



Landlord Report to Tenants 2020/21

Information on
the performance
of the council as a
housing provider





Versions of this leaflet can be supplied in Braille, large print, audiotape or in your own language. Please phone Customer Services if you require assistance on 01620 827199

Contents

This report has been developed in partnership with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP). If you have feedback on any aspect of this report please get in touch with us (contact details on the back page).

Welcome	4
Achievements & key highlights	5
Housing stock	6
Communication & participation	7–8
Housing quality	8
Repairs, maintenance & improvements	9
Safer Communities	10
Evictions	11
Housing Options	11
Homelessness	12
Value for money, rents & service charges	13
Financial Support during Coronavirus/Covid-19	14
Feedback – Participate – Contact	15

Welcome



Welcome to our latest *Landlord Report to Tenants*, which provides information on our performance as a landlord during the year 2020/21. The report shows how we are meeting the requirements of the *Social Housing Charter* on key tenant issues such as; repairs, rents, energy efficiency and improvements. We highlight aspects of the service which are working well and identify those we need to improve.

It is important to note that this report covers the period from April 2020 to March 2021 during the full impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has presented significant challenges to us as a housing service in how we deliver our services and support our tenants. We have worked really hard to ensure services run as smoothly as possible in line with restrictions, however we have at times only been able to carry out essential and emergency services in line with government guidelines. This has affected things like our modernisation programme and upgrades to our housing stock over the past year.

Wendy McGuire

Head of Service (Housing)
East Lothian Council



East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) continue to work in partnership with East Lothian Council to deliver and sustain an improved service for all our tenants.

This has been a very difficult year for communities and tenants alike caused by the ongoing impacts of the Covid pandemic. However, despite everything we have continued to build our partnership, working with the council and have adapted positively to new ways of working whilst still delivering the service and support our tenants and residents have come to expect from our organisation. The dedication and willingness by all our volunteers and local groups to support their communities throughout the Covid restrictions has really been a remarkable achievement.

Despite the many challenges faced, ELTRP assisted ELC once again to achieve **Gold Accreditation** for their Tenant Scrutiny work. East Lothian are the first local authority in Scotland to uphold this first class standard for a further 3 years, which again demonstrates the excellent work being done by ELTRP EC in partnership with ELC.

It makes me very proud as chairperson of ELTRP, particularly in such a challenging climate, to be part of a combined effort by everyone; all working together to improve the area and wellbeing of all our East Lothian tenants and residents. You will see evidence of this partnership approach throughout this year's Landlord Report to Tenants and I really hope you enjoy reading it. Please contact ELTRP or ELC if you have any comments or would like to feedback on any aspects of the Report.

Jim Herron

Chairperson
East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel

Achievements & Key Highlights

Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Government's *Social Housing Charter* sets out the standards and outcomes that the council should be achieving when delivering housing services.

It's helped us focus on how we perform as a landlord and provide information to our tenants.

This year's *Landlord Report to Tenants* covers the period from April 2020 to March 2021 during the full impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been a difficult year for us all and we have faced challenges trying to ensure that our housing service continues to be delivered and our tenants are supported. In line with Government restrictions, we have at times only been able to carry out essential and emergency services. The majority of our housing staff have been working from home and interacting with their tenants in different ways. Despite the restrictions we have continued to let our properties, collect rents, carry out repairs and support our tenants.



PROPERTIES OWNED BY US

145 EMPTY
26 UNDERGOING MAJOR WORK



APPLICANTS ON HOUSING LIST



EMERGENCY & 18,619

NON-EMERGENCY REPAIRS COMPLETED



NEW BUILD PROPERTIES COMPLETED



NEW KITCHENS INSTALLED



NEW BATHROOMS INSTALLED



PROPERTIES LET BY ELC

AVERAGE RE-LET TIME 51 DAYS

406 HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Council Housing

Upgrades to our existing housing stock

Taking into account government guidelines and restrictions in respect of the pandemic, we have been unable to carry out some of the planned works to upgrade council properties especially those in occupied tenancies. We have however been able to carry out upgrades to empty (void) properties to improve our housing stock and carry out some upgrades to properties with existing tenants when restrictions were eased at various points throughout the pandemic.

We installed:

- **108 Kitchens**
- **144 Bathrooms**
- **27 properties had major adaptations**

Undoubtedly, restrictions have hindered the amount of modernisation works we would have liked to have made. With this in mind, we have increased the number of **planned upgrades** for the coming years.



All new tenants receive a copy of our Tenant Handbook.

Our new Moving In and Moving Out leaflets are designed to provide tenants with better information when moving into a property, and advice on how they should be left when moving out to help us to re-let the property sooner.

New builds

Despite the necessary restrictions imposed we have managed to deliver 80 new build properties. We were able to allocate to those applicants with the most housing need and they have been able to safely move in with the precautionary safety measures we have put in place.

- **Completed 80 new build properties**
- **Bought 13 properties for rent through Open Market Acquisitions** (this is when we purchase properties which are advertised on the open market to assist meeting the needs of those on our housing list).
- **The time it took us to re-let our houses was 51 days**
- **The percentage of our properties meeting the EESSH standard increased to 86.63%**
- **We saw an improvement in rent collection rates, up to 102.11%**
- **We saw a reduction in rent arrears down to 5.87%** (6.29% last year)

Kitchens	104
Bathrooms (including adapted bathrooms)	174
Heating (including condensing boilers & High Heat Retention Storage Heating)	385
Front Doors (including Fire Doors in flatted properties)	142
Windows (Full house)	61
Insulation measures (including lofts, cavity wall, external wall)	124
Full house rewiring	27

Communication & Participation

Communication with our tenants

During Covid-19 restrictions, we maintained tenant support and communications by using text, telephone and emails instead of in-person home and office visits, along with online forms and other web-based housing information.

New ways of working have helped us continue our day-to-day activities of letting properties, housing management and tenancy support.

Tenant Participation

Our tenant participation activities continue to ensure our tenants have a voice. We work in partnership with ELTRP and our local tenants and residents groups.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic we've had to find new and innovative ways of keeping in touch and engaging with ELTRP, our tenants and tenants groups. We have made greater use of online communication channels like Zoom, Skype and Teams, switching all our meetings and events to online. We've done a number of things to change the way we work and support tenants to enable them to attend our online meetings. ELTRP have continued to provide support and obtained funding for IT equipment, hold regular fun online events to engage in a less formal way and help us all get used to using these different ways of working. We see this as an opportunity to increase our online tenant participation. We will continue to support tenants, upskill our staff and ELTRP so that they can provide training and support.

Our new Tenant Participation Strategy promotes our Digital Participation and online presence to make tenant participation more accessible and encourage engagement.

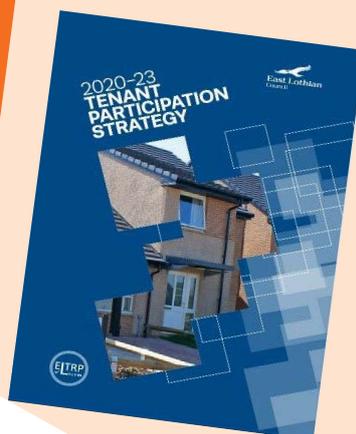


Tenant Scrutiny

Tenant Scrutiny is also an important part of our everyday work. All the work we do is in partnership with our tenant representatives. Due to the restrictions we have been unable to carry out our usual Scrutiny activities in 20/21, however our tenant's representatives and groups have continued working with our housing staff to improve our services.

We have worked hard to have our Gold accreditation for Tenant Scrutiny renewed for another three years.

East Lothian Council was first accredited in 2017 with the three-year term and is the first housing organisation of its kind in Scotland to trail-blaze, and uphold its first class standard.



Local initiatives

Other ways in which we encourage tenants to participate is through our estate inspections and local initiative projects. These local initiative projects are often identified by our tenant's groups as ways of improving their area. Although we were not able to carry out any of the planned estate inspections over the last year we were able to complete a number of local initiative projects.

Some of the projects in 2020/21 included:

- **upgrades and additional equipment to play parks in Tranent, Musselburgh and Haddington**
- **new secure doors to common areas in Musselburgh, Tranent and Prestonpans**
- **modernisation to communal garden spaces in Tranent**
- **fencing and improvements such as resurfacing drying areas in Musselburgh, Dunbar and Haddington.**



Local Initiative Budget £200,000 per annum

Annual spend:

Year	Total Spend
2017/18	£97,124
2018/19	£49,311
2019/20	£161,994
2020/21	£169,492

We must make sure that our properties meet certain standards and are well maintained. The standard, set by the Scottish Government, is called *The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)*.

The aim is to ensure tenants' homes are energy efficient, well maintained and have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition.

Providing safe and secure homes is also a key part of the SHQS and we are working to meet challenging legislative changes in relation to fire safety. The Scottish Housing Regulator will monitor how many of our properties comply with the new smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detection laws, and we significantly increased our modernisation programme to achieve compliance.

In 2020/21 we completed works in 4,320 properties to ensure they had the correct alarms installed. Works are already underway to ensure any remaining properties are brought up to the correct standard.

The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors how many of our properties meet Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH).

ELC EESH Compliant Properties

2017/18	58.05%
2018/19	58.52%
2019/20	82.81%
2020/21	86.63%

Local Authority Average (LAA)

2020/21	87.55%
---------	--------

Requesting feedback

To monitor tenant satisfaction, we carry out a survey when tenants move in to their home.

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

2017/18	75.36%
2018/19	70.10%
2019/20	76.89%
2020/21	76.09%
2020/21 (LAA)	85.17%

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. We carried out 2,365 emergency repairs last year. Our target to complete these type of repairs is four hours.



AVERAGE
EMERGENCY
REPAIR
TURNAROUND



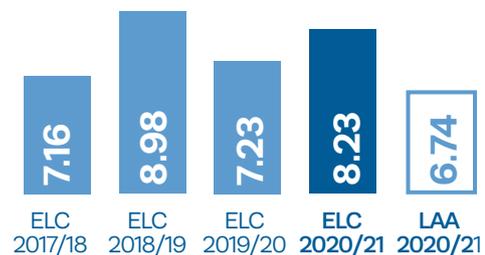
Non-emergency repairs

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 hours to complete an emergency repair



Average time in working days to complete non-emergency repairs



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.

- 18,619 non-emergency repairs last year
- 4,106 non-emergency repairs survey forms issued last year (October 2020 – January 2021) as restrictions meant we were only able to carry out emergency repairs for much of the year
- 302 (7.36%) tenant surveys returned

The table below shows repairs satisfaction levels over the years and how they compare to the Scottish Local authority Average.



Safer Communities

Antisocial behaviour

The year 2020/2021 witnessed a marked increase in the number of antisocial behaviour complaints made to the council across all housing tenures.

The growth can be attributed to the pressures associated with Covid-19; namely, more people finding themselves at home during the day, and therefore, more likely to complain about issues that they were previously oblivious to combined with the general eroding of tolerance levels.

Although the numbers have increased, there is nothing to suggest that the severity of the complaints have intensified.

The provisions of the Antisocial Behaviour Policy have been applied throughout the pandemic, despite the challenges faced with the council continuing to raise antisocial behaviour related court actions whenever the regulations have permitted.



Last year **749 complaints** were made about:

Noise 358

Neighbour disputes 70

Other* 321

**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 may take longer to resolve for a variety of reasons.

Antisocial behaviour cases resolved within our locally agreed targets of:

1 month 566

2 months 8

4 months 22

1 year 34

Cases remaining open at 31/03/21 119

Total resolved within target: 84.1% 630

Our Safer Communities Team also dealt with:

- **235 Dog Fouling complaints** which were received between 1/4/2020 – 31/3/2021
- **5 Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)** were granted by the courts
- **Live ASBOs** as at 31/03/2021: **18**

A preventative approach

We use evictions as a last resort, and will always try to work with our tenants to support them and provide preventative measures wherever possible. There are times where we have to take this step as all other means have failed.

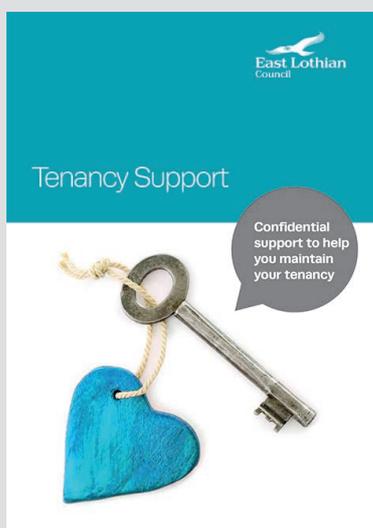
We carried out two evictions for antisocial behaviour in 2020/21. There were no evictions due to Non-Payment of Rent due to a Government provision to protect tenants from eviction during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Abandonments

Over the year there are a number of properties that tenants have abandoned. The table below shows how many of our properties were abandoned in the year and which area they were in.

East Area*	6
Musselburgh	3
Prestonpans	2
Tranent	2
Total	13

*Dunbar, North Berwick, Haddington



There is a very high demand for our properties and on 31st March 2021 we had **2925 applicants** on our housing list. The turnover of our stock is very low with only **461 properties** let in 2020/21. This means that we cannot meet all the demand for council housing and we provide **Housing Options Advice** to applicants so alternative solutions can be found.

This advice is free to people in all types of housing, including council and private lets, home owners and people in other tenures. Due to the low turnover of our properties it is important that we make the best possible use of our housing stock.

Of the 461 homes we let last year:

- **242 went to homeless applicants**
- **118 to existing tenants**
- **101 general housing list applicants**

Percentage of houses that became vacant

2017/18	581	6.90%
2018/19	509	5.97%
2019/20	450	5.24%
2020/21	399	4.57%
2020/21 (LAA)		6.73%

Our average time* in days to re-let properties

2017/18	28.12
2018/19	39.92
2019/20	30.83
2020/21	51.88
2020/21 (LAA)	57.34

*Our target re-let time is 42 days.

Homelessness



Under the Scottish Government's Homelessness Legislation we have a statutory requirement to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applicants. The figures below show what the current situation is with our temporary accommodation and the average length of time spent in temporary or emergency accommodation in days.

For more information on finding a place to live, visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/housing

Average time in days spent in temporary accommodation

2017/18	216 days
2018/19	187 days
2019/20	181 days
2020/21	194 days
2020/21 (LAA)	106 days

Average time in days spent in temporary accommodation by type

	Private Sector Leasing	Social Housing Sector	Hostel	Bed & Breakfast
2017/18	416	416	226	71
2018/19	398	361	261	57
2019/20	711	368	212	62
2020/21	0	387	218	74
2020/21 (LAA)	226	383	69	34

Value for Money

Value for money, rents and service charges

On 31st March 2021 we owned 8,917 properties and our average rent was £72.50 per week.

Although we carried out our Rent Consultation with our tenants towards the end of 2020 and the feedback which we received was that the proposed 2% was 'fair', we took the decision not to impose any increase to our tenants in the current financial climate.

We were one of the few council's in Scotland who chose not to do so.

The chart below shows how our rent increase in 2020/21 compares with similar local authorities:



Payment trends

Over the past year we have seen a significant change in the way Council tenants have paid their rent compared to previous years. The temporary closure of local Council offices has seen the greatest impact, with an 86% reduction in the number of rent payments being made this way.

There has been a significant increase in the number of online payments, with a 46.68% increase in the number of rent payments received via the council website. Payments at Post Offices have also increased, with a 36.93% increase in the number of payments taken this way.

Rent collected

From April 2020 to March 2021 we collected:

- **£ 31,920,536 out of £31,260,782 rent due in the year.**

This amounts to 102.11% as some of the money collected was arrears paid by current tenants and previous tenants who had arrears when they left their tenancy.

Of our 8,593 tenants, at the end of 2020/21:

- **30.40% had rent arrears**
- **52.91% of those with arrears owed less than £250**
- **14.43% of those with arrears owed more than £1,000.**

Rent lost due to Voids

The percentage of the rent due that we lost through properties being empty during the last year has increased due to extra measures we had to put in place to allow our staff to work safely within a property.

2017/18	0.82%	£220,312
2018/19	1.19%	£341,581
2019/20	0.53%	£156,998
2020/21	0.64%	£202,858
2020/21 (LAA)	1.31%	

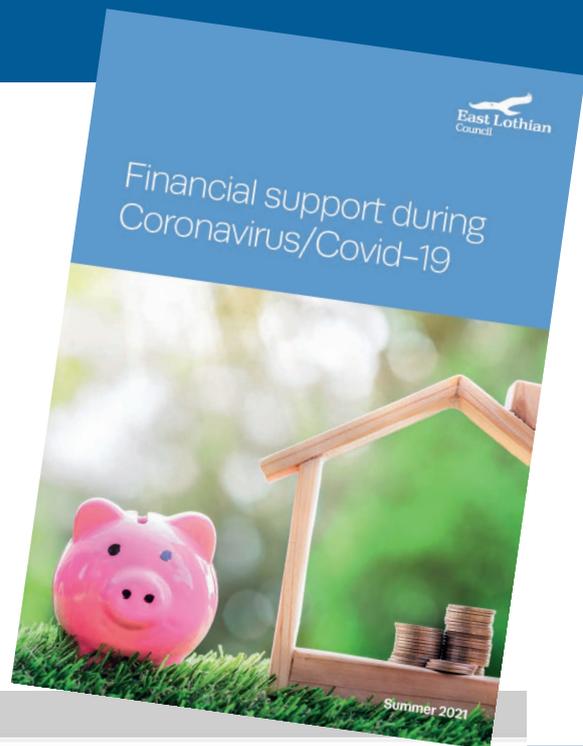
Coronavirus/Covid-19

Financial support

If you or a member of your household has been affected by Coronavirus/Covid-19 you may be eligible for financial help.

The summer 2021 edition of our **Financial Support during Coronavirus/Covid-19** leaflet brings together updated guidance about help available, with information about who to contact if you need more advice.

Visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/covid-finance



COVID-19 Welfare Advice and Financial Support

- Low income pandemic payment (LIPP)
- Help if you're in crisis
- Information about DWP benefits
- How our Financial Inclusion team can help
- Help if you're self employed
- Other financial help you may be entitled to
- Help with Council Tax and Rent
- Help if you're worried about energy & fuel bills
- Online benefits calculator

Our Macmillan service

About our Macmillan service
Understanding benefits
Benefit checker
Macmillan grants
Videos about the practical impact of cancer
More information about Macmillan

Help with benefits

Disability and carer benefits
Maternity and child benefits
Pension benefits
Sickness benefits
Single parent benefits
Unemployment benefits
Benefits following a death
Get an estimate with our online benefits calculator

Grants and Assistance

Low Income Pandemic Payment (LIPP)
Coronavirus Self-Isolation Support Grant
Scottish Welfare Fund
Discretionary Housing Payment
East Lothian Energy - affordable energy tariffs
Energy advice and help to stay warm
Access to warm clothing
Access to food
Free school meals and clothing grants



Coronavirus - Find out what help is available in our new leaflet

COVID-19 is impacting the finances of households across East Lothian. Help is available if your income has been affected and you're struggling.

[Read more](#)



Low Income Pandemic Payment (LIPP)

A one-off £130 payment will be made by 31 October 2021 to any household who meets the eligibility criteria.

[Read more](#)

[Social Security Scotland Benefits](#)

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 with your feedback, or leaving a message on our **Freephone 0800 413 721**.

Get involved

By participating, you'll be able to tell us what you think about the services we provide, make suggestions on how we could do better, and check out how we're performing. There are many ways to get involved and help us keep you informed including:

- **Tenants & Residents Groups**
- **Questionnaires & Surveys**
- **Consultation Register**
- **Estate Inspections**

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

Follow us



East Lothian Council



@ELCouncil

Data Protection

East Lothian Council uses the personal data you provide for purposes associated with the delivery of our services. For more information go to: 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

All information correct at date of publishing: 1 October 2021

East Lothian Council
Community Housing
Penston House
Macmerry
EH33 1EX