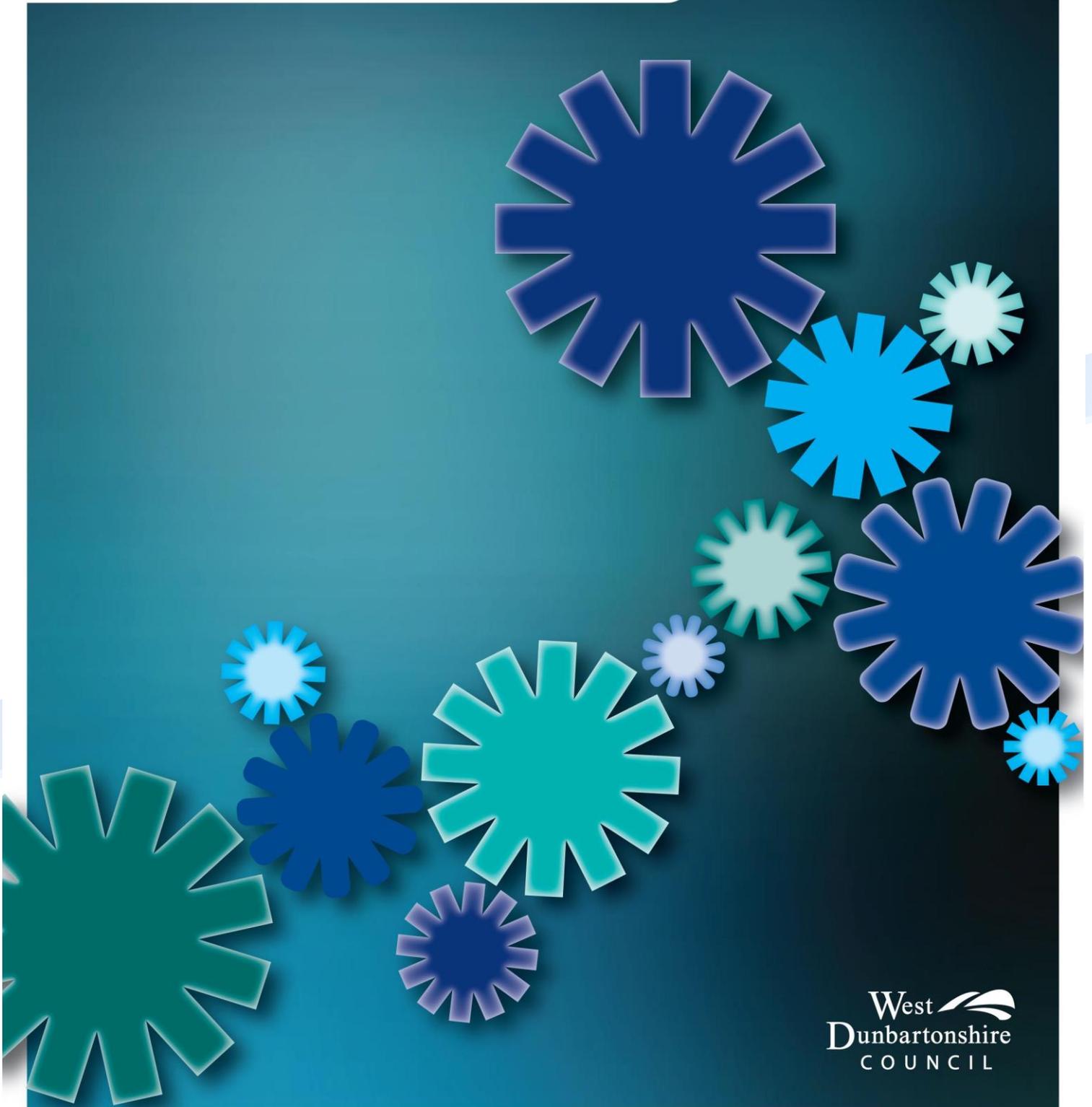




National Panel for Tenants and Service Users

November 2014



Introduction

Welcome to a series of regular briefings prepared by the Housing Strategy and Development team on the big issues concerning housing. These briefings will be shared with staff, tenants and elected members and keep everyone up to date with regards the ever changing policy context that we are operating within.

The Housing Strategy and Development section is responsible for:-

- Providing the statutory strategic housing authority role within the local authority area
- Supporting the development of a culture of continuous improvement in Housing services and to facilitate opportunities to excel;
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for Housing and Community Safety Services within West Dunbartonshire;
- Developing the Council's housing strategy to ensure that it supports the delivery of our strategic priorities;
- Performance management within Housing and Community Safety services; and
- Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

For further information on Housing Strategy and Development please telephone 01389 737889 or e-mail: housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Background

A National Panel of Tenants and Services Users was established in 2013 as a way for the Regulator to engage with tenants and other users of landlord services.

Main Issues

A report has been produced which outlines the main findings from Year 1 of the engagement between the Regulator and the National Panel.

Key findings are outlined around the following topic areas;

- Priorities in relation to specific landlords services,
- Priorities around how landlords should provide services,
- Main concerns of tenants and other customers,
- Landlord performance,
- Complaints Handling,
- Welfare Reform,
- Scottish Social Housing Charter,
- Priorities for the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Priorities – Landlord Services

The main points to note are;

- Repairs and maintenance and dealing with anti-social behaviour are rated as the most important services provided by landlords,
- These priorities were also the top priorities identified in previous research carried out by the Scottish Government in 2009,
- These priorities were rated as most important across all respondent groups,
- Repairs and maintenance is by some margin seen as the single most important landlord service.

Priorities – How Landlords Provide Services

The main points to note are;

- Providing services that are value for money seen as most important aspect of service delivery,
- Views on value for money influenced by rent levels, affordability and clarity around how charges related to service provision,
- Good communication and services being sympathetic and responsive to individual needs are the next most important priorities for how landlords deliver services.

Main Concerns of Tenants and Customers

The main points to note are;

- When asked the vast majority of tenants and customers highlight at least one area of concern in relation to the services provided by their landlord,
- Most common concerns are housing costs and condition of home / area.

Landlord Performance

The main points of note are;

- Most respondents feel well informed about landlord performance and have seen performance information,
- There is strong interest in landlord performance information, particularly around those areas of service which are deemed the most important (M&R and ASB).

Complaints Handling

The main points to note are;

- Most respondents felt that they would know how to make a complaint to their landlord, however,
- Only a small number state they had received information about their landlords, complaints handling procedures.

Welfare Reform

The main points to note are;

- Most respondents had not been affected indicated but had received information about housing related benefit changes,
- Around half thought there was more useful information they had not yet received.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

The main points to note are;

- Positive feedback about the principle of the Charter, especially in relation to clear statement of what to expect from landlord services,
- High levels of interest in comparing performance with other landlords.

The full report can be found [here](#).

What it means for West Dunbartonshire

It is likely that the findings outlined in the report will be used to shape the focus of the Regulator's activities. The Regulator will therefore look at Maintenance and Repairs and Anti-social Behaviour Services as part of their risk based approach, as well as any areas of weakness highlighted in our ARC submission.

Maintenance and Repairs

Performance in relation to Maintenance and Repairs is consistent, with further improvements anticipated when new technology is procured and initiatives like "Home Start" are implemented.

Anti-social Behaviour Services

In consultation with Housing Strategy and Development, the ASIST Service has reviewed its approach to recording and reporting against Charter Indicator 19 and initiated improvements such as automatic warnings when cases are approaching specific milestones.

The proposed engagement with the Scrutiny Panel should provide an opportunity to identify and implement further improvements.

In addition to these specific issues, the report re-states what is seen as good practice in relation to service provision and communicating well with tenants and other customers and highlights specific cross-service areas such as Complaints Handling, Welfare Reform and Landlord Performance.

For further information, please contact

Stefan Kristmanns

Performance and Continuous Improvements Officer

Housing Strategy and Development

01389 737545

stefan.kristmanns@west-dunbarton.gov.uk