

West Lothian

# tenants news

informing and involving West Lothian's tenants



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*Linn Jaw Waterfall, Linhouse Water  
Photographer: Paul Watt*



# Performance Matters 2016

Welcome to West Lothian Council's autumn edition of Tenants News. Within these pages you will find our third annual Landlord Report called Performance Matters; this covers the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, which we will refer to throughout as the 'Reporting Year'.

2015/16 was another successful year for Housing, Customer and Building Services (HCBS). The council was the only Scottish council to be shortlisted in two categories for the UK Housing Awards 2016; this recognises outstanding work by housing organisations to improve the lives of people in their communities.

The council's 1,000 new build housing programme was Highly Commended in the Local Authority of the Year category and a

finalist in the Outstanding Development Programme of the Year category.

Congratulations also go to our Tenants Panel representatives for winning an award for the 'Most Inspiring Scrutiny Group' at the TIS National Excellence Awards 2016. This award is testament to the hard work and dedication of our Tenants Panel in monitoring and scrutinising services at the highest level, on behalf of their fellow tenants.



# Background



The Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter) was a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 which states that ‘Ministers must set out standards and outcomes which social landlords should aim to achieve when performing housing activities’. The Charter came into effect on 1 April 2013 and applies to all local authorities and social landlords in Scotland.

Each landlord is required to submit an annual return on their performance to the Scottish Housing Regulator (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:



(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. In total there are 37 Performance Indicators underpinning the six standards.

The council is required to report performance against each of these indicators to The Scottish Housing Regulator by the 31 May each year, and must publish a Landlord Report to tenants by the 31 October each

year. Information in this report shows how well we have performed against each of the standards that apply to West Lothian Council.

The report has been produced in association with the members of our Editorial Panel, to ensure the information is clear and of interest to tenants and service users.

# Landlord Information



Council housing in West Lothian is managed by Housing, Customer and Building Services (HCBS).

The service is managed by a Head of Service, supported by a Senior Management Team, who are responsible for the following areas of service:

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

The council's aim is to offer excellent value for money services and provide quality homes for rent in West Lothian. The service employs different types of officers to ensure delivery of an effective service, managing, maintaining and improving homes.

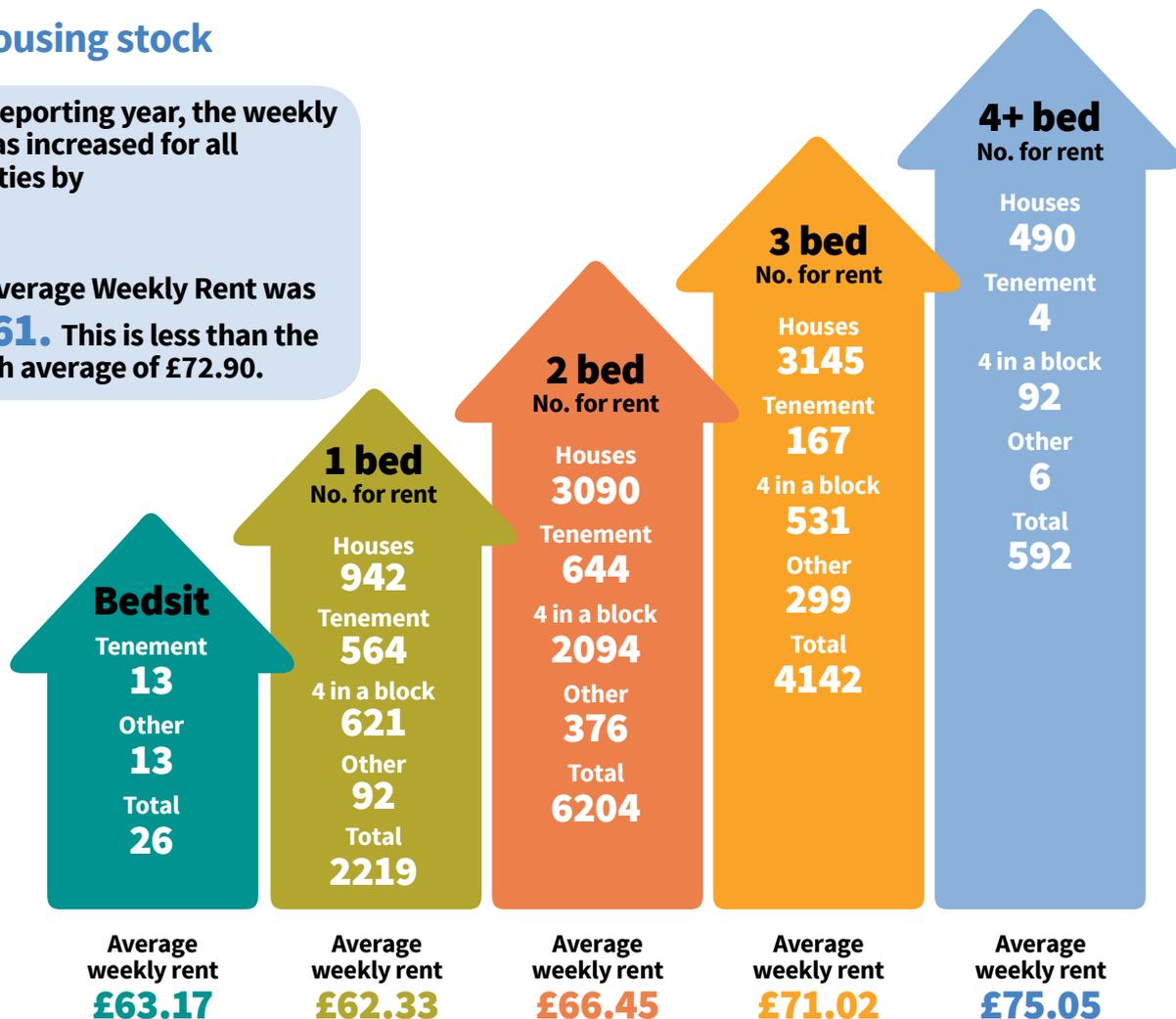


**Housing, Customer and Building Services employs over 800 officers**

## Our housing stock

In the reporting year, the weekly rent was increased for all properties by **3%**

Total Average Weekly Rent was **£67.61**. This is less than the Scottish average of £72.90.



Total number of houses for rent **13,183**

# Performance against the ARC for 2015/2016



## Improvement Action Plan

Based on the figures quoted in this Landlord Report we have identified a number of opportunities to improve the services we provide to our tenants. We have prepared a detailed action plan, which may be found on our website, [www.westlothian.gov.uk](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk) which shows how we will improve performance. The action plan shows actions, responsibilities and timescales and includes:-

- Setting up focus groups with service users to further understand the issues

- Initiating a Quality Improvement Team to address void related issues
- Changes to wording and guidance
- Changes to processes and procedures
- Further recruitment and training for staff
- Changing how we manage our emergency accommodation

We will, of course, consult with tenants as we work through these actions and will report on findings and outcomes in a future edition of Tenants News.

## 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

In autumn 2015 all households were sent a survey, giving the chance to tell us what they think of the services provided by HCBS. We received 1401 responses to this survey; this was more than double compared to the previous year's responses of 687.

“ We would like to thank everyone who took the time to return their surveys, as this information really helps us see where we need to improve services.”

Throughout this report, we provide information from the survey showing how tenants feel HCBS performed against certain charter indicators. These are shown as icons which represent:



very or fairly satisfied



neither satisfied or dissatisfied



fairly or very dissatisfied

**The following information shows how well we performed against the above standard, during the reporting year.**

From 1374 tenant responses...



with the overall service provided by HCBS

From 1378 tenant responses...



that their landlord was good at keeping them informed about their services and outcomes.

From 1367 tenant responses...



with the opportunities given to them to participate in the decision making processes.



## Standard 2

### Housing quality and maintenance

- tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and 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 Housing Quality Standard was introduced by the Scottish Government in February 2004 with the target that all homes rented from social landlords should meet a certain standard by April 2015.

In West Lothian we have been working hard to bring our housing stock up to the required standard and we are delighted that we have achieved this for **99.4%** of our properties. We only have one property that we have been unable to bring up to the required standard and we are presently working to address this.



**properties up to standard**

## Repairs

In West Lothian, repairs to our housing stock are carried out by our own Building Services operatives. In 2015/16, they completed a grand total of **50,356** routine and emergency repairs.



**repairs completed**

From 989 tenant responses...



with the repairs and maintenance service they received in the last 12 months.

From 1378 tenant responses...



with the quality of their home.

## Appointments

In West Lothian we are able to offer scheduled appointments for routine repairs and tenants have the choice of a morning or afternoon slot or a school run slot (this is anytime between 9.30am and 4.30pm).

In the reporting year **20,315** routine repair appointments were made and we were able to attend **99%** of these. However sometimes unforeseen circumstances can prevent us being able to attend an appointment. If this happens, we endeavour to keep the customer informed and will do our best to make another appointment at a time that suits the customer.



**repair appointments made**

## Book your repair online

We recently introduced a new service providing tenants with the flexibility to book routine repair appointments online. This is a simple and straightforward process accessed through the council website [www.westlothian.gov.uk](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk). Click on **Report It** and select **Housing**.

If you don't have access to the internet, you can still call **01506 280000** or pop into your local CIS office.

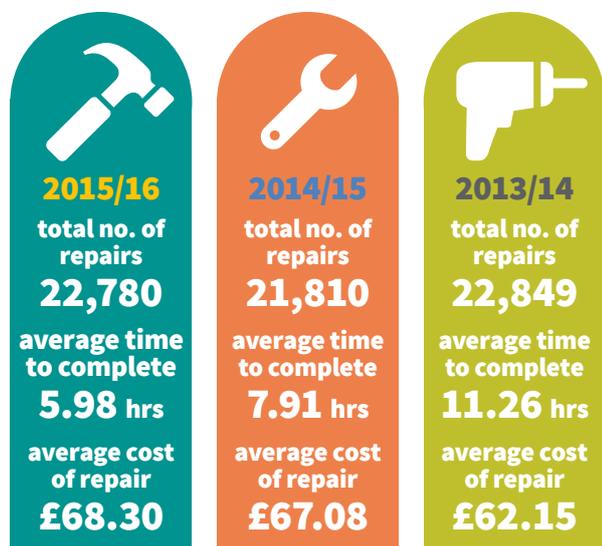


**89.7%**  
tenants were satisfied that their repair was completed 'right first time' and within the appropriate timescale.

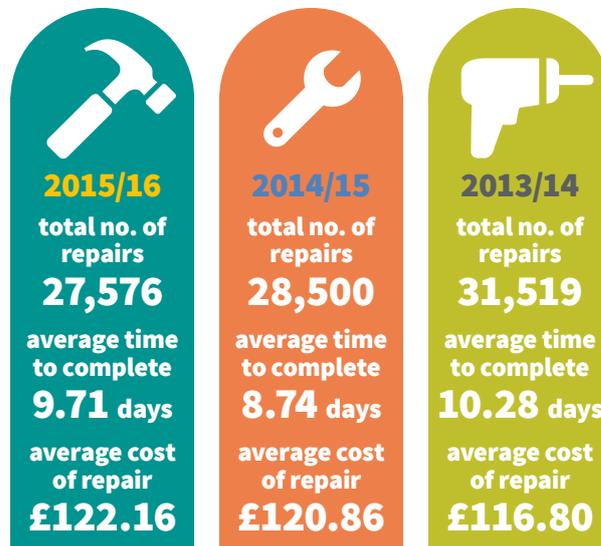
## Emergency and Routine Repairs

Here we show performance information for emergency and routine repairs, and the average cost of these:

### Performance for Emergency repairs (unplanned repair)



### Performance for Routine repairs (these should be completed within 5-15 working days, depending on the type of repair required)



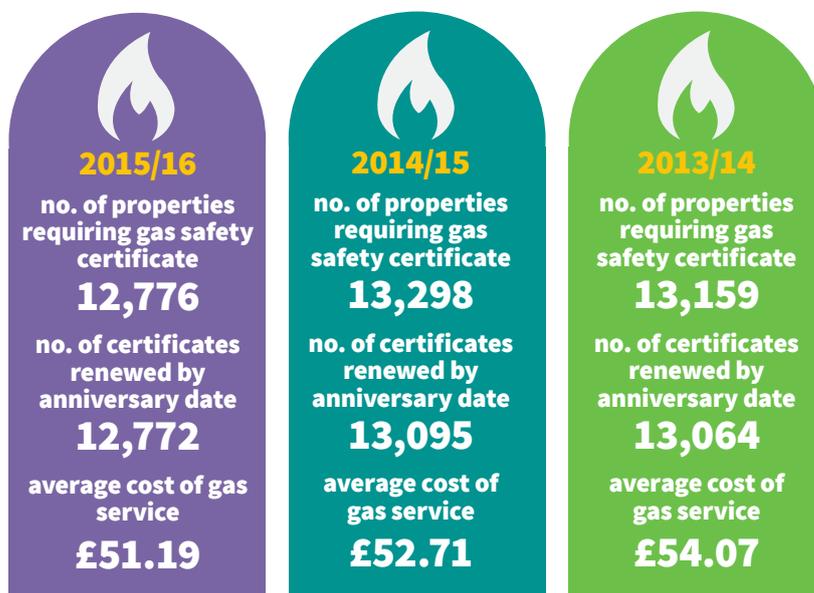
## Gas Servicing

We are required by law to carry out an annual gas safety check and service to those of our housing stock with gas heating systems. This gives us the opportunity to keep our systems in good working order and gives our tenants peace of mind, knowing that everything is being done to keep them safe and warm.

As it is a legal requirement that these checks are carried out, failure to allow us into a property can result in our operatives having to force entry to a property.

**99.9%** of our properties had a gas safety check and certificate renewed by their anniversary dates.

### Gas Servicing and Safety Check Performance





## 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, customers, the police and other council services to manage our neighbourhoods.

From 1381 tenant responses...



with the way their neighbourhood is managed.

### Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)

We record the number of antisocial behaviour complaints made to the council. These can include neighbour complaints, vandalism/damage, fly tipping, street drinking or problems with unoccupied houses. Shown below are the number of cases reported and resolved.

#### Antisocial Behaviour Performance

	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14
reported cases of antisocial behaviour	336	490	368
reported cases resolved	246	212	278
cases resolved within locally agreed targets	223	121	194

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. You can contact us by:

Calling: the **Customer Service Centre** on **01506 280000** or Police Scotland on **101** (Calls charged at a local rate).

Email: [customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk)

**66.4%** of cases reported were resolved within locally agreed targets.

## 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



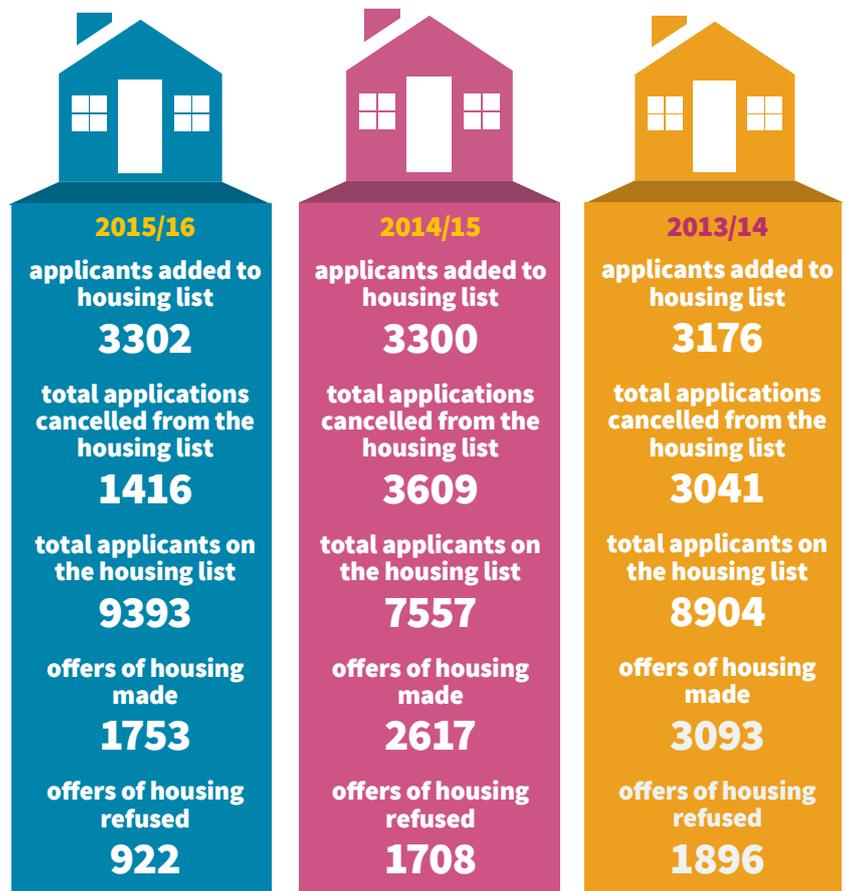
### Housing List Performance

The council allocates properties to people who have an active housing application. Points were awarded to applicants based on their housing needs and those with most points were given priority.

A new Housing Allocations Policy came into effect on 29 March 2016. The full policy can be found on the council's website.

[www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/968/Housing-Allocation-Policy/pdf/Housing\\_Allocation\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/968/Housing-Allocation-Policy/pdf/Housing_Allocation_Policy.pdf)

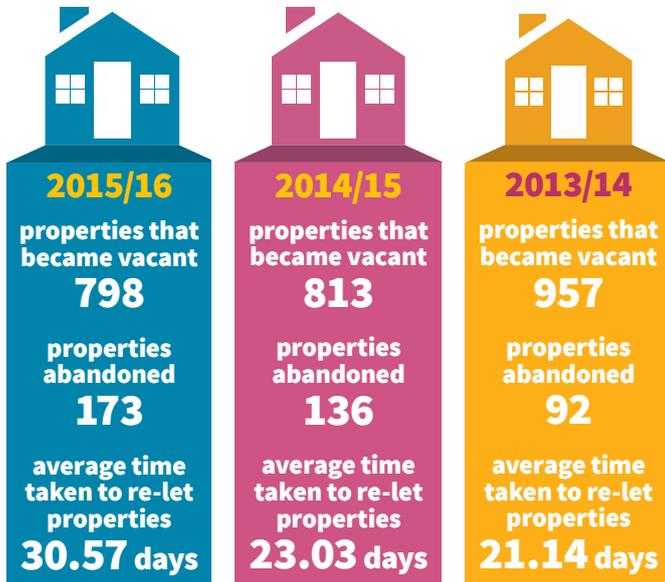
### Housing List Performance



## Letting our Houses

When a property becomes empty we do our best to re-let as quickly as possible as this maximises income for the service and our customers.

### Letting performance



### How we let our houses



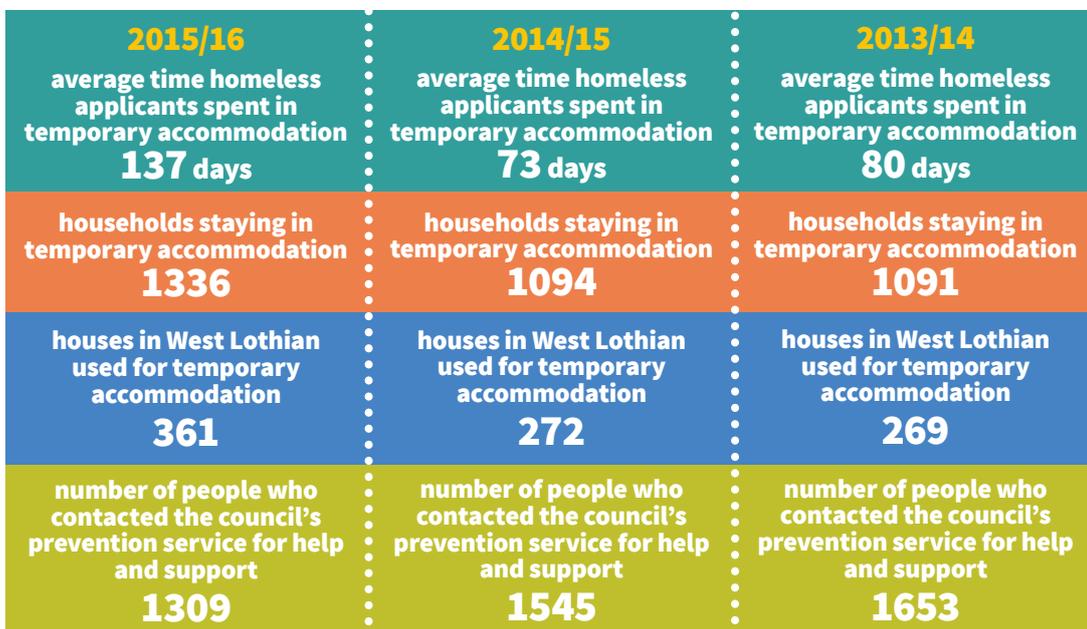
From 313 tenant responses...



## 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



From 165 tenant responses...



with the quality of the temporary or emergency accommodation they were housed in

## Medical Adaptations

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. The information below shows how well we performed:

### Medical Adaptations Performance

	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14
 medical adaptations completed	<b>637</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>858</b>
 time taken to complete approved applications for medical adaptations	<b>18.5 days</b>	<b>22.5 days</b>	<b>24.4 days</b>

**90.6%** of approved medical adaptations were completed 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



From 1369 tenant responses...



that the rent for their property represents good value for money



### How your rent money is spent

The rent we receive from council properties allows us to maintain and improve the council's housing stock, so it is very important that we make best use of the resources we have.

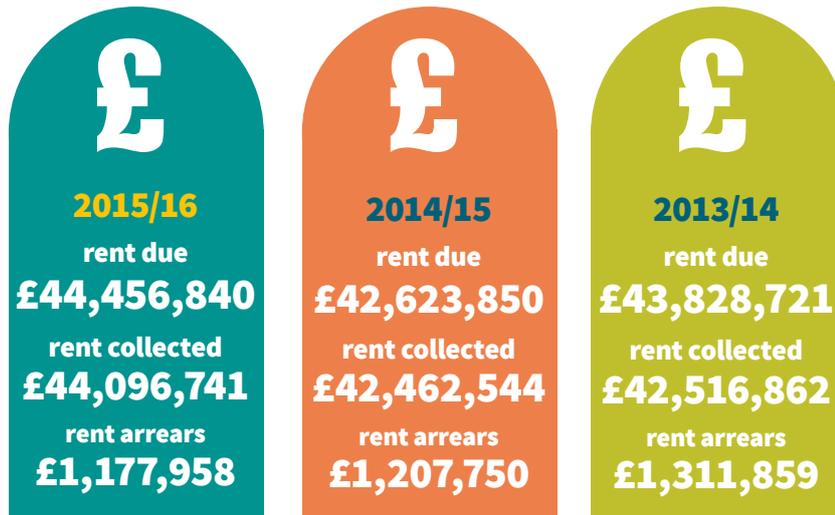
The chart below shows just how your rent money is being spent; you will see that over 70 pence in every pound collected is being spent on Repairs, Maintenance and Planned Investment work on tenants' homes.

## 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 and difficult year for many, we were able to collect **99.2%** of the rental income due in the reporting year.

We are pleased with the amount collected and our aim for 2016/2017 is to continue to work with tenants to maximise our income and reduce rent arrears.

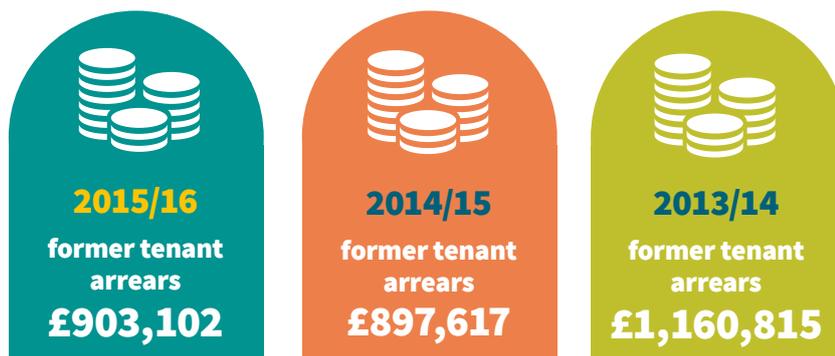
### Income and Arrears Performance



## 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. At the end of the reporting year, former tenant arrears totalled

### Former Tenant Arrear Performance



## Rent lost due to Empty Properties

When properties become empty, we do our best to re-let 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 **0.4%** of our rent, a total of **£187,974** was lost due to properties being empty.

To improve this performance, we are currently carrying out an internal review of our processes and procedures to see how we can streamline this area of our service.

# Taking Part



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

In West Lothian we have a Tenant Participation strategy which sets out how the council will communicate, consult and most importantly, take on board the views and opinions of tenants and use these to influence decisions that shape services. Any tenant or service user can take part, either as an individual or through one of our tenants and residents 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 or environmental issue. If you would be interested in taking part, please contact us by:

Email: **TP@westlothian.gov.uk**

Telephone TP Team: **01506 281882, 281885 or 281073**



## Tell us what you think

If you have any comments you would like to make on the content of the report, or if you have suggestions on how we can improve services, please fill in the slip below and return it to us. Alternatively you can email us at **TP@westlothian.gov.uk**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like us to contact you?      Email       Post       Telephone

### Tell us what you think!

\_\_\_\_\_

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Please complete and return this form to:  
**TP Team, Housing, Customer and Building Services**  
**Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston, West Lothian EH54 6FF**