

Our Landlord Report 2015

At the end of May we submitted our annual performance report to the Scottish Housing Regulator; this shows how the Council has performed against the aims of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and is summarised in this edition of Tenants News.

The report, which covers the reporting period from April 2014 to March 2015, shows how well we performed in key areas including rent collection, tenant and service user involvement, repairs, maintenance and improvements, allocations, homelessness and how we deal with issues such as empty properties and antisocial behaviour. The full report will soon be published on the Scottish Housing Regulator website

We are proud of our performance but know that with your involvement we can do even better in future. We are always looking for ideas on how we can improve and would value your opinion on how well you feel we have done. Should you wish to get involved in

helping to improve services, please contact us on 01506 280000 or fill in the tear-off slip at the end of this edition and tell us what you think.

We would like to offer our thanks to the members of our Tenants' and Editorial Panels for their dedication and commitment in working with West Lothian Council to improve services for tenants throughout West Lothian; their input and expertise were vital in shaping and designing this document.

Alistair Shaw
Head of Housing, Construction and Building Services



West Lothian Council Housing – The Context

Our housing stock

The council has houses in many locations across West Lothian. The sizes and average weekly rents are shown below.

No of bedrooms	House	Tenement	4 in a block	Other	Total	Average Rent (£)
Bed-sit		13		13	26	62.20
1	955	557	625	118	2255	60.53
2	3060	645	2104	394	6203	64.50
3	3191	168	534	302	4195	68.96
4+	494	4	92	6	596	72.91
Total	7,700	1,387	3,355	833	13,275	65.65



Little Boghead, Bathgate



Drumgelloch Crescent, Eliburn

Our housing applicant list

Council housing is in great demand. In 2014/15 we:

- **Added 3300 applicants**
- **Cancelled 3609 applications**

There are a total of **7557** applicants on the list compared with **8904** last year.

How we let our houses

	2014/15	2013/14
The number of lets to existing tenants (transfers)	186	311
The number of lets to housing list applicants	161	270
The number mutual exchanges	167	180
The number of lets from other sources	6	0
The number of lets to homeless applicants	540	612

2014/15 Satisfaction



Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey

During 2014/15 all tenants were sent a survey in the Tenants News, giving every household the chance to tell us what you think of the services provided by Housing, Construction and Building Services (HCBS). We have received 687 replies to this survey, which is one of the best response rates we have had so far from our tenants. However, we would like even more tenants to take the chance to share your views with us this year. If you missed your chance to reply, please tell us what you think of our performance by completing the comments card included in this Tenants News.

- 89.5% (615 tenants) are satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord, compared to 88.1% the previous year.
- 72.3% (491 tenants) are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes. This is a very similar result on the previous year, of 72.6%.
- 86.2% (593 tenants) are satisfied that HCBS keep them informed about their services and decisions, compared to 85% the previous year. This is a slight improvement on the previous year but we would still like to do even better. If you have any ideas on how we can do this, please let us know.
- 78.2% (535 tenants) are satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in, compared to 77% the previous year.

Value

Getting good value from rents and service charges

The council manages over 13,000 homes that are let to tenants. It is very important to us that we provide good quality homes at a reasonable cost to tenants and that we are able to have these re-let quickly to ensure we bring in as much rental income as possible. Against a challenging and difficult year for many tenants, we are pleased with the amount of rent collected.



99.6% of the total rent due from our mainstream tenants was collected; this means tenants that are in Scottish Secure tenancies and does not include rent from temporary tenancies. This is an improvement on our performance last year, which was 97%. The below table details how much rent was due and completed.

Rent Due: £42,623,850

Rent Collected: £42,462,544

- 85.5% (568 tenants) think the rent they pay represents good value for money, compared to 81.5% the previous year.
- 0.51% of our rent, a total of £219,526 was lost due to properties being empty. This is due to re-lets or work being carried out to improve homes. We have been working hard to ensure our properties are re-let as quickly as possible and we have achieved a small improvement in this area compared to last year's results of 0.57% (£252,486).



Rent arrears

The council will continue with its rent arrears reduction campaign, working closely with tenants to resolve arrears issues at an early stage and ensure maximum take up of welfare benefits. Our performance for 2014/15 is set out below:

Actual Rent Owed from Arrears 2014/15: £1,207,750

Target for 2015/16: £1,000,000

- £23,845,164 of our rental income was received directly from housing benefit.
- 9,622 West Lothian Council households received part or full housing benefit (74%).

Former tenant arrears

When a tenant leaves a council property with rent arrears, we keep a record of these and work with our colleagues in Revenues to collect this money. At the end of the reporting period 2014-15, former tenant arrears totalled £897,617. We have a small team working specifically to reduce these arrears and during the reporting year we collected £45,958.



Housing quality and maintenance

Our customers have a range of needs and we are responsible for providing and maintaining good quality homes. This section shows how well we have improved and repaired our homes.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)

All of the council's stock has been surveyed against the requirements of the SHQS and the table shows the status of our housing stock at the end of the reporting year.

	2014/15	2013/14
Total self-contained stock at the end of the reporting year	13,275	13,229
Self-contained stock exempt from SHQS	128	363
Self-contained stock in abeyance from SHQS	18	N/A
Self-contained stock failing SHQS for one criterion	1	667
Self-contained stock failing SHQS for two or more criteria	0	33
Total self-contained stock failing SHQS	1	700
Stock meeting the SHQS	13,128	12,466

Reasons for the small difference for the reporting year include delays to flats being demolished, some houses being significantly rebuilt and tenants refusing improvement works.

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in

We asked new tenants: *"Thinking about when you moved in, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of your home?"*

728 tenants responded:

	2014/15 (728)	2013/14 (726)
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in:	75.41%	84.99%



This is an area we are looking to improve on next year and are working on ways to raise tenant satisfaction with their new home.

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home

We asked tenants: *"Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of your home?"*

686 tenants responded:

	2014/15 (686)	2013/14 (552)
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home:	83.82%	82.79%



This area has improved since last year, and we will continue to seek new ways of delivering our service to achieve our goal of making all our tenants completely satisfied with the quality of their home.

Property repairs and servicing

Reactive repairs – the numbers	2014/15	2013/14
Total number of reactive repairs completed during the reporting year	50,310	54,368
Average number of reactive repairs completed per occupied property	3.89	4.23



A reactive repair is an unplanned repair. If properties are in good condition, the amount of repairs required will decrease as has happened in 2014/15.

Reactive repairs – the emergencies	2014/15	2013/14
The number of emergency repairs completed in the reporting year	21,810	22,849
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)	7.91	11.26



We aim to complete all emergency repairs within 24 hours of the tenant reporting this to us.

Reactive repairs – the non-emergencies	2014/15	2013/14
The number of non-emergency repairs completed in the reporting year	28,500	31,519
Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)	8.74	10.28



We aim to complete all non-emergency repairs within 5 -15 working days depending on the type of repair required. This is a target we always seek to achieve and improve on each year.

Reactive repairs – completed right first time	2014/15	2013/14
The number of reactive repairs completed right first time in the reporting year	26,770	28,782
The total number of reactive repairs completed during the reporting year	28,500	31,561
Percentage of reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed right first time	93.93%	91.19%



'Right First Time' are reactive repairs which we complete fully, to the tenant's satisfaction and within the appropriate timescale. We are pleased to have improved on this in 2014/15, and are looking to improve further next year.

Reactive repairs – the appointments we kept	2014/15	2013/14
The number of reactive repairs appointments made in the reporting year	20,160	22,753
The number of reactive repair appointments kept in the reporting year	20,037	22,675
Percentage of repairs appointments kept	99.39%	99.66%



We perform consistently high in keeping our appointments to carry out repairs in tenants homes. We will continue to seek to achieve 100% in this area.

Gas Servicing Performance	2014/15	2013/14
How many properties required gas safety records	13,298	13,159
How many gas certificated had been renewed by their anniversary dates	13,095	13,064
Percentage of properties that require a gas safety record which had a gas safety check and record completed by the anniversary date.	98.47%	99.28%



There has been a slight decrease in properties receiving a gas service by their anniversary date this year. We always seek to achieve 100% in this very important area of our service. We are confident that this will improve in 2015/16.

Average cost of repair	2014/15	2013/14
Emergency Repairs	£67.08	£62.15
Routine Repairs	£120.86	£116.80
Gas Servicing	£52.71	£54.07



This table shows how much on average we spend per property on emergency, non-emergency and gas servicing over the year.



Percentage of tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service

We asked tenants who had had repairs carried out in the last year, *“how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the repairs service?”*

680 tenants responded:

	2014/15 (680)	2013/14 (548)
Percentage of tenants satisfied or very satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	85.44%	86.13%



We are working on ways to improve the level of our customer satisfaction to get as many tenants as possible feeling very satisfied.

How well we managed empty homes last year

The council allocates properties to people who have an active application for housing. Points are awarded to applicants based on their needs and those with most points are given priority. The full Allocations Policy can be found on the council website. When a property becomes empty we do our best to re-let as quickly as possible as this maximises income for the service and our customers.

Lettable house that became vacant	2014/15	2013/14
Houses that became vacant (excludes new build)	813	937
Represents what percentage of stock	6.4%	7.4%

Abandoned properties

We reported that 136 properties were abandoned during the reporting year. This compares with 92 in the year 2013/14.

Offers refused

The number of offers refused is shown below.

	2014/15	2013/14
The number of tenancy offers	2,617	3,093
The number of tenancy offers that were refused	1,708	1,896
Percentage of tenancy offers refused during the year	65.27%	61.3%



Given that the offers are made on the basis of an applicant's choice of area, size and type, there is a high level of refusals, and whilst this is an improvement on last year, we would like to see the amount of refusals decrease next year.

Average time to re-let properties

	2014/15	2013/14
No. of properties that became void	746	946
Average time to re-let (days)	23.03	21.14



On void properties, our aim is to complete safety and repair work, have the property up to an acceptable standard and re-let to a new tenant as soon as possible.

Medical adaptations

	2014/15	2013/14
Percentage of approved applications for medical adaptations completed during the reporting year	98.30%	99.45%
Average time to complete approved applications for medical adaptations in the reporting year (days)	22.50	24.43



Medical Adaptations are alterations made to a property that are approved by an Occupational Therapist. These changes enable the tenant to live more independently in their property by having it adapted to suit their medical needs. There are a wide variety of changes we can make to make life easier for tenants who need some assistance from us. The type of adaptations we make to properties can range from installing a grab –rail, ramps, or wet-floor showers.

Involvement

Help us to get it right

If you tell us if you have had a problem with any service you have received, it helps us make improvements and provide a better service for tenants and service users.



Complaints received	2014/15	2013/14
Received	579	724
Not upheld	299	304
Partly upheld	179	222
Upheld	113	188

The table below shows the reasons for complaints, ranging from standard of service, being the highest, to missed appointments, being the lowest.

Complaint Reason	Number	Percentage
Employee Attitude	57	10
Missed Appointments	6	1
Policy Related	94	12
Poor Communication	85	16
Standard of Service	282	52
Waiting Time	55	9
Total	579	100

Community safety

Out of Hours Service (7pm to 4am)

The Council operates an Out of Hours service for complaints of antisocial noise nuisance. If necessary, we can work with the police for more serious disturbances. Call them on 01506 280000. During the reporting year the Out of Hours services received 2033 calls, resulting in some of the calls received:

- **130** warning notices issued
- **894** advice calls
- **209** verbal warning administered
- **157** calls referred to Environmental Health
- 490 cases of antisocial behaviour were received – 333 were resolved
- 350 court actions were initiated
- 25 households were evicted for non-payment of rent

We did not evict anyone for anti-social behaviour. It is the council's policy to use eviction as a last resort, after all other means have been exhausted.

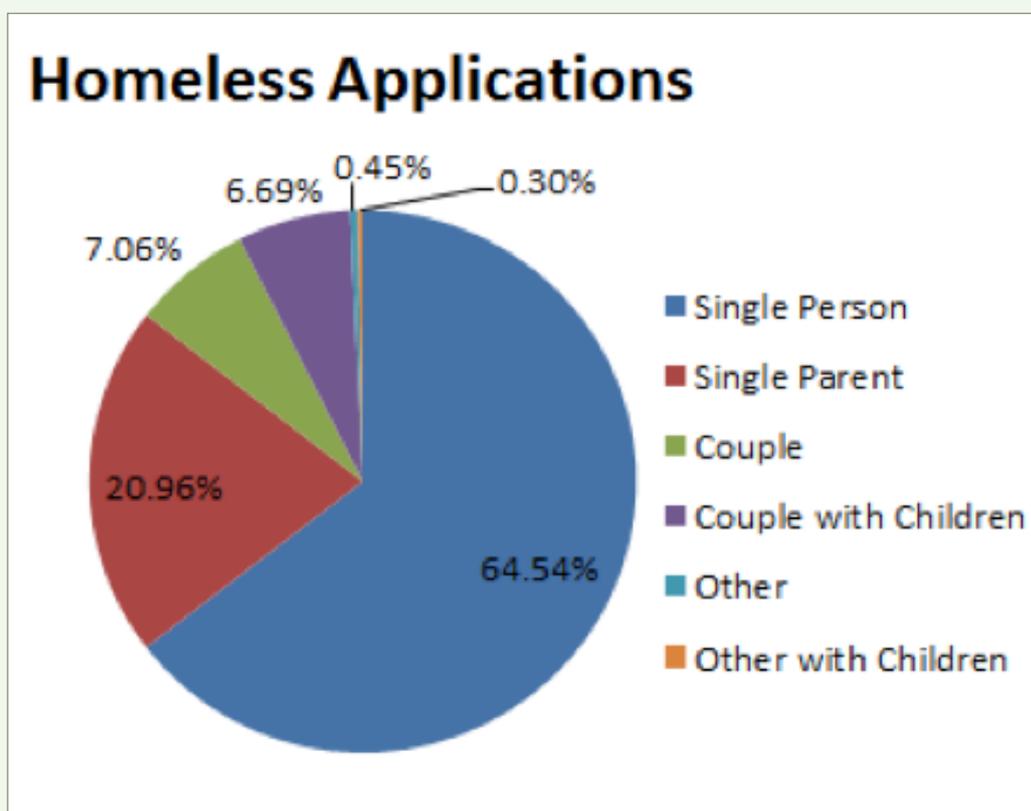
Homelessness

The Council provides a 24 hours service for people who are homeless or potentially homeless. There are specialist teams who provide practical support and assistance to those needing help with their housing situation. We manage temporary accommodation for homeless people, which includes emergency accommodation and temporary tenancies.

In West Lothian we received a total of 1,331 applications from households presenting as homeless; this was 3% more than the previous year of 1,290 households.

Of the 1,331 applications, 1,138 (85.5%) were from a single person or single parent, 94 (7.06%) were from a couple, 89 (6.69%) were from a couple with children and 10 (0.75%) were from other groups eg. civil partnerships.

In West Lothian, 1,016 applications were assessed as unintentionally homeless, meaning the council had a duty to provide the applicant with settled accommodation. 919 (90.5%) went on to be offered permanent accommodation.



How well did we do?	2014/15	2013/14
Average time homeless applicants spent in temporary accommodation	73 days	80 days
How many households stayed in temporary accommodation	1094	1091
How many houses in West Lothian were used for temporary accommodation	272	269
How many people contacted the council's prevention service for help and support	1545	1653