

Governing Body Member Induction

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1. Introduction

This guidance has been produced to support members in designing and delivering induction for new members of the governing body; it is intended to be a practical resource that can be used to devise induction resources that suit the needs and priorities of individual RSLs. The guidance has been informed by the experience of many SFHA members, including those who have contributed to a working group of the Governance Forum that has supported the drafting process and provided case studies to share their approach and experiences. Their contributions are very much appreciated.

The guidance is not intended to be an 'off-the-shelf' induction programme. Each RSL is different and so is each new GBM. It is essential that induction is geared towards the experience of the 'new recruit(s)', whilst also reflecting the organisation and its priorities. The guidance offers suggestions about how induction can be delivered, what should be included and some advice about timing and format.

There are also signposts and links to other SFHA governance resources that are relevant. Examples of successful - and not so successful – approaches are also included, to provide ideas about how induction can be structured and delivered practically and effectively.

Induction is an investment for the RSL and everyone involved. It requires planning, time and resources – and it is important for the strength and success of the organisation's governance. Providing effective induction support is also a regulatory requirement¹.



POINTS TO THINK ABOUT



Induction must be customised to the RSL and tailored to the new recruit(s)

Information about the sector and the regulatory framework are essential, of course, but the early stages of induction should prioritise the organisation – its priorities and structure; objectives and challenges and, crucially, the key people – and what's expected of them.

2. Aims of Induction

Any induction process should have the following aims:

- Introduce new member(s) to organisation and colleagues
- Develop the GB 'team';
- Support a constructive partnership between the GB and senior staff team

¹ Regulatory standards of Governance and Financial Management (2024) Standard 6.5 "The RSL ensures all new governing body members receive an effective induction programme to enable them to fully understand and exercise their governance responsibilities"

- Support new GBMs to attend meetings, particularly during initial 3-6 months
- Identify areas of interest / expertise and agree 'best use'
- Ensure awareness / understanding of RSL and its operating / regulatory environments
- Identify learning / development priorities / opportunities
- Enable new GBMs to become confident and effective in their role as early as possible

3. Induction Schedule

The following outline schedule describes three distinct phases of induction, with a defined beginning, middle and end:

- Before election/co-option/appointment
- Following election/co-option/appointment
- Three to six months from joining

3.1 Before election/co-option/appointment

Induction begins when someone expresses interest in getting involved. Anyone who is interested in joining the GB should first be provided with the GBM role description and invited to meet with a current GBM and a senior member of staff. Often, the Chair and senior officer are the people involved from the RSL, but the GB should decide.

It's important to be clear from the start about the organisation's priorities and what's involved in the role. This includes a realistic assessment of the time commitment; although there can be a tendency to downplay the amount of time to avoid putting people off, being specific at the outset helps to reduce the risk of someone resigning after a few months because the role isn't what they expected and/or takes up more time than they have.

Once an initial discussion has taken place and confirmed interest, a recruitment pack should be provided (see [SFHA succession planning and recruitment guidance](#)) that includes:

- Application / Nomination form
- RSL Membership Policy
- GB profile (collective skills, knowledge, experience for GB; current recruitment priorities)
- GBM Role Description,
- GBM eligibility criteria (Rule 43)² and Disclosure requirements³
- GB Meetings Calendar
- RSL Annual Accounts, Engagement Plan and Corporate Plan

² [SFHA Model Rules 2020](#)

³ [PVG Disclosure Requirements Briefing](#) – SFHA – May 2025



POINTS TO THINK ABOUT



What's the best format?

It is important to consider the best way to present information and to avoid overload, from the start. Weblinks are likely to be useful for many prospective candidates; others may prefer paper copies

Perfect Timing – why now?

Think about why information is being offered at specific times: annual accounts may be useful information for potential candidates but Rules and Standing Orders are likely to become relevant after election / appointment. A summary of the key constitutional requirements is likely to be useful to highlight what a new GBM really needs to know from the start (e.g. 4-meetings rule; quorum; Code of Conduct), in addition to the Rules / Articles and Standing Orders.

3.1.1 Observing meetings

Some RSLs invite potential GBMs to observe a GB meeting in advance of the AGM, or before confirming their co-option / appointment: this is a good opportunity for interested people to see how the GB operates and the business that it conducts. Of course, observers should not be present during confidential or business sensitive discussions and should be expected to confirm that they will respect the meeting's confidentiality, whether they subsequently join the GB or not.

Other RSLs organise an 'open' evening/afternoon that is publicised as part of the pre-AGM / recruitment campaign preparations, providing an opportunity for interested people to meet informally with GBMs and senior staff, before progressing with a nomination or application.

Sector Example 1 – Orkney HA

Over the past few years, Orkney Housing Association has hosted successful recruitment events in the form of informal 'Come and Meet Us' sessions, aimed at attracting new Management Committee Members. These relaxed, drop-in events—typically held in the late afternoon or early evening—are open to invited individuals as well as anyone from the wider Orkney community with an interest in getting involved. Promoted through local media and posters in shops, ferries, and community spaces, the events offer an opportunity to chat with current committee members over a cuppa. Follow-up conversations are arranged with attendees to explore next steps and potential involvement.

Interested individuals are encouraged to attend one or more Management Committee meetings as observers before deciding on further involvement. This allows them to:

- *Meet current committee members*
- *Gain insight into how meetings are conducted*
- *Better understand the culture of the group and organisation*
- *Get a clearer picture of the responsibilities involved*

Prior to attending, individuals are provided with only the meeting agenda. They may be asked to step out for any items that are confidential or commercially sensitive.

This helps ensure potential members can make a well-informed decision about whether joining the committee is the right decision for them. (Mhairi Hughes, Head of Corporate Governance, Orkney HA)



POINTS TO THINK ABOUT



Ensure that Standing Orders don't prevent observers attending a GB meeting.

Although many RSLs specify that meetings will not be open to the public, it is possible to specify in the Standing Orders that e.g. someone who has been nominated or who has otherwise applied to join the GB will be invited to attend one meeting before joining the GB

3.2 Following election/co-option/appointment⁴

This is when 'formal' induction is usually understood to begin. It's important to strike the right balance between what a new GBM needs to know 'now' and what can be programmed later. It is important that induction is supported by the GB – ideally, the Chair and other office bearers should be actively involved and participate in the sessions that form part of the programme.

A good approach is to organise an introductory induction session that all new GBMs are invited to attend, together with their buddy / mentor / go-to colleague. Several RSLs also encourage experienced GBMs to attend, to contribute, get to know new colleagues and participate in refresher training. Ideally, this session should be scheduled in advance of the first GB meeting but, if that's not possible, at least within the first six weeks or so. This first induction event can be held in person or virtually –

⁴ Election of shareholding member at the AGM; co-option (can but need not be shareholding member) between AGMs; appointment either to fill casual vacancy between AGMs or in accordance with Rules ([SFHA Model Rules](#) Optional Rule 37)

or as a hybrid session: it's for individual organisations to decide, in consultation with the new GBMs – there are different approaches across the sector. Some RSLs believe that in-person helps to introduce people to each other and begin to build a team dynamic; others point out that their meetings tend to be hybrid and so it's essential to be able to offer that option.

The programme for the introduction will depend on the time available, but is likely to involve anywhere from 90 minutes to a half (or whole) day: this is for individual RSLs to determine according to specific circumstances.

The programme might include:

- Introduction to the RSL: governance and organisational structure; office bearers and senior staff; current priorities / challenges
- Insight into main business activities (introduced by lead officer)
- GBM responsibilities and expectations of the role (including Code of Conduct, commitment to meetings, learning / development, strategy sessions; hybrid meeting protocol etc.)
- Regulatory requirements; RSL sector overview; current 'big picture'

Sector example 2 – Fife Housing Group

At FGH, once we have completed the interview process, we invite potential GBMs to attend a GB meeting as an observer, to give them an understanding of the operation of the GB ahead of their formal appointment. During this period, we also encourage new GBMs to consider joining the relevant GB sub-committee which matches their skills set once they are appointed.

Following appointment, all new GBMs are invited to an induction session where they are introduced to the GBM responsibilities and expectations, given an overview of the business from all members of the business leadership team (BLT) and an introduction to the RSL sector. We run these sessions as a conversation to encourage questions and avoid PowerPoint overload. Sign up to the Code of Conduct is carried out at that meeting and members are directed to several other relevant policies and procedures which will assist them gain a fuller understanding of their role.

*The new GBM's are encouraged to ensure they engage with the BLT, other GBMs, FHG Tenants (via events) and the wider sector (by attending training and conferences) throughout their time on the GB to help them develop a more detailed understanding of both business and the responsibilities of being a GBM. We also ask for feedback on the induction session so we can ensure that the structure and approach remain appropriate. **(Brian Fisher, Chair, Fife Housing Group)***

Before their first GB meeting, each new GBM should be offered an opportunity to talk with either their buddy or a member of staff about the agenda and business to be

discussed. It is important that a new GBM doesn't feel overwhelmed by what are likely to be substantial reports that might appear to be very complex: offering an opportunity to talk through the agenda, highlighting the history / significance of each item, the role of the GB and the action / decisions required will help to avoid that. Equally, it's an opportunity to ask questions and resolve any potential misunderstandings.

Practicalities:

- This opportunity could be offered throughout the first 3-6 months, depending on individual requirements.
- Discussions can be offered in whatever format works best for those involved (virtual / in person / telephone).
- The first session could be a collective session, offered to all new recruits, depending on experience and availability – and could be combined with the induction introduction described above. If there is a mix of experience amongst a group, however, individual conversations may be more effective.

3.3 Three to six months from joining

Deliver comprehensive information and insight into the organisation, its people and priorities, the role of a GBM; regulatory requirements, the RSL sector. Try to ensure that the 'flow' of information is measured / paced to avoid overloading new GBMs as they settle into their role and become familiar with the organisation. Promote one to one engagement so that queries can be resolved and relationships built.

Sector Example 3 – FLAIR Academy

FLAIR (The Federation of Local Associations in East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire) consists of Barrhead, Bridgewater, Ferguslie Park, Linstone, Paisley and Williamsburgh HAs. Collectively we agreed to run a potential Board member induction programme to encourage new members onto our Board/Committees, Sub Committees and Subsidiaries.

The induction programme is a series of training sessions which provide an insight into the main areas within housing: Governance, Finance, Housing, Technical, Community Investment, Factoring and Development. We call this programme FLAIR Academy. We felt that by having training sessions at the start, new members would be more aware of, and familiar with, what would be discussed at Board/Committee meetings and participants would all start with the same level of knowledge. Training sessions are open to prospective Board/Committee members as well as any existing Board/Committee members or staff members wanting a bit of a refresher on a particular topic.

We advertised in each of the local areas and each HA put details onto their websites and social media. Anyone interested completed a registration form, had one point of contact and is "buddied" to the HA they are best suited to. Any new recruits are directed to the Association with any vacancies and these are shared out across FLAIR members.

The training sessions are held both virtually and in person for 9 weeks and participants attend as observers to Board/Committee meetings so they know what is expected of them if they choose to join. The trainers are staff members from each of the Associations so the cost of running the Academy is minimal and shared. The sessions run twice a year (April and October).

After the induction programme ends each of the attendees makes the decision whether to join the Board/Committee or not. The below summarises the typical Board/Committee journey:

1. See advert and contact corporate services officer
2. Sign up and complete the academy over 9 weeks
3. Get connected to HA with board vacancies
4. Join the board and complete the housing association's onboarding process
5. Do refresher training at the academy on chosen topics in 1 or 2 years

We have been running FLAIR Academy since 2018 (although had a break during covid) and have successfully recruited 54 board members, with 36 existing Board/Committee members attending for refresher training.

Fiona McTaggart (Chief Executive, Paisley HA) & Lorna Wilson (CEO Barrhead)



POINTS TO THINK ABOUT



Pace the information flow

Consider and manage the pace of induction: there should be sufficient momentum to ensure that new GBMs experience a complete programme with connected components but delivered neither so quickly as to be superficial nor so slowly that interest flags.

Keep it manageable and relevant

Remember that a long list of web-links can be as daunting as a large bundle of papers: try to ensure that each web-link is supported by a brief explanation of importance / relevance – and provide incrementally, linked to the stage of the induction programme

3.4 Documents that must be signed

During the course of induction (and beyond), specific documents must be signed by governing body members. The checklist at **Appendix 1** (p23) summarises these key documents, when they need to be signed and how regularly.

4. Elements of Induction

There are numerous elements that should be covered during the induction process. This section looks at:

- Key aspects to cover
- What to aim for and what to avoid
- Who should be involved
- Introducing the RSL
- Useful resources to support induction
- Explaining/defining features of good governance
- Constructive challenge
- Gaining and maintaining assurance
- Effective decision making

4.1 Key aspects to cover

An important element of induction is to support a new GBM to become familiar with the organisation that they have joined. SFHA has published a [model guide for GBMs](#) that each member can customise to reflect their specific organisation and its history⁵

The following is a summary of some key aspects to cover during the induction process:

- ✓ Role of the Board member
- ✓ Governance structure (including meetings cycle; reporting structure & format; delegated authorities)
- ✓ Expectations: Code of Conduct; Registration and management of Interests; Entitlements, Payments & Benefits; time commitment (meetings; membership of sub-committees; ongoing learning & development; annual reviews; away days); meetings protocols
- ✓ Introduction to GB colleagues: names, experience on Board; relevant background (pen portraits plus 'round the table' introductions at first meeting)
- ✓ Introductions to key staff (senior team; governance staff) and contact arrangements
- ✓ History of the organisation; aims, objectives, mission, purpose; key features
- ✓ Current business plan priorities and pressures
- ✓ Key decisions to be considered by the Board over the next quarter; six months; year (and any relevant 'history' when the matter comes on to the agenda)
- ✓ Regulatory environment / requirements / considerations
- ✓ Funding arrangements; introduction to accounts; role of the Board
- ✓ Introduction / background to any sub-committee Board member is joining
- ✓ Organisational structure

⁵ SFHA Get Governance: [GBM Guide – July 2024](#)

- ✓ Organisational practice: 'how to' access buildings, portals, information; claiming expenses; requesting training
- ✓ Introduce key information: KPI reports; Management Accounts; Internal Management Plan; Internal Audit Plan / reports; Risk Map / reports; Annual Report; Engagement Plan; ARC / Landlord Report; Assurance Statement / Evidence Bank / recent press statements / newsletters
- ✓ Describe the bigger picture – current SG policy; sector issues and how these affect the RSL



POINTS TO THINK ABOUT



Ensure that induction is actively supported

Induction resources should not be DIY packs! Preferences will, of course, vary between individuals but each new GBM should have access to at least one 'go to' person during their first six months and there should be some in-person sessions to share information and address any queries.

Useful Facts and Figures

Consider developing 'bite-sized' induction resources to support the programme and supplement the resources provided to new GBMs e.g. 10 things about the RSL; 10 key features about our tenants; 5 things you need to know about our relationship with the local authority etc.

Sector Example 4 – Clydesdale Housing Association

Clydesdale's committee member induction process starts at the recruitment stage when we provide an information pack that includes a role description, person specification, a meeting schedule and some background information on the organisation. The recruitment process is owned by our management committee – a small panel of committee members conduct candidate interviews and report back to the rest of committee on their findings. Preferred candidates attend the next committee meeting to introduce themselves and observe/participate in the meeting before committee make any appointment decisions. The whole process is supported by an HR consultant.

Led by the vice-chair, supported by the CEO, within four weeks of being appointed new committee members take part in a formal welcome meeting. This also provides an overview of Clydesdale's induction arrangements and an agreement on the induction timetable and target completion date for the process (no more than six months). New recruits are also introduced to an experienced committee member who will serve as their 'Buddy'. Buddies provide:

- *a first point of contact for any queries*
- *a familiar face to sit next to during early meetings*
- *an introduction to other committee members*

- an experienced committee member perspective on induction sessions attended

Following the welcome meeting, dates will be agreed with the new recruit for sessions with independent trainers and members of CHA's Management Team that cover:

- Conduct Standards: The Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members and Conflicts of Interest
- Orientation: meeting dates, expenses, IT equipment, online resources and learning & development;
- CHA Background & Governance: CHA history, the RSL sector, vision & values, regulation, CHA stock and customer profile, role of the Governing Body, CHA governance structures and signposting to governance documents;
- Housing Management: the Scottish Social Housing Charter, performance levels, access to housing, empty house management, rents and debt recovery, neighbourhood management & anti-social behaviour and complaints handling;
- Repairs & Maintenance: the Scottish Social Housing Charter, performance levels, reactive repairs, housing standards, planned & cyclical maintenance, tenant safety, medical adaptations and factoring owners;
- Financial Management: budgets & financial management, long-term financial planning, treasury management and annual/quarterly accounts;
- Health & Safety: participate in annual collective refresher training or online module;
- Equalities: participate in annual collective refresher training or online module.

All sessions will start with a review of the previous session and the opportunity for the new recruit to ask questions.

We time sessions to fit with the committee meeting schedule to ensure that relevant sessions take place close to and in advance of meetings dealing with these reporting areas – this is designed to accelerate learning and support new recruits' understanding of committee business.

On the conclusion of the induction process, the vice-chair and CEO meet again with new committee members (and their Buddies) to review and evaluate the process. This meeting also provides an opportunity to:

- Answer questions the new recruit may still have;
- Check in on how the new recruit is enjoying the Governing Body experience;
- Provide feedback to the new recruit on their contributions since joining CHA;
- Review the induction process to ensure that intended learning outcomes have been met;
- Evaluate the process in order to identify areas for improvement that future recruits could benefit from;
- Identify any further important learning needs;
- Review and evaluate the Buddy system in order to identify ways to improve it;
- Ensure that IT equipment and online resources are accessible and working properly.

Thereafter, new committee members participate fully in Clydesdale's annual collective and individual review system. **(Joe Gorman, Chief Executive, Clydesdale HA)**

4.2 Aim to and Aim to Avoid

The table below summarises some key elements that induction should include, and some key points that should be avoided.

Aim to	Aim to avoid
deliver induction over an initial period of (at least) three months: avoid over-loading people but try to ensure a steady 'flow'	lack of support and/ or over-reliance on self-directed induction; uncertainty about who to ask / where to find out; no 'go-to' contact
prioritise what a new member needs to know to participate effectively as early as possible	insufficient induction – reliance on 'learning as you go'
blend reading with inter-active delivery: offer an opportunity to 'check-in' with a GB colleague or staff member after providing resources for review	unfamiliarity with colleagues – absence of introductions / background to all GBMs; new GBMs should be able to understand the experience profile of their colleagues
identify a 'key contact' (buddy / mentor, if offered)	inconsistent approach – different experiences amongst people joining around the same time (there should always be a 'core' element that every new recruit engages with, regardless of their experience)
include some individual conversations – virtual or in person - to support new members	
include 'external' information to describe the RSL's operating environment and key relationships (council, funders, partners etc.)	practical obstacles – difficulties accessing portals / platforms / buildings; uncertainty about sources of assistance
introduce senior staff, with an opportunity to find out what they (and their team) do	never-ending induction – not marking the completion of the core induction programme, causing uncertainty to new GBMs and potentially undermining confidence / limiting participation
explain elements in the right level of detail: a high-level starting point followed up by more detail can be a good approach for some topics	
introduce new GBMs at the start of their first meeting – and introduce existing Board members too	
include practical support: how to access the portal (meetings / paper; external training providers) / Board papers ('live' demonstrations are best); how to	

Aim to	Aim to avoid
contact the Chair / CEO; how to book training; who to submit apologies to (and when); how to declare / record interests; how / when to claim expenses; share / communicate meetings etiquette be specific about expectations: taking part in training; participating in strategy /away days; responding to internal consultation; requirements of hybrid governance (in-person expectations; on-screen visibility)⁶; core / minimum training; maintaining confidentiality; offer / support stock and/or communities tour(s) to familiarise new GBMs with areas of activity, communities, type of stock ensure that there is an opportunity for new members to ‘talk through’ the agenda and papers with and experienced GBM or staff member, in advance of their first meeting	

Sector Example 5 – Almond Housing Association

As part of our Annual Assurance process last year, some Board members noted the absence of a structured approach to Board member induction. While all Board members received an induction, there was clear room for improvement. As a result, Almond now invites all new Board members to meet the Senior Management Team and Governance team in person for an introduction to the business and the role.

A stock tour is arranged with existing Board members and SMT, allowing new members to view the stock and understand any issues with our properties. They are also given access to a secure Board SharePoint site containing a vast range of resources such as board papers, policies, regulatory returns, audit reports, as well as information about fellow Board members. Training opportunities are offered depending on the needs of the new Board member, and access is given to an online training portal offering a wide range of social housing related courses.

Almond has recently launched a new buddy system where an experienced Board member provides individual support to a new Board member for a period of six months, providing context to Board decisions and reports, and acting as a point of contact for Board related matters. Feedback from new Board members has been

⁶ SFHA Get Governance: [Digital Governance \(August 2023\)](#)

positive and an evaluation will be carried out of our improved approach in due course. (**Anila Ali, Governance and Business Improvement Manager, Almond HA**)

Sector example 6 – Grampian Housing Association

At Grampian we have in place a comprehensive induction process, which is detailed in our [induction template](#). It is currently very lengthy and attempts to cover everything, so we are looking at ways of streamlining this.

The aim is to have everything listed completed in 6 months but in practice, that is simply not possible – with volume of meetings being one factor. An induction/ background meeting usually takes place with the CEO and Depute CEO. Then a 1:1 with each Exec Team member (3) is scheduled and then another with the Chair. That is a total of five meetings already as part of the process.

Whilst we like to cover as much as possible as part of every new board member's induction, there is a risk of overwhelming them. Sometimes less is more, and we are exploring methods to trim the process down a bit. (**Emma Willox, Governance Officer, Grampian HA**)

4.3 Who should be involved?

There are some key people who must be involved in the induction process:

- the Chair, sub-committee Chairs, other GBMs as appropriate
- CEO
- buddies / mentors (if appointed)
- senior staff (introducing core business areas / priorities / challenges)
- specialist staff (e.g. governance, HR)

The flow chart at **Appendix 2** (p24) summarises who should be involved and when during the first six months of a GBM's induction.



POINTS TO THINK ABOUT



Induction should be a programme that has a clear start & finish

It's important to reach a point when new GBMs recognise that they have moved beyond induction and are established in their new role. Induction should usually be complete six months after joining the GB. There should be a conversation with each GBM around the six-month stage to ensure they are confident about their role and have completed the core induction requirements (a role for the buddy / mentor / Chair or CEO). This is also a good opportunity to get feedback on the effectiveness of the induction programme that can inform future arrangements.

Involving Tenants

Think about how to share tenant insight with new GBMs – inviting members of a Scrutiny panel to one of the induction sessions or encouraging new GBMs to attend the next tenants' event would be good early opportunities to highlight the GB's responsibility to listen to and take account of tenant feedback

4.4 Introducing the RSL

It is important to introduce new GBMs to the people they are likely to engage with (staff and GBMs) and also to the RSL and what it does. Contributing to discussions and understanding reports is much easier if GBMs have an insight into the RSL's communities, core business activities, performance and key challenges. Recognising that there is a lot to take in, it's important to supplement what's communicated in 'live' sessions with resources that can be referred to later, such as:

Developing summaries that GBMs can refer to e.g. five/ten things you need to know about the RSL/our tenants/our finances/our performance/ our current plans (see Points to Think About, p9)

Many RSLs organise annual 'tours' of some or all of their housing stock to provide insight to the GB about the communities that their decisions affect. Including a stock tour in the induction programme will ensure that new GBMs are introduced to the RSL's 'core business' more effectively than any reading material can. A tour is also an excellent way to introduce people to each other and help to build the team dynamic that's essential to effective collaborative working – amongst the GB and between the GB and senior staff. Of course, many RSLs organise visits to e.g. sites that are potential new developments; existing properties that are scheduled for planned work; estates that have benefitted from specific initiatives – or need some attention: these can usefully be incorporated into induction programmes too. Recognising that it's not always possible to get everyone together at the same time,

Providing routes for self-guided stock tours (walking or driving): highlighting specific features e.g. asset management priorities; demand; investment requirements; energy efficiency could be a contingency resource, rather than the 'preferred' option, as an independent tour is simply a drive or walk-around with no engagement or opportunity to ask immediate questions. The strategic / operational distinction between GBM and staff should be highlighted and must always be observed. It's important to make sure that there is prompt contact with any GBM following such a 'tour' to pick up on any questions.

Publicising dates for estate walkabouts that GBMs could join occasionally, offering an insight into the 'on the ground' situation and an opportunity to talk to staff (always respecting roles and responsibilities)

Circulating and maintaining a **calendar of tenant engagement events** that GBMs could be encouraged to join occasionally, to gain insight into what's important to tenants (contributing to evidencing compliance with Regulatory Standard 2.4⁷)



POINTS TO THINK ABOUT



Supplement rather than replace

It is important to stress that these suggestions are not intended to replace any of the advice offered in this guidance: these are additions rather than alternatives!

4.5 Useful resources to support induction

During induction, it is helpful to flag up any key resources and organisations that Governing Body Members should be aware of. Some of these are noted below:

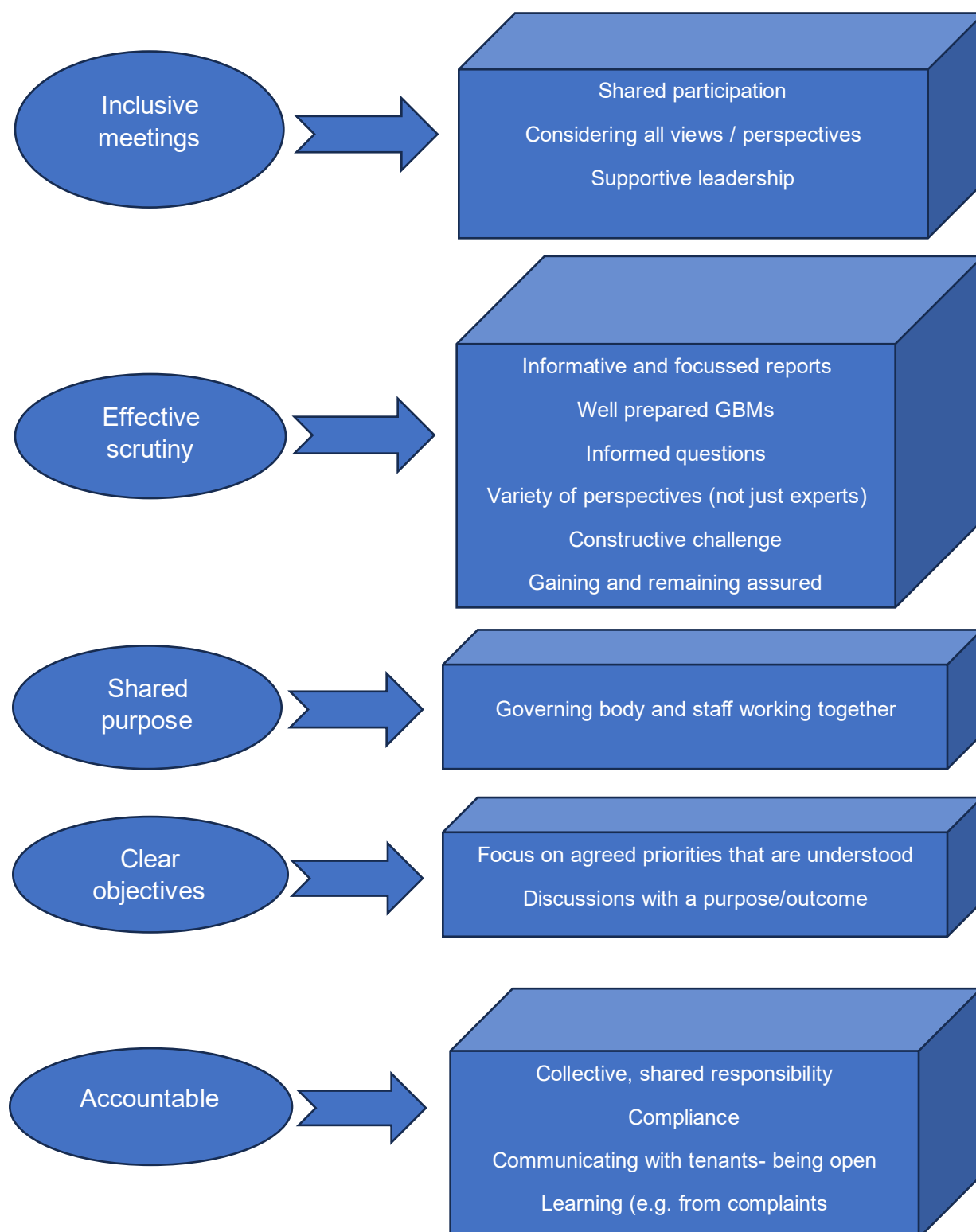
- **SFHA**
 - Provide website log-in details
 - [Code of Conduct and Guidance](#)
 - [EPB and Guidance](#)
 - [Model role description](#) – customised to RSL
 - [Introduction / Guide to HAs](#) – customised to RSL
 - [Getting the Balance Right](#)
 - Link to other [Get Governance](#) and policy / campaigning resources
 - GBM Forum and Conference
 - [Events calendar](#)
- **SHR**
 - Annual risk assessment
 - Annual report
 - Blogs
 - Registration; Compliance (Housing Scotland Act 2011 and subsequent)
 - [Regulatory Framework](#)
 - Standards of Governance and Financial Management
 - Scottish Social Housing Charter / Annual Return on the Charter
 - Code of Conduct (requirement to have Code; SFHA Model 'approved')
 - Register of Interests & policy (requirement to have; SFHA Model 'approved')
 - Rules / Memorandum and Articles (compliance with constitutional standards; requirement to submit; notification/approval of changes)
 - Annual accounts (requirement to submit)
 - Notifiable Events

⁷ Regulatory Standard 2.4: "The RSL actively seeks out the needs, priorities, views, concerns and aspirations of tenants and other service users and stakeholders. The governing body listens to its tenants and service users and takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions".

- Disposals (limited approval requirements)
- Serious Concerns
- Memorandum of Understanding with OSCR, recognising as 'lead regulator'
- **Financial Conduct Authority:**
 - Registration (Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014; Companies Act 2006)
 - Rules / Articles – approval and registration
 - Annual accounts – annual submission
 - Board eligibility
- **Office of Scottish Charity Regulator:**
 - Registration (Charity Trustee and Investment Act 2005 / 2024)
 - Trustee database
 - Annual accounts (requirement to submit)
 - Board/Trustee eligibility and information (requirement to provide details)
 - Memorandum of Understanding with SHR
- **Health and Safety Executive**
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Tenant and Resident Safety
 - Employee and Contractor Safety
 - Public Safety (e.g. construction sites / footpaths & pavements; play grounds; offices)
- **Care Inspectorate**
 - Registration and Regulation: (Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010)
 - Care and support services
- **Scottish Information Commissioner**
 - Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2005
 - Duty to publish information
 - Disclosure compliance
- **Information Commissioner's Office**
 - General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- **Disclosure Scotland**
 - Certification of fitness for role (employees and some GBMs)
- **SPSO**
 - Complaints from tenants and other customers

4.6 Explaining/Describing Features of Good Governance

As well as describing the RSL and its work, it is important to outline the features of good governance as part of any induction programme, to equip GBMs to govern well and challenge any poor practice. These features are summarised below, and when discussing as part of an induction session, it is also useful to illustrate the features with examples from the RSL's practice.



4.7 Constructive Challenge

New GBMs bring different perspectives and levels of governance experience. The importance of constructive challenge is crucial to highlight as part of any induction process. This section covers:

- Regulatory Requirements
- What contributes to providing effective challenge
- Effective challenge outcomes
- Use of language in constructive challenge

4.7.1 Regulatory Requirements

The SHR's Regulatory Framework places requirements on RSL's GB to challenge and scrutinise effectively. These requirements are included in the Standards of Governance and Financial Management:

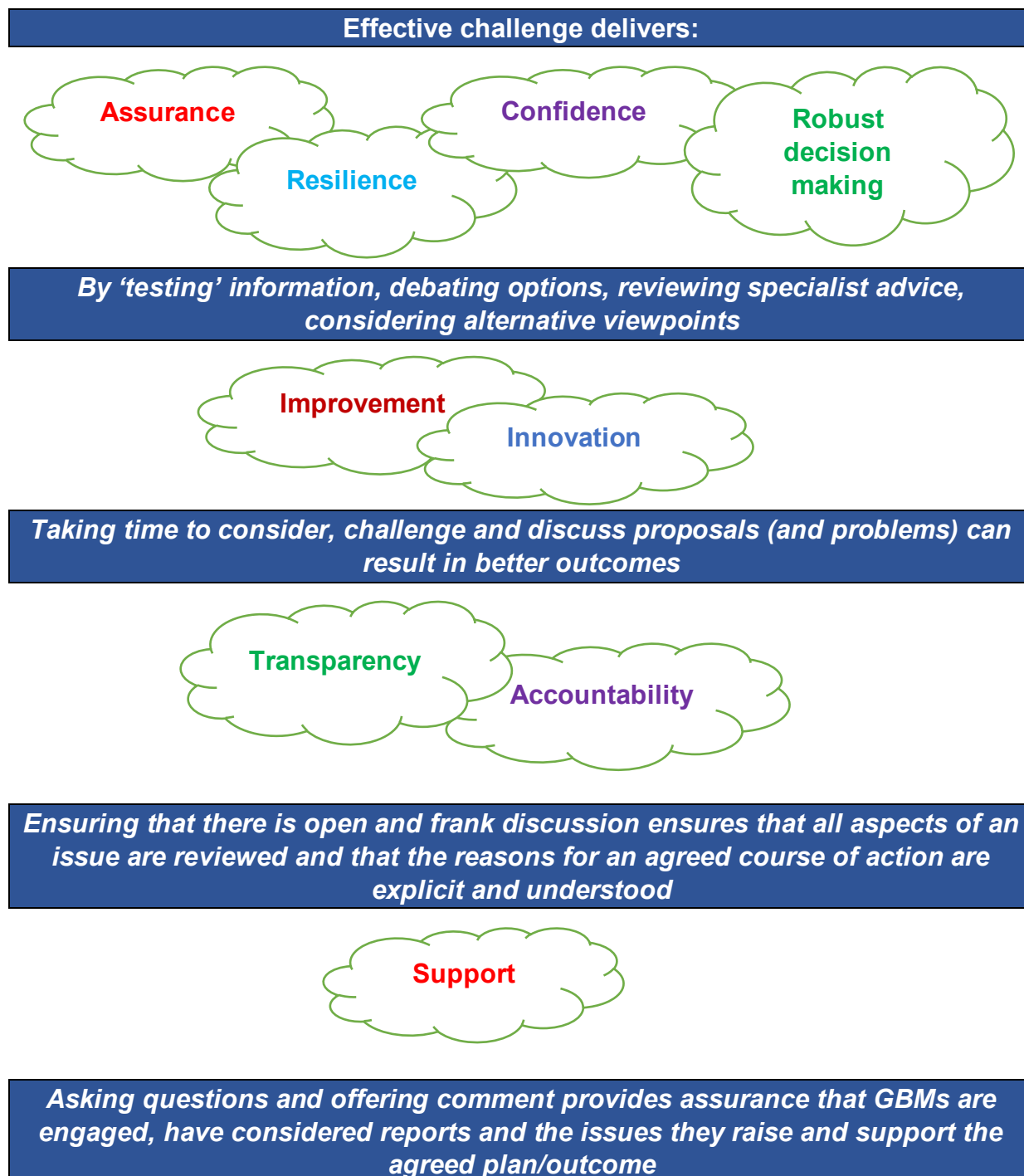
- Standard 1: The governing body leads and directs the RSL to deliver good outcomes for tenants and other service users
- Standard 4.3: The governing body challenges and holds the senior officer to account for their performance in achieving the RSL's purpose and objectives

4.7.2 What contributes to providing effective challenge?

- Diversity of thought, perspective, experience: the GB should combine people with relevant but different experiences and perspectives that will inform their contributions and considerations
- Participation: effective induction and inclusive meetings will support GBMs to be confident, engaged, proactive
- Good reporting: well-presented, concise, comprehensive and transparent reports, focussed, explicit in purpose; supported by additional information where necessary
- Knowledge: relevant to the business; broad range of experience; up to date – to inform contributions, questions and challenge
- Focus: in agendas, reports, presentations and discussions; clarity about what's important and why
- Equality: information presented in accessible style; comprehensible to experts and lay people alike; inclusive discussions where all questions, comments, contributions are encouraged; respectful consideration of diverse views
- Shared responsibility: respect for 'resident expert' – but not deference; each GBM must be satisfied/assured; willingness to seek additional information and/or specialist expertise

- Respect and trust: recognition of roles and responsibilities; objective trust in staff/advisers'/colleagues' professionalism – based on experience and quality of reporting

4.7.3 Effective challenge outcomes



4.7.4 Use of language in constructive challenge

The key to effective challenge is a constructive approach. The following phrases might be helpful to highlight to new governing body members to help them develop such an approach.

- 👉 It would be helpful to understand...
- 👉 ...what other options were considered
- 👉 ...how X will be achieved by doing Y
- 👉 I feel that we need more information before we can take a decision because...
- 👉 What can we learn from ...?
- 👉 How will this benefit / impact our tenants?
- 👉 How can we be assured that our resources are being used as effectively as possible to ...?
- 👉 Are we confident that, if we go ahead, our (people) resources are not going to be over-stretched?
- 👉 What will be the impact on delivering our business / corporate plan objectives?
- 👉 Recognising that X has happened, how do we ensure that it doesn't recur?
- 👉 My understanding is that X policy says Y, so I'm not clear how Z has happened / been decided
- 👉 How have the risks associated with this been assessed? Are we confident that these risks are manageable?
- 👉 I'd like to understand the immediate / long-term financial impact better
- 👉 I'm not confident that I understand the assumptions here – can you talk us through them?
- 👉 How has independent evidence / advice / research informed this proposal and what does it tell us about the value / risks?
- 👉 I know we've been doing X in this way for some time – how often do we review our approach / are there any new initiatives we could consider?
- 👉 There have been a lot of different views expressed and we've been provided with a significant amount of information – would it be helpful to have more time to consider everything before we take a decision?

4.8 Gaining and Maintaining Assurance

A key responsibility for the GB and individual GBMs is gaining and maintaining assurance that the RSL is compliant with its statutory and regulatory obligations – so it's important to highlight the significance of assurance in the induction programme and the means by which GBMs might gain and maintain adequate assurance. Some aspects that could be included might be:

Summarise requirements:

- Submit an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS), Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and all financial and performance returns to SHR and other regulators

- Have assurance and evidence of compliance with all legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness services, equalities and human rights and tenant and resident safety
- Have assurance and evidence of compliance with the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management (2024)
- Report any material non-compliance as soon as identified
- Report performance and compliance to tenants

Identify some assurance questions that GBMs may want to consider and signpost relevant sources:

- What gives me confidence and assurance that XHA is compliant?
- How does the GB know that assumptions, assessments and projections are reasonable?
- What information does the GB need to gain and sustain assurance? Do we have it?
- How do we gain assurance that plans / designs for e.g. asset management are compliant with relevant safety legislation and good practice advice?
- How do tenant views influence our planning, service delivery and decision-making? Do we know enough about what matters to them?
- How involved are tenants in setting and monitoring service performance: do our services meet expectations?
- Do we know how XHA's performance compares to our peers? Are we satisfied?

4.9 Collective Decision Making

Collective decision making depends on all GBMs participating actively in the RSL's governance: by reading reports, preparing for and attending meetings; asking questions; contributing to discussions; expressing opinions and doubts (and reasons); asking for additional information; expressing dissent, if not able to agree. This is an important element to flag up as part of the induction programme.

It is crucial to avoid "group think", and the following red flags should be noted:

- Limited/no discussion
- Proposals always/usually accepted
- Very few questions asked
- Small number of (same) contributors
- Short meetings
- Limited turnover amongst membership
- Dominant opinions
- Challenge discouraged / dismissed

- Assumed agreement
- Insular perspective

5. General Points about Induction

Finally, some general points to consider as part of the induction process are noted below.

- ✓ Recruitment Packs: include role description; Eligibility (rule 43); Code of Conduct; annual calendar of meetings - to ensure extent of commitment is clear
- ✓ Offer opportunity to observe a meeting before confirming / being elected
- ✓ Meet with potential GBMs to explain / discuss role before election / appointment (ideally Chair and CEO) – or an ‘open evening’ that interested people can attend
- ✓ Identify and introduce ‘buddy’/ nominated GBM to be first contact point – agree contact means
- ✓ Provide pen-portraits (with photos) of GBMs and senior staff in advance of attending first meeting
- ✓ Ensure GB involvement: avoid induction being exclusively / predominantly staff-led
- ✓ Invite all GBMs to join (or dip into) induction – to build team dynamic and refresh knowledge
- ✓ Deliver at least some induction support in person / face to face / live
- ✓ Programme early opportunity(ies) to meet senior staff to introduce organisation & provide insight into delivering priorities
- ✓ Tailor non-core induction to reflect individual needs / experience
- ✓ Avoid assuming knowledge
- ✓ Package reading material (e.g. RSL organisation / RSL strategy / Regulatory Framework / Sector)

Appendix 3 (p25) provides a to do list for the various stages of induction that can serve as a useful checklist.

Appendix 1 - Document Checklist

To be signed (by governing body member):

Before election / appointment / co-option

- ☐ Eligibility (Rule 43)
- ☐ Nomination form (and/or application form)
- ☐ Disclosure, where required

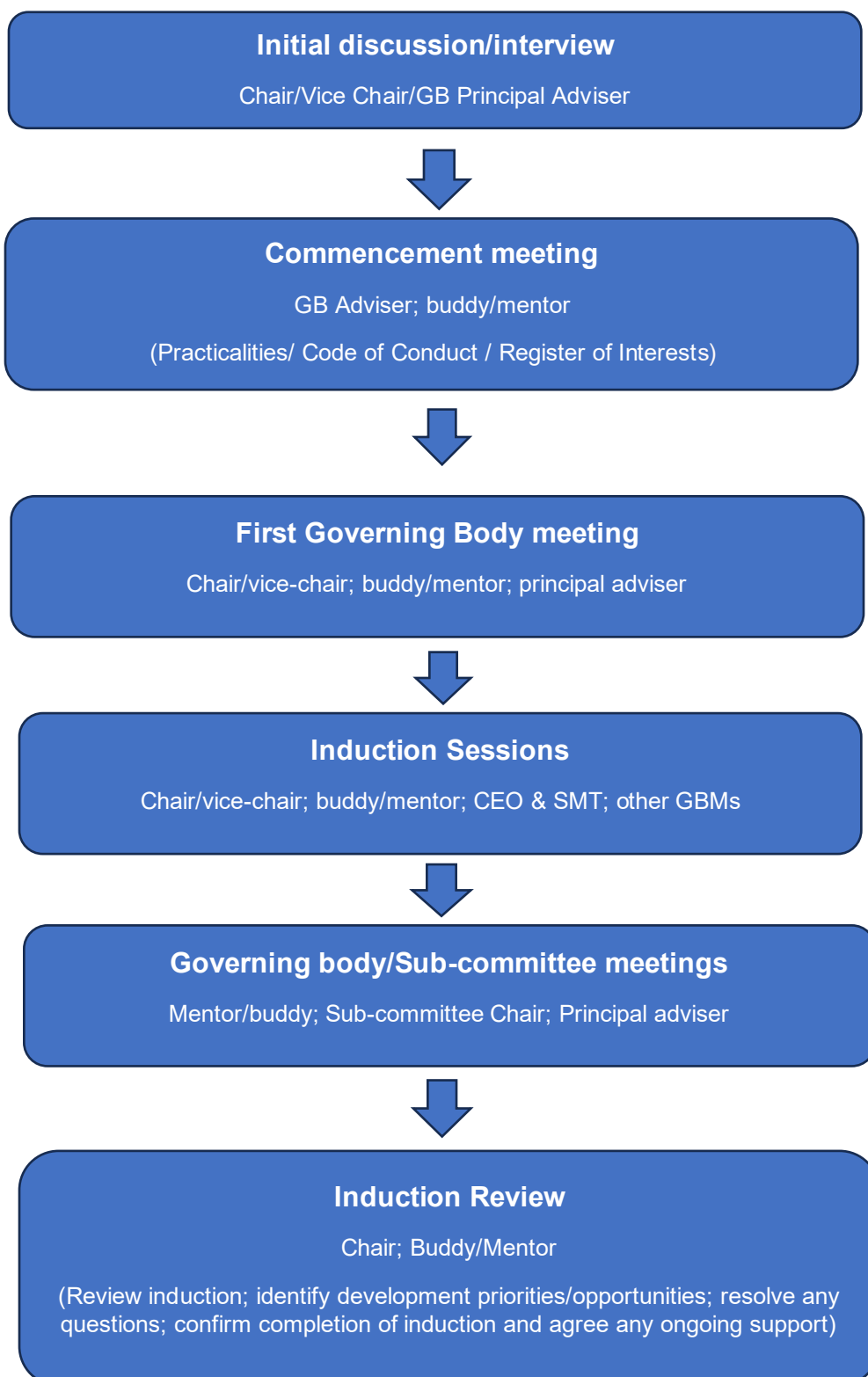
Following election / appointment / co-option

- ☐ Code of Conduct
- ☐ Declaration of Interests
- ☐ Any documentation relating to e.g. use of technology

Annually

- ☐ Code of Conduct
- ☐ Register of Interests

Appendix 2 - Who should be involved



Appendix 3 - Induction 'To Do' List

Before election/co-option

- ☐ Confirm eligibility (declaration or equivalent)
- ☐ Complete necessary disclosures

Before first meeting

- ☐ Sign Code of Conduct
- ☐ Complete Declaration of Interests
- ☐ Provide access details (passwords etc. for RSL website / portal / buildings)
- ☐ Explain format of meeting and business to be discussed (i.e. go through meeting pack; highlight key decisions / discussions)
- ☐ Identify GB colleague who can answer queries before / at meeting
- ☐ Provide 'pen-portraits of all GBMs

At first meeting

- ☐ Introduce everyone (name, background / special interest or experience)
- ☐ Chair to provide brief synopsis of each agenda item as it's reached

Following first meeting

- ☐ Offer 'de-brief' (buddy / Chair / CEO)
- ☐ Identify / agree ongoing support for new GBM and how it will be delivered
- ☐ Signpost useful websites: SFHA; SHR; Scottish Housing News etc.

During first six months

- ☐ Periodic 'check-ins' (in person / virtual / telephone)
- ☐ Incremental release / delivery of induction programme and resources
- ☐ Stock tour – guided or independent
- ☐ Complete core induction / prioritised training

At end of six months

- ☐ Hold conversation with each GBM to confirm induction completion / address outstanding questions / arrange additional training as required