



Landlord Report to Tenants 2022/23

Information on
the performance
of the council as a
housing provider



**We're living through stressful times
just now, and everyone's feeling it.**

**Our staff are doing their best to assist local residents
and businesses whilst delivering essential services.**

Please, be nice.



*Thanks for your patience
& politeness*



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

All information correct at date of publishing: 1 October 2023

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www.eastlothian.gov.uk/housing

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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 we'd love to hear from you – see page 16.

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Welcome



Wendy McGuire
Head of Service
(Housing)
East Lothian Council

Welcome to East Lothian Council's latest Landlord Report to our tenants, which provides information on our performance as a landlord for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. We are writing this report for tenants and service users to show how East Lothian Council has performed against the aims of the **Scottish Social Housing Charter** on key tenant issues such as; repairs, rents, energy efficiency and improvements, as well as allocations and homelessness, and how we deal with issues such as antisocial behaviour. The report highlights aspects of the service which are working well and identifies those areas where we need to improve.

Our services continue to recover steadily from the pandemic, which is still having an impact on some of the things we do, however it is also important to note the current financial challenges and the impact the cost of living crisis is having on our tenants, particularly around energy costs and the price of food. These challenges are also very real for the council who are experiencing significant pressures associated with the increasing cost of materials and labour for repairing and improving tenants' homes, increasing interest costs related to borrowing, costs of meeting new energy standards and decarbonising heat, as well as the cost to help deliver new affordable homes.

Housing however plays a vital part in helping to reduce inequality, financial hardship, social isolation and digital exclusion. Moving forward, despite these challenges, we will continue to work hard and remain committed to increasing the stock of high quality affordable accommodation for local people; providing excellent accommodation for our current and prospective tenants; making our neighbourhoods safe, secure and vibrant and supporting people to live independently in their own homes.

While noting improvement is required in a number of areas, I am proud of our performance and know that with your involvement we can continue to improve and do better. I would like to offer my thanks to our staff and their commitment to ensuring services run as smoothly as possible while supporting and ensuring the safety of our tenants. I would also like to thank the members of **East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel** for their dedication and commitment to improving services for tenants and service users and for their continued engagement and input in developing this report. We hope you find our report informative.

You can find further information on key performance indicators for housing and the role of the regulator online at: www.housingregulator.gov.scot



Jim Herron
Chairperson
East Lothian Tenants
& Residents Panel

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) continues to work in partnership with East Lothian Council to monitor performance and deliver an improved service for all our tenants. We have adapted positively to new ways of working whilst still delivering the service and support to our tenants and residents that they have come to expect from our organisation. The dedication and willingness of all our volunteers and local groups to support their communities continues to be a remarkable achievement. It makes me very proud as chairperson of ELTRP, particularly in such a challenging financial climate, to be part of a combined effort by everyone, all working together to improve the area and support the 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.

Achievements & key highlights

It has been another challenging year for us due to the impact of global financial challenges and the after-effects of the pandemic. The majority of our housing staff have continued to work from home and have been speaking with their tenants, by telephone, email and in person when requested. We have continued to let our properties, collect rents, carry out repairs and support our tenants. We are also still required to meet the *Scottish Social Housing Charter* standards.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the standards and outcomes the council should be achieving when delivering our housing services. It has helped us focus on how we are performing as a landlord and provide information to our tenants.

Here are the key highlights for our service over this past year:



**NEW BATHROOMS
INSTALLED
INC ADAPTED
BATHROOMS**



**NEW KITCHENS
INSTALLED**



**EMERGENCY
REPAIRS
COMPLETED**

Of our properties, on 31st March 2023, 218 were empty and 86 were undergoing major work. Our average time for completing emergency repairs was 3.89 hours.



**PROPERTIES
ALLOCATED
INCLUDING
102
NEW BUILDS**



**AVERAGE
DAYS TAKEN TO
RE-LET VACATED
PROPERTIES**



**PROPERTIES
MANAGED BY US**



**APPLICANTS
ON HOUSING LIST**

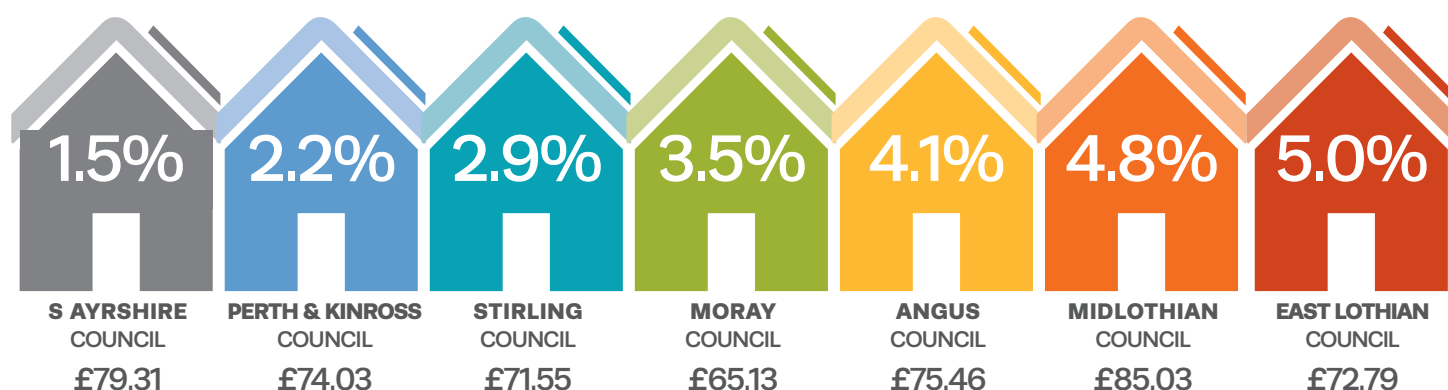
Rent & value for money

Our rents

On 31st March 2023, we owned **9,107** properties and our average rent was **£72.79** per week.

We took the difficult decision to increase rents by **5%** to make sure that we could maintain our service and deliver on our new build and modernisation programmes.

The graphic below shows the percentage rent increases for **2023/24** in similar sized local authorities to East Lothian Council, and their average weekly rent:



Arrears

At the end of 2022/23 we had:

- **8,748** current tenants
- of whom **31.86%** had rent arrears
- Of those with rent arrears; **52.78%** owed less than **£250**
- **12.27%** owed more than **£1,000**.

Rent collected

We collected:

£32,353,224 out of **£31,898,949** rent due in the year. Shown as a percentage of total rent due this amounts to **101.42%**. The total collected was more than 100% as some of it was arrears.

Rent loss due to voids

The percentage of the rent that we lost through properties being empty during the last year has increased for a number of reasons including staff shortages, contractor shortages and delays as well as extra measures we had to put in place to allow our staff to work safely within a property during the pandemic.

Void properties

2018/19	1.19%	£341,581
2019/20	0.53%	£156,998
2020/21	0.64%	£202,858
2021/22	1.04%	£331,487
2022/23	1.09%	£350,942
2022/23 SLAA*	1.43%	-

**Scottish Local Authority Average*

Housing allocations & tenancy sustainment

Allocation of homes

We allocated a total of **503** council properties during 2022/23. We saw an increase in the total number of properties allocated due to the increase in new build properties. There were also **100** mutual exchanges carried out, where tenants exchange house with each other, with the council's consent.

Throughout the year we also have a number of properties that will become vacant and shown below are the percentage of houses that became vacant and on average how long it took us to relet them.

Percentage of houses which became vacant

2019/20	5.24%	450
2020/21	4.57%	399
2021/22	4.67%	420
2022/23	4.82%	439
2022/23 SLAA	7.76%	-

Average time to re-let properties

2019/20	30.83 days
2020/21	51.88 days
2021/22	66.19 days
2022/23	65.19 days
2022/23 SLAA	51.57 days

Tenancy sustainment

93.52% of all new tenants sustained their tenancy for more than 1 year.

Our *Tenancy Support Officers* help existing tenants sustain their tenancy and help with budgeting; maximising income and claiming benefits.

They also help with reporting repairs, and providing housing options advice and independent living skills.

We have two Tenancy Support Officers in our *Housing Options Team* who work to assist our homeless applicants.



123
to existing
tenants (transfer)

294
to homeless
applicants

86
to housing list
applicants

New builds

Despite post-pandemic challenges still facing the construction sector, we managed to deliver **102 new build properties.**



Blindwells, Tranent



We were able to allocate these new properties to applicants with the greatest housing needs and ensure they were able to move in safely with the measures we put in place during the pandemic.

- we completed 102 new build properties
- we bought 23 properties for rent through *Open Market Acquisitions**

**This is when we purchase properties which are advertised on the open market, to help meet the needs of those on our housing list.*

New builds allocated in 2022/23 were:

60 at Blindwells, Tranent

26 at Macmerry

16 at Craighall, Musselburgh



Communication & participation

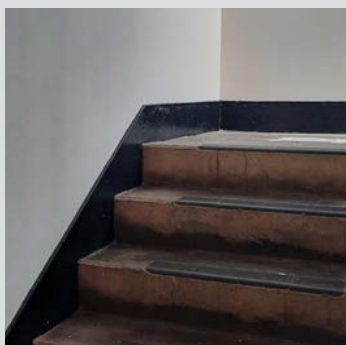
Over the past year, we have started to have more face-to-face contact as well as continuing to use alternative ways to speak to our tenants including phone and email instead of home or office-based meetings. We have also made tenants aware of some services they can access by text message. Our website has been updated to include a number of new forms and extra housing information.

Our tenant participation activities continue to make sure that our tenants have a voice. We continue to work in partnership with ELTRP and our local tenants and residents groups. ELTRP has been particularly active in creating fun online and face-to-face events to engage with tenants in a less formal way and encourage more people to get involved.

We are also making great use of online communication channels, like Zoom, Skype, Teams and Near Me – our video consulting service.



Wingate Flats
renovated stairwell



Local initiatives

We encourage tenants to get involved in estate inspections and local initiative projects. These projects can be identified during an estate inspection, by tenants or through local tenants and residents groups. Some recent projects have included upgrading of communal areas and play parks, resurfacing of drying areas, demolition of old garages and creation of parking bays as well as improvements to doors and decoration of communal stairs.

The annual Local Initiative Budget is £200,000

Year	Total Spend (£s)
2020/21	169,492.00
2021/22	99,032.27
2022/23	75,282.97

The low spend in 2022/23 was due to the effects of the pandemic. Estate inspections only restarted at the beginning of 2023. We hope that during our programme of inspections, more local initiative projects will be identified and we will see an increase in the spend over the coming year.

<<< Galt Lane, Musselburgh:
Before opposite, and after below



Housing quality & upgrades

We must make sure 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 of the SHQS is to ensure tenants' homes are safe and secure, energy efficient, well maintained and have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition.

Over the last year, we brought **741** properties up to the new smoke, heat and carbon monoxide standards as well as completing **3,301** electrical installation inspections. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors how many of our properties meet **Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH)**. Our figures are shown below.

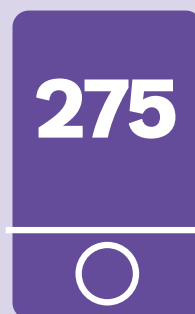
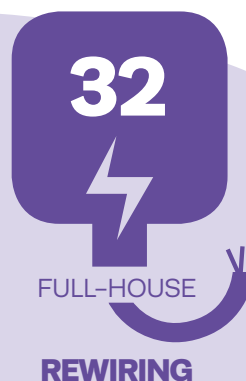
The percentage of EESH compliant council properties in East Lothian were:

2019/20	82.81%
2020/21	86.63%
2021/22	90.29%
2022/23	90.86%



Upgrading our stock

During the last year we installed:



HEATING
INC CONDENSING GAS BOILERS,
AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMPS
& HIGH HEAT RETENTION
STORAGE HEATING



**INSULATION
MEASURES**
INC LOFTS,
CAVITY WALL
& EXTERNAL WALL

Repairs, maintenance & improvements

Repairs, and in particular **emergency repairs**, are a key part of the service we provide our tenants.

We carried out **2,363** emergency repairs last year. Our target to complete these type of repairs is four hours from report to completion. Shown below is the average time to complete over the past four years.

Average time to complete an emergency repair (in hours) and how this compares to the Scottish Local Authority Average (SLAA):

2019/20	3.98
2020/21	4.33
2021/22	3.89
2022/23	3.89
2022/23 SLAA	4.70

We also carry out non-emergency repairs, our target from report to completion is 20 working days.

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

2019/20	7.23
2020/21	8.23
2021/22	9.82
2022/23	9.18
2022/23 SLAA	9.68

Tenant satisfaction with our repairs

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

Last year we carried out **20,265** non-emergency repairs.

We sent out **10,628** satisfaction survey forms to tenants who had a completed repair

15.75% (1,674 tenants) of those who were sent a survey responded and told us how satisfied they were with the service.

The percentages below shows our repairs satisfaction over the years and how it compares to the SLAA:

2019/20	90.15%
2020/21	86.42%
2021/22	90.39%
2022/23	88.03%
2022/23 SLAA	88.52%



Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Every three years we are required to carry out a **Tenant Satisfaction Survey**, the most recent being in 2022.

The information gathered helps inform which areas of the service our tenants are most satisfied with, and identified those where we need to make improvements.

Summary of how satisfied tenants were last year with some key aspects of our service:

Overall service provided by landlord: **81.6%**

Being kept informed about services and decisions: **86.0%**

Opportunities to participate in decision-making processes: **80.2%**

Quality of the home: **83.8%**

Management of the neighbourhood: **88.4%**

Rent level represents good value for money: **85.4%**

Requesting feedback



To monitor how satisfied our tenants are we ask them to provide feedback when they move in to their home.

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

2019/20	76.89%
2020/21	76.09%
2021/22	69.06%
2022/23	72.13%
2022/23 SLAA	86.94%

have your say



Antisocial behaviour

There were 726 antisocial behaviour complaints made in the last year for the following reasons:

Noise	301
Neighbour Disputes	90
Other – e.g. vandalism, drugs, threats, intimidation, youth ASB	335
Total number of reports	726



We have targets in place for resolving antisocial behaviour cases, agreed with ELTRP.

Number of antisocial behaviour cases resolved within these locally agreed targets:

Target	No. resolved
Resolved within 1 month	461
Resolved within 2 months	14
Resolved within 4 months	29
Resolved within 1 year	26
Cases remaining unresolved at 31/03/23	196

Total number resolved within target (73%)

Some cases can take longer to resolve, for a variety of reasons.

Evictions

We had **1** eviction due to **non-payment of rent** in the period 2022/23. The Government provision to protect tenants from eviction during the Covid-19 pandemic ended in March 2021.

Abandonment

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

Area	Number of abandonments	
	2021/22	2022/23
East Area	4	6
Musselburgh	5	3
Prestonpans	3	6
Tranent	3	4
Total	15	19



Housing Options

Demand for council housing is very high. On 31st March 2023 there were 4,414 applicants on our waiting list. The turnover of stock is very low, with only 503 properties let in 2022/23. This means that we cannot meet all the demand for council housing. We provide housing options advice to applicants so alternative solutions can be found.

Housing Options 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.

HOUSING OPTIONS SUPPORT



Homelessness

Under national 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 number of days spent in temporary or emergency accommodation.

Average number of days spent in temporary accommodation by type

	Council/Housing Association	Hostel	Bed & Breakfast
2019/20	368	212	62
2020/21	387	218	74
2021/22	450	204	84
2022/23	450	153	97
2022/23 SLAA	197	67	43

The high demand for our properties and low turnover of our stock means that we cannot meet all the demand for council housing.

This puts pressure on our ability to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applicants resulting in very long lengths of stay.

Average number of days spent in temporary accommodation

2019/20	345
2020/21	339
2021/22	391
2022/23	423
2022/23 SLAA	223

Boost your income

Let's talk cost of living

The cost of living is increasing rapidly with prices rising at rates not seen since the 1970s; from energy bills to food, clothing, fuel and more.

There are a range of financial support measures in place to boost people's income and help meet their essential living costs. However, it is not always easy to know just what support is available, or how to apply, so lots of benefits go unclaimed.

Our website has information about financial support available to help ease the cost of living challenges faced by many local households. Don't assume you're receiving everything you're entitled to, always check, and if you are still struggling or in doubt, email: financialinclusion@eastlothian.gov.uk

If you are concerned about your bills, including rent and Council Tax, don't let arrears build up...

There are lots of ways we can help ensure you get what you're entitled to.

Find out more online at:

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/boost

scan the QR code, or talk to your local Housing or Tenancy Support Officer.



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Whatever stage you are at in your career, we have a wide variety of jobs, with great employee benefits, flexibility, and job satisfaction.

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Council

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME
CYCLE TO WORK SCHEME
SPORTS, SOCIAL &
FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

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be proud to work for.

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have your say

We'd love to hear from you...



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

Get involved

We want you to let us know what you think about the services we provide to our tenants. There are many ways that you can get involved and help Housing Services to keep you informed. These include getting involved in *East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel*, local Tenants' & Residents' Groups or as an individual tenant by completing our questionnaires, being involved in estate inspections or by being on our consultation register.

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

Data Protection

East Lothian Council uses the personal data you provide for purposes associated with the delivery of our services. Find out more online at: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/communityhousingpn

Personal data will be retained in line with East Lothian Council retention policies.

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Haddington, EH41 3HA.
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