

# West Dunbartonshire Council Housing Services

## Annual Charter Performance Report for Tenants and other Customers 2019/20





# Foreword

Welcome to our Annual Charter Performance Report which outlines how we performed during 2019/20 against the Outcomes and Standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

Both the content and the style of the report have been updated following a consultation with tenants and I would like to thank again those who were involved for their positive contribution. The report truly covers those areas that tenants have said are important and I hope that it is received as positively as previous reports have been.



This past year has been another busy and challenging period across housing services, as we continue to respond positively to the impacts of Welfare Reform and continue to deliver improving customer focused housing services. We are now facing the Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected the everyday lives of individuals and communities across West Dunbartonshire and has posed significant challenges to the delivery of our services and we continue to react to the changing circumstances to minimise the impact on our residents as much as possible.

Some of our key achievements during the past year include the successful expansion of “No Home for Domestic Abuse”, delivering a sector leading ‘zero tolerance’ approach, which has been widely shared across the housing sector. We have completed a successful restructure of Anti-Social Behaviour and Estate Caretaking Services, expanding capacity and extending service delivery. We have implemented our new approach to homelessness, which aims to provide settled accommodation quickly and includes our Housing First initiative, which supports some of those with the most complex needs, to access and keep their homes. In addition, our “Every Day Counts” focus on empty properties has seen continued good performance in terms of the length of time homes are empty and rental income lost as a result.

We also carried out a successful rent setting consultation with tenants, which a record number took part in and resulted in a rent increase amongst the lowest in Scotland. We remain proud of our relationship with the many tenant groups that we have and how effective they are in representing their communities, getting involved in decision making and ensuring that tenants get value for money services.

As well as summarising our performance in 2019/20, the report sets out some of the actions we will be taking during 2020/21, in order to respond positively to the challenges we face and ensure that we achieve our goal of being a top performing landlord.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Barry'.

Peter Barry

Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability





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# 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.



(Photo taken prior to current government guidelines)

This report outlines how Housing and Homeless Services performed during 2019/20. It focuses on the areas that tenants have said are the most important to them and each page 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, a group of 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 to the report published in October 2019 and have been kept in this years' report.

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 previous year



Better



Poorer



No change

### Comparison with other landlords.



Top Quarter



Second Quarter



Third Quarter



Bottom Quarter

# Communication and Participation

**Aims:** 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 landlords’ decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
% of tenants who feel that we are good at keeping them informed about services and decisions	84.5%	85.7%	↑	
% of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlords’ decision making processes	79.1%	83.9%	↑	



We continue to take action to improve communication with tenants and also develop the opportunities to get involved and influence the decision making process.

We also continue to ensure that tenants find it easy to participate in and influence decisions at a level they feel comfortable with. Our Tenant Participation structures are well established and embedded into Housing Services activities. Some examples of opportunities to participate are outlined at Tenant Involvement on page 14.

Feedback from a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey carried out during 2019/20 showed that the proportion of tenants who feel satisfied that we are good at keeping tenants informed about services and satisfied with the opportunities available to participate in the decision making process have both increased.



During 2019/20 we implemented Year 3 of our Tenant Participation Strategy “Involving You”. Key achievements included a review of the Service Standards we have in place across Housing Services and successful consultations on our annual rent setting process and the review of our caretaking and anti-social behaviour services.

For more information on becoming involved, see the [tenant participation](#) section of our website.

**What we are doing in 2020/21**

- We will consult on and develop a new Tenant Participation Strategy for the period 2021/24
- We will continue to increase tenant involvement and demonstrate the impact tenants can have
- We will expand the use of our social media and electronic forms of communication to help tenants stay involved

Performance Indicator	Target	Stage 2
Average length of time taken to respond to Stage 1 complaints	5 days	11.4 days
Average length of time taken to respond to Stage 2 complaints	20 days	24.9 days

**Aims:** 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 (ESSH) by December 2020.

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
% of Council's housing stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard	91.9%	95.6%	↑	
% of Council's housing stock meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)	77.6%	79.7%	↑	
% of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	86.3%	76.5%	↓	

Our "More Homes, Better Homes West Dunbartonshire" approach will ensure that our new and existing homes in West Dunbartonshire meet the needs of our tenants and future tenants.



We are committed to delivering around 2,000 new homes for social rent in West Dunbartonshire over the next 10 years. These properties will all meet the recently introduced affordable housing design standard which provides exemplar energy efficiency and space standards. We will continue to push the boundaries in terms of our housing building programme putting quality first.



We will also continue to invest significantly in improving existing Council homes and local estates based on identified tenant priorities. This ongoing investment will enable the Council to maintain its commitment to exceeding Scottish Housing Quality Standard and meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing by the end of 2020. We are committed in ensuring our homes are safe and secure and that we provide high quality and energy efficient homes.

### What we are doing in 2020/21

- We will deliver our Capital Investment Programme for 2020/21
- We will ensure that all applicable housing stock achieves the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing by the end of 2020
- We will implement Year 3 of our Housing Asset Management Strategy

Some of our key plans for 2020/21 are outlined below:

- Improve 200 homes with new external insulated render.
- Improve 250 homes with new central heating systems.
- Improve 350 homes with new roof coverings.
- Improve 360 homes with window/door renewals.
- Improve 100 homes with kitchen renewals.
- Improve 100 homes with bathroom renewals.
- Improve 200 homes with loft insulation.



Outcome  
**5**

# Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements

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

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	3.41 hours	4.56 hours	↓	
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	5.7 days	5.25days	↑	
% of reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed right first time	90.5%	92.9%	↑	
% of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	88.5%	68.3%	↓	
% of properties that had a gas safety check within 12 month anniversary date	100%	100%	↔	



During 2019/20 there was improvement in 2 key measures of performance and 100% compliance with gas safety was maintained. Overall our performance continues to compare well when compared to other local authorities, however, there are areas where we can improve.



The levels of satisfaction reported by tenants has dropped and whilst we have taken some actions to address this already, such as improving the call handling around repairs reporting, increasing the customer satisfaction level is a key focus for 2020/21.

We have developed a Customer Service Improvement Plan which will be implemented during the year. This, together with the continued development of our new Integrated Housing Management System, is aimed at improving the service experienced by tenants.

**What we are doing in 2020/21**

- We will implement our Customer Service Improvement Plan

Unfortunately the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that have been imposed have had an impact on the repairs service that we have been able to provide. We will continue to react to this challenge as best we can but recognise that this will have an impact in terms of delivering an improved service for tenants.





# Outcome 6 | Managing our estates, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

**Aims:** Tenants and other customers live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
% of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in	80.3%	78.5%	↓	
% of anti-social behaviour cases resolved	80.4%	94.7%	↑	
% of tenancy offers refused	54.6%	45.6%	↑	



Ensuring that tenants live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe is a key objective. Our “No Home for Domestic Abuse” initiative continues to ensure that victims have immediate access to practical help and specialist legal assistance and support following any incident of domestic abuse, in order that they can remain in and feel safe within their home.

During 2019/20, in conjunction with tenants, we carried out a review of our Anti-social Behaviour and Estate Caretaking services to ensure neighbourhoods are clean, safe and vibrant communities for our tenants and residents to live in.

We have introduced foot patrols by Anti-social Behaviour Officers to provide further reassurance to communities and help deter anti-social behaviour within our estates. A key aim is to provide an immediate response and shorten the time tenants are subjected to negative behaviours.

**What we are doing in 2020/21**

- We will review and update our Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- We will review and update the information sharing protocol we have in place with Police Scotland



During 2019/20 the percentage of anti-social behaviour cases resolved increased. It is hoped that these changes will lead to an increase in the levels of satisfaction with the landlord contribution to the management of the neighbourhoods that tenants live in.

Outcome  
10

# Access to Social Housing

**Aims:** 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.

Local Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend
Average time to assess housing applications	3.8 days	27 days	
% of housing application suspended	3.6%	1.6%	
% of medical assessments assessed within 28 day target	15%	33%	

We are committed to ensuring that people find it easy to apply for the widest choice of housing available and 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 information about a range of housing options.

	2018/19	2019/20
Total number of properties	10397	10042
Total number of lets in the year	993	779
Total number on waiting list	3968	4876
Total number added to waiting list during 2019/20	2167	2265

During 2019/20 there was a reduction in the percentage of housing applications that were suspended and a reduction in the percentage of tenancy offers refused.

We expect that the number of refusals received will continue to fall as we effectively utilise the full capacity of our QL system (Integrated Housing Management System)

We are disappointed with the time it currently takes for housing applications and applications for medical points to be assessed and we are currently taking action to address this and ensure that performance improves during 2020/21

**What we are doing in 2020/21**

- We will review and update our Housing Allocations Policy

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
% of tenancy offers refused	54.6%	45.6%		



**Outcome 11** | **Helping People Stay in their Homes**

**Aims:** 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 other organisations.

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
% of all new tenants housed in 2018/19 who were still in their tenancy 12 months later	87.1%	89.8%	↑	
Average time to complete medical adaptations	68 days	68 days	↔	

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.

We aim to provide a comprehensive level of person centred support to all tenants where this is required, with the aim of ensuring that their needs and requirements are addressed and that we deliver wrap around tenancy management services designed to achieve tenancy and community sustainability.

**What we are doing in 2020/21**

- Implement the recommendation from the West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel report on medical adaptations
- Plan to increase the number of visits carried out with tenants who submit a tenancy termination notice



A key aspect of this is providing support to those tenants facing difficulties paying their rent. We have introduced stronger monitoring of new tenant rental accounts and introduced a dedicated Welfare Officer to assist tenants with debt that they may have.

It is important that those tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability, or caring responsibilities are provided with a quick and efficient service and we have more to do to improve in this area. This has been an area of focus for the West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, who in conjunction with Council officers have identified a number of recommendations, aimed at driving improvements in this area.





# Outcome 12 Homeless People

**Aims:** 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.

Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
% of people satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation	76.3%	81.0%		
% of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%		
% of temporary accommodation offers refused	1.9%	1.79%		

Our new 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 will be taken to ensure that these improvements are sustained and we continue to prevent and alleviate homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.

**What we are doing in 2020/21**

- We will implement Year 2 of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
- We will continue to reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation for those households with low/no needs by delivering settled accommodation quickly
- We will develop further initiatives aimed at preventing homelessness

We continue to ensure that decisions on all cases are made promptly and efficiently, that households are being provided with temporary accommodation when required and the incidences of repeat homelessness is minimised.

Local Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend
Incidences of homeless in West Dunbartonshire	1037	1021	
% of homeless cases issued with decision within 28 days	99%	98%	
% of homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homelessness)	4.9%	4.3%	



Outcome  
**13**

# Value for Money

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



Performance Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	Trend	Comparison
% of tenants who feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money.	75.3%	77.1%	↑	
Gross rent arrears as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year.	9.71%	10.08%	↓	
% of rent lost through properties being empty during the last year.	0.73%	0.85%	↓	
Average length of time taken to re-let properties in the last year.	23.3 days	26.8 days	↓	



Welfare Reform continues to pose a significant challenge following the roll out of Universal Credit, which together with the impact of Covid-19 has had an impact in terms of rent collection.

Whilst current tenant arrears have increased significantly, we continue to review the processes in place with the DWP to ensure these are streamlined and cover all options available to landlords in relation to maximising direct payments and reduce arrears. This is now being done quicker and there has been an increase in the number of direct payments being received.



We will continue to be pro-active in terms of the pre-allocations work we carry out and plan to review our processes when a new tenant signs for their new home, so that rental income is maximised from the beginning of the tenancy.

Via our “Help Us, Help U” approach, we will continue to work closely with tenants to maximise the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to assist those most affected, with early intervention being our priority.

### What we are doing in 2020/21

- We will assist those tenants in arrears that have been affected by Covid-19 and their ability to pay rent
- We will establish a short term working group to tackle the impact of Covid-19 on void performance as effectively as possible



Our “Every day counts” approach to managing empty homes maintained good performance in 2019/20 although this has been adversely affected by the lockdown period, when letting properties was restricted.



Outcomes

14,15

# Rents and Service Charges

**Aims:** Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers.

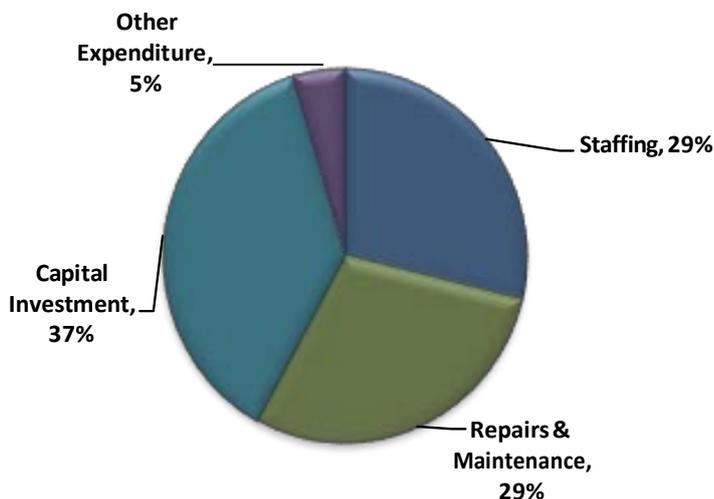
	1 Apt	2 Apt	3 Apt	5 Apt
<b>WDC average rent</b>	<b>£72.71</b>	<b>£76.69</b>	<b>£78.93</b>	<b>£89.92</b>
<b>Scottish average rent</b>	<b>£73.47</b>	<b>£78.65</b>	<b>£82.26</b>	<b>£98.69</b>

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.

This consultation focuses on the Council's plans to both meet and maintain the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing, alongside our ambitions to improve our communities.

Last year various options were looked at and discussed with tenants and proposals were developed, which were then agreed by the Council. This resulted in a below inflation rent rise of 1.9%, one of the lowest rent increases in Scotland.



How we spent each £1 of your money in 2019-20

**Supervision and Management:** 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.

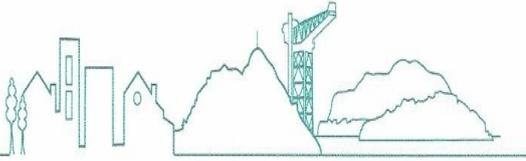
**Repairs and Maintenance:** the costs for day to day repairs carried out across all properties and costs associated with medical adaptations.

**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.



# 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 community support information.

There are many ways to participate-e.g. through a local Tenants and Residents Association, scrutiny group or rent setting consultation. During the COVID pandemic we developed digital ways for us to meet with tenants and most of our groups now meet via zoom. This pandemic has made us all focus a bit more on our neighbourhood and community, so this might be a time that you want to get more involved and have your say. If it is, then please get in touch.

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 it is also available online at <http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/housing-news/>

If you would like more information about tenant participation, then please get in touch with Jane Mack, 0798 354 2993 or email [jane.mack@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:jane.mack@west-dunbarton.gov.uk).



**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 formie audio.



**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.

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# What do you think of this report?

Complete this page and return it to the address overleaf

**1. How satisfied are you with the design and layout of this report?**

Very satisfied/Fairly satisfied/Neither or/ Fairly dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied

**2. How satisfied are you that this report is easy to read and understand?**

Very satisfied/Fairly satisfied/Neither or/ Fairly dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied

**3. How satisfied are you that this report informs you about how we are performing?**

Very satisfied/Fairly satisfied/Neither or/ Fairly dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied

**4. Which information did you find particularly useful or not useful?**

.....  
.....

**5. What other information would you like to see in a future annual report?**

.....  
.....



Alternatively, tell us by completing the survey online at [https://  
www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Charterreport2019-20](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Charterreport2019-20) or use the QR code on the right



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2



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