



Landlord Report to Tenants 2019/20

Information on
the performance
of the council as a
housing provider



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Welcome



Welcome to our Landlord Report, which tells tenants how we performed as their landlord during the year 2019/20. We hope it tells the story of how the housing service was delivered and the resources that we had available. This report has been developed in partnership with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP). It reports on issues that are important to tenants, like repairs, rents, energy efficiency and improvements.

This report helps to show how we are meeting the requirements of the Social Housing Charter. We highlight parts of the service where things are working well and identify areas where we need to improve.

We would welcome your views on the report, please do get in touch if you would like to give us your feedback (contact details on the back page).

Douglas Proudfoot

Head of Service (Development)
East Lothian Council



East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) continue to work in partnership with East Lothian Council to deliver and improve services for tenants. We continue to encourage people to be involved in scrutiny and consultation events knowing the importance of local groups working together to improve their area and the wellbeing of folk living in East Lothian.

ELTRP will work with the council, listen to tenants' and residents' concerns and views on all aspects of council work. We hope you enjoy this year's report which shows a wide range of performance information. If there is anything you would like us to include in next year's report, please let us know.

This year, I am very proud to announce that ELTRP, some groups and individuals were nominated for five out of the eight categories at the TIS Annual Awards for Excellence – winning two! Well done to everyone who was nominated and to the winners who were Leah Hay (Young Achiever of the Year) and ELTRP (Tenant Group of the Year).

Jim Herron

Chairperson
East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel

Achievements & key highlights

Our achievements

*Between 1 April 2019
and 31 March 2020
East Lothian Council...*

- **77** new build properties completed
- bought **19** properties for rent through Open Market Acquisitions
- the time it takes us to re-let our houses is down to **30.83** days (was 39.92)
- carried out a total of **183** major adaptations to help tenants with mobility issues
- the percentage of our properties meeting the EESSH standard increased to **82.81%** (was 58.52%)
- saw an improvement in rent collection rates, up to **102.22%** from 100.57%
- saw a reduction in rent arrears down to **6.29%** from 7.49%
- performance in estate inspections reached our target of **100%** complete
- our tenant scrutiny activities looked at the repairs service and made some recommendations for improvement.



PROPERTIES OWNED BY US

155 EMPTY
59 UNDERGOING MAJOR WORK



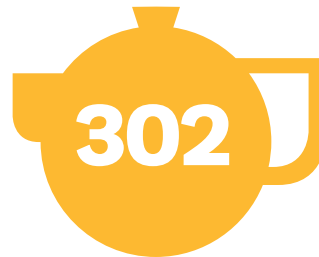
APPLICANTS ON HOUSING LIST



**EMERGENCY & 19,077
NON-EMERGENCY REPAIRS COMPLETED**



NEW BUILD PROPERTIES DELIVERED



NEW KITCHENS INSTALLED



NEW BATHROOMS INSTALLED



REWIRES

CARRIED OUT

464 HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS OFFERED TEMPORARY ACCOMODATION



**PROPERTIES LET BY ELC
AVERAGE RE-LET TIME 30 DAYS**

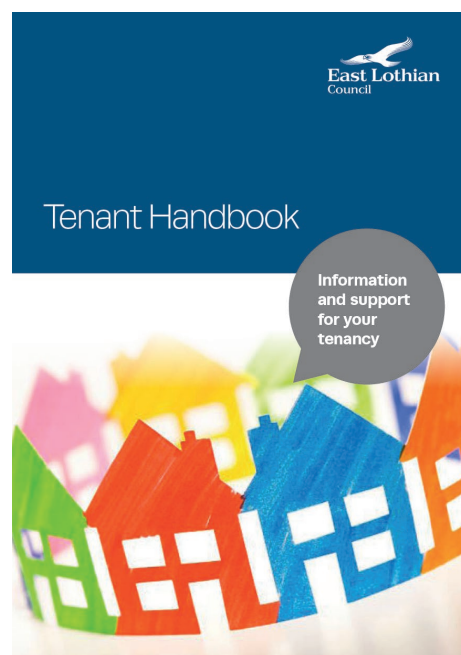
You said – we did

Social Housing Charter

This charter sets out the standards and outcomes that the council should be achieving when delivering our housing services.

It has helped us focus on how we are performing and provided good information to our tenants. We regularly gather feedback from tenants through satisfaction surveys, our feedback policy, and through our work with ELTRP.

Here are some of the outcomes as a result of what you told us...



“Day-to-day repairs take too long”

We continue to work hard to improve our procedures – moving them online where possible. Our non-emergency repair turnarounds have reduced by a day and a half.

“The tenants’ handbook needs updated”

We published our new handbook in July this year and are now giving it to all our new tenants.

“Improve tenants moving in experience”

We reviewed our voids (empty homes) process. We’ve made some changes and introduced a Void Clean Standard, Decoration Paint Pack Scheme for tenants and a more competitive tariff Preferred Energy Supplier.

“Estate inspections are not working, and local initiatives take too long”

Reaching our target, we carried out 100% of inspections last year. We also increased the amount of money that we spend on local initiative projects in our communities.

Communication & participation



Tenant scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny is an important part of our everyday work. All the work we do is in partnership with our tenant representatives. This year we reviewed what happens when a tenant requests a repair, which resulted in recommendations being made to help improve the service.

Tenant participation

Our tenant participation activities continue to make sure that our tenants have a voice and participate with us. We work in partnership with ELTRP and local tenant and residents groups. We provide a range of support and one of the ways we encourage participation is through our estate inspections and local initiative projects.

This year we **carried out 100% of all planned inspections** which is a real achievement. The amount of money we have spent on local projects like the creation of parking bays, communal bin stores, drying greens and improved street lighting has increased significantly and the table below shows how much money has been spent over the years.

Local Initiative Budget is £200,000 per year:

2015/16 £64,901	2016/17 £41,756	2017/18 £97,124	2018/19 £49,311	2019/20 £161,994
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Tenant satisfaction

Every three years we are required to carry out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey, the most recent being in 2019. The information gathered helps inform which areas of the service our tenants are most satisfied with, and identifies those where we need to make improvements. **The results of the last survey show that there is an encouraging increase in overall satisfaction by 2% up to 84%.** Here is a summary of some of the key information gathered across our last three surveys, compared with the current Scottish average figures:

Satisfied with:	Survey year:	2013	2016	2019	Scottish average*
Overall service provided by landlord		84%	82%	84%	82.1%
Being kept informed about services and decisions		89%	90%	89%	85.9%
Opportunities to participate in decision making processes		77%	85%	85%	79.4%
Quality of the home		86%	86%	87%	80.5%
Management of the neighbourhood		89%	88%	88%	85.0%
Rent level represents good value for money		89%	89%	88%	84.2%

*Local Authority Scottish Averages shown are the Scottish Housing Regulator's average figures unless otherwise stated.

Housing quality



76.89%
tenants satisfied
with the quality
of their home

8,836
COUNCIL
PROPERTIES

Void house, Prestonpans

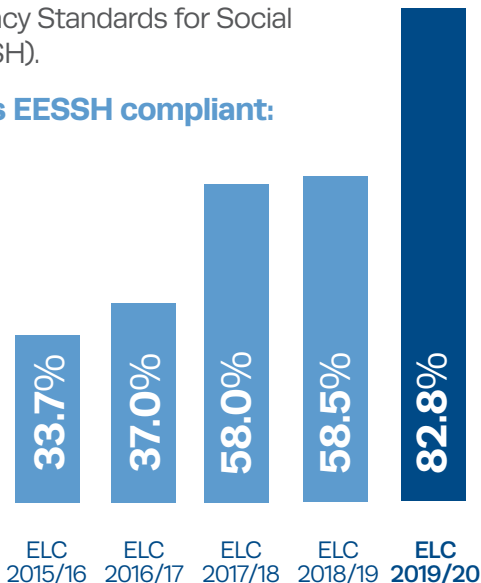
Meeting standards

We must make sure our properties are well maintained and meet the standards set by the Scottish Government, known as **The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)**.

We aim to ensure tenants' homes are energy efficient, safe and secure, not seriously damaged and have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition.

Energy efficiency is a key part of this and we are working to meet national standards in a range of ways including replacing heating systems and installing and upgrading insulation. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors how many of our properties meet Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (ESSH).

% Properties ESSH compliant:



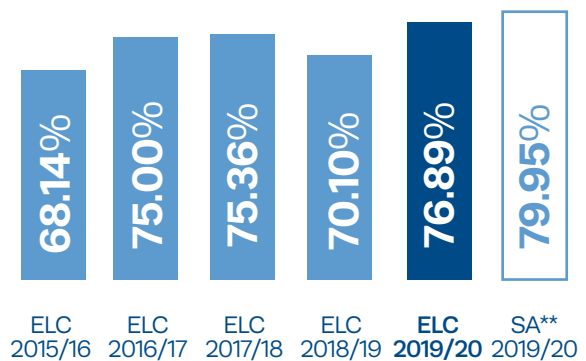
We recently introduced a new system of surveying our properties on a regular basis to monitor how many meet national energy efficiency and housing quality standards.

In 2019/20 we completed 770 surveys. In addition to this, we lodged 631 new **Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)** surveys. The total number of our properties that currently have a valid EPC is 2,795.

Requesting feedback

We monitor how satisfied our tenants are on moving in to a new home by asking them to complete a survey.

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home on moving in:



**Scottish Housing Network average figure.

Repairs, maintenance & improvements

Emergency repairs

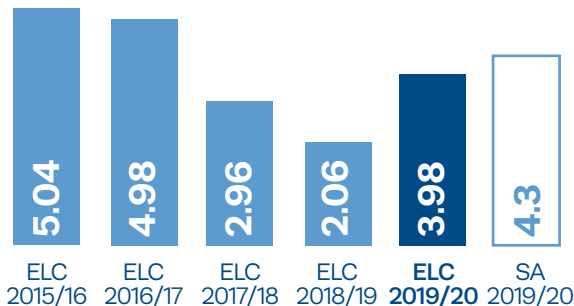
Repairs are a very important part of the service we provide to tenants and in particular dealing with emergency repairs.

Examples include blocked toilets, electrics sparking, roof slates / masonry hanging dangerously.



AVERAGE
EMERGENCY
REPAIR
TURNAROUND

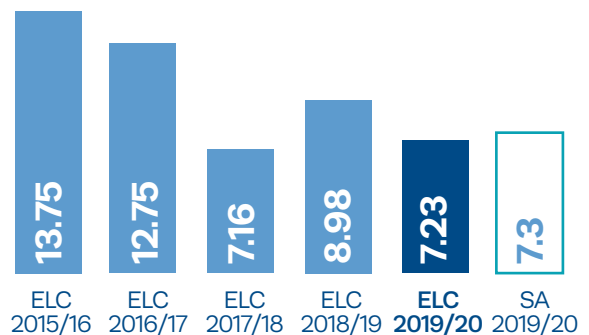
Average time in hours to complete an emergency repair



Non-emergency repairs

We also carry out non-emergency repairs. Anything that is not a danger or hazard to health is classed as non-emergency.

Average time in (working) days to complete non-emergency repairs



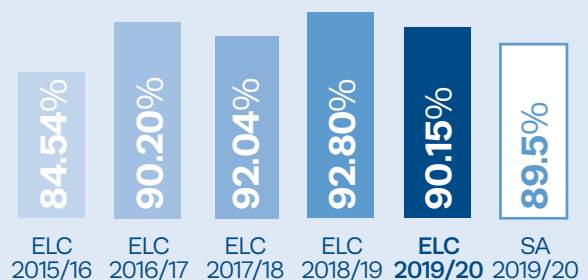
Our Tenant Scrutiny Group have looked at what happens when a tenant reports a repair and are working with the Repairs Service to put in place their recommendations.

Tenant satisfaction with our repair and maintenance service

We regularly ask tenants who have had a non-emergency repair completed how satisfied they were with the work we carried out.

- 19,077 non-emergency repairs last year
- 10,314 survey forms issued to tenants who had a non-emergency repair completed
- 1,960 surveys (19%) returned from tenants

The table below shows how satisfaction levels in our repairs have increased over the years and how it compares to the Scottish average.



Safer communities

We promote the right of every resident to enjoy peace and quiet in their own home with respect for and from their neighbour.

We will continue to work towards tackling and resolving antisocial behaviour (ASB) whilst balancing it carefully with the needs of those affected by such behaviour.

Last year **451 complaints** were made about:

Noise 229

Neighbour disputes 26

Other* 196

**Vandalism/drugs/ threats/ intimidation youth ASB*

There are targets in place for resolving antisocial behaviour cases and these are agreed in advance with ELTRP. The number of cases and how many were resolved within the locally agreed targets is shown below. Some cases take longer to resolve for a variety of reasons.

Antisocial behaviour cases resolved within our locally agreed targets of:

1 month 310

2 months 7

4 months 9

1 year 14

Cases resolved more than 1 year later 11

Total resolved within target 75.39%

Our Safer Communities Team also deal with:

- **Dog fouling:** 255 complaints were received and 4 fixed penalty notices issued
- **Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs):** 17 ASBOs were issued

A preventative approach

Eviction is a last resort.

We've developed a preventative approach to ensure our tenants get all the help and support they need to help them maintain their tenancy.

A small number of evictions do however still occur, and during 2019/20 we evicted **21** tenants. The reasons for these were:

Antisocial Behaviour 4

Non-payment of rent 12

Other 5

Abandonments

Over the year there are a number of properties that tenants have abandoned.

Last year there were a total of **23 abandonments** across the following areas:

East Area* 5

Musselburgh 5

Prestonpans 7

Tranent 6

**Dunbar, North Berwick, Haddington*

Access to housing & support

Providing options

We promote housing options and provide **free advice** to people in all types of housing, including council and private lets, home owners and people in other tenures. It is important that we make the best possible use of our housing stock and to maintain a steady turnover. In support of this we also offer incentives such as grants to move to a smaller property.

There are many different housing circumstances and no case is 'typical' and anyone is welcome to approach us for advice on their housing options.

The 511 homes we let last year went to:

- 276 homeless applicants
- 130 existing tenants
- 105 general housing list applicants

We do not have any hard-to-let areas and the total number of offers refused in the year were 108.

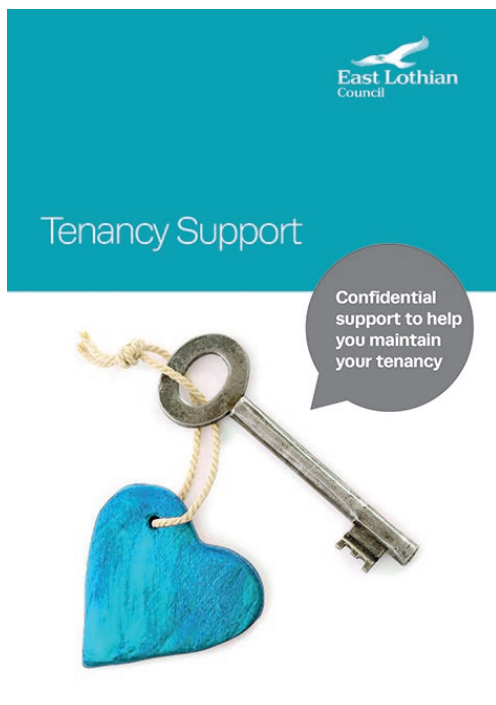
Percentage of houses that became vacant

2015/16	409	4.87%
2016/17	536	6.39%
2017/18	581	6.90%
2018/19	509	5.97%
2019/20	450	5.24%

Our average time* in days to re-let properties

2015/16	19.62
2016/17	34.88
2017/18	28.12
2018/19	39.92
2019/20	30.83
2019/20 (SA)	37.90

*Our target re-let time is 42 days.



76.89%

satisfied with the quality of their home



My Tenancy Support Officer helped me to turn my house into a home - thank you.

Homelessness

Housing demand

There is a very high demand for our properties and on 31st March 2020 we had **3,234 applicants** on our housing list.

The turnover of our stock is very low with **only 511 properties available to let** in 2019/20.

As we are unable to meet the demand for council housing, we provide housing options advice to applicants so alternative solutions can be found.

Average time in days spent in temporary accommodation by type

	Private Sector Lease	Housing Association	Council House	Hostel	Bed & Breakfast
2016/17	411	329	351	132	61
2017/18	470	455	416	226	71
2018/19	398	0*	361	261	57
2019/20	711	0*	368	212	62
2019/20 (SA)	180	231	131	68	33

*Housing Associations do not provide us with temporary accommodation.



6 DAYS
LESS THAN
LAST YEAR

Average time in days spent in temporary accommodation

2015/16	163 days
2016/17	192 days
2017/18	216 days
2018/19	187 days
2019/20	181 days
2019/20 (SA)	184 days

Value for money

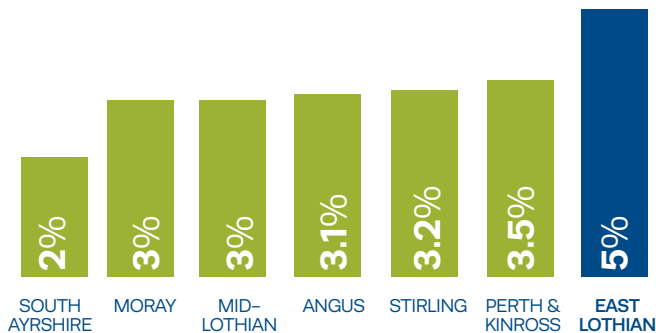
Value for money, rents and service charges

On 31st March 2020 we owned 8,836 properties and our average rent was £68.91 per week.

Each year we consult with tenants on our proposals to increase rents and service charges and last year we proposed a 5% increase. This was our best estimate of what it would take to maintain existing services, continue with the investment in new housing and the maintenance and improvement of existing council houses.

The feedback we received from tenants showed that 78% thought the council's proposed 5% increase was fair.

The chart below shows how our rent increase in 2019/20 compares with similar local authorities:



We know just how challenging the past year has been for many of our tenants - so if you're experiencing financial difficulties please do get in touch. We're here to help.

Rent collected

We collected £30,323,220 out of £29,663,680 rent due in the year. This amounts to 102.22% as some of the money collected was arrears paid by current tenants and previous tenants who had arrears when they left their tenancy.

At the end of financial year 2019/20 we had 8,441 current tenants, of whom 28.02% had rent arrears. Of those with rent arrears 44.53% owed less than £250. 11.84% owed more than £1,000



The percentage of the rent due that we lost through properties being empty during the last year has decreased and is below the Scottish average figure.

2015/16	0.55%	£135,911
2016/17	0.74%	£192,245
2017/18	0.82%	£220,312
2018/19	1.19%	£341,581
2019/20	0.53%	£156,998
2019/20 (SA)	1.5%	

Scottish Housing Day

A day to remember

Each year we celebrate **Scottish Housing Day** by holding an Awards Ceremony and event for all the tenants and staff who go the extra mile to support our housing service. This year we had to do things a bit different. We celebrated some of our housing news stories which focussed on our Tenant Support Officers and Community Housing Officers and the fantastic work of our tenant volunteers. There was a feature on the work of the East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel who hosted a fun Scottish Housing Day Quiz on Zoom.



Tribute to Jeanette Boyd

In May 2020 we lost Jeanette who was a much loved and valued tenant volunteer and a member of our Landlord Report Group since it was first formed in 2014.

Jeanette was a lovely lady, always very positive and a committed member of the group who help us produce the Landlord Reports over the years.

We have missed Jeanette very much this year and would like to dedicate this issue to her.



We'd love to hear from you...

We really value your view on our report – in particular what you like about it and what information you'd like to be included in the future. You can let us know by emailing tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk or leaving a message on our **Freephone 0800 413 721**.

Contact us

East Lothian Council	01620 827 827
East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel	0131 665 9304

Visit us

www.eastlothian.gov.uk
www.eltrp.co.uk
www.housingregulator.gov.scot

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www.eastlothian.gov.uk/communityhousingpn

Personal data will be retained in line with East Lothian Council retention policies. Data Protection Officer, East Lothian Council, John Muir House Haddington, EH41 3HA. Email: dpo@eastlothian.gov.uk