



Regulator of
Social Housing

Dacorum Borough Council (26UC) Regulatory Judgement

14 August 2024

Our Judgement

	Current grade	Change	Date of assessment
Consumer	C2 Our judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.	First grading	August 2024

Reason for publication

We are publishing a regulatory judgement for Dacorum Borough Council (Dacorum BC) following an inspection completed in August 2024.

This regulatory judgement confirms a consumer grading of C2. This is the first time we have issued a consumer grade in relation to this landlord.

Summary of the decision

From the evidence and assurance gained during the inspection, we have concluded that there are some weaknesses in Dacorum BC delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed, specifically in relation to outcomes in our Safety and Quality Standard and Transparency, Influence and Accountability

Standard. Based on this assessment, we have concluded a C2 grade for Dacorum BC.

How we reached our judgement

We carried out an inspection of Dacorum BC to assess how well Dacorum BC is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards, as part of our planned regulatory inspection programme. During the inspection we considered all four of the consumer standards: Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Safety and Quality Standard, Tenancy Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

During the inspection we observed a Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting and a meeting of the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee. We also met with tenants, officers and councillors including the leader of Dacorum BC and the portfolio holder. We also reviewed a wide range of documents provided by Dacorum BC.

Our regulatory judgement is based on all the relevant information we obtained during the inspection as well as analysis of information received from Dacorum BC through routine regulatory returns and other regulatory engagement activity.

Summary of findings

Consumer – C2

August 2024

In relation to the Safety and Quality Standard, Dacorum BC provided assurance that it has appropriate systems in place to manage its health and safety responsibilities and to ensure the health and safety of its tenants in their homes and associated communal areas. Outcomes across all main areas of health and safety compliance are good, and performance is actively monitored by senior officers and councillors. The council has a planned approach to tackling damp and mould and is managing the risks associated with this work.

The Safety and Quality Standard also requires landlords to have an accurate record of the condition of its homes at an individual property level based on a physical assessment of all homes and ensure that homes meet the requirements of the Decent Home Standard. Dacorum BC has some gaps in its information, as more than 40% of property records are not up to date. We saw evidence that work is underway to address this issue, with a clear programme in place, and sufficient resource to carry out the necessary works. Dacorum BC has a number of homes that are failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard. We will continue to engage with Dacorum BC while it takes action to ensure that it has an accurate and up to date understanding of the condition of its homes.

Our inspection and engagement with Dacorum BC and its tenants demonstrated that action is needed to ensure the council is delivering an effective, efficient and timely repairs and maintenance service. Relatively low levels of satisfaction with repairs were identified and Dacorum BC recognises that it needs to improve this area of service. We saw evidence of Dacorum BC taking steps to address this weakness and evidence of the plans Dacorum BC has in place to improve tenant satisfaction. We will continue to engage with Dacorum BC in relation to its repairs service and will continue to seek assurance that it will embed change and deliver improved outcomes for tenants.

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard states that landlords must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour and hate incidents in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing. We saw evidence that Dacorum BC deals effectively with anti-social behaviour and hate incidents in line with its policy and procedures, with clear monitoring and oversight of cases. We saw examples of Dacorum BC working with relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where it provides homes.

In relation to the Tenancy Standard, we saw evidence that Dacorum BC has an allocations policy that offers tenancies or terms of occupation that are compatible with the purpose of its accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of its housing stock. Dacorum BC operates a choice based letting system and through the inspection we obtained assurance that Dacorum BC supports residents to sustain their tenancies.

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard includes the requirement for landlords to provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account. It also requires landlords to ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly. We saw evidence that Dacorum BC provides mechanisms for tenants to engage with it and scrutinise its performance. Evidence was also provided to demonstrate how tenant feedback is used in service planning. However, Dacorum BC needs to improve the information about the diverse needs of its tenants to better adapt and tailor its services to their individual needs to ensure its housing and landlord services deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants. Dacorum BC recognises that collection and analysis of this information is an area for improvement and is developing a new corporate platform to support this work. Additionally, Dacorum BC has commissioned external support to improve tenant involvement and scrutiny functions. This work is ongoing, and we will continue to monitor how the council is strengthening its approach to tenant engagement.

Dacorum BC provides a range of relevant and accessible information to tenants, including about its performance, but acknowledged this is an area in need of

continued improvement. Dacorum BC's approach to complaints handling is clear and in line with the requirements of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, but a further area for improvement for Dacorum BC is how it learns from complaints and uses these to improve services.

Background to the judgement

About the landlord

Dacorum BC owns and manages 10,124 homes, which is around 20% of all homes in the borough. Around 20% of Dacorum BC's homes are sheltered housing. Most homes are located within Hemel Hempstead, with around 2,500 in surrounding smaller towns and villages. Dacorum BC manages some services itself and outsources some other services. The largest areas of operation, asset management and repairs, are largely outsourced.

Our role and regulatory approach

We regulate for a viable, efficient, and well governed social housing sector able to deliver quality homes and services for current and future tenants.

We regulate at the landlord level to drive improvement in how landlords operate. By landlord we mean a registered provider of social housing. These can either be local authorities, or private registered providers (other organisations registered with us such as non-profit housing associations, co-operatives, or profit-making organisations).

We set standards which state outcomes that landlords must deliver. The outcomes of our standards include both the required outcomes and specific expectations we set. Where we find there are significant failures in landlords which we consider to be material to the landlord's delivery of those outcomes, we hold them to account. Ultimately this provides protection for tenants' homes and services and achieves better outcomes for current and future tenants. It also contributes to a sustainable sector which can attract strong investment.

We have a different role for regulating local authorities than for other landlords. This is because we have a narrower role for local authorities and the Governance and Financial Viability Standard, and Value for Money Standard do not apply. Further detail on which standards apply to different landlords can be found on our [standards page](#).

We assess the performance of landlords through inspections and by reviewing data that landlords are required to submit to us. In-Depth Assessments (IDAs) were one of our previous assessment processes, which are now replaced by our new inspections programme from 1 April 2024. We also respond where there is an issue or a potential issue that may be material to a landlord's delivery of the outcomes of

our standards. We publish regulatory judgements that describe our view of landlords' performance with our standards. We also publish grades for landlords with more than 1,000 social housing homes.

The Housing Ombudsman deals with individual complaints. When individual complaints are referred to us, we investigate if we consider that the issue may be material to a landlord's delivery of the outcomes of our standards.

For more information about our approach to regulation, please see [How we regulate.](#)