

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
HOUSING SERVICES**

Annual Charter Performance Report for Tenants and other Customers 2022/23





Foreword



Welcome to our Annual Charter Performance Report, which outlines how we performed during 2022/23 against the Outcomes and Standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The content and the style of the report was agreed following a consultation with

tenants and covers those areas that tenants have said are important to them and I hope that it is received as positively as previous reports have been.

We are rightly proud of our relationship with the many tenant groups that we have and how effective they are in representing their communities and getting involved in decision making. This relationship was recognised earlier in the year when we were again awarded Gold Accreditation for Excellence in Tenant Participation from TPAS Scotland (Tenant Participation Advisory Service). We will continue to take action to improve communication with all tenants and we are committed to continue to strengthen the tenant voice across housing services, increasing opportunities to participate and influence the provision of services.

As you would expect, it has been another busy year across housing services as we continued to respond to the legacy impacts of the pandemic and the challenges this posed. Some of our key achievements included a reduction in the average time taken to re-let empty homes, achieving a consistently high rate of tenancy sustainability against the background of a cost of living and energy crisis, the introduction of a mobile app for Housing Officers to enable real-time community based working and the delivery of a more proactive and visible anti-social behavior service.

Our Homelessness and Housing Options Service delivered Year 4 of our Rapid Rehousing Transition

Plan “Home at the Heart”. Key achievements during the year included being able to support over 500 households to prevent the experience of homelessness and delivering continued high rates of tenancy sustainability from our Housing First initiative.

New key housing policies were implemented during the year, including our new Local Housing Strategy – More Homes Better Homes West Dunbartonshire, our updated Domestic Abuse Policy and we also implemented our reviewed and updated Housing Allocations Policy.

The Council’s ambitious New House Building Programme ‘More Homes West Dunbartonshire’, has now successfully delivered over 500 new affordable homes to date. The Council is now the leading housing developer in the area and we continue to see significant effort invested in the creation and acquisition of new homes of the right type and in the right places.

Our latest completion took place at the Queens Quay development in September 2022, delivering 29 new Council homes in a key regeneration area, as part of a wider development which has delivered 146 new social rented homes. These are the first residential properties to be heated from the Council’s Queens Quay District Heating Network. This development has been recognised at recent housing sector awards, winning the Herald Property Award ‘Regeneration Project’ of the Year and Inside Housing National Award for Best Affordable Housing Development in Scotland.

We recognise that there are areas where we need to improve and this report sets out some of the actions we will be taking during 2023/24 in order to respond positively to the challenges we face and ensure that we achieve our goal of being a top performing landlord.

Peter Barry

Chief Officer, Housing and Employability



Contents

Introduction	4
Communication and participation	5
Quality of housing	6
Repairs and maintenance	7
Estate management and anti-social behaviour	8
Access to housing	9
Tenancy sustainment	10
Homeless people	11
Value for money	13
Rents and service charges	14
Tenant involvement	15



Introduction

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the outcomes and standards that the Scottish Government expects landlords to be delivering for their tenants and other customers.

All social landlords are expected to assess their performance against these Charter outcomes on an annual basis and produce a report based on this assessment, which includes actions being taken to address any areas of weakness.

This report outlines how Housing Services performed during 2022/23. It focuses on the areas that tenants have said are the most important to them and each outcome includes key measures of performance, whether this performance has improved or not since the previous year and how this performance compares to other landlords.



Tenant involvement in this report

The Scottish Social Housing Charter expects landlords to fully involve tenants in assessing and reporting their performance. In August and September 2019, tenants were involved in reviewing the content, style and format of this report.

Lots of valuable feedback was provided and all of the changes asked for by tenants were made and have been included in subsequent reports.

Another key task of the review was to consider the best group of landlords to compare our performance against. There are many “peer groups” that can be used, each with some benefits and drawbacks. In the end, tenants have asked that the report shows how our performance compares with that of all the other local authorities in Scotland that have housing stock.

This comparison is shown using symbols, which again have been reviewed, are used consistently throughout the report and are explained below.

Comparison with the previous year



Better



Poorer



No change

Comparison with other landlords



Top quarter



Second quarter



Third quarter



Bottom quarter



Outcomes 2 & 3

Communication and Participation



Aims:

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

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.

To support our key principles of being a listening, accessible, responsive and open Council, we are committed to continue strengthening the tenant voice across housing services, increasing opportunities to participate and influence the provision and improvement of services.

“Involving You”, the Council’s Tenant Participation Strategy for the period 2021-2024 was developed in conjunction with tenants and approved in February 2021. It is disappointing that the percentage of tenants who feel we are good at keeping them informed and who are satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making has dropped, however the implementation of this strategy is further improving the opportunities for tenants to get involved and really influence services being provided.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good	85.7%	75.8%	↓	
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities	89.3%	69.2%	↓	

A key focus for 2021-24 is to encourage more tenants to get involved, promote the personal benefits as well as community benefits of getting involved and ensuring that we can demonstrate the impact tenants have.

During 2022/23 we implemented Year 2 of this strategy. Our full Tenant Participation performance report can be accessed [here](#) and key achievements included:

- Continued good response from tenants in the annual rent setting process
- Being awarded Gold Accreditation from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, a national organization that specialises in participation, for our approach and structures within West Dunbartonshire
- Tenant consultation around our Multi Storey Enhanced Living Strategy
- Continued tenant involvement in shaping and improving housing services, examples of the variety of opportunities to participate are outlined at Tenant Involvement on page 15.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Average time in working days to respond to a Stage 1 complaint	11.78 days	10.36 days	↑	
Average time in working days to respond to a Stage 2 complaint	27.03 days	34.09 days	↓	

What we are doing in 2023/24:

- We will review and update our Tenant Communication Strategy
- We will explore new methods to provide information to tenants and obtain their views



Outcome 4

Quality of Housing

Aims:

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:




Tenants' homes, as a minimum, when they are allocated are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and any other building quality standard in place throughout the tenancy; and also meet the relevant Energy Efficiency and Zero Emission Heat Standard.

Our “More Homes, Better Homes West Dunbartonshire” approach aims to ensure that our new and existing homes in West Dunbartonshire meet the needs of our tenants and future tenants.

The Council's Better Homes Project Board has been strengthened to ensure all our homes meet the best possible standards, including energy efficiency standards. Some programmes affected by the Covid-19 pandemic have not fully recovered and this has impacted on our level of compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

In terms of future investment plans, we are keen to strengthen the alignment with tenant priorities and we are aware that additional focus is required in terms of planning and developing our approach to meeting climate change targets to deliver our ambition of increased tenant satisfaction with the quality of our homes.

Following the decision taken by West Dunbartonshire Council to agree a weekly rent increase of 5% for 2023/24, tenant representatives were consulted and helped to develop an Enhanced Housing Capital Investment Programme which will deliver an additional £30m of investment in Council homes over the next five years, bringing our overall investment to over £151 million over this period to improve tenants homes.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Percentage of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	76.5%	62.7%		
Percentage of properties meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)	18.2%	32.2%		

Over the period of 2023/24, we plan to invest around £33 million in existing homes including:

- Improving 613 homes with new heating systems;
- Improving 435 homes with new external insulated render;
- Improving 568 homes with new roof coverings;
- Improving 600 homes with window/door renewals;
- Improving 272 homes with kitchen renewals;
- Improving 190 homes with bathroom renewals;
- Improving 190 homes with electrical shower installs;
- Carrying out 120 medical adaptations; and
- Carrying out 450 path/general environmental upgrades

What are we doing in 2023/24:

- **We will continue to deliver the Council's New Build Housing Programme**
- **We will deliver our Capital Investment Programme for 2023/24**
- **We will implement our Multi Storey Enhanced Living Strategy**



Outcome 5

Repairs and Maintenance











Aim:

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

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

Performance in relation to repairs and maintenance during 2022/23 shows some improvements, with a reduction in the average time to complete both emergency and non-emergency repairs and all annual gas safety checks being carried out within the 12 month target date. We recognise there are areas where we can get better and plans are in place aimed at improving the service experienced by tenants.

In November 2022, the Council reviewed how we responded to dampness being reported by tenants in their homes and a revised policy was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in May 2023. This new policy ensures quicker response times to deal with dampness, more cyclical maintenance such as extractor fan cleaning and investment in technology solutions to help identify, tackle, and proactively prevent damp and mould issues.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	5.8 hours	4.5 hours		
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	10.16 days	9.31 days		
Percentage of reactive repairs carried out completed right first time	86.5%	85.7%		
Number of times in the reporting year we did not meet our statutory obligation to complete a gas safety check within 12 months of a gas appliance being fitted or last checked	0	0		
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	87.7%	83.7%		

What we are doing in 2023/24:

- We will take actions to improve satisfaction with the repairs service
- We will implement a revised process and monitor performance in addressing dampness and mould in tenants homes



Outcome 6



Estate Management and Anti-Social Behaviour

Aim:

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure as far as reasonably possible that:

Tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

Ensuring that tenants live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe is a key objective. Our Anti-Social Behaviour Services operated throughout the pandemic and the number of cases resolved remains high. Whilst reported satisfaction levels have dropped, we have an improvement plan in place aimed at addressing this.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in	78.5%	62.7%	↓	
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases resolved	98.1%	97.1%	↓	

What are we doing in 2023/24:

- We will review and update our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- We will increase awareness in how to report anti-social behavior and ensure attendance at all community Tenant and Resident Association meetings to provide guidance and updates to tenants
- We will continue proactive work in partnership with other agencies to provide a visible presence in our communities and tackle hot spot areas to meet community needs
- We will actively promote our estate walkabout programmes to tenants within our communities
- We will share our community work and actions we are taking to tackle anti-social behavior with tenants and residents via the Housing News and social media platforms



Outcome 10

Access to Housing

Aim:



Social landlords ensure that:




People 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.

We are committed to ensuring that people find it easy to apply for the widest choice of housing available which meets their needs. In addition to being given information about their prospects of being housed by the council, our application process provides information about how homes are allocated and about a range of other housing options.

A review of our Allocations Policy has been carried out and following consultation with tenants, housing list applicants and other stakeholders, proposals to make improvements to the policy were approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in February 2022 and implemented during 2022/23. This included a full review of the housing waiting list and the implementation of a rolling review to ensure data remains accurate.

During 2023/24 we will continue to improve the information held for our applicants in relation to their housing preferences, ensuring applications are as up to date a possible in order to reduce refusals, waiting times and maximise the chances of being rehoused. This has already resulted in a steady reduction in the number of offers refused and will remain an area of focus during 2023/24.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Percentage of tenancy offers refused	49.2%	51.7%		

Local performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend
Average time to assess housing applications	2.4 days	1.3 days	
Percentage of housing applications suspended	2.1%	2.5%	
Percentage of medical applications assessed within 28 day target	62%	55%	

	2021/22	2022/23
Total number of properties	10,377	10,422
Total number of lets in the year	909	797
Total number on waiting list	4737	5635

What we are doing 2023/24:

- We will review procedures in place to identify support needs of new tenants
- We will improve online access to the housing waiting list and Housing Options information
- We will review the process in place for receiving and processing medical applications from applicants



Outcome 11

Tenancy Sustainment



Aim:
Social landlords ensure that:

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.

Providing advice and support to those who need it to remain in their homes is a key priority and we will continue to develop initiatives to ensure that tenants are provided with the help they need to maintain their tenancy.

Over the recent past we have reviewed and updated our approach to carrying out new tenant visits and we have taken action to increase the number of visits carried out when a tenant submits a tenancy termination notice. The tenancy sustainment rate subsequently increased from 91.5% in 2020/21 to 94.6% in 2021/22 and this improvement was sustained in 2022/23.

It is important that those tenants who need their home adapted due to age, disability, or caring responsibilities are provided with a quick and efficient service. Our ability to carry out medical adaptations was impacted by the restrictions that were in place during the Covid-19 pandemic and this resulted in a back-log of work and an increase in the time taken to carry out this work. There was an improvement during 2022/23 with the average time taken reducing from 108 days to 73 days and we aim to further reduce this during 2023/24.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Percentage of all new tenants housed, who were still in their tenancy 12 months later	94.6%	94.1%	↓	
Average time taken to complete medical adaptations	108 days	73 days	↑	

What we are doing in 2023/24:

- We will continue to increase the number of visits carried out with tenants who submit a tenancy termination notice and provide support to those who require it to remain in their home
- We will continue to monitor the time taken to carry out medical adaptations with the aim of delivering further improvements



Outcome 12

Homeless People

Aim:

Local councils perform their duties on homelessness so that:









People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness get prompt and easy access to help, advice and information; 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.

Our approach to homelessness is outlined in our 5-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, aimed at ensuring that people who have experienced homelessness reach a settled housing solution as quickly as possible, rather than spending long periods of time in temporary accommodation.

This approach builds on the success of our previous homelessness strategy “More than a Roof” which made a positive impact and sets out a number of key actions and developments that are being taken to ensure that these improvements are sustained and we continue to prevent and alleviate homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.

We continue to ensure that decisions on all cases are made promptly and efficiently, with the average time from application to assessment reducing to 13 days in 2022/23. We also continue to ensure that appropriate support is provided to help people access and maintain their own home and that instances of repeat homelessness are reduced.

The homeless service continued to operate throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and faced challenges with an increase in the number of homelessness presentations and an increase in demand for temporary accommodation and support services. Whilst we have managed to make an offer of temporary accommodation on all occasions when this was required, the increased pressures on the service means this has not always been in areas where people want and this has impacted on reported satisfaction with the temporary accommodation provided.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Average time from application to assessment	14 days	13 days		
Percentage of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%		
Percentage of all homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homeless)	5.3%	4.4%		
Average total time spent in temporary accommodation	191 days	171 days		



Outcome 12

Homeless People continued...

Local performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend
Incidences of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire	1,203	1,202	↑
Percentage of all homeless cases given a decision within 28 days	99%	99%	↔
Satisfaction with the quality of temporary accommodation	86%	74%	↓

Our Housing First initiative forms part of our wider approach to tackling homelessness. It is targeted at those with the most complex needs and a history of low engagement with support services that has not led to successful or sustainable housing outcomes in the past and resulted in repeat homelessness. The initiative is now well established across West Dunbartonshire with 64 Housing First tenancies being created by the end of 2022/23 and high levels of tenancy sustainment being reported.

What we are doing in 2023/24:

- We will implement Year 5 of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
- We will carry out a review of the Council's approach to homelessness prevention
- We will continue our Housing First approach and report progress to the Scottish Government and key partners



Outcome 13

Value for Money



Aim:

Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that:

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

Prior to the pandemic our “Every day counts” approach to managing empty homes had delivered good performance in this area. This was adversely affected by the lockdown and period when letting properties was restricted. We developed a comprehensive action plan to drive recovery and have seen improvements in this area during 2022/23, with the average time taken to re-let properties reducing and the rent lost due to properties being empty also reducing.

The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic also presented significant challenges for rent collection. Processes were streamlined and made more efficient. We reviewed the preferred contact method of tenants and introduced text messaging and emailing for those who prefer to be contacted this way. We also reviewed the processes around Universal Credit and created a direct email contact with DWP for escalation of non-payment cases and improved the processing of Universal Credit payments. It is positive to see that rent collected as a percentage of rent due increased in 2022/23, although the overall level of rent arrears has increased slightly.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	Trend	Comparison
Average time to re-let properties	45.8 days	33.6 days	↑	
Rent loss due to voids expressed as a percentage of the total amount of rent due	1.29%	1.28%	↑	
Rent collected as a percentage of total rent due	98.4%	98.5%	↑	
Gross rent arrears as a percentage of total rent due	9.24%	10.0%	↓	

What are we doing in 2023/24:

- We will implement a new void re-let standard
- We will review the Direct Tenant Support Funding Schemes we have in place
- We will continue to review ways to improve rent collection



Outcomes 14 & 15

Rents and Service Charges

Aim:

Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that:

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.

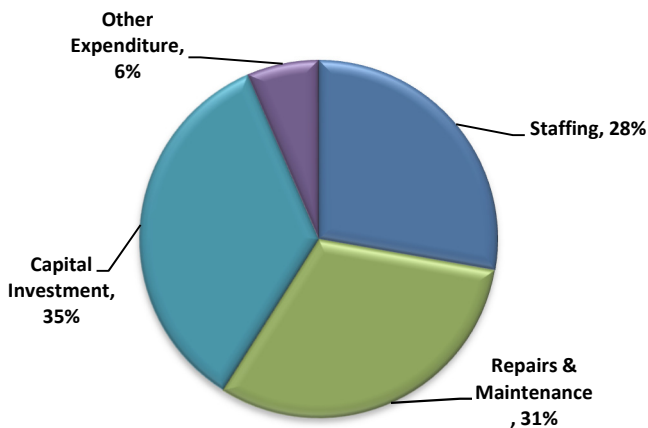
All tenants want to live in good quality, energy efficient homes in well maintained neighbourhoods, where they feel safe. For this reason, we continue to invest heavily in both our housing capital programme and our new council house building programme and employ housing officers to manage estates, promote successful tenancy sustainment and tackle anti-social behaviour.

We strive to keep our costs as low as possible and carry out a rent consultation process annually, in conjunction with tenants. Budgeting was made more difficult last year due to the uncertainty around interest rates and 2 options were considered in the public consultation. The Council approved a rent increase of 5% in March 2023, which included an enhanced capital investment programme and also £565,000 of direct financial assistance for those tenants experiencing hardship, to provide support through the cost of living crisis.

We have a Joint Rent Group comprising tenants, Council officers and the Convener of the Housing and Communities Committee, who work together to ensure compliance with the guidance in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and their focus is ensuring the Housing and Homelessness Services provide best value for current and future tenants.

We are keen to ensure that the involvement and influence of tenants in this process continues and if you would like to become involved contact Jane Mack on **0798 354 2993** or jane.mack@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

How your rent was spent in 2022/23



Staffing:

employee costs, administration costs (this also includes payments to other departments for example financial services, computer systems, human resources, corporate communications, architectural services) and property costs.

Repairs and Maintenance:

the costs for day to day repairs carried out across all properties and costs associated with medical adaptations.

Capital Investment:

the interest and principal repayments on money we have borrowed to fund the Council's new build programme and carry out major works and improvements (e.g. cladding, kitchens, bathrooms, roofs).

Other expenditure:

costs associated with arrears and the collection of rents, bad debt provision (funds required to account for rents and debt accounts which are not paid to the Council) and Council Tax and lost rent on empty homes.

What we are doing in 2023/24:

- We will carry out robust rent consultation with tenants and future tenants, including review of existing timetable
- We will undertake a rent affordability assessment as part of the rent consultation exercise



Tenant Involvement

At West Dunbartonshire Council we have a long history of tenant involvement. Tenant Participation helps you to become directly involved in decision making which will influence housing services now and in the future.

Details about the various ways tenants can become involved are available online at <http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/tenant-participation/>. You can also following us on Facebook, where we post regular information about housing, events and share community information.

There are many ways to participate, e.g. via a local Tenants and Residents Association, scrutiny group or the rent setting consultation. We have got back to in person meetings but kept some virtual meetings, where they suit people better. Like many organisations, our tenant group numbers have been affected since lockdown and our current focus is to encourage more involvement and help support tenant groups represent their area and improve neighbourhoods.

We produce a quarterly newspaper called Housing News, which is delivered to all West Dunbartonshire tenants. It provides up to date news on housing in West Dunbartonshire, including information on our performance, new housing developments, tenant consultations and information on tenant participation activities.

A copy of Housing News is delivered to you and is also available online at <http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/housing-news/>

If you would like more information about tenant participation or want to see what you could get involved in then please get in touch with Jane Mack on 0798 354 2993 or by email - jane.mack@west-dunbarton.gov.uk.

What do you think of this report?

We are keen to hear your thoughts on this report and how it could be improved.

Please use the link or QR code below to complete 5 very short survey questions.

<https://arcg.is/1fbSf40>



This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format on request.

Arabic

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.

Hindi

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

Urdu

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Chinese (Cantonese)

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Polish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formacie audio.

Ukrainian - Українська

Цей документ також доступний іншими мовами, великим шрифтом та в аудіоформаті за запитом.



British Sign Language

BSL users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](https://www.scotland.gov.uk/contact-scotland-bsl), the on-line British Sign Language interpreting service.

☎ 01389 737527

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