

Housing, Customer and
Building Services



LANDLORD REPORT 2024

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 2023 to 31 March 2024; this is referred to throughout this report as the 'reporting year'.

Over the past year, our combined efforts have resulted in substantial improvements across all aspects of our service, demonstrating our dedication to ensuring tenant satisfaction. These achievements extend to our exceptional performance in meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), which underscores our commitment to providing safe, energy-efficient, secure, and well-maintained social housing in Scotland. Furthermore, we have observed an increase in the overall satisfaction of our tenants.

As we move into the next reporting year, our service will continue to adapt, innovate, and collaborate to improve tenant satisfaction and commit to improving services to meet our tenants' needs.



Julie Whitelaw
Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services

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TAKING PART

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 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 which 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 May, and publish a Landlord Report to tenants.

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 Head of Service, with the support of a Senior Management Team.

HCBS are made up with the following service areas:

- Building Services
- Customer and Community Services*
- 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

**This is a council wide service and not a landlord function.*

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



OUR HOUSING STOCK

In the reporting year, the weekly rent was increased for all properties by 3.5%, as agreed by tenants as part of the five-year strategy as agreed in February 2023.

As of 31 March 2024, the council had 14,261 homes for rent, an increase in our housing stock of 63 houses from 2022/23.

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	12	£71.82
one Bed	2,631	£78.89
two Bed	6,717	£83.75
three Bed	4,248	£83.73
four+ Bed	653	£95.70

IN 2023/24 THE COUNCIL HAD

14,261

HOMES AVAILABLE FOR RENT



PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE ARC FOR 2023/24

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

We have developed a customer engagement and feedback approach designed to maximise opportunities for collecting the lived experiences of our tenants and service users. This ensures we are capturing valuable insights to continuously improve our services based on real-life experiences.

We are pleased to report that the past year has witnessed an increase in tenant satisfaction levels with our service. This positive trend reflects our commitment to enhancing the tenant experience through a multifaceted approach.

Our Customer and Communication team has been working hard to understand our tenants' journey and involve them in shaping our services, resulting in a more tenant-centric approach. We will continue to work with tenants to improve their experience and ensure that we communicate with them about what matters to them, at the right time.

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



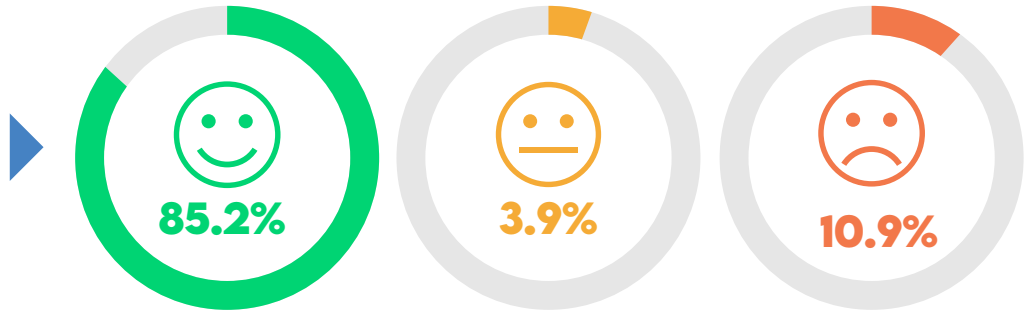
FAIRLY OR VERY DISSATISFIED

OVERALL SATISFACTION

969 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:

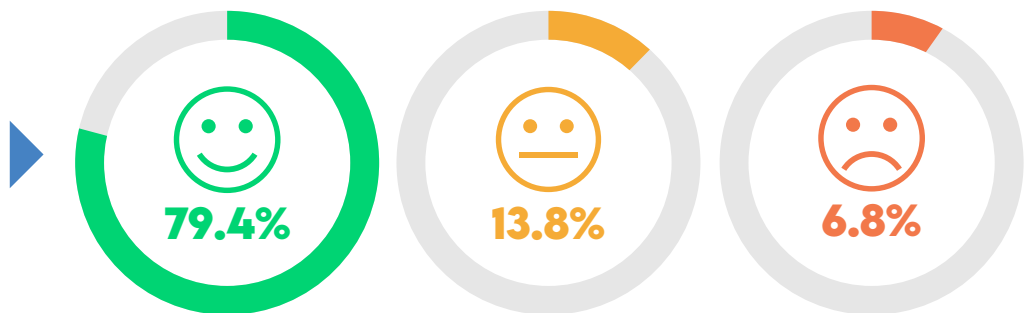


COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION

969 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:

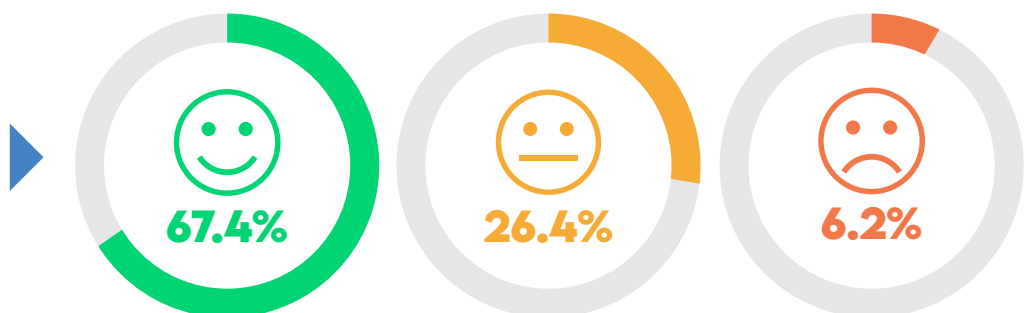


PARTICIPATION SATISFACTION

969 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.

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, 13,370 properties met the quality standards of the SHQS.

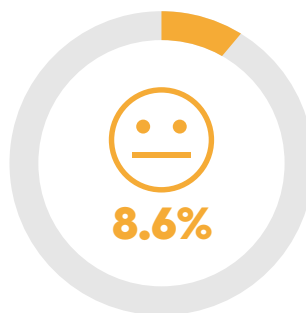


QUALITY OF HOME SATISFACTION

969 responses received

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

Tenants reported satisfaction levels as:



REPAIRS

In West Lothian we offer scheduled appointments for routine repairs so there is a choice of a morning or afternoon slot (anytime between 8am 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
85.51%
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 34,212 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	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
total no. of repairs	21,875	25,780	23,994
average time to complete (hours)	6.04 hrs	6.26 hrs	6.29 hrs
average Cost of Repair	£107.75	£97.90	£86.46

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

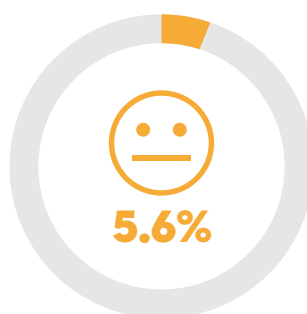
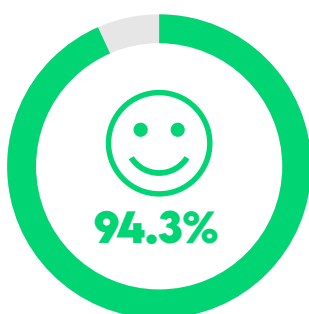
Reporting Years	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
total no. of repairs	12,337	13,319	13,612
average time to complete (days)	9.23 days	8.46 days	9.24 days
average Cost of Repair	£114.98	£122.51	£100.94

REPAIR SATISFACTION

3,737 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	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
total no. of properties requiring a gas safety certificate	14,008	13,954	13,729
no. of certificates renewed by their anniversary date	14,007	13,953	13,720
average cost of gas service	£62.58	£63.43	£54.58

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, partner agencies 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.

82.08%
OF REPORTED
CASES WERE
RESOLVED IN THE
REPORTING YEAR

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PERFORMANCE

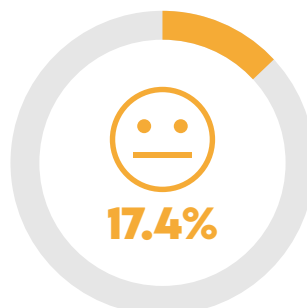
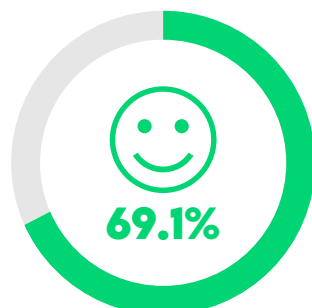
Reporting Years	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
reported cases of antisocial behaviour	240	197	260
reported cases resolved	197	159	204

NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT SATISFACTION

969 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 received a total of 1,165 Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. This has decreased compared to 2022/23, where 1,351 complaints were recorded.

Reporting Years	Stage 1	Stage 2
Complaints received in the reporting year	852	313
Complaints carried forward from the previous reporting year	14	21
Total number of complaints received and carried forward	866	334
The percentage of all complaints responded to in full during the reporting year	100%	97.90%
Average time in working days for a full response being issued for each individual complaint	4.09 days	17.47 days
Number of complaints responded to in full by the landlord in the reporting year	866	327
Time taken in working days to provide a response for the total number of complaints over the reporting year	3,539 days	5,714 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	526	45.2%
Poor Communication	183	15.7%
Waiting Time	176	15.1%
Policy Related	139	11.9%
Employee Attitude	106	9.1%
Missed Appointment	35	3.0%
TOTALS	1,165	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.



**HOMELESS PEOPLE
GET PROMPT AND
EASY ACCESS TO HELP
AND ADVICE**

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	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
applicants added to the housing list	5,094	4,225	3,027
applications cancelled from the housing list	3,480	2,385	502
applicants on the housing list	11,269	10,476	9,512
offers of housing made	1,663	1,739	1,480
offers of housing refused*	908	1,001	785

**the offers of housing can count multiple refusals on one property.*

**FROM THE OFFERS OF HOUSING MADE,
54.60% 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.

5.07% OF OUR
LETTABLE HOUSING STOCK
BECAME AVAILABLE
FOR RE-LET.



LETTING PERFORMANCE

Reporting Years	2023/24	2023/24	2021/22
properties that became vacant (excluding mutual exchanges)	726	785	631
properties abandoned	40	45	17
average time to re-let properties	88.21 days	59.74 days	51.62 days

HOW WE LET OUR HOUSES

Reporting Years	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
existing tenants (transfers)	97	168	105
housing list applicants	190	181	168
mutual exchanges	176	136	138
other sources	13	9	14
homeless applicants	449	391	396
TOTAL	925	749	821

The speed of re-letting homes in 2023/24 has been affected by several factors, including delays with suppliers and materials, a shortage of external contractors, utility issues, and challenges in recruiting skilled tradespeople. Severe weather in December 2022 also caused significant flooding, which diverted resources to urgent repairs in tenanted homes, further increasing the backlog of void properties. Many of these properties have required substantial work to bring them back to a lettable standard, contributing to the ongoing backlog throughout 2023/24.

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	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
average time homeless applicants spent in temporary accommodation	141.7 days	152.4 days	122.5 days
how many households stayed in temporary accommodation	1,796	1,522	1,754
how many houses in West Lothian were used for temporary accommodation	641	646	633
how many people contacted the council's prevention service for help and support	937	524	754
The total number of homeless households to whom the council has a statutory duty to secure permanent accommodation	911	1,391	891

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	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
medical adaptations completed in the reporting year	398	405	395

The total cost of completed medical adaptations in the reporting year was £629,372.

Reporting Years	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
average time to complete approved applications	20.08 days	15.42 days	13.80 days

WE COMPLETED 95.6% 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.

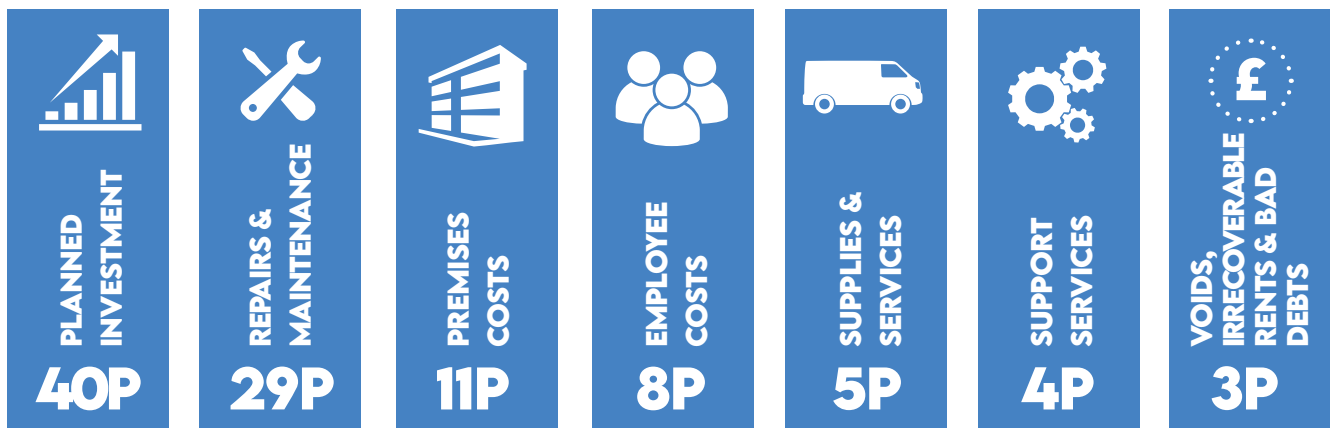
a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and other customers can afford them.

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 council house projects. It is therefore very important that tenants pay their rent to ensure the council is able to deliver these vital services. In 2023/24, we invested £16 million in improving council homes.

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 41 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 98.32%
OF THE RENTAL INCOME DUE IN THE
REPORTING YEAR.**

**OUR AIM FOR 2024/25 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, 8,087 households had their housing benefit paid directly to the Housing Revenue Account, amounting to £18.537M.

Reporting Years	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
rent due	£60.569M	£58.267M	£56.243M
rent collected	£59.554M	£56.834M	£55.172M
rent arrears (gross)	£6.002M	£5.313M	£4.601M

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.

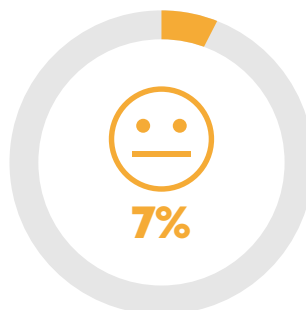
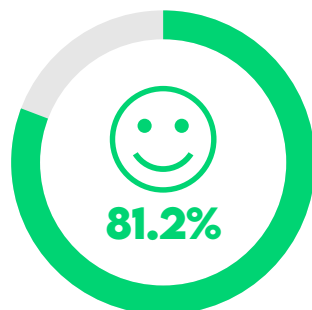
IN THE REPORTING YEAR, 1.50% OF OUR RENT, A TOTAL OF **£910,423** WAS LOST DUE TO PROPERTIES BEING EMPTY.

RENT SATISFACTION

969 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 2024/25

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 2024/25.
- 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.

The logo features a white house outline on a green background. The text 'LANDLORD REPORT' is written in white, with '2024' in black below it.

LANDLORD REPORT 2024

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 & Customer 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 280434 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

