



TDBC HRA Compliance Summary Update

February 2018

Report By: Derek Quick, Property Compliance Manager

Background.

Statutory property compliance is founded in a complex set of regulations, assessments and inspections, which the council must undertake to comply with current government legislation.

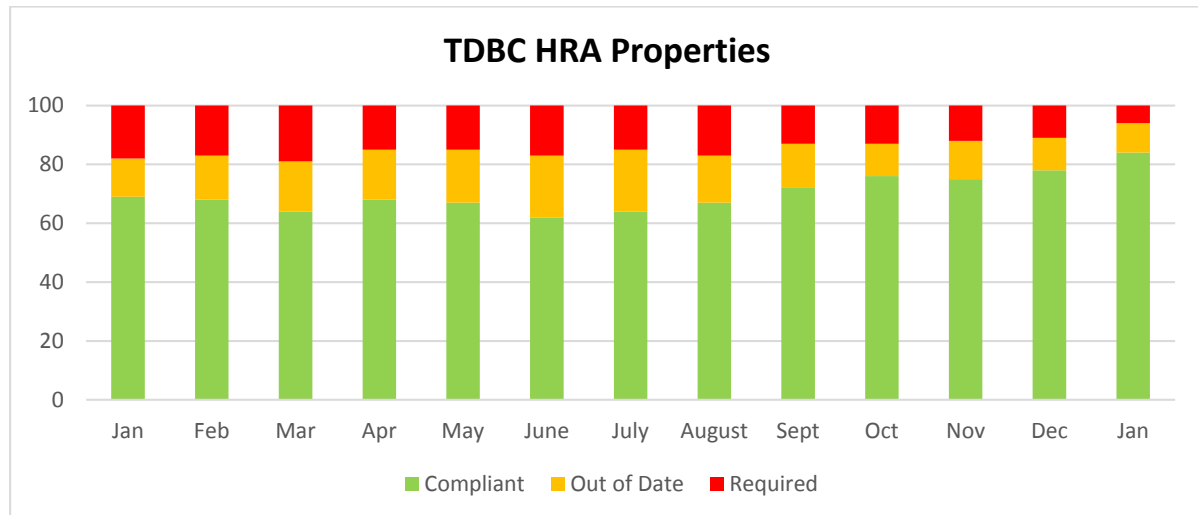
As duty holder, the council acknowledges and accepts its responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and all other attendant statutory and regulatory legislation, codes of practice and guidance. Accordingly we have developed a property compliance strategy document which sets out how we mitigate associated risks, and our responsibilities in meeting the Government's Decent Home Standard (DHS), thereby providing our tenants with a safe and comfortable environment in which to live, and our staff, visitors, contractors and partner organisations, a safe place in which to work.

Through the implementation of the property compliance strategy, the council are committed to achieving the following objectives:

- To promote tenants wellbeing, health and quality of life, make schemes as safe as possible for all tenants, and ensuring communal areas comply with health and safety legislation;
- To provide a housing function which delivers value for money, with a customer focused service to our tenants, and others living in our premises;
- To have an effective system for communicating and consulting on matters of property compliance, and securing the co-operation of tenants, staff, visitors, contractors and partner organisations;
- To strive to improve continuously the council's property compliance performance, measuring its progress against agreed performance standards;
- To be honest, do what is right and stick to it.

Current Status.

As part of the programme of stock condition surveys carried out by the asset surveyors, compliance audits have also been undertaken. These take the form of visual inspection together with desk-top review of all certification. Approximately 100 properties per month are subject to review as part of a five-year rolling programme, and as can be seen from the graph below, there has generally been a steady month-on-month improvement in overall compliance.



Where significant issues have been identified through these audits, asset surveyors will immediately arrange for the appropriate action to be taken, and the relevant servicing and maintenance teams to attend and make safe.

It should be noted that these issues are very rare, but usually as a result of DIY works carried out by tenants – primarily around electrical safety.

Where gaps in our servicing and testing regimes are identified, monthly notification reports are issued to the relevant maintenance teams to inform and assist in their workflow planning.

Summary Updates.

Domestic premises are currently audited on six key areas of statutory and regulatory compliance, these are as follows;

ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT SURVEYS

This is an area where the council has traditionally been weak in demonstrating compliance, with no structured regime of surveying and, more pertinently, recording these surveys. In March 2017 the council commenced a programme to survey all communal areas of its housing stock, all garage blocks, together with 20% of its housing portfolio (some 1200 homes), focusing on a wide variety of architypes.

These surveys were completed in the autumn of 2017 and surveys held on the council's dedicated electronic database. Analysis of the results indicated no major issues across all architypes. This offers a measure of reassurance to tenants and the council, and allows us to proceed with a structured regime on surveys over the next 4 years.

GAS SAFETY

The council has a very strong and robust system of Gas Safety Checks utilising a system called GasTag. This allows the council to programme its maintenance and testing inspection regime, and offers a demonstrable real-time snapshot of the levels of compliance.

Gas Safety is of paramount importance for the council and its tenants, and they can be reassured that this rigorous testing regime ensures that we 99.9% compliant at all times, and those premises which are non-compliant are due to outside factors, and are mitigated against through isolation of systems or devices.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Again, this is an area where the council has traditionally been less strong, however there is now a rolling programme in place to ensure that every domestic premises has an electrical safety inspection every five-years – as opposed to the regulatory standard which states every ten-years.

This too should provide tenants with reassurance that the commitment from council is to exceed rather than meet recommendations.

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES (EPCs)

With regard to domestic premises, the council undertakes EPCs on all domestic premises whenever they become Void, or when works are carried out that may affect that rating. Currently, approximately 30% of these premises have valid EPC, and whilst this ensure that we meet our obligations at present, the criteria for EPCs will become increasingly stringent.

The council has invested in training the asset surveyors so that they can carry out EPCs whenever they are undertaking a stock condition survey. Over the next 5-years, this will ensure the council is in a strong position to meet any future regulatory requirements.

FIRE SAFETY

This is an area that has been brought before this group previously, and an area where the council is particularly strong. We have an excellent understanding of areas which need addressing, and the funding in place to meet those needs. Tenants can expect to see us continuing with fire door programme for flat blocks, checks for compartmentation of roof voids and other safety checks.

We will also be increasing our 'housekeeping checks', ensuring that common areas are kept clear of obstructions and rubbish, with any breeches addressed with tenants and leaseholders.

We will also look to carry out wider-ranging works, such as investigating the possibility of constructing communal bin stores, and integrating these works with improved access and security.

We also ask for tenants continued support in monitoring issues relating to fire safety.

WATER HYGIENE

This is not a high-risk area within domestic premises, as water supplies are regularly 'turned-over', with water not sitting within pipework for very long. However, there are particular areas we take into consideration, and as part of our stock condition survey programme, we are checking pipework within homes, identifying old cast iron feeds, as well as premises with water tanks in lofts.

We also encourage tenants to take some ownership with regard to water hygiene too, such as ensuring they run all taps for at least two minutes whenever they return from holiday, for example, or remove shower heads to allow pipes to drain when not using for any extended period of time. To this end, we will be issuing communications in the next tenant's newsletter, to coincide with the summer break when it will be fresh in people's minds.

Next Steps.

In addition to the measures outlined above, and to which the council is already committed to, we will also look to develop strategies around Radon, Sewage Safety and Air Handling Systems, as well as ensure that new technologies such as PV are included in any future regimes.

Key to managing property compliance, and developing our maintenance strategies, is the introduction of a smarter digital platform. The council is now committed to delivering this through the Open Assets Database, which will not only mitigate against the risks, but also to visibly demonstrate compliance.

Regular monthly reporting is presented to Asset Management Groups and circulated to Portfolio Holders, and we will continue to update the Tenant Services Management Board, with the latest developments, as well attend meetings to discuss any queries which may arise.

We undertake to learn lessons from recent events such as Grenfell Tower and how we can better respond to queries from tenants, government agencies and partners.

Conclusion.

The council continues working towards best practice with regards to property compliance of our HRA properties. We are aware of our liabilities and understand the work and measures to be 100% compliant in all areas of property compliance.

However there is still much more to do, with the council having recognised and made satisfactory financial and dedicated resources within the Asset Management Team to deliver and maintain the council's legislative, statutory and regulatory requirements for property compliance. This will continue through and beyond the transformation process which the council is currently undertaking.