

Housing, Customer and
Building Services



LANDLORD REPORT 2022

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to West Lothian Council's latest edition of our Landlord Report. This covers the performance of Housing, Customer and Building Services (HCBS) from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022; this is referred to throughout this report as the 'reporting year'.

The last year has been particularly challenging for all of us, as we have adapted to living life with some normality. We have delivered essential services throughout the pandemic using new and innovative ways to ensure the safety of our colleagues and our customers throughout West Lothian and continue to do so as we remobilise.

As you go through the landlord report, you will note that in some areas of our performance, we are still affected by the impact of the pandemic. However, we have made excellent progress in returning to the high-performance levels our tenants and service users expect and deserve.



Julie Whitelaw
Interim Head of Housing,
Customer and Building Services

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BACKGROUND

The Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter) is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, and sets out the standards and outcomes which social landlords should aim to achieve when performing housing activities.

The Charter came into effect on 1 April 2012 and was reviewed during 2016; it is currently being further reviewed by the Scottish Government in 2021/2022. The Charter applies to all local authorities and social landlords in Scotland, with each landlord being required to submit an annual return on their performance to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The SHR is an independent regulatory authority who monitors progress against these standards; this is known as the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

Within The Charter there are six standards:

- The Customer Landlord Relationship
- Housing Quality & Maintenance
- Neighbourhood & Community
- Access to Housing and Support
- Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges
- Other Customers (Standard 6 applies only to those that are responsible for managing sites for gypsies/travellers. As we do not currently have any sites, this standard does not apply to West Lothian Council).

Under each standard there is a clear statement of what tenants and service users can expect from their landlord, and underpinning each standard there are Performance Indicators which each landlord must report on each year to the SHR.

This year, the council was required to report performance against each of these indicators to The Scottish Housing Regulator by the 31st July, and publish a Landlord Report to tenants by the 31st October 2022.

Information in this report shows how well the council has performed against each of the standards that apply to them as a landlord. This report is produced in association with the members of the Tenant Participation Development Working Group and Tenants' Editorial Panel, to ensure the information is clear and of interest to tenants and service users.

The Scottish Housing Regulator's website shows performance information from all local authorities and social housing landlords from across Scotland. If you would like to compare the Council's performance with up to four other social landlords, you can do so using the Landlord Comparison Tool, which can be found here:

➤ <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance>

LANDLORD INFORMATION

Council housing in West Lothian is managed by Housing, Customer and Building Services (HCBS). The service is managed by Julie Whitelaw, the Interim Head of Service, with the support of a Senior Management Team.

- Building Services
- Customer Services and Customer Services Development
- Housing Need
- Housing Operations
- Housing Strategy and Development
- Performance and Change

The council aims to offer an effective service, managing, maintaining and improving homes whilst delivering an excellent value-for-money service

**HOUSING
CUSTOMER AND
BUILDING SERVICES
EMPLOYS AROUND 800
OFFICERS TO CONTINUE
PROVIDING QUALITY
HOMES FOR RENT.**



OUR HOUSING STOCK

In the reporting year, the weekly rent was increased for all properties by 3%, as agreed by tenants as part of the five-year rent consultation carried out in 2017.

As of 31 March 2022, the council had 14,027 homes for rent, a decrease in our housing stock of 4 houses from 2020/21.

Here we show the size and average weekly rent for our housing stock:

| Type of Property Available for Rent | No. of Properties Available for Rent | Average Weekly Rent per property type |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| bedsit | 14 | £67.12 |
| one Bed | 2580 | £73.48 |
| two Bed | 6622 | £78.12 |
| three Bed | 4186 | £82.88 |
| four+ Bed | 625 | £88.87 |

IN 2021/22 THE COUNCIL HAD

14,027

HOMES AVAILABLE FOR RENT



PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE ARC FOR 2021/22

STANDARD 1 - THE CUSTOMER LANDLORD RELATIONSHIP

every tenant and customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

TENANT SATISFACTION

Following the launch of the service's Customer Experience (CX) team in late 2021, a review of the service surveying and customer engagement was undertaken. A new approach to seeking feedback and satisfaction has been developed to improve methods and opportunities to ensure we are collecting the lived experiences of our tenants and service users.

There has been a very marginal decline in the result for this indicator this year, the service moved to limit face-to-face tenant participation in keeping with restrictions during the pandemic, and the shift was made to a fully digital programme of engagement. The evolution of the CX team has resulted in Tenant Participation and Customer Experience joining the new customer and communication team, with a programme of targeted activity to increase the service tenant and customer participation offering, with new ways of getting involved in service developments.

Throughout this report we provide information from the survey showing how tenants feel HCBS performed against certain charter indicators. We also show the number of tenants who responded to each question. **These are shown as icons which represent:**



VERY OR FAIRLY SATISFIED



NEITHER SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED



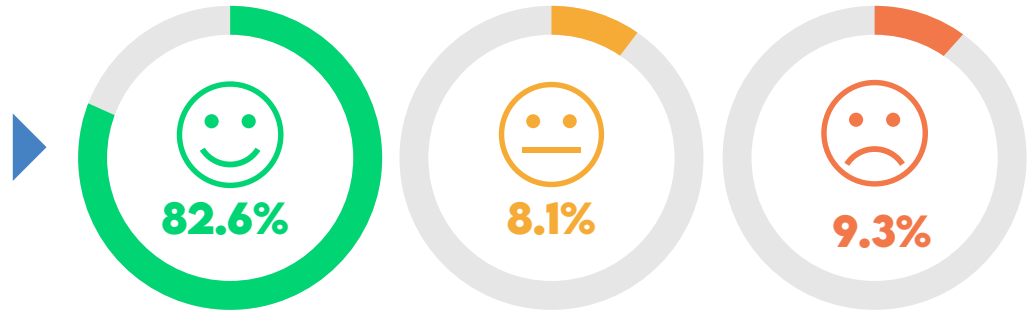
FAIRLY OR VERY DISSATISFIED

OVERALL SATISFACTION

2,464 responses received

Q. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by your landlord?

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:

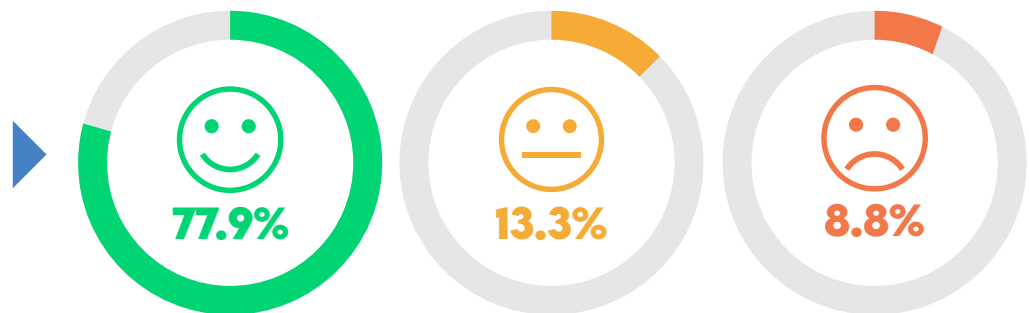


COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION

2,202 responses received

Q. How good or poor do you feel your landlord is at keeping you informed about their services and decisions?

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:

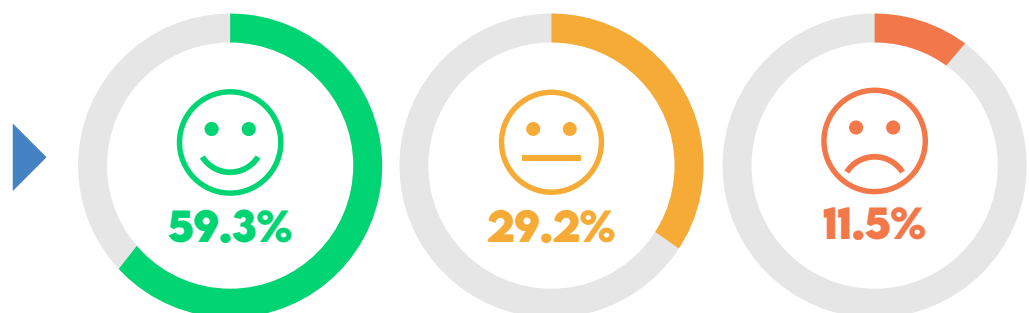


PARTICIPATION SATISFACTION

2,167 responses received

Q. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with opportunities given to you to participate in your landlord's decision-making processes?

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:



STANDARD 2 - HOUSING QUALITY AND MAINTENANCE

tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) when they are allocated; are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair, and also meet the energy efficiency standard for social housing (EESH) by December 2020.

tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.



SCOTTISH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD

The Scottish Government introduced the SHQS in February 2004. At the end of the reporting year, 12,602 properties met the quality standards of the SHQS.

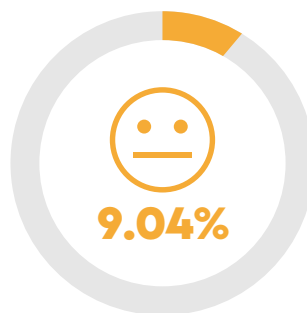
89.84%
OF PROPERTIES MET
THE SHQS STANDARD

QUALITY OF HOME SATISFACTION

2,213 responses received

Q. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:



ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARD FOR SOCIAL HOUSING (EESH)

The EESH aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. The Scottish Government brought EESH into force in March 2014.

The EESH sets a minimum energy efficiency rating for landlords to achieve, meaning tenants should benefit from a warmer home, which could mean lower fuel consumption, lower energy bills and fewer tenants in fuel poverty.



REPAIRS

In West Lothian we offer scheduled appointments for routine repairs so there is a choice of a morning or afternoon slot (anytime between 9:30am and 4:30pm).

To help the council manage each reported repair, these are categorised based on the type and the urgency of the repair. It is important for you to know this as each category has different timescales for when the repair must be completed.

There are five different categories of repair which should be reported as soon as possible. There are different ways to report different categories of repair, depending on whether these are emergency or non-emergency.

More information on the different repair categories can be found online at:

[www.westlothian.gov.uk/
request-a-repair](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/request-a-repair)

BOOKING A REPAIR

Tenants have the option and flexibility to book routine repair appointments online, by telephone or in person.

You can do this by:

- Online through '[Housing Online](#)'
- through the online interactive tool [Request a Repair Online](#)
- Online at [contact us](#)
- By telephone on: 01506 280000

REPAIRS PERFORMANCE

In West Lothian, repairs to our housing stock are carried out by our own Building Services operatives.



IN THE REPORTING
YEAR, THEY COMPLETED
89.25%
OF REPAIRS 'RIGHT
FIRST TIME'.

IN WEST LOTHIAN, OUR BUILDING
SERVICES OPERATIVES CARRY OUT
REPAIRS TO OUR HOUSING STOCK.
IN THE REPORTING YEAR, THEY
COMPLETED 37,606 EMERGENCY AND
NON-EMERGENCY REPAIRS.

REPAIRS PERFORMANCE

Here we show a breakdown of the type and number of repairs carried out, with the average time to complete and the average cost of each repair:

CATEGORY 1 - EMERGENCY AND OUT OF HOURS REPAIRS PERFORMANCE

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/20 |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| total no. of repairs | 23,994 | 20,061 | 23,165 |
| average time to complete (hours) | 6.29 hrs | 5.94 hrs | 5.96 hrs |
| average Cost of Repair | £86.46 | £83.02 | £82.48 |

CATEGORY 2 AND 3 REPAIRS – URGENT AND NON-URGENT REPAIRS PERFORMANCE

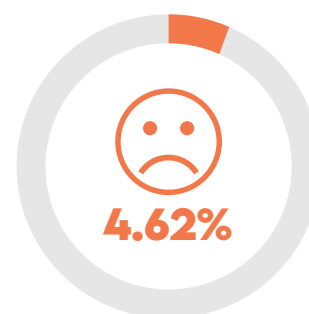
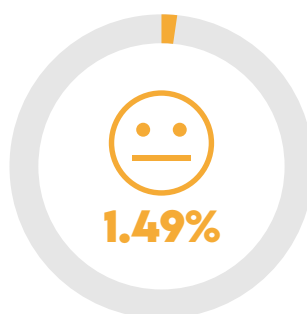
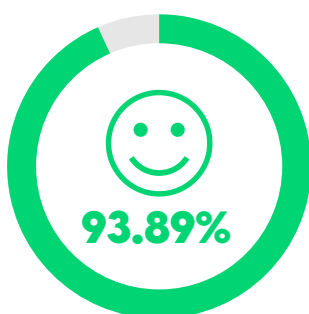
| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/20 |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| total no. of repairs | 13,612 | 10,051 | 14,765 |
| average time to complete (days) | 9.24 days | 7.74 days | 7.01 days |
| average Cost of Repair | £100.94 | £108.57 | £89.44 |

REPAIR SATISFACTION

2,012 responses received

Q. Thinking about the LAST time you had repairs carried out, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the repairs service provided by your Landlord?

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:



GAS SERVICING

By law, we must carry out an annual gas safety check and service to our homes with gas heating systems. This keeps our systems in good working order and gives tenants peace of mind knowing that everything is being done to keep them safe and warm. It is also a legal requirement that these checks are carried out and failure to allow us into a property can result in our operatives having to force entry to a property.



IN THE REPORTING YEAR, 100% OF OUR PROPERTIES HAD A GAS SAFETY CHECK AND CERTIFICATE RENEWED BY THEIR ANNIVERSARY DATES.

GAS SERVICING AND SAFETY CHECK PERFORMANCE

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|--|---------|---------|-----------|
| total no. of properties requiring a gas safety certificate | 13,729 | 13,608 | 13,493 |
| no. of certificates renewed by their anniversary date | 13,720 | 13,051 | 13,493 |
| average cost of gas service | £54.58 | £55.10 | £54.21 |

STANDARD 3 - NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.



WORKING TOGETHER

In West Lothian we work in partnership with tenants, service users, the police and other council services to manage our neighbourhoods.

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB)

We record the number of antisocial behaviour complaints made to the council. These can include neighbour complaints, vandalism/damage, street drinking or problems with unoccupied houses.

78.5%
OF REPORTED
CASES WERE
RESOLVED IN THE
REPORTING YEAR

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PERFORMANCE

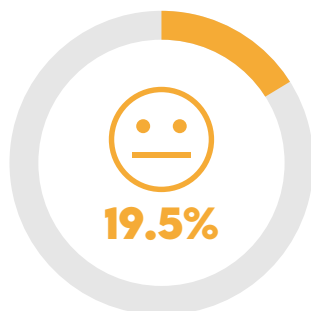
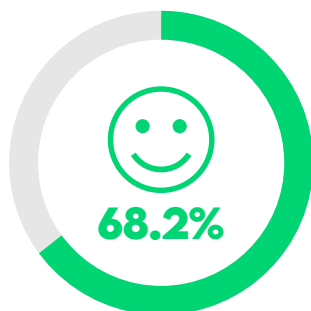
| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|--|---------|---------|-----------|
| reported cases of antisocial behaviour | 260 | 310 | 272 |
| reported cases resolved | 204 | 270 | 256 |

NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT SATISFACTION

2,186 responses received

Q. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord's contribution to the management of the neighbourhood you live in?

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:



One of the most important things you can do to improve safety in your community is to report antisocial behaviour. With your help we can stop antisocial behaviour before it escalates into something more serious.

To report antisocial behaviour:

- [Contact the Council](#)
- Police Scotland on 101. (calls to this number are charged at the local rate)
- Police Scotland on 999, if it's an emergency.

COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE

In the reporting year, HCBS dealt with a total of 1,037 Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. This has increased compared to 2020/21, where 757 complaints were recorded.

| Reporting Years | Stage 1 | Stage 2 |
|---|------------|------------|
| Complaints received in the reporting year | 786 | 251 |
| Complaints carried forward from the previous reporting year | 11 | 8 |
| Total number of complaints received and carried forward | 797 | 259 |
| The percentage of all complaints responded to in full during the reporting year | 97.24% | 93.44% |
| Average time in working days for a full response being issued for each individual complaint | 3.74 days | 19.63 days |
| Number of complaints responded to in full by the landlord in the reporting year | 775 | 242 |
| Time taken in working days to provide a response for the total number of complaints over the reporting year | 2,896 days | 4,750 days |

Complaints allow us to look at where things have gone wrong and make improvements in the future, and HCBS would like tenants to tell us if they have had a problem with any service received. By telling us where problems have been experienced, the service is able to identify where issues lie and work on making services better for tenants and service users.

Complaints are broken down into separate categories to help us identify where improvements to our procedures need to be made in order to prevent similar complaints occurring in the future.

| Complaint Reason | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Standard of Service | 429 | 41.4% |
| Employee Attitude | 88 | 8.5% |
| Poor Communication | 220 | 21.2% |
| Waiting Time | 169 | 16.3% |
| Policy Related | 98 | 9.4% |
| Missed Appointment | 33 | 3.2% |
| TOTALS | 1,037 | 100% |

STANDARD 4 - ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SUPPORT

those looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.

tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.

those at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

those looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.

tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice; are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed; and are offered continuing support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.



HOUSING LIST PERFORMANCE

The council allocates properties to people who have an active housing application. Applications are assigned to a group and points are awarded based on applicants housing need.

For information on applying for a house can be found [here](#).

Information shown provides details of how we managed our housing list in the reporting year.

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|--|---------|---------|-----------|
| applicants added to the housing list | 3,027 | 3,475 | 3,390 |
| applications cancelled from the housing list | 502 | 593 | 2,249 |
| applicants on the housing list | 9,512 | 9,248 | 7,999 |
| offers of housing made | 1,480 | 1,265 | 2,634 |
| offers of housing refused | 785 | 682 | 712 |

**FROM THE OFFERS OF HOUSING MADE,
53.04% OF THESE WERE REFUSED
DURING THE REPORTING YEAR.**

LETTING OUR HOUSES

When a property becomes empty, we do our best to re-let it as quickly as possible; this maximises rental income and provides much-needed accommodation for those with housing needs.

4.5% OF OUR
LETTABLE HOUSING STOCK
BECAME AVAILABLE
FOR RE-LET.



LETTING PERFORMANCE

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| properties that became vacant (excluding mutual exchanges) | 631 | 608 | 929 |
| properties abandoned | 17 | 55 | 81 |
| average time to re-let properties | 51.62 days | 53.35 days | 36.92 days |

HOW WE LET OUR HOUSES

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| existing tenants (transfers) | 105 | 83 | 342 |
| housing list applicants | 168 | 114 | 268 |
| mutual exchanges | 138 | 82 | 113 |
| other sources | 14 | 9 | 11 |
| homeless applicants | 396 | 402 | 763 |
| TOTAL | 821 | 690 | 1,384 |

HOMELESSNESS

The council provide a 24 hour practical support and assistance service for people who are homeless or potentially homeless. Our homeless accommodation includes both emergency and temporary accommodation.

HOMELESSNESS PERFORMANCE

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|--|------------|------------|-----------|
| average time homeless applicants spent in temporary accommodation | 122.5 days | 101.3 days | 88.2 days |
| how many households stayed in temporary accommodation | 1,754 | 1,765 | 1,829 |
| how many houses in West Lothian were used for temporary accommodation | 633 | 597 | 404 |
| how many people contacted the council's prevention service for help and support | 754 | 445 | 767 |
| The total number of homeless households to whom the council has a statutory duty to secure permanent accommodation | 891 | 1,120 | 696 |

MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS

At some stage in life, tenants may find their home is no longer suitable for them. This may be because the layout of the house is difficult due to illness, disability, mobility or if a tenant is elderly.

We can carry out alterations to a property (as approved by an Occupational Therapist), based on a tenant's medical needs. These adaptations are to help the tenant continue to live more independently in their own home. Adaptations can include grab rails, ramps or wet-floor showers.

MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS PERFORMANCE

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|---|---------|---------|-----------|
| medical adaptations completed in the reporting year | 395 | 215 | 546 |

The total cost of completed medical adaptations in the reporting year was £630,847.

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|
| average time to complete approved applications | 13.80 days | 9.58 days | 10.30 days |

WE COMPLETED 97.05% OF APPROVED MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS IN THE REPORTING YEAR.

STANDARD 5 - GETTING GOOD VALUE FROM RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES

tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

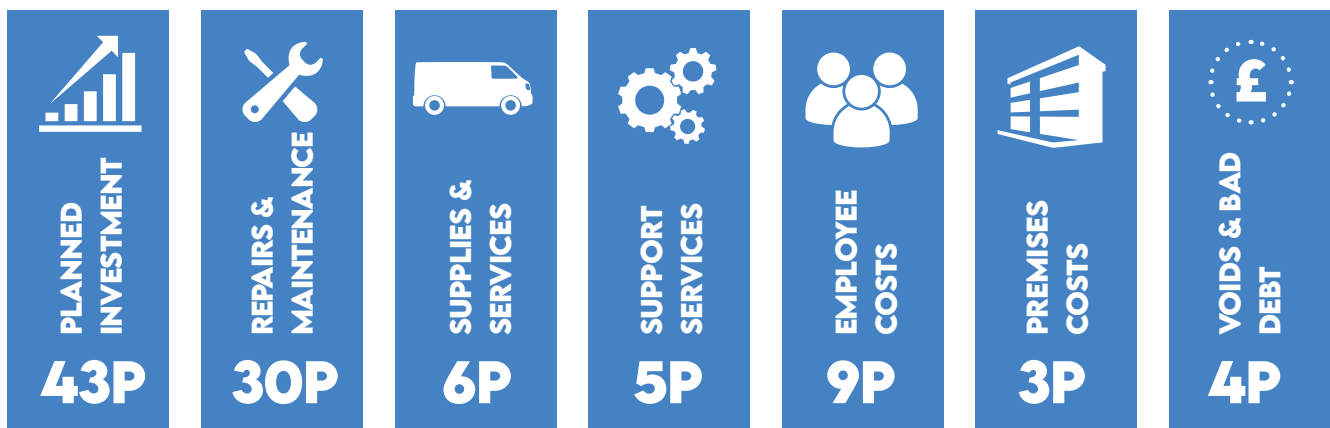
a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and other customers can afford them.

tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including any details of individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.

WHERE DOES YOUR RENT MONEY GO?

Rent money is used to fund the repair service, improvements to tenants' homes and new-build projects. It is therefore very important that tenants pay their rent to ensure the council is able to deliver these vital services.

The graphic below shows where every penny in the pound goes from your rent payments. You can see how the rental income is being spent, with 73 pence in every pound collected being spent on Repairs, Maintenance and Planned Investment work on tenants' homes.



RENTAL INCOME

As a landlord we have a duty to collect as much rental income as possible so we can provide a good value for money service to all our tenants.



**AGAINST A CHALLENGING YEAR
FOR MANY, WE COLLECTED 98.1%
OF THE RENTAL INCOME DUE IN THE
REPORTING YEAR.**

**OUR AIM FOR 2022/23 IS TO
CONTINUE TO WORK WITH TENANTS
TO MAXIMISE OUR INCOME AND
REDUCE RENT ARREARS.**

PAYING RENT

Paying rent is part of your tenancy agreement and it is important that rent is paid on time and in full. If you are having difficulty paying rent, please contact your housing officer for help and advice.

Tel: 01506 280000 or

visit www.westlothian.gov.uk/contactus

If you wish to pay your rent online, click here:

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/47580/Housing-Rent>

INCOME AND ARREARS PERFORMANCE

In the reporting year, 8,959 households had their housing benefit paid directly to the Housing Revenue Account, amounting to £29,547,805

| Reporting Years | 2021/22 | 2020/21 | 2019/2020 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| rent due | £56,243,018 | £54,138,937 | £51,817,411 |
| rent collected | £55,172,190 | £53,277,472 | £50,490,260 |
| rent arrears (gross) | £4,600,676 | £4,206,919 | £3,331,538 |

The performance information shown above also includes figures for 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 the money owed.

RENT LOST DUE TO EMPTY PROPERTIES

When a property becomes empty, we do our best to re-let it as quickly as possible; however, sometimes this can take longer than we would like due to improvement work being carried out on the property.

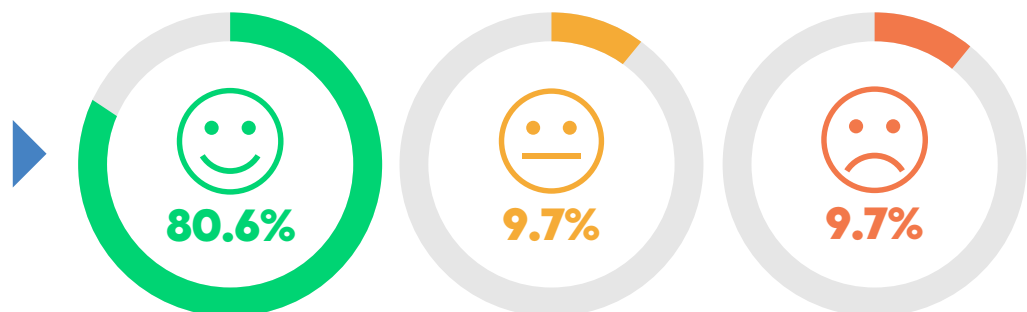
IN THE REPORTING YEAR, 0.71% OF OUR RENT, A TOTAL OF **£396,517** WAS LOST DUE TO PROPERTIES BEING EMPTY.

RENT SATISFACTION

2,215 responses received

Q. Taking into account the accommodation and the services your landlord provides, do you think the rent for your property represents good or poor value for money?

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:



PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT 2022/2023

Housing, Customer and Building Services are a key player in developing and deploying corporate strategies aimed at improving the quality of life for all people in West Lothian. Over the coming years, the service will continue to support the delivery of the council's eight key priorities with value adding activities and will also assist in the delivery of the council's transformation programme through:

- Achieving all of the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, homeless people, and others who use our services.
- Collecting data relating to each of the protected characteristics for our existing tenants, new tenants, people on waiting lists and staff. We also collect data on protected characteristics for people who apply to us as homeless.
- Complying with all legal obligations related to housing and homelessness, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.
- Recognising the risks and pressures associated in delivering on the standards and outcomes in relation to homelessness, and improvements in this area of the service is one of the key areas of focus for the service as we deliver the reviewed Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in 2022/23.
- Understanding the ongoing impacts of UK Government welfare reforms and cost of living increases on our tenants, particularly those most vulnerable to social deprivation. The service has made practical support and guidance a cornerstone of our service development programme, in order to help mitigate future impacts and pressures on tenants and our ability to respond.
- Focussing on improvements in void performance in order to maximise our stock availability to relieve pressures felt in the service in terms of turnover
- Having an ARC improvement plan in place to ensure continuous improvement is a key focus for all service areas.
- Building on the good joint working with all partners and agencies engaged in the RRTP and in private sector landlord focussed teams to improve our reach in terms of utilising the whole sector, across tenures, to mitigate the threat of homelessness.
- In terms of Electrical Installation Condition Reports have 100% completion for all our properties at the time of submission.



LANDLORD REPORT 2022

TAKING PART

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and 2010 gives tenants legal rights in relation to participation and places a duty on Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to consult with tenants on a range of housing issues.

In West Lothian, we have a Tenant Participation Strategy that sets out how the council will communicate, consult and most importantly, take on board and use the views and opinions of tenants to influence decisions that shape our services.

There are many ways in which any tenant or service user can take part, either as an individual or as a member of the various groups in a way that suits them.

We have various initiatives and activities available that provide a means for tenants to come along and find out about changes or improvements to services such as rent levels, repairs or any other housing related service.

If you would be interested in taking part, please contact us by:

Email: TP@westlothian.gov.uk

Telephone: 01506 281885 or 01506 282967 and ask to speak with the TP Team

Complete our online form: <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/32597/Taking-Part>

 Or join us on Facebook by searching:
West Lothian Council Tenant Participation

View our short video on how to take part in Tenant Participation

