It should be noted that the summary set out above is based on comments from 51 individuals, who will have disagreed with one or more statements about leadership in their organisation or the sector as a whole. A full list of verbatim comments is noted in the supporting material.

2.4 Culture

Level of agreement with statements about common aspects of organisational or wider culture

Most respondents agree to some extent or agree strongly with all statements about common aspects of organisational or wider culture, particularly in relation to the statements: *"the organisation has a clear mission and values that are well understood"* (90 per cent), *"people feel included and respected regardless of their background or identity"* (90 per cent), *"the organisation actively promotes equity in opportunities and treatment"* (89 per cent) and *"diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued"* (86 per cent).[10]

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10   Figures are expressed as a percentage of the whole sample of respondents, although "Don't know/not relevant" responses have been removed from the base.

Table 2.12: We have set out below some statements about common aspects of ORGANISATIONAL OR WIDER CULTURE. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to YOUR CURRENT ORGANISATION.

Common aspects of organisational or wider culture	Disagree strongly	Disagree to some extent	Agree to some extent	Agree strongly	Base
The organisation has a clear mission and values that are well understood	3%	7%	22%	68%	194
These values are reflected in day-to-day behaviours	5%	14%	39%	42%	192
People feel safe to express thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences	9%	20%	32%	38%	192
Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities	5%	15%	34%	46%	191
Important decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way	6%	15%	40%	39%	193
There is open and honest communication at all levels	9%	21%	39%	31%	194
Feedback is encouraged and acted upon constructively	9%	18%	34%	39%	192
People feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues	4%	15%	36%	46%	193
Cross-functional collaboration is effective	7%	20%	45%	27%	176
Service users are seen as having a stake in the organisation	4%	17%	38%	40%	183
Innovation and creativity are encouraged	8%	11%	33%	48%	186
People feel empowered to show initiative or try new approaches	6%	16%	36%	41%	184
Diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued	4%	10%	27%	59%	191
People feel included and respected regardless of their background or identity	5%	5%	26%	64%	188
The organisation actively promotes equity in opportunities and treatment	6%	5%	26%	63%	189

Chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority were significantly more likely than average to agree to some extent or strongly agree with almost all statements. Similarly, executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely to agree that *"people feel safe to express thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences"*, *"important decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way"*, *"there is open and honest communication at all levels"*, *"feedback is encouraged and acted upon constructively"* and *"service users are seen as having a stake in the organisation"*.

Level of agreement with statements about common aspects of culture within the social housing sector as a whole

Figures are slightly lower for the social housing sector as a whole, although the majority of respondents still agree to some extent or agree strongly with all statements about common aspects of culture within the sector, particularly in relation to the statements: *"the sector actively promotes equity in opportunities and treatment"* (88 per cent), *"people feel included and respected regardless of their background or identity"* (86 per cent), *"diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued"* (85 per cent) and *"the sector has a clear mission and values that are well understood"* (84 per cent).[11]

Table 2.13: Now, please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements in relation to THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR AS A WHOLE.

Common aspects of culture	Disagree strongly	Disagree to some extent	Agree to some extent	Agree strongly	Base
The sector has a clear mission and values that are well understood	4%	13%	48%	36%	165
These values are reflected in day-to-day behaviours	4%	19%	56%	20%	154
People feel safe to express thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences	7%	25%	54%	15%	142
Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities	6%	28%	51%	14%	139
Important decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way	5%	18%	60%	17%	147
There is open and honest communication at all levels	8%	28%	52%	12%	141
Feedback is encouraged and acted upon constructively	8%	24%	53%	15%	137
People feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues	3%	18%	50%	30%	147
Cross-functional collaboration is effective	4%	23%	57%	16%	146
Service users are seen as having a stake in the sector	4%	16%	55%	24%	156
Innovation and creativity are encouraged	3%	22%	52%	22%	152
People feel empowered to show initiative or try new approaches	5%	22%	54%	20%	147
Diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued	3%	11%	49%	36%	158
People feel included and respected regardless of their background or identity	3%	12%	48%	38%	151
The sector actively promotes equity in opportunities and treatment	3%	10%	51%	37%	156

11   Figures are expressed as a percentage of the whole sample of respondents, although "Don't know/not relevant" responses have been removed from the base.

Chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority were significantly more likely than average to agree to some extent or strongly agree with the statements: *"people feel safe to express thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences"*, *"mistakes are treated as learning opportunities"*, *"important decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way"*, *"there is open and honest communication at all levels"* and *"feedback is encouraged and acted upon constructively"*.

Employees at operational level were significantly more likely than average to agree that *"the sector has a clear mission and values that are well understood"* while housing association/RSLs and executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely than average to agree that *"these values are reflected in day-to-day behaviours"*.

Executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were also significantly more likely than average to agree that *"people feel a strong sense of camaraderie with colleagues"* and local authorities were significantly more likely than average to agree that *"innovation and creativity are encouraged"*.

Other important organisational or wider culture attributes

Respondents were asked to comment further on any aspects of organisational or wider culture that they think will be particularly important for the sector in the future. In summary, the comments highlight a sector struggling with power imbalances, entrenched toxic cultures and a drift toward corporate, risk-averse and siloed working that undermines collaboration and transparency.

Larger RSLs are often seen as less personal, with weakened joint-working traditions and diminished tenant focus. Concerns include nepotism, outdated and resistant organisational cultures, and regulatory bodies failing to address poor performance or cultural issues. There is frustration over leadership prioritising personal or organisational profile over practical, sustainable solutions for frontline staff, as well as over management ignoring staff feedback on operational changes. While some organisations demonstrate values-driven, inclusive and high-performing cultures, these are not consistent across the sector.

Equality, diversity and inclusion efforts are sometimes viewed as politicised or selective, neglective of certain groups, and at times more focused on policy statements than tangible outcomes. A stronger focus on accountability for organisational culture, embedding values in daily practice, empowering diverse voices, and keeping tenant and staff experience at the core is seen as essential for genuine sector improvement. A selection of comments is listed below:

Housing association/RSL

> *"I think there is a very big disconnect between RSLs within the sector. A lot of this has come down to the size of RSLs within the sector. The shift towards very large RSLs has created a loss of the culture the sector once enjoyed in relation to joint working and acting within the spirit of joint working."*

> *"As the sector responds to ongoing financial, regulatory and societal pressures, organisational culture will become an even more critical driver of resilience, innovation and impact."*

Local authority

> *"There is a perception that senior managers often prioritise what benefits the business or enhances their own professional profile, rather than focusing on what is practical and sustainable for frontline staff who are responsible for implementing these decisions."*

> *"A key cultural challenge for the sector going forward is ensuring that individual services and organisations are held accountable for the culture they create and sustain."*

Again, despite an overall positive view of common aspects of organisational and wider culture, the additional comments highlighted some perceived negative areas and issues for improvement. It should be noted that the summary set out above is based on comments from only 30 individuals, who will have disagreed with one or more statements about organisational and wider culture. A full list of verbatim comments is noted in the supporting material.

2.5 Impact of leadership and culture in the sector

Impact of quality of leadership

The majority of respondents feel that the quality of leadership within their organisation has had a positive impact on their organisation's performance (70 per cent, some or significant positive impact). However, a significant minority (22 per cent) feel that there has been a negative impact. [12]

Table 2.14: What impact do you think the QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP within your organisation has had on the organisation's performance?

Extent of impact	%
Significant negative impact	8%
Some negative impact	14%
No impact either way	7%
Some positive impact	30%
Significant positive impact	40%
Base	176

Chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority and executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely than average to think that the quality of leadership within their organisation has had a positive impact on their organisation's performance (93 per centand 81 per cent, respectively). Conversely, local authorities and supervisors or team leaders were significantly less likely than average to think that the quality of leadership within their organisation has had a positive impact on their organisation's performance (56 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively).

Impact of culture of organisation

The majority of respondents feel that the culture within their organisation has had a positive impact on their organisation's performance (65 per cent, some or significant positive impact). However, a significant minority (25 per cent) feel that there has been a negative impact.[13]

Table 2.15: What impact do you think the CULTURE OF YOUR ORGANISATION has had on the organisation's performance?

Extent of impact	%
Significant negative impact	7%
Some negative impact	18%
No impact either way	11%
Some positive impact	34%
Significant positive impact	31%
Base	176

12   Only asked of current practitioners.
13   Only asked of current practitioners.

Again, chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority and executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely than average to think that the quality of leadership within their organisation has had a positive impact on their organisation's performance (89 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively). Conversely, local authorities, supervisors or team leaders and employees at operational level were significantly less likely than average to think that the quality of leadership within their organisation has had a positive impact on their organisation's performance (51 per cent, 53 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively).

Effectiveness of recruitment, training and development practices

As detailed in table 2.16, the majority of respondents rated the effectiveness of all practices within their organisation positively, particularly in relation to *"recruiting people who have a good fit with the organisation's values"* (70 per cent, rated as good or very good), *"recruiting people that have the right technical skills and knowledge for their roles"* (69 per cent), *"giving people appropriate training and development to help them progress" (*68 per cent) and *"giving people opportunities to develop on the job"* (68 per cent). By comparison, ratings were significantly lower in relation to *"providing appropriate career development paths for people"* (59 per cent).[14]

Table 2.16: Please rate the effectiveness of each of the following practices within your organisation on a scale of one to five, where one is "Very poor" and five is "Very good".

Practices	Very poor	Poor	Neither good nor poor	Good	Very good	Base
Recruiting people that have the right technical skills and knowledge for their roles	2%	5%	23%	53%	16%	176
Recruiting people who have a good fit with the organisation's values	2%	6%	22%	43%	27%	176
Giving people appropriate training and development to help them progress	5%	11%	15%	36%	32%	176
Giving people opportunities to develop on the job	4%	13%	16%	36%	32%	174
Providing appropriate career development paths for people	5%	13%	24%	36%	23%	174

Chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority were significantly more likely than average to positively rate *"recruiting people that have the right technical skills and knowledge for their roles"* (82 per cent), *"recruiting people who have a good fit with the organisation's values"* (86 per cent), *"giving people appropriate training and development to help them progress"* (89 per cent) and *"providing appropriate career development paths for people"* (79 per cent). Similarly, executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority were significantly more likely than average to positively rate *"recruiting people that have the right technical skills and knowledge for their roles"* (80 per cent) and *"recruiting people who have a good fit with the organisation's values"* (80 per cent). Supervisors or team leaders were significantly more likely than average to positively rate *"giving people opportunities to develop on the job"* (80 per cent).

Conversely, respondents from local authorities and employees at operational level were significantly less likely than average to positively rate all of the above practices.

14   Only asked of current practitioners.

Senior management views on leadership and culture within organisation

The vast majority of respondents in a senior management position agree or strongly agree with all positive statements about leadership and culture within their organisation, particularly in relation to the statements *"our current senior management already demonstrate a high level of leadership attributes"* (89 per cent), *"we have access to the support that we require to improve leadership and culture within the organisation"* (87 per cent) and *"we already have a very positive organisational culture"* (86 per cent). Agreement is also high in relation to the statements: *"we have a robust plan in place to ensure that we have the necessary leadership attributes in the future"* (80 per cent) and *"we provide appropriate leadership development opportunities for our employees across the organisation"* (82 per cent).[15]

Table 2.17: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about leadership and culture within your organisation.

Statements	Disagree strongly	Disagree to some extent	Agree to some extent	Agree strongly	Base
Our current senior management already demonstrate a high level of leadership attributes	3%	8%	66%	23%	64
We have a robust plan in place to ensure that we have the necessary leadership attributes in the future	2%	19%	67%	13%	64
We provide appropriate leadership development opportunities for our employees across the organisation	6%	13%	52%	30%	64
We already have a very positive organisational culture	3%	11%	48%	38%	64
We have access to the support that we require to improve leadership and culture within the organisation	3%	9%	53%	34%	64

The vast majority of respondents answering this question worked for a housing association or RSL and so there are no significant distinctions by any other type of organisation.

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15   Only asked of local authority directors, chief executives, executive directors or equivalent.

Further comments on leadership and culture

Respondents were asked to comment further on any aspects of leadership and culture that they felt were important. Only seven responses were provided by respondents in a senior management position, and these are listed below. All comments were from individuals working for a housing association/RSL:

"At our housing association, we recognise the importance of strong, authentic leadership and a values-led culture in delivering positive outcomes for both staff and tenants. While our senior management team demonstrates many of the leadership attributes we value, such as visibility, integrity and collaborative working, we are conscious that leadership must be nurtured at all levels of the organisation, not just at the top. We are currently developing a comprehensive People Strategy; this will include clear leadership development pathways, succession planning and investment in staff capability. We also recognise the need to foster a culture of continuous learning, openness and innovation; particularly as we respond to challenges around affordability, decarbonisation and service transformation. While our culture is broadly positive and improving, we are not complacent. We are strengthening feedback mechanisms; encouraging more cross-team collaboration; and embedding a "customer-first" mindset across all roles. External support through sector networks, peer learning and professional development providers continues to be valuable; and we are open to further collaboration to accelerate progress."

"The external environment has put enormous pressures on RSLs over the last year. Learning to adapt has helped refocus and strengthen our culture and leadership. Senior management teams think more as a whole organisation rather than just their function; this creates a stronger culture and higher-quality services for our customers."

"I work for a small, ambitious RSL; much of our progress is due to ambition, but our timeline on this is delayed at times because of our size, scale and other priorities. The intentions are good and very much on the right track."

"We have dedicated this year to carrying out refresher sessions on our values across the organisation to all colleagues. Following this, we will be starting our Leadership Journey Development series, which is open for all colleagues to apply to. This is an ongoing three-year programme."

"You cannot stand still. Always need to be working on these statements. There is no finish line when it comes to leadership and culture."

"I think there is a sense of timing. My organisation is heading for a significant change at the top; existing senior management is not always cohesive in delivering key messages."

"We continue to plan for future succession. We also actively engage with our staff using a range of methods, such as an independent staff survey supported by a management consultant."

The small number of comments above indicates positive cultural progress through values-led leadership, succession planning and staff engagement, though challenges like limited resources and inconsistent senior communication remain.

2.6 Training, development and qualifications

Housing-specific qualifications

The majority of respondents say that they have Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) qualifications or membership (68 per cent) and a further 43 per cent have a postgraduate level qualification in housing. A significant proportion of respondents (14 per cent) have no housing-specific qualifications.

Table 2.18: Which, if any, of the following HOUSING-SPECIFIC qualifications or types of qualification do you hold personally?

Housing-specific qualifications	%
SVQ or Modern Apprenticeship in Housing	13%
Degree level qualification in housing	15%
Postgraduate level qualification in housing	43%
Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) qualifications or membership	68%
Other housing-specific qualification (please give details below)	15%
None of the above	14%
Base	200

Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) qualifications or membership and postgraduate level qualifications in housing are significantly more likely than average amongst chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority (92 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively). Conversely, people working in an organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector – supervisors or team leaders and employees at operational level – are significantly less likely than average to have a Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) qualification or membership (33 per cent, 53 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively).

Leadership and management qualifications

Fewer respondents have a formal leadership and management qualification or similar, although the proportion of those that do is still a majority (53 per cent), with 22 per cent having an entry to middle level leadership and management qualification, 20 per cent having a middle to senior level leadership and management qualification, 15 per cent having a strategic or executive leadership and management qualification and a further three per cent having another leadership qualification.

Table 2.19: Please say whether you hold any formal leadership and management qualifications or similar in the following categories?

Leadership and management qualifications	%
Entry to middle level leadership and management qualifications	22%
Middle to senior level leadership and management qualifications	20%
Strategic or executive leadership and management qualifications	15%
Another leadership qualification (please give details below)	3%
None of the above	47%
Base	200

Strategic or executive leadership and management qualifications are significantly more likely than average amongst chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within a local authority (35 per cent), while middle to senior level leadership and management qualifications are significantly more likely than average amongst executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority (30 per cent). Local authority employees, middle managers and supervisors or team leaders are significantly more likely than average to have an entry to middle level leadership and management qualification (37 per cent, 33 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively).

Rating of availability of housing-specific qualifications, training and development

The majority of respondents positively rate the availability of housing-specific qualifications, training and development, particularly in relation to the availability of relevant certificated housing-specific qualifications (92 per cent, rate as good or very good) and the availability of non-certificated housing-specific training and development appropriate for the sector (86 per cent).

Ratings are significantly lower in relation to the availability of non-certificated leadership and management training and development appropriate for the sector (76 per cent) and the availability of certificated leadership and management qualifications appropriate for the sector (74 per cent).[16]

Table 2.20: From what you know, how would you rate each of the following within the social housing sector in Scotland?

Qualifications, training and development	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good	Base
Availability of relevant certificated housing-specific qualifications	2%	6%	54%	38%	184
Availability of certificated leadership and management qualifications appropriate for the sector	4%	22%	50%	24%	165
Availability of non-certificated housing-specific training and development appropriate for the sector	2%	12%	56%	30%	170
Availability of non-certificated leadership and management training and development appropriate for the sector	2%	21%	52%	24%	162

Organisations providing support to Scotland's social housing sector are significantly less likely than average to positively rate the availability of all of the above qualifications, training and development.

16   Figures are expressed as a percentage of the whole sample of respondents, although "Don't know" responses have been removed from the base.

Extent to which availability of qualifications drives improvements in leadership within organisations

The vast majority of respondents feel that the availability of qualifications in the sector drives improvements in leadership and culture within their organisation, either slightly, to some extent or to a significant extent (94 per cent), with 74 per cent indicating that this is the case to some or a significant extent.

Table 2.21: To what extent do you think that the range of qualifications available to people in the sector drives improvements in leadership and culture within their organisations?

Extent	%
Not at all	6%
Only slightly	20%
To some extent	53%
To a significant extent	21%
Base	192

Chief executives of RSLs/heads of housing service within local authorities are significantly more likely than average to think that the availability of qualifications in the sector drives improvements in leadership and culture within their organisation, to some extent or to a significant extent (88 per cent). Conversely, this is significantly less likely to be the case amongst former practitioners within Scotland's social housing sector (64 per cent), employees working at operational level (61 per cent) and organisations providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (59 per cent).

Importance of senior managers having housing-related and leadership and management qualifications

Most respondents feel it is very or quite important for senior managers to have housing-related qualifications (75 per cent) and leadership and management qualifications (77 per cent).

Table 2.22: How important or otherwise do you think it is for senior managers (typically at leadership team / executive team and chief executive level) to have each of the following types of qualifications?

Qualifications	Not important	Only slightly important	Quite important	Very important	Base
Formal housing-related qualifications	6%	19%	34%	41%	199
Formal leadership and management qualifications	4%	19%	32%	45%	199

Formal housing-related qualifications are significantly more likely than average to be seen as important for senior managers to have amongst organisations providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (100 per cent) and supervisors or team leaders (86 per cent). They are significantly less likely to be seen as important amongst executive directors in RSLs or senior managers within the housing service of a local authority (61 per cent).

Formal leadership and management qualifications are significantly more likely than average to be seen as important for senior managers to have amongst supervisors or team leaders (100 per cent) and employees at operational level (90 per cent).

Aspirations for future qualifications, training and development

The majority of respondents (67 per cent) have aspirations for future qualifications, training and development, most commonly in relation to taking part in additional leadership and management training and development to develop their leadership and management capabilities (40 per cent), receiving on-the-job support to develop their leadership and management capabilities (37 per cent) and undertaking a strategic or executive leadership and management qualification (21 per cent).

Table 2.23: Thinking about your own personal aspirations over the next few years, which of the following would you like to do?

Extent	%
Take part in additional leadership and management training and development to develop your leadership and management capabilities (not formally certified as a formal qualification)	40%
Receive on-the-job support to develop your leadership and management capabilities	37%
Undertake an entry to middle level leadership and management qualification	11%
Undertake a middle to senior level leadership and management qualification	11%
Undertake a strategic or executive leadership and management qualification	21%
None of the above	37%
Base	196

Where the proportion of respondents with aspirations for each type of qualification is greater or lower than the average figure by 10 per cent or more, the profile for each is as follows:

<u>Significantly more likely</u>

Take part in additional leadership and management training and development to develop your leadership and management capabilities: organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (55 per cent); supervisor or team leader (50 per cent).

Receive on-the-job support to develop your leadership and management capabilities: middle manager (50 per cent); employees at operational level (50 per cent).

Undertake a strategic or executive leadership and management qualification: executive director in RSL or senior manager within the housing service of a local authority (39 per cent); middle manager (33 per cent).

<u>Significantly less likely</u>

Take part in additional leadership and management training and development to develop your leadership and management capabilities: employees at operational level (30 per cent).

Receive on the-job support to develop your leadership and management capabilities: organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (27 per cent); chief executive of RSL/head of housing service within a local authority (24 per cent).

Undertake a strategic or executive leadership and management qualification: organisation providing support to Scotland's social housing sector (nine per cent); supervisor or team leader (seven per cent); employees at operational level (seven per cent).

Further comments

Respondents were asked to comment further on any aspects of qualifications, training and development. In summary, views on qualifications in the housing sector are mixed, with some valuing formal education and structured development, and others emphasising experience, behaviour, and access over credentials, raising concerns about exclusion, inconsistent training opportunities, and the need for more practical, inclusive approaches to leadership development. A selection of comments is listed below:

Housing association/RSL

"I am strongly against any requirement for formal qualifications to work in the sector. While I have these qualifications, we have staff who do not; they perform very well. Forcing formal qualifications onto people can drive good, positive people away from the sector."

"Having spent most of my career in management positions, I have taken a step away from this to give me a better work-life balance."

Local authority

"Due to limited funding, only a small number of staff are able to attend the course; this can reduce its perceived value in interviews or promotion processes. Without formal recognition or consistent opportunities to demonstrate the learning, the benefit of completing the course may be overlooked; particularly when others with stronger presentation skills are more visible."

"CIH membership is not seen as relevant by many, as they do fine without it."

The above summary is based on comments from only 35 individuals. A full list of verbatim comments is noted in the supporting material.

2.7 Final comments

Respondents were asked to make any further comments on issues of leadership and culture in Scotland's social housing sector. In summary, the comments reflect a sector with passionate views on the future of leadership, qualifications, and culture, underscoring the need for inclusive, tenant-led decision-making and clarity of purpose in social housing. While many value formal training and leadership development, others stress the importance of lived experience, emotional intelligence and diverse pathways into leadership roles without creating barriers.

Concerns include persistent inequality, lack of meaningful progress on diversity, over-regulation and a failure to fully support frontline staff. There is a call for more collaboration, innovation and a shared, modern vision for housing, balanced by a respect for local context, strategic investment in people, and the empowerment of underrepresented voices. A selection of comments is listed below:

Housing association/RSL

"I think leadership in Scotland's housing sector should place the tenant's voice at the heart of decision-making. The homes and services we deliver should be tenant-led where possible; this will make sure the performance is of a high standard and set by those impacted."

Local authority

"Generally, it is a great sector to work in; there is such a thing as a housing vocation, rather than something people just end up doing because they have not been successful at other activities."

"Certain leaders can determine cultures within services and organisations; they can make them either great places to work or toxic environments."

The above summary is based on comments from only 32 individuals. A full list of verbatim comments is noted in the supporting material.

3. Tenant survey

3.1 Respondent profile

Current situation

Most respondents (86 per cent) are social housing tenants while others include former social housing tenants (four per cent) and individuals with an interest in Scotland's social housing sector (six per cent).

Table 3.1: Which of the following best describes your current situation?

Current situation	%
A social housing tenant	86%
A former social housing tenant	4%
Not a tenant but have an interest in Scotland's social housing sector	6%
Other	4%
Base	51

Current or most recent landlord

The majority of respondents are tenants, or former tenants, of a local authority (67 per cent), followed by a housing association or RSL (30 per cent).

Table 3.2: Which of the following best describes your current or most recent landlord?

Landlord	%
Housing association/RSL	30%
Local authority	67%
Other	-
Prefer not to say	2%
Base	51

Length of time as social housing tenant

The majority of respondents have been social housing tenants for more than 10 years (70 per cent).

Table 3.3: How long have you been a social housing tenant for? If you are no longer a tenant, please say how long you were a tenant for.

Length of time	%
Up to 2 years	2%
Between 2 and 5 years	11%
Between 5 and 10 years	15%
Between 10 and 20 years	37%
More than 20 years	33%
Prefer not to say	2%
Base	46

Respondent age

All respondents were aged 35 or over with the vast majority being aged 55+ (79 per cent).

Table 3.4: What age are you?

Age	%
24 or under	-
25 to 34	-
35 to 44	10%
45 to 54	6%
55+	79%
Prefer not to say	6%
Base	52

Respondent gender

Most respondents were men (56 per cent) and 37 per cent were women.

Table 3.5: Please select the option that best describes you.

Gender	%
Man	56%
Woman	37%
Non-binary	2%
Prefer to self-describe	2%
Prefer not to say	4%
Base	52

3.2 Leadership and culture in Scotland's social housing sector

Responsibility for leadership and culture within organisations

The majority of respondents think that responsibility for leadership and culture should be shared between board/ management committee or similar (71 per cent), the senior executive management team or equivalent (63 per cent), all managers and/or supervisors (63 per cent), the chief executive or equivalent (62 per cent), an external body such as a regulator or government department (58 per cent) and all staff (52 per cent). Primary responsibility is perceived by a significant minority to rest with board/management committee or similar (33 per cent), all managers and/or supervisors (22 per cent), or all staff (16 per cent).

Table 3.6: Which of the following do you consider to have at least SOME RESPONSIBILITY for LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE in any social landlords you are involved with (e.g. as a tenant)? And which of the following do you consider to have PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY for LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE in any social landlords you are involved with (e.g. as a tenant)?

Position	Some responsibility	Primary responsibility
Board/management committee or similar	71%	33%
An external body such as a regulator or government department	58%	4%
Chief executive or equivalent	62%	12%
Senior executive management team or equivalent	63%	6%
All managers and/or supervisors	63%	22%
All staff	52%	16%
Other	13%	8%
Base	52	51

Level of agreement with statements about leadership within the sector

The majority of respondents agree to some extent or agree strongly with all statements about leadership within the sector, particularly in relation to the statements: *"leaders encourage joint working between stakeholders such as staff, tenants and other service users"* (76 per cent), *"leaders set out a clear vision and strategy for the future"* (74 per cent) and *"leaders provide the support and resources to help others to achieve their goals"* (68 per cent). Levels of agreement are lower, by comparison, in relation to the statements: *"leaders provide feedback and recognise the contribution of others"* (62 per cent) and *"leaders take accountability for their actions"* (55 per cent).[17]

17   Figures are expressed as a percentage of the whole sample of respondents, although "Don't know/not relevant" responses have been removed from the base.

Table 3.7: Based on your experiences as a tenant or of the social housing sector generally, please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about LEADERSHIP within the sector.

Statements about leadership	Disagree strongly	Disagree to some extent	Agree to some extent	Agree strongly	Base
Leaders set out a clear vision and strategy for the future	16%	10%	39%	35%	49
Leaders take accountability for their actions	24%	20%	22%	33%	49
Leaders provide the support and resources to help others to achieve their goals	15%	17%	35%	33%	48
Leaders provide feedback and recognise the contribution of others	21%	17%	29%	33%	48
Leaders encourage joint working between stakeholders such as staff, tenants and other service users	14%	10%	31%	45%	51

Level of agreement with statements about organisational or wider culture within the sector

The majority of respondents agree to some extent or agree strongly with all statements about organisational or wider culture within the sector, particularly in relation to the statements: *"organisations support equality, diversity and inclusion"* (79 per cent) and *"organisations have a clear purpose and values"* (73 per cent). Levels of agreement are lower by comparison in relation to the statements: *"organisations have a culture of learning and improving what they do"* (64per cent), *"there is open and honest communications between different people and groups"* (64 per cent), *"there is a culture of people working together"* (61 per cent) and *"organisations encourage new ways of doing things"* (58 per cent).[18]

Table 3.8: Again, on your experiences as a tenant or of the social housing sector generally, please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about ORGANISATIONAL OR WIDER CULTURE within the sector.

Statements about organisational or wider culture	Disagree strongly	Disagree to some extent	Agree to some extent	Agree strongly	Base
Organisations have a clear purpose and values	10%	18%	51%	22%	51
Organisations have a culture of learning and improving what they do	14%	22%	39%	25%	51
There is open and honest communications between different people and groups	20%	16%	32%	32%	50
There is a culture of people working together	25%	14%	37%	24%	51
Organisations encourage new ways of doing things	14%	29%	29%	29%	49
Organisations support equality, diversity and inclusion	6%	15%	45%	34%	47

18   Figures are expressed as a percentage of the whole sample of respondents, although "Don't know/not relevant" responses have been removed from the base.

Further comments about leadership and culture within the sector

Respondents were asked to make any further comments on issues of leadership and culture in Scotland's social housing sector. In summary, some respondents expressed deep frustration with the culture and leadership within Scotland's social housing sector, highlighting poor communication, lack of accountability and a failure to treat tenants with respect and dignity.

Common themes included the tick-box approach to tenant engagement, ineffective repairs, a broken allocations process that exacerbates problems in already struggling areas, and systemic disregard for tenant voices – particularly in sheltered housing. There is a strong call for leaders and professionals in the sector to better understand tenant realities by experiencing them firsthand, and for housing staff to adopt a more people-focused, empathetic approach rather than a detached, corporate one.

Respondents also criticised the influence of middle-class professionals who lack genuine understanding of social housing values, and lamented inadequate government action, underinvestment, and long-term neglect of housing priorities. A selection of comments is listed below:

> *"Being part of the housing culture in Scotland on a tenant's and residents' level, I find it extremely frustrating that our councils tend to just tick boxes with meetings and action is rarely done." (housing association/RSL)*

> *"Communication can vary and be poor at times. I sometimes get told they never received an email, but they in fact did. There is no automatic acknowledgement from my landlord." (housing association/RSL)*

> *"Fundamentally landlords forget that tenants are also "customers". There is strong and clear evidence that social landlords often do not understand their customers and fail to consider or treat tenants as customers." (local authority)*

> *"Too many housing organisations don't really get to the heart of what housing service is about due to the continual top-down professional approach that isn't rooted in the 'we work for, with and alongside' our tenants as it's our purpose." (local authority)*

Despite an overall positive view of common aspects of leadership and culture, the additional comments did highlight some perceived negative areas and issues for improvement. It should be noted that the summary set out above is based on comments from 16 individuals, who will have disagreed with one or more statements about leadership and culture within the sector.

4. Summary of key points

4.1 Practitioners

A large majority of respondents considered all listed issues as having at least some impact on the sector in the coming years, with 84 per cent indicating that both the ability to invest in new social housing and meeting critical housing need (including homelessness) would have a significant impact. Other areas considered likely to have a significant impact included maintaining the quality of housing stock (77 per cent) and the financial sustainability of the sector (67 per cent).

Responsibility for leadership and culture within organisations is viewed as shared across multiple roles, with 81 per cent stating that the senior executive management team has at least some responsibility, closely followed by all staff (80 per cent) and the chief executive (78 per cent). In terms of primary responsibility, the chief executive (35 per cent) and the senior executive management team (30 per cent) were most frequently cited.

Respondents were generally positive about leadership within their own organisations. The highest levels of agreement were with the statements that leaders support professional development (84 per cent), articulate a compelling vision for the future (84 per cent), and show genuine concern for wellbeing (83 per cent). Agreement levels were consistently lower when the same statements were applied to the sector as a whole, though a majority still agreed to some extent or strongly, particularly in relation to vision (78 per cent) and shared values (77 per cent).

Perceptions of organisational culture were also largely positive. High levels of agreement were recorded for statements such as having a clear mission and values (90 per cent), promoting equity (89 per cent), and ensuring inclusion and respect for all backgrounds (90 per cent). Again, agreement was lower when considering the sector as a whole, although most statements still received a positive response.

Most respondents believed that the quality of leadership (70 per cent) and the culture within their organisation (65 per cent) had a positive impact on organisational performance, though around one in five felt there had been a negative impact in both areas.

Recruitment, training and development practices were generally rated positively, especially for recruiting staff with the right values (70 per cent) and technical skills (69 per cent). By contrast, only 59 per cent rated the provision of appropriate career development paths positively.

Senior managers were broadly positive about the leadership and culture within their organisations, with 89 per cent agreeing that senior leaders demonstrated strong leadership attributes and 86 per cent agreeing that their organisation already had a positive culture. Most also agreed that they could access support to improve leadership and culture (87 per cent).

A majority of respondents (68 per cent) held Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) qualifications or membership, and 43 per cent held postgraduate housing qualifications. Just 14 per cent held no housing-specific qualifications. In contrast, 53 per cent held some form of leadership and management qualification, with 22 per cent having an entry to middle level qualification and 15 per cent a strategic or executive level qualification.

Most respondents rated the availability of housing-specific qualifications and training positively, with 92 per cent rating the availability of certificated housing qualifications as good or very good, and 86 per cent doing so for non-certificated housing training. Ratings were lower for certificated leadership and management qualifications (74 per cent) and non-certificated training in the same area (76 per cent).

A large majority (94 per cent) felt that the availability of qualifications contributes positively to improvements in leadership and culture within organisations, with 74 per cent indicating that this was the case to some or a significant extent.

Three-quarters of respondents considered it important for senior managers to have housing-related qualifications (75 per cent) and formal leadership and management qualifications (77 per cent).

Finally, 67 per cent of respondents had personal aspirations for future development, most commonly in relation to non-certificated leadership and management training (40 per cent), on-the-job development (37 per cent), or pursuing strategic or executive-level qualifications (21 per cent).

4.2 Tenants

A majority of respondents considered that responsibility for leadership and culture within social landlords should be shared across a range of roles. Most commonly, responsibility was seen to lie with the board or management committee (71 per cent), the senior executive management team (63 per cent), all managers and/or supervisors (63 per cent), and the chief executive (62 per cent). Over half also indicated that some responsibility lay with all staff (52 per cent) and external regulators or government departments (58 per cent). In terms of primary responsibility, the most common responses were the board or management committee (33 per cent), all managers and/or supervisors (22 per cent) and all staff (16 per cent).

Most respondents agreed to some extent or strongly with statements about leadership within the sector. Agreement was highest in relation to the statements that leaders encourage joint working between stakeholders (76 per cent), set out a clear vision and strategy for the future (74 per cent), and provide support and resources to help others achieve their goals (68 per cent). Lower levels of agreement were recorded for statements that leaders provide feedback and recognise contributions (62 per cent) and take accountability for their actions (55 per cent).

Views on organisational or wider culture within the sector were also broadly positive. Respondents most frequently agreed that organisations support equality, diversity and inclusion (79 per cent) and have a clear purpose and values (73 per cent). Agreement was somewhat lower for statements concerning a culture of learning and improvement (64 per cent), open and honest communication (64 per cent), collaboration (61 per cent) and encouragement of innovation or new approaches (58 per cent).