

This summary highlights the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Scottish social housing sector up to the end of February 2021.

Based on 12 months of data collection, our analysis focuses on submissions made by Scottish members. With Scotland experiencing different lockdown restrictions to other UK nations, this analysis highlights the similarities and differences experienced in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK.



Recovery from pandemic is 'top priority'

We found that Scottish landlords' top strategic priority for 2021/22 is recovering service levels following pandemic-related restrictions.

These involve helping residents and communities to get back to full strength as well as uncovering positive learning outcomes from reviewing internal services.



Reported repairs increase in spite of lockdown

Even with the lockdown restricting landlords' access to 'essential repairs only', non-emergency repairs rose by 15% following a low-point in January. The rise is driven by large month-on-month increases of 30-40% at a small number of landlords. Emergency repairs dropped slightly, which makes the overall increase around 2%.



9% fall in sickness absence

After increased COVID-19 infections in January, Scottish landlords reported fewer absences in February, losing around 5.5% of employee working days to sickness. While it seems that COVID infections and other communicable diseases are lower than pre-pandemic levels, several landlords expressed concerns about a rise in sickness relating to mental health and wellbeing.



Lettings bounce back after new year in the doldrums

The number of lettings grew by 42% during February with more tenants moving house as permitted by lockdown restrictions.

The increase in lettings appears to coincide with a matching rise in tenancy terminations – which means that the overall number of vacant and available properties remained static between the two months.



Current arrears rates unchanged

Participants' current tenant arrears remained stable between January and February. A reduction of just 0.4% in overall arrears has resulted in no change to current arrears rates as a proportion of rent due – with a median of 4.4%.

This month we have established a link between the Universal Credit rollout and landlords' effectiveness recovering arrears through the pandemic. More details are in our full report for participants.



Gas safety compliance maintained at 99.98%

The sector is maintaining high compliance levels during the lockdown with access for gas servicing continuing as an essential activity.

Average compliance levels across all landlords were close to 100% in February, falling a slight reduction at the start of the year. We have continued to find a minority of landlords' compliance levels below 98%.