

Making a Difference

Providing Affordable Homes in Strong Communities



LANARKSHIRE
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

HOUSING PLAN
2016-2021

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HOUSING PLAN 2016-2021

Making a Difference



PREFACE TO STRATEGIC PLANS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

This PLAN identifies the key issues which are the most relevant to a specific departmental responsibility within the organisational structure of Lanarkshire Housing Association (LHA). Its specialist background is outlined in a Foreword by the Chairperson of the relevant Sub-Committee. It can be read as a standalone document in relation to the service priorities of the department, but it is important to acknowledge that its goals are integral to a wider planning framework which incorporates all THREE of LHA's departmental strategic documents, as follows :

1. The Corporate Plan
2. The Housing Plan
3. The Capital Investment Plan (formerly known as the Development Plan)

Each of the above PLANS is linked to LHA's desire to support people in achieving a better future for themselves and their families. This aspiration is summarised by our VISION of the social and economic benefits in providing affordable, sustainable homes within strong communities during the plan period of 2016-2021. This VISION is intended to set out fairly succinctly our desire to move forward by developing our corporate and social responsibilities in a realistic, appropriate, inspirational, ambitious and distinctive way, and it is plainly stated as being :

“To benefit communities in Lanarkshire by protecting the global environment and engaging with stakeholders to find better ways to invest scarce resources in providing affordable homes for the future and delivering greater social value in our housing related services.”

There are numerous resources and driving factors that have fed into the growth of our strategic thinking, including (but not limited to) the following :

- The Scottish Government's strategic priorities – the context of affordable housing provisions and the funding regime in Scotland
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter – the standards and outcomes expected of RSLs in Scotland by the Charter
- The Scottish Housing Regulator – registration requirements, regulation status (landlord performance report and official notices) and the Determination of Accounting Requirements (December 2014)
- Strategic Housing Investment Plans – Local Authorities' housing strategies

- LHA's Core Values (acronym, “ACCEPT”) :
 - Accountability
 - Customer satisfaction
 - Care for the environment
 - Ethical practice
 - Public service
 - Teamwork
- The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman – the principles of good practice in responsive complaints procedures
- The National Housing Federation (NHF) guidance on excellence in Governance
- The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator – rules and regulations of charitable status
- Acts of Parliament relating to housing, welfare, planning, employment, environmental and building standards – all relevant UK and Scottish legislation such as (but not limited to) :
 - Welfare Reform Act 2012
 - Universal Credit (Waiting Days) (Amendment) Regulations 2015
 - Housing (Scotland) Acts (2014/2010/2006)
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009
 - Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014
 - Heat Network (Metering and Billing) Regulations 2014
 - Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011
 - Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004
 - Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Building (Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2004
 - Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Data Protection Act 1998
 - Health & Safety at Work etc Act (1974) and other Employment legislation
 - Human Rights Act 1998

As a valued stakeholder, I hope you will find our PLANS to be a useful insight into the Association's ambitions to play a pivotal role in securing the growth of much needed, high quality, affordable housing provisions in Lanarkshire as well as delivering more integrated housing related services that will help to strengthen our local communities, provide employment opportunities and improve people's lives.

James Stevenson
Chief Executive

FOREWORD BY CONVENER OF THE HOUSING SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE – JOHN GLENNY

Our last strategic plan was published in 2012, covering the period from 2012-2015, and I am pleased to report that we made significant progress in achieving the objectives detailed therein. Against this background we retain a strong commitment to our journey of improvements and are confident that the launch of this new plan will allow us to continue to address the key changes introduced by the Scottish and UK governments, while responding to future opportunities and challenges.

This goal was tested following the introduction of the Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter (the Charter) which came into force in April 2012 and requires social landlords to provide the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) with details of their performance in relation to Charter outcomes and standards. The SHR subsequently publishes this information in a Landlord Report and we first issued this to our tenants and customers in 2014, along with our own annual Charter performance report, to provide an insight into our activities and allow a comparison with other Scottish Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This year we plan to improve our services by seeking customer input on the quality and standard of information provided within our Charter report; with a view to reviewing the format in response to customer feedback. In relation to the Charter, I can advise that we performed above the Scottish average in most of the indicators outlined in the SHR's 2014 Landlord Report and I can also advise that our performance for many of the Charter outcomes has improved from last year with the publication of the 2015 SHR Landlord Report expected later in the year.

In accordance with the Charter, we regularly undertake an independent Tenant Satisfaction Survey and our 2015 survey was redesigned to fully incorporate specific Charter indicators. This survey again yielded positive results for the services we provide and will also be published later in the year.

Regarding our housing stock, the last plan period saw record levels of investment to maintain and improve our homes and the launch of this plan will ensure that we continue to provide tenants with a first class repairs service, where ambitious performance targets are largely achieved. We also successfully progressed our planned improvement programme, achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015 and aim to meet the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH) by 2020.

The previous plan period covered a difficult economic climate, but we were nonetheless able to implement sensitive rent reviews which took cognisance of this. During the next five years one of our goals will be to help customers deal with the further financial challenges ahead, particularly in relation to the impact of the Welfare Reform agenda. To do this, we will operate positive tenancy management alongside appropriate advice and support to the most vulnerable in our communities.

Our new plan also incorporates improved communication with customers and we will achieve this by updating our website and promoting the use of mobile technology and interactive social media to provide a wide range of online services. Continuing in this vein, we also remain committed to improving participation options for tenants, through the creation of focus groups which allow us to ensure that their views remain reflected in all our activities.

In conclusion, this plan's purpose is to help us continue to improve as an organisation, investing in communities and working harder to provide better services. To realise this objective, we will continue to promote successful partnerships and new working arrangements to reinforce our credentials as an excellent housing provider that serves those in greatest need, whilst making a valuable contribution to neighbourhoods and communities.

In my capacity as Convener of the Housing Services Sub-Committee, I express my sincere gratitude to our dedicated committee members and staff for their excellent work and am delighted to commend the Housing Plan 2016-2021 for adoption.

ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST HOUSING PLAN 2012-2015

Housing Management

2012-2015 Strategic Plan Objectives	Current Position (July 2015)
Implement the requirements of the Charter.	Our first Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) was completed in 2014 and the SHR's Landlord Report and our annual Charter performance report were issued to tenants in October of that year.
Improve rent collection through proactive initiatives and early intervention to maintain arrears at or below benchmark targets.	Rent arrears have remained below target for three consecutive years due to our practical proposals, such as the Advice for Tenants and Residents (AFTAR) project.
Monitor the impact of central government's Welfare Reforms on rent collection and allocations.	Our positive engagement and proactive tenant support mitigated the effects of the under occupancy charge, assisted by Local Authority Discretionary Housing Payments.
Implement a revised Void Management Strategy to reduce relet times.	Our revised strategy successfully reduced relet times to 13 days at 30 June 2015, following a prior drop in performance.
Our housing allocation software package will be upgraded to ensure this is harmonised with our Allocation Policy.	We implemented a new Allocations IT system, which allows automatic pointing of housing applications. Our Allocation Policy was revised in 2014, although we retained our independent housing need assessment.
Promote homeless prevention, supporting local authorities through protocol arrangements.	Homeless prevention initiatives included proactive tenancy management, nomination arrangements and Section 5 referral protocols.
Analyse low demand and high turnover in identified areas to address wider social issues and promote social inclusion.	Community safety was addressed through our crime reduction strategy and strong partnerships were developed with police and local authorities, contributing to improvements.
A new Tenants Handbook and Tenancy Information Pack will be issued, attaining Plain English Crystal Mark for clarity of the documents.	Our revised Tenant Handbook is due to be published later in 2015, with Plain English Crystal Mark accreditation alongside the launch of our 'Happy to Translate' interpreting services.
Property management services will be developed with guidance provided to owners on factoring issues, compliant with legislation and good practice.	We became a Registered Property Factor in 2012, with a written statement of services and property management guide issued to all factored owners.
Mortgage to Rent and Acquisition for Rent strategies will be developed, with full appraisals undertaken as part of the assessment.	We successfully acquired 36 Mortgage to Rent properties and 6 Acquisition for Rent during the plan period.

2012-2015 Strategic Plan Objectives	Current Position (July 2015)
An independent Tenant Satisfaction Survey will be undertaken every 3 years.	We completed a Tenant Satisfaction Survey in 2012 and in 2015 this was redesigned to fully incorporate all of the Charter indicators.
Build upon existing tenant participation initiatives to ensure activities remain responsive to customers' needs.	A range of participation options were provided and assistance was given to build the capacity of Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs).
We are committed to developing our people through effective training and formal accreditation.	We received re-accreditation to Investor in People in November 2012.

Property Maintenance

2012-2015 Strategic Plan Objectives	Current Position (July 2015)
We shall ensure reactive repairs are carried out efficiently and economically, within target response times.	We set challenging targets for all categories of repairs, with performance currently only marginally below benchmark targets.
We will carry out an assessment of our procurement methods to ensure 'Best Value' in all aspects of property maintenance.	Consultants assessed the procurement of maintenance services, resulting in a three year negotiated partnering agreement which achieved excellent customer service and improved value for money.
We will monitor defined qualifying repairs relating to the 'Right to Repair' scheme, to ensure these are completed within the specified timescale.	Qualifying repairs were reviewed to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. Tenants received 'Right to Repair' information within their tenancy pack, with further information provided in quarterly newsletters.
Monitor compliance with the Gas Safety service policy, to ensure we meet legislative requirements.	100% access for Gas Servicing was achieved over the past 3 years.
We will deliver a cost-effective maintenance service to ensure resources remain available for long-term major repairs and renewals.	Our planned maintenance budget is clearly linked to our life cycle model, with prudent financial planning ensuring funds are available for the future.
We will develop a delivery plan to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality standards by 2015.	All planned work was completed by the 2015 deadline.
We will commission an updated house condition survey to assist in setting future priorities in our planned maintenance programme.	A house condition survey was undertaken in 2012, which assisted with setting priorities in our programme.
We will promote tenant consultation to provide the opportunity for selection of kitchen replacements and paint work colours.	Tenant consultation to provide choice was undertaken for appropriate aspects of planned maintenance.
We aim to improve our systems databases with links to contractors' IT systems.	We updated our maintenance IT system to improve system reporting, linked to performance requirements. A number of maintenance contractors have IT systems which allow access to repair progress for real time reporting.

2012-2015 Strategic Plan Objectives	Current Position (July 2015)
We will ensure compliance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2009, and issue Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) for all new lets. We will promote continued professional development for staff as in-house assessors.	EPCs continue to be provided internally, with ongoing training and development of staff as qualified energy performance assessors. 133 EPCs were completed during the plan period.
We will assess our emergency repair system for all out of hours repairs.	An annual satisfaction survey of tenants was undertaken using our emergency contact centre, with 100% satisfaction recorded during the period of the plan.
Our void property standards will set minimum requirements.	Revised void property standards were implemented, with details included within the new tenant's information pack and satisfaction was assessed at settling-in visits.
We aim to install energy efficient heating systems under the planned maintenance programme.	We installed 54 heating systems during the period of the plan.
We will minimise the number of tenants living in fuel poverty.	We monitor energy efficiency of properties through EPC certification.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI) ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE 2012-2015 PLAN PERIOD

Our other important achievements relating to KPIs are shown in the undernoted tables and these outline our performance over the period of the previous plan. An assessment of these allows us to plan priority actions for services where we have not achieved the benchmark target:

Housing KPIs	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Rental income (£)	£3.445m	£3.5m	£3.65m
Total tenant rent arrears	2.68%	2.96%	2.55%
Technical arrears	0.17%	0.44%	0.17%
Non-technical arrears	2.06%	2.07%	1.90%
Former tenant arrears	0.45%	0.45%	0.48%
Void rent loss	0.35%	0.38%	0.47%
Average relet times	18 days	17 days	24 days

Housing KPIs	LHA 2013/2014	RSL Average 2013/2014
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	1.3 hours	6.9 hours
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	2.7 days	8.2 days

CHARTER PERFORMANCE

The SHR published the first Landlord Reports in 2014 using information from the ARC, with the undernoted table presenting LHA's performance on several of the indicators that tenants said matter most to them - in comparison to the overall Scottish average :

Indicator	Scottish Social Housing Charter - Tenant Satisfaction	LHA	Avg
1	% of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by your landlord	94.1%	87.9%
3	% of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions	95.8%	88.9%
6	% of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes	91.8%	78.4%

2015 TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

Our Tenant Satisfaction Survey was completed in 2015 with this providing an independent evaluation of tenant's satisfaction with their home, neighbourhood and wider community. This revealed that we equalled or surpassed all but two of the SHR average benchmark indicators and we will endeavour to improve these during the new plan period. **Appendix 1** of this plan provides a summary of the 2015 Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We provide a comprehensive range of Housing Management and Property Maintenance Services, with these two separate but related roles fundamental to sustaining high quality affordable homes and associated services. Our Housing Management service includes allocation of housing, tenancy sustainment, rent collection, arrears management and estate management. Property Maintenance incorporates repairs, maintenance and planned improvements.

Both functions are underpinned by a strong customer focus, promoting positive participation.

Since the publication of our prior housing plan, measures were introduced to improve performance in a number of identified areas. These produced outstanding results; particularly in rent collection, void rent loss and maintenance expenditure. The new Housing Plan has been developed following an analysis of departmental performance, focusing on the Charter, over the previous three years.

Our 2016-2021 plan identifies key areas where improvements are required - including maintenance response times and relet periods; which were both below the benchmark target at the end of the last financial year.

2.0 OPERATING CONTEXT

After the review of our overall corporate strategic objectives, these can be outlined as follows :

2.1 LHA's Overall Aims

Our vision.....

“To benefit communities in Lanarkshire by protecting the global environment and engaging with stakeholders to find better ways to invest scarce resources in providing affordable homes for the future and delivering greater social value in our housing related services”

OUR GUIDING PHILOSOPHY - “ACCEPT” CORE VALUES

ACCOUNTABILITY



- clearly defined duties and obligations for staff and committees
- benchmarks / targets for performance standards (KPIs)
- individual and collective responsibility
- rewards and sanctions
- regulatory guidance / control mechanisms

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



- feedback from our customers by listening and responding to their concerns
- appropriate opportunities for tenant participation
- a performance culture that challenges us to exceed expectations and deliver more cost-effective and efficient services of a high standard
- the pursuit of excellence in the goods and services we provide

CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



- the need to address the ‘climate change’ agenda
- the need to examine and review our impact on the environment
- the need to achieve lower carbon emissions, sustainable growth and continuous improvement

ETHICAL PRACTICE



- the need to be open and transparent about our actions and decisions
- rules on individual and commercial confidentiality
- our Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSRs)
- the need to be positive about disabled people and abide by the important principles of equality

PUBLIC SERVICE



- the ethos of serving the public to the best of our abilities
- the duty to promote a good corporate and personal reputation
- the need to work with partners in the public and private sectors
- the need to support and appreciate the spirit of voluntarism at the heart of the local housing association movement

TEAMWORK



- we must value individuals but work together as a team
- the need to motivate our people to collaborate effectively and work in harmony with a shared sense of purpose and achievement.
- the need to foster and develop our human resources and voluntary committee contribution by enriching people’s skills and encouraging them to reach their full potential

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES 2016-2021

OBJECTIVE 1

To meet or exceed the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) and deliver fair, accessible, and responsive customer services

- We have submitted our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) for 2014/2015 to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and our Charter outcomes have improved in most key areas since last year
- We aim to produce a more detailed annual ARC Report starting from October 2015 to be circulated to all key stakeholders with appropriate feedback options
- We aim to improve on our achievements in meeting maintenance response times, especially in routine repairs
- We aim to improve communications with our tenants through a modernised website, quarterly newsletters, tenant focus groups/panels and extend our use of mobile technology and interactive social media
- Our new Corporate "Vision" for 2016–2021 will help us create more focused departmental strategic plans in consultation with key stakeholders

OBJECTIVE 2

To ensure all of our homes meet or exceed the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)

- During 2014/2015 we managed to ensure that 100% of our houses met the SHQS; we aim to ensure that we maintain our stock in such a way that we preserve our 100% record in this area
- A key challenge is to improve the energy efficiency of those houses that fall below the expected standards. We aim to do this through appropriate surveys, improved home insulation, delivering greater heating efficiency and the use of new technologies where feasible
- We will include a specific section in our annual ARC Report giving details of our achievements relating to the ESSH

OBJECTIVE 3

To improve our consultation opportunities to tenants on key measures to regularly maintain and improve the standard and quality of their homes

- We are pleased to have high levels of tenant satisfaction with our services and the facilities we make available for tenant participation (verified by our independent 2015 survey outcomes); however we are determined not to be complacent about this and will continue to pursue excellence in setting realistic and challenging performance targets in all operational areas
- We aim to improve our outcomes in reactive response times, communicate more clearly about tenant participation in those matters where tenants can be offered more choice and establish additional forums through which tenants can more readily express their concerns
- We will support and subscribe to the approved regulatory procedures for handling complaints and significant performance failures

OBJECTIVE 4

To improve the energy efficiency of our business operations and reduce associated carbon emissions

- We undertake to review the impact of every aspect of our business operations on the environment
- We aim to deliver savings in overheads by regularly assessing the potential for reducing business fuel charges by comparing energy suppliers, introducing energy saving technology, reducing waste and increasing our capacity to recycle material more effectively

OBJECTIVE 5

To examine prospects for organic growth of the business through affordable development and acquisition opportunities

- We will provide regular reports to the Governing Body on the financial strength of the business and its associated ability to source appropriate funding in the public and private sectors for the provision of additional affordable homes
- We will risk assess the prospects of entering into appropriate partnerships with other organisations with the aim of providing sustainable and affordable homes of mixed tenure (social rent, shared ownership, mid-market rent, etc.)

OBJECTIVE 6

Achieve our Corporate and Social Responsibilities (CSRs) through excellence in governance and financial management, linked to ethical codes of practice

- We aim to strengthen our internal audit functions and continue to employ strong and independent external auditors who can report directly to our governing body
- From 2016 our external auditors will be afforded at least one opportunity per year to report to the Management Committee without staff being present
- We will strengthen financial reporting to the Management Committee paying particular attention to clarity and transparency in key areas such as rent arrears, void properties, staff overheads including pension liabilities, loan covenants, etc.
- We will continue to report directly to the Management Committee on all matters pertaining to Employment Law and Health & Safety at work
- We will pursue appropriate policies that avoid the potential for any conflicts of interest

2.2 Influencing Background Factors

As well as our vision and guiding philosophy, within the overall framework there are a number of important external factors which influence our planning processes and the key ones are as follows :

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform agenda is ongoing with the roll out of Universal Credit occurring in tranches. This merges six benefits into one to simplify the benefits system and promote the Welfare to Work agenda and we recognise the key challenges presented by these major changes affecting tenants, including the impact of the under occupancy charge.

New Technology

The rapid advances in new technology since the publication of our previous plan are recognised, leading to increased customer expectations for improved communication and participation.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2014

Some of the provisions of this Act require secondary legislation or the publication of further guidance by the Scottish Government before implementation. A key area of the legislation incorporates the abolition of the Right to Buy from August 2016.

Housing and Wellbeing

We support the principles of the Commission for Housing and Wellbeing report 'A blueprint for Scotland's future' recognising that good housing offers a stable foundation to build a home, which provides a sense of belonging and springboard to develop other aspects of life.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Health and Safety Legislation

As a landlord we are responsible for Health & Safety and must comply with statutory duties. One important example is gas safety and it is critical that we ensure compliance with relevant legislation. A further area requiring care is work involving asbestos based materials and this must be assessed in accordance with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and its associated legislation, as well as current HSE guidelines. We are also required to reduce the risk of exposure to Legionella and specific legislation includes;

- The Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (Sections 2,3,4 and 6)
- The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (Regulations 6,7,8,9 and 12)

These regulations are embodied in the Approved Code of Practice and guidance document: ACOP L8: 4th Edition. Similarly, electrical safety is paramount and the Wiring Regulations 17th Edition BS7671: 2008 incorporating amendment 3:2015, (Amendment No. 3 to BS7671: 2008 came into effect on 1 July 2015) also require to be complied with.

The Efficiency Agenda

The procurement of property maintenance services should adhere to the Efficiency Agenda and the following relevant key aims should be addressed;

- More planned and less responsive maintenance to make budgets more predictable
- Ensure compliance with EU directives (OJEU) if the estimated value of a contract equals or exceeds the relevant financial threshold
- Fairness, transparency and accountability in procurement procedures
- Attain the highest achievable quality in terms of materials and workmanship aiming to ensure repairs are completed right first time
- High levels of tenant satisfaction with all aspects of the service

3.0 DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Our priorities for the next five years centre around the Charter outcomes and standards, with details of how we will address those relevant to us during the plan period as numbered below :-

THE CUSTOMER/LANDLORD RELATIONSHIP

1: Equalities

We will carry out all aspects of our housing services so that :

‘every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.’

We embrace the principle of equality and aim to positively assist people from all sections of the community to help them live independently and free from unlawful discrimination or harassment.

We will find ways to understand the needs of different customers and deliver services that recognise and meet these needs. We have adopted the ‘Happy to Translate’ service, to help customers and staff overcome any communication barriers, allowing access to information and services on an equal basis.

We will review our services to ensure that everyone receives a high quality service. We will encourage equal opportunities and diversity, responding to different needs and service requirements - regardless of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, social origin, religious beliefs, political opinions or other personal attributes.

2: Communication

We will manage our business so that :

‘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.’

We are committed to making sure customers find it easy to interact with us. To promote this we will modernise our website and extend the use of mobile technology and interactive social media, to include a customer friendly platform with 24 hour access to real time relevant information.

We promote digital inclusion and offer access to free computer learning sessions every week at our office, provided through the AFTAR/CAB Digital Inclusion Coach. These sessions offer training on essential computer skills and allow access to the internet for online benefit claims, income maximisation checks, employment opportunities and social media.

Focus groups will also be encouraged to make it easier for customers to communicate with us.

We provide clear information to customers in plain english, making it easy for them to find out what they wish to know about us and understand the reasons for our decisions and actions. We also encourage and enable them to make complaints or provide feedback on all of our services and will use this to make improvements.

Whilst we seek new opportunities to improve communication with tenants, we will also look at ways to address important issues of privacy, security and data protection.

3: Participation

We will manage our business so that :

‘tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.’

Tenant participation is at the heart of our plan. We believe it is important to be as inclusive as possible and will offer customers the opportunity to become involved in decision-making processes in line with our Tenant Participation Strategy. We aim to go beyond our statutory duties, addressing how we will gather and take account of tenants’ views and priorities. Whilst our approach to participation has been successful to date, we recognise that this requires further development and will promote a wider range of options to ensure tenants and customers are informed and consulted.

During the new plan period we will promote focus groups, extending the opportunities for customers to have their views reflected in our services. We will also continue to develop RTOs, building the capacity within groups to allow them to be more effective. We will work in partnership with local authorities and tenant advisors to assist community groups engage with us and make a positive difference in their neighbourhoods.

We also assess tenant feedback on all aspects of Housing and Maintenance services including ad hoc, annual and three yearly independent tenant satisfaction surveys and the results of these are channelled into our further decisions.

HOUSING QUALITY AND MAINTENANCE

4: Quality of Housing

We will manage our business so that :

‘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’.

We will ensure we meet tenants’ expectations in relation to housing quality as we recognise that tenants value good quality homes and an efficient repair service.

Our approved SHQS delivery plan achieved the requisite quality standards by 2015 and we aim to ensure our houses continue to surpass this level and also meet the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH) by 2020, where feasible. We will access assistance from our Technical Services section in procuring the necessary contracts to improve the energy efficiency of our stock and this will include a variety of works such as new central heating, double glazing and insulation of properties.

We aim to achieve high quality housing from first let and will provide properties in a good condition, monitored through settling-in visits.

5: Repairs, maintenance and improvements

We will manage our business so that :

‘tenants’ homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.’

We remain fully committed to providing an efficient property maintenance service for both reactive and planned maintenance as we realise how important this is to our tenants.

Repairs and improvements will be carried out when needed and in accordance with our statutory duties, with tenants given a practical choice about timing of the work.

We also strive to complete repairs right first time and we will assess satisfaction with the quality of the repair service through tenant feedback, quality assurance checks and tenant satisfaction surveys.

We aim to improve maintenance response times, especially in routine repairs, but will also analyse maintenance performance for each category of repair.

A partnering approach to the procurement of routine maintenance service has been adopted, following a full evaluation of alternative procurement options available, and contractors are selected utilising a balanced approach to quality and cost.

For major repairs and renewals, our Technical Services Section provides internal services by managing the procurement process and Planned Maintenance contractors are selected on a 'partnering' basis through selective tendering procedures.

Our long-term planned maintenance programme will ensure properties meet modern energy efficient standards, through capital investment and essential component renewal at appropriate frequencies, linked to our financial planning and budget setting.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Working in partnership with other agencies we will help to ensure that :

'tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.'

We recognise that providing attractive neighbourhoods, where people feel secure, is important to ensure that people are happy in their homes and want to stay in our communities. Good quality homes and stable communities assist with improving the health of tenants. We aim to maintain a high standard within our estates to ensure they are places which are conducive to personal wellbeing.

Our estate management procedures address neighbourhood issues, however, we recognise that we cannot always resolve anti-social behaviour problems alone and will work with the police and Local Authorities to protect our communities. Sensitive tenancy management, is crucial to effective estate management and successful neighbourhoods. We will take action to enforce tenancy conditions and signpost tenants to appropriate tenancy support when needed.

We will consult with tenants on appropriate policy issues, including locally agreed targets to deal with anti-social behaviour.

ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SUPPORT

7, 8 & 9: Housing Options

We will work with partners to ensure :

'people 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'

'people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.'

We will provide customers with good quality information on their housing options to allow them to move across the social housing sector or to an alternative sector and will clarify applicants' prospects of being housed. The Common Housing Register (CHR) also improves access to housing through a one stop approach.

We are committed to homeless prevention, utilising a multi-agency proactive approach to ensure people have access to advice on housing options and tenancy support. Our allocation policy, nomination agreement and Section 5 referral protocol with local authorities address a range of housing needs, including homelessness. Additionally assistance is provided to home owners at risk of homelessness, through participation in the Scottish Government's Home Owners' Support Fund for Mortgage to Rent programme.

10: Access to Social Housing

We will ensure that :

'people 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.'

We will ensure that people looking for housing receive good quality information, to help them make an informed choice about the range of housing options open to them.

The CHR in place in North Lanarkshire and the Home Finder system in South Lanarkshire improve access to housing and allow applicants to complete one application for social rented housing in their area of choice. Partners participating in the CHR provide advice and information on all housing options available to applicants, whilst retaining our own independent Allocation Policy.

We aim to ensure our Allocation Policy makes best use of our stock and addresses a range of housing needs. Mutual exchanges are also promoted and advice is available from the AFTAR project.

We also provide information on how our houses are allocated and allocation points reviews are available on request.

11: Tenancy Sustainment

We will ensure that :

'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.'

We aim to ensure that tenants get the information and sensitive support they need to sustain their tenancy and stay in their home if it remains appropriate to their needs; by providing assistance with benefit applications, disabled adaptations and liaising with support agencies.

We will proactively plan for the implementation of Universal Credit, communicating positively with tenants to ensure they are aware of these changes. The impact of the under occupancy charge has been minimised through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) from local authorities for qualifying tenants and these payments are likely to continue into 2016.

Advice is available for tenants facing financial difficulties, through the AFTAR project and the Local Authorities' welfare and debt advisory services. We aim to ensure that the AFTAR project continues to run successfully during the period of the plan, with the service providing invaluable assistance on a range of issues such as benefit/debt advice and fuel poverty. The successful partnership is supported by a consortium of local housing associations working alongside CAB, with a successful Big Lottery funding award allowing the service to be

expanded to include a digital inclusion coach and an energy advisor. Action for recovery of possession of properties will remain a last resort; with Section 11 notifications issued timeously to the local authorities to advise of impending homelessness.

Tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability or caring responsibilities will receive guidance and support. We also promote disabled adaptations and assistive technology to enable people to live in their homes for as long as possible.

12: Homeless People - Applies to Local Councils only

GETTING GOOD VALUE FROM RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES

13: Value for Money

We will manage all aspects of our business so that :

‘tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.’

We aim to ensure tenants receive value for money through controlling costs and the efficient management of services; including minimising the period that houses remain void. Managing rent arrears and other resources effectively are also vital and we always strive to provide ‘more for less’.

We evaluate tenants’ views through feedback from our Rent Review consultation and this influences decisions on our annual rent increase. Rent levels are benchmarked against other social landlords within our peer group, aiming to ensure our properties remain desirable and affordable, whilst maintaining our commitment to continued improvement of our stock.

Our maintenance programmes ensure that houses are kept in good order and consequently retain the best possible asset value whilst good financial planning ensures our continued viability; placing us in a strong financial position to invest in our properties.

In managing our services during the new plan period, efficiencies will be implemented including minimising the length of time houses remain empty, managing rent arrears efficiently and achieving value for money in our repairs procurement.

14 & 15: Rents and Service Charges

We set rent and service charges in consultation with our tenants and other customers so that :

‘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’

and

‘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.’

Rental income is our primary revenue source and is maintained at a level which we believe is affordable. We provide clear information on how rent and service charges are calculated and consult tenants annually on their Rent Review. To do this, we notify tenants of our proposed rent increase and as a result of tenant consultation these have been reduced from the proposed levels for the past two years.

We also seek tenants' views to establish if they consider their rent to be 'Good Value for Money' through our annual Rent Review consultation process and also in our three yearly tenant satisfaction survey.

In relation to Property Service Charges, these are the actual cost of providing services over and above the standard benefits of the house and are individual to each development. We aim to ensure that all services are economically provided, based on our high quality service standards.

We provide our customers with clear information on the association's expenditure on a regular basis.

4.0 DELIVERY OF OBJECTIVES

4.1 Housing Management Mission Statement

"To provide a sensitive, professional, customer-focused service at an affordable rent, as well as addressing fair and equitable means of allocating tenancies."

4.2 Property Maintenance Mission Statement

"To continuously improve customer services in property maintenance by ensuring repairs and improvements are carried out efficiently, effectively and economically and to the tenants' satisfaction."

4.3 Plan's Objective

Our Housing Plan provides the foundation for setting and prioritising goals over the next five years with our approach designed around the needs and aspirations of our tenants. In the coming years we aim to implement the improvements necessary to maintain our culture of excellence, with the strategy clearly linked to our corporate and business plans.

4.4 Means of Achievement

Departmental action plans will prioritise objectives, with these divided into stated timescales of short and medium term (2016-2018 and 2018-2021 respectively). We will consult stakeholders and partners to ensure priorities are agreed. Progress will be monitored by our Housing Services Sub-Committee, allowing it to assess achievements against the plan. Where targets are not realised, appropriate improvement plans will be submitted to the Governing Body.

4.5 Means of Measurement

KPIs continue to assist in our planning review as the principal means of measuring success and the main business outcomes will be reported to our Governing Body. Furthermore, an Annual Performance Report on our performance against Charter Indicators will be issued to customers together with the SHR Landlord Report.

4.6 Short Term Housing Management Objectives 2016-2018

(It should be noted that current targets will be regularly reviewed and may change during the plan period.)

Maintain our successful performance in key housing functions, including rent arrears and void management.

Maintain current tenant rent arrears at 2.25% and void rent loss to no more than 0.80%.

Address any activities not meeting target, such as relet times (currently 18 days.)

Continue our positive performance in rent collection through proactive initiatives and our early intervention strategy.

Monitor the impact of central government's proposals relating to Welfare Reform, particularly in relation to rent collection, arrears management and allocations.

Provide ongoing training and support to staff on the migration process of Universal Credit to ensure they are equipped to provide positive advice to tenants.

Continue to forge partnership links with key stakeholders, including Local Authorities and government departments.

Upgrade our IT software to include a customer portal and text messaging. In promoting digital inclusion we will modernise our website and quarterly newsletters. We will also extend our use of mobile technology and interactive social media.

Continue to promote training and support to tenants through the AFTAR project.

Evaluate feedback from satisfaction surveys, responding to identified issues where performance does not achieve expected standards.

Develop estate initiatives and monitor common areas, landscaping, car parking, drying areas, gardens and footpaths to ensure these promote welcoming neighbourhoods.

Respond to the changes imposed by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, once secondary legislation or Scottish Government guidance is received.

Publish our revised Tenant Handbook, with Plain English and Crystal Mark accreditation for clarity and the 'Happy to Translate' service.

Produce a more detailed ARC report for tenants, seeking feedback on the contents and format of the document.

Attain re-accreditation of Investors in People award.

We will consult with tenants on locally agreed targets to deal with anti-social behaviour.

Decide, in discussion with tenants and other customers whether to publish information about expenditure above agreed thresholds.

Prepare an Allocation Policy information leaflet for applicants providing clear information on how our houses are allocated.

4.7 Medium Term Housing Management Objectives 2018-2021

Assess satisfaction with our property factoring services by carrying out an owner's survey every 3 years.
Promote tenant participation, including focus groups, and offer training and development for our RTOs.
Continue to play a key role in the operation of our Mortgage to Rent and Acquisition for Rent properties.
Appoint independent professional consultants to undertake a Tenant Satisfaction Survey every three years, with the next survey due in 2018.
Liaise with local authorities relating to our nomination arrangements, taking account of the CHRs in place.
Continue with successful partnerships with local schools and colleges, including supporting employment initiatives through work placements to benefit recipients.

4.8 Short-Term Property Maintenance Objectives 2016-2018

We will ensure a cost-effective property maintenance service is delivered, with resources in place for long-term repairs and renewals.
Improve maintenance response times, especially in routine repairs.
Monitor qualifying repairs compliant with legislation governing the Right to Repair. We will issue information to new tenants and provide regular reminders within our quarterly newsletter.
Improve communication with tenants through a modernised website, quarterly newsletters and tenant focus groups. Extend the use of mobile technology and interactive social media.
Upgrade our maintenance software systems, implementing efficient digital technology for a range of property and tenant satisfaction surveys. This includes customer portal and text messaging, offering improved access to information and repair reporting in real time. We aim to improve system reporting to reflect ARC requirements in relation to measuring response times.
Continue to promote positive communication with tenants in order to meet our legislative requirements for Gas Safety and to ensure we achieve 100% access to properties for our 10 monthly Gas Safety Servicing cycle.
Review our Gas Service contract on a 3 yearly basis, utilising our approved procurement procedures to ensure a clear balance of quality and price in the selection of contractors.
Continue our 5 year rolling programme for periodic electric safety inspections to ensure our properties continue to be in a safe and serviceable condition.
Ensure that we maintain our 100% record in meeting SHQS.
Maintain an Asbestos Register and where required, an Asbestos Survey shall be carried out in advance of any work.

Improve the energy efficiency of homes that fall below the expected standards, with property surveys undertaken to make assessments.
Continue to report on our performance relating to the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). We adopt the principles of the Sustainable Housing Strategy (SHS), which sets a vision for warm, high quality, affordable, low carbon homes; with energy efficiency playing a major part in achieving that vision.
Monitor tenant satisfaction with the maintenance service, undertaking ad-hoc surveys in addition to our three yearly independent tenant satisfaction survey. We will prepare action plans for improvement to address any aspect of service which does not achieve our expected standards.
Monitor satisfaction with void property standards through both our tenant satisfaction surveys and an evaluation of settling-in visit feedback.
Issue a new Tenant Handbook to all tenants advising of the maintenance service.

4.9 Medium Term Property Maintenance Objectives 2018-2021

Recognising the rapid advances of technology, we aim to modernise our systems databases and introduce the use of mobile technology. We will promote clear links to contractors' IT systems, to monitor repair completion in real time.
Ensure continued compliance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2009, issuing Energy Performance Certificates for all new lets and ensuring continued professional development of staff as in-house assessors.
Update our Fire Risk Assessments for all flatted properties in accordance with the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, prepare an appropriate action plan and monitor its implementation.
Continue to assess our call centre emergency repair system, evaluating efficiencies and customer satisfaction with our out of hours service.
Assess our life cycle costing methodology to ensure maintenance funding decisions comply with our corporate financial planning.
Continue to address the Efficiency Agenda in procurement of maintenance services in order to achieve best value.
Assess efficiencies in the provision of maintenance servicing for specialist equipment, including Combined Heating and Power, lift maintenance and fire safety equipment.
Commission an updated house condition survey which will assist in setting future priorities in our planned maintenance programme.
Ensure value for money in the installation of Disabled Adaptations; ensuring competitive costs are obtained through our approved tendering procedure, seeking competitive tenders on a 3 yearly basis.

Understanding the needs and expectations of our customers is key to our delivery of excellent services, with the findings from a robust, independent customer survey, essential to inform how we address customers changing needs and expectations.

Our three yearly Tenant Satisfaction Survey was undertaken by independent consultants in June 2015, with the final report published in July 2015. The survey was designed to enable LHA to seek the views of its tenants on their overall satisfaction level with services provided.

Additionally, compliant with the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) we must assess tenant and service user satisfaction against a number of Charter indicators to allow the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to monitor and assess landlords' achievements against Charter outcomes and standards.

The results from our most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which was conducted in 2015, revealed that our tenants enjoy a positive relationship with us as their landlord in many areas of service delivery. The table below shows the satisfaction results compared with the Scottish RSL average as published by the SHR.

SHR Indicator No.	Description of Measure	LHA 2015 Satisfaction%	Scottish RSL Average 2015 Satisfaction%
1	Overall service provided by landlord	94%	88%
3	Kept informed about services and decisions	98%	89%
6	Opportunity to participate in the decision making process	92%	78%
10	Overall quality of home	81%	85%
16	Repairs and maintenance service	90%	88%
17	Management of neighbourhood	84%	84%
29	Rent representing good value for money	67%	77%

Chart 1 - Comparison of LHA against the SHR published average figures

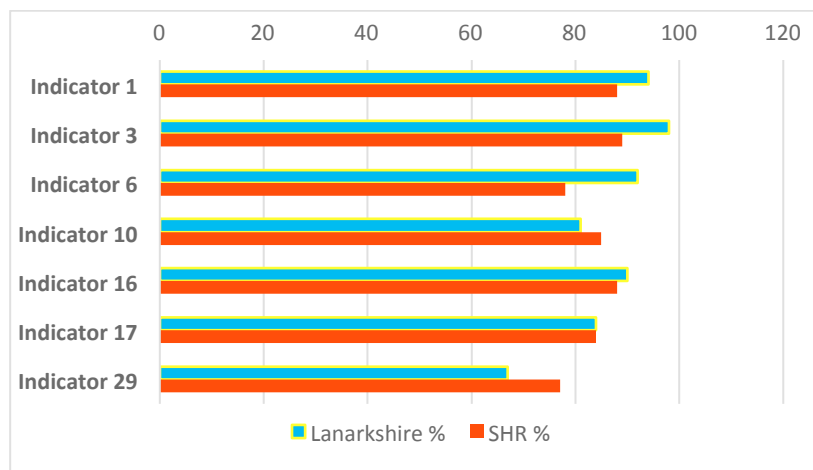


Chart 2 - % level of satisfaction with overall service provided by LHA

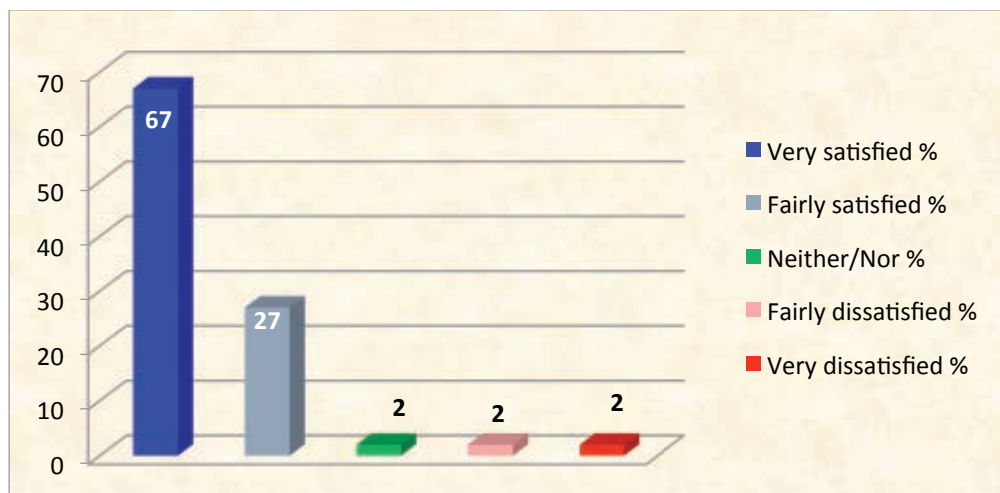
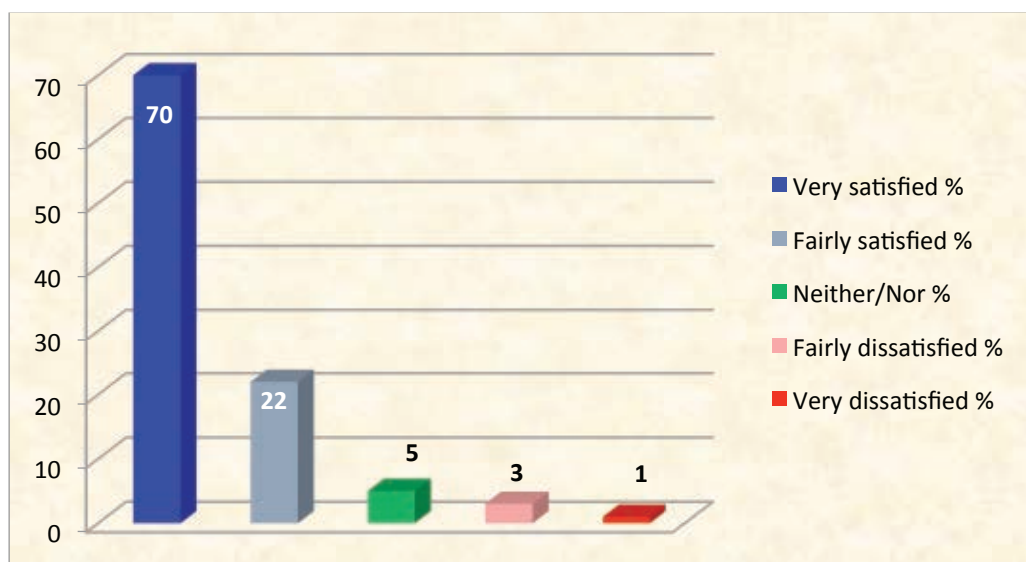


Chart 3 - % level of satisfaction with opportunities to participate



The survey illustrates positive findings for the Association, in addition to highlighting areas where particular issues have potential for improvement. Overall, the findings provide a framework for developing actions over the period of the plan to help raise levels of satisfaction across all services.

The overall results are welcome and demonstrate that LHA provide good quality housing and management services whilst encouraging participation from tenants in the decision making process. Two measures which have fell below the national average and our own expectations are in relation to the quality of homes being provided and value for money. These areas will be prioritised by management for action with the objective of improving these results in the next tenants' survey.

Sample Size of Tenant Satisfaction Survey

A total of 925 properties (100% of LHA's housing stock) were issued with questionnaires and a response rate of 40% was achieved.



LANARKSHIRE
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

HOUSING PLAN 2016-2021

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