



**30 July 2020**

**Circular: Housing 24/2020**

To: All Directors of Services (Housing)

**Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA) 2020**

Dear Director,

I am directed by the Minister for the Housing, Planning, and Local Government to advise you that under Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, each housing authority<sup>1</sup> is required to prepare a summary, in the prescribed form, of the social housing assessments carried out in its administrative area.

The Minister has directed that the summary be prepared on **2 November 2020**.

The form of the 2020 summary is as prescribed in the Social Housing Assessments (Summary) Regulations 2016. In this regard the following is attached:

1. Social Housing Assessments (Summary) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 287 of 2016)
2. Direction from the Minister requiring that the summary of social housing assessments is carried out on 2 November 2020,
3. “Guidance for Housing Authorities” on the preparation of the summary assessment,
4. Summary Form to be signed and returned by each housing authority on or before **30 November 2020**,

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<sup>1</sup> The Act gives housing authority the same meaning as it has in section 23 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992.



## 5. IT Specification prepared by the LGMA.

### **Basis and Aim of Annual Summaries**

The 2020 summary is the continuation of the process of annual assessments of national social housing need that commenced with the 2016 Summary. The results of these summaries are invaluable in terms of identifying the level of social housing support needed nationally and informing of housing policy. In particular, the data compiled through the annual summaries will provide a vital input for the realisation of the objectives of ***Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness***.

The Department is acutely aware of the administrative burden placed on local authorities in conducting the summaries. However, it is hoped that the experience of the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 SSHA process will have encouraged local authorities to review applications on a rolling basis to provide for more efficient internal systems, greater data accuracy, leading to an overall reduction in the administrative burden associated with the process in the medium to long term.

### **2020 Methodology**

The methodology for the 2020 Summary remains the same as the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 Summaries and as such the form prescribed by the Social Housing Assessments (Summary) Regulations 2016 will apply for the 2020 Summary.

### **Net Need**

The key output of the summary remains the **net need** figure i.e. the number of qualified households on housing authority lists whose housing need have not been met. It is therefore crucial that in preparing the summary, all households included on the list of qualified households meet the criteria of eligibility and need set out in the Social Housing Assessment Regulations, and also that each authority's total figure does not include certain households, such as those on multiple or transfer lists, or in accommodation provided under RAS or HAP. Information on how the net need figure is to be calculated is contained in Section 3.2 of the guidance document.

### **IT Specification**

There are no changes to the IT specification for 2020 and the position remains the same as 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.



### **Summary Procedure**

In order to fulfill the requirements set out in the prescribed form, housing authorities may be required to do one or more of the following:

- Re-examine or re-interview households that have already been approved for social housing support,
- Ask households to confirm that they are still seeking social housing support, or
- Obtain additional information on a household's current circumstances, including its housing situation, household composition and income.

In order to improve the rate of responses to letters issued by local authorities to those households on their list, it is open to authorities to undertake local advertising through the media and community groups.

Section 4 of the guidance document gives details on the procedures to be followed by housing authorities in reviewing their files / contacting households, and this process should be commenced immediately.

As per section 4.1.1. of the guidance document, the files that require review are those that have **not** been assessed for the first time or reviewed since **10 April 2019**<sup>2</sup>. Households which were assessed and qualified for support, or reviewed, since 10 April 2019 do not need to be reviewed. A proportion of files will have been reviewed since that date as part of the 2019 Summary and these do not need to be reviewed as part of this process.

### **Submission of Information**

Authorities are requested to submit data in an electronic format in respect of each household approved for social housing support as at 2 November 2020 to the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) for input into the data warehouse. Details of the fields required in this regard are set out in section 4.5 of the guidance. This will

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<sup>2</sup>Circular 11/2019 issued on 10 April 2019 and notified local authorities of the requirement to prepare a Summary of Social Housing Assessments by 22 July 2019. Files assessed or reviewed as part of that process will not be required to be reviewed for the 2020 Summary.



fulfill the reporting requirements set out in the Schedule of the attached Social Housing Assessments (Summary) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 287 of 2016).

It should be noted that the figure included on the Summary Form return may not match the overall net need figure calculated by e>Returns figure, as the latter figure will have excluded certain classes of households such as those on transfer lists, multiple lists and in HAP or RAS accommodation. As highlighted in section 3.2 of the guidance, **authorities should be mindful of this when reporting on any figures e.g. to Council members in advance of the publication of the final national summary report.**

Guidance in relation to the LGReturns system is available on the LGMA website.

As part of the Summary process, applicants will be removed from the list of qualified households for various reasons. It has been agreed that data in relation to these removals must be provided by all local authorities to the Housing Agency at the same time as the main summary file is uploaded to LG Returns. Detailed information in relation to what is required can be found in section 4.4.2 of the guidance document.

The Department acknowledges that undertaking the summary of social housing assessments this year in light of the Covid - 19 emergency will present additional challenges for local authorities. In this regard, authorities are encouraged and supported to use whatever resources are available to them, including assisting other local authorities and entering into shared services arrangements for the compilation of the information. Furthermore, as outlined on page 16 of the guidance document, in addition to the standard tasks undertaken in previous years when contacting households and recording correspondence, these activities will need to take place in keeping with each authority's Covid – 19 safety protocols. Guidance materials in this regard are also provided in the guidance document. Notwithstanding the above, it should also be noted that the legislation<sup>3</sup> requires that returns are made from each individual local authority in respect of their administrative area.

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<sup>3</sup> Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009



### **Date for Return of Summary Form**

Housing authorities are asked to return the Summary Form on or **before 30 November 2020**. This is also the deadline for submitting electronic data to the LGMA. There will be no extension of this deadline as the timeline for the compiling the report by end of year is very tight.

### **Contacts for Queries**

If you have any general queries in relation to the summary process, the relevant contacts are detailed below:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
<b>Department</b>	Jennifer Thompson	<a href="mailto:jennifer.thompson@housing.gov.ie">jennifer.thompson@housing.gov.ie</a>	01 888 2000
	Darryl Barr	<a href="mailto:darryl.barr@housing.gov.ie">darryl.barr@housing.gov.ie</a>	01 888 2000
<b>Housing Agency</b>	Julie Davis, Oona Kenny, Adele Lacey	<a href="mailto:ssha@housingagency.ie">ssha@housingagency.ie</a>	01-6564100

Any specific queries relating to **LGReturns** or **iHouse** should be submitted to the relevant contact for these areas listed in Section 5 of the guidance.

Yours sincerely,

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**Caroline Timmons**  
**Principal**  
**Housing Policy**