

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 24 SEPTEMBER 2019

SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER RETURN: RESULTS

1. BACKGROUND

The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into force in April 2012, and since then we have reported our performance through the set of indicators in the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). The purpose of this annual return is to monitor performance to ensure quality and value for money for tenants and customers for the services they receive. The results are published annually for all Local Authorities (LAs) and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Scotland which helps us to compare our performance and make improvements within our own services by adopting good practice of other landlords.

Our Housing Improvement Teams (HITs) have been set up to identify areas for improvement and put in place plans to deliver these improvements. There are five HITs, each made up of a core group of Communities staff and subgroups where required. For each HIT the core group agrees an action plan, based on current understanding of performance in each area as well as any legislative changes and good practice guidance. Housing Improvement Teams have been set up with an aim to make improvements in service and performance through staff and customer involvement, and to tackle legislative, regulatory and audit requirements.

The five HITs are:

1. Income Management
2. Maintaining & Improving Homes
3. Housing Options
4. Homes & Communities
5. Tenant Participation

These HITs correspond with the Charter outcomes and the indicators which form the ARC. An important section of the Charter includes satisfaction indicators which show how housing service customers view the services provided to them.

In order to produce the number of returns desired to give a good indication of customer views, it was decided to contract with an external service provider – Knowledge Partnership. 1,009 face to face interviews were carried out between January and March 2019, which represents approximately 15% of all tenants.

2. DETAIL

Income Management

The remit of the Income Management HIT covers achieving good value from rents and service charges, including arrears and voids.

	2017/18		2018/19		Trend
	Scottish Average	Angus	Scottish Average	Angus	
All Arrears as a % of Gross Rent	6.36%	7.66%	6.90%	9.23%	↓
% Rent Loss due to Empty Properties	0.84%	0.76%	0.90%	0.86%	↓
% Rent Collected in the Year	99.21%	99.97%	98.70%	98.52%	↓
Average Time (Days) Taken to Re-let all Properties	32.04 days	31.49 days	33.80 days	30.10 days	↑
% of Tenants Satisfied that our Rent Represents Value for Money	80.6%	80.26%	81.30%	80.67%	↑

Rent arrears have spiked this year, largely as a result of Universal Credit. An action plan is in place with Revenues and Benefits which includes changes to the new tenancy process and additional resources

to target rent arrears. Implementing the review of the Community Housing Teams will also assist in better identifying households at risk of falling into rent arrears and allow a more preventative approach.

There has been continued focus through HIT work, and advertising empty properties through the Immediate to Let section of the Council website which has been beneficial for our re-let times again this year. Our teams have been successful in improving performance in this indicator so that we are now performing better than the Scottish average. While the rent lost due to empty properties has slightly dropped in performance this year, it is still performing better than the Scottish average.

Maintaining & Improving Homes

The Maintaining & Improving Homes HIT ensures that properties are well-maintained, that any repairs are completed to a high standard, and that tenants are kept informed about when repairs will be carried out. This HIT includes five main indicators.

	2017/18		2018/19		Trend
	Scottish Average	Angus	Scottish Average	Angus	
% of Repairs Completed First Time	92.87%	98.17%	92.90%	89.32%*	↓
% of Repair Appointments Kept	96.09%	99.93%	96.90%	99.87%	→
Total % of Stock Meeting SHQS	94.39%	93.17%	94.80%	93.87%	↑
% Satisfaction with the Repair Service	90.81%	82.36%	90.89%	76.05%	↓
% Satisfaction with Quality of Home	84.60%	85.74%	85.10%	80.77%	↓

Over the last few years there have been significant improvements in the repair indicators, although some of these have dropped slightly this year. The drop in the proportion of repairs completed first time relates to a former contractor, McGills, going into administration. Customer satisfaction levels have also reduced and measures to improve performance in this area will be a key aspect of the new repairs contract.

Housing Options

The Housing Options HIT aims to ensure that there is a consistent approach in the delivery of the Housing Options Service in line with current legislation, policies and procedures. The service provides advice to anyone who needs it to help them find, keep and maintain their home.

	2017/18		2018/19		Trend
	Scottish Average	Angus	Scottish Average	Angus	
% of Tenancies Sustained more than 1 year	89.03	91.63%	89%	84.84%	↓
Average time spent in Temporary Accommodation	103.15 days	131.74 days	98.08 days	162.58 days	↓

The tenancy sustainment indicator has dropped this year, however the ending of a tenancy is not always for negative reasons. We are continuing to make efforts to improve prevention of homelessness, which has resulted in some good levels of engagement in the past, and we are following Scottish Government guidance to ensure consistent approach across all teams.

The average days spent in temporary accommodation has increased, however, fewer households were placed in B&B accommodation compared to last year. The increase is partly as a result of families from Timmergreens, Arbroath being rehoused as well as a mismatch between stock profiles and the needs of homeless households. Actions from the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan will ensure households spend less time in temporary accommodation.

Homes & Communities

The Homes & Communities HIT encompasses tenancy management, estate management, gypsy travellers and anti-social behaviour. The main indicators for this HIT look at the level of tenant satisfaction with the management of their home, and the number of ASB cases reported and resolved.

	2017/18		2018/19		Trend
	Scottish Average	Angus	Scottish Average	Angus	
% of Tenants that were Satisfied with the Management of their Home	83.83%	81.66%	83.60%	80.67%	↓
% of Anti-Social Behaviour cases reported in the last year which were resolved	88.49%	99.30%	86.40%	98.22%	↓

Although there has been a slight reduction in the resolution of ASB cases this year, we have continued to be above the Scottish average. The Council resolves ASB in a number of ways, and follows a well-structured set of guidelines, and we will continue to develop methods of dealing with cases.

Tenant Participation

Tenant Participation is a new HIT group set up over the past year. The main indicators include the satisfaction with opportunities to participate, and with being kept informed.

	2017/18		2018/19		Trend
	Scottish Average	Angus	Scottish Average	Angus	
% Satisfaction with overall service provided by their landlord	84.94%	82.65%	85.70%	80.77%	↓
% Satisfaction with being Kept Informed about services and decisions	84.65%	79.66%	85.50%	78.69%	↓
% Satisfaction with Opportunities to Participate	76.92%	62.11%	80.20%	59.27%	↓

We found younger tenants were most likely to say they are dissatisfied with participation, which was the case in the previous survey as well. We will continue to develop our communication methods which will hopefully ensure tenants are well-informed and equipped to participate, influence housing policies and make informed choices. There has been development of an e-panel in the past year to increase the potential for online participation, and it is hoped that this will improve satisfaction with participation amongst younger tenants in particular. These issues will be addressed through the Tenant Community and Engagement Strategy 2019-22.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This year there have been both positive and negative changes in the performance levels. There has been significant work to maintain and improve performance despite changing legislation including Welfare Reform which brings with it new ways of dealing with the services. The review of Community Housing services will bring about significant changes to the way we deliver services in the future with a greater focus on customer needs and preventative services. This is intended to drive an improvement in performance and satisfaction levels.

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