

Landlord Report 2023



Introduction

The Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) was first introduced in 2012 and updated in 2017. The Charter sets out the service standards and outcomes each social landlord is expected to achieve, and therefore what customers can expect from their landlord.

In May each year, every social landlord submits their Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The ARC is a series of measures designed to demonstrate how a landlord is performing and whether they are meeting the outcomes of the Charter.

In August, the Scottish Housing Regulator publishes a report for every landlord with key information on their performance and how that compares to the Scottish national average. The ARC for each social landlord is also made publicly available on the regulator's website.

In this report we have shown our performance over three years and compared ourselves to our partner landlords in North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway. The Local Housing Association partners are Cunninghame Housing Association, Ancho, Atrium Homes, Shire Housing Association, Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership (now Wheatley Homes South), Loreburn and Home in Scotland.

In this report, we look at our priorities for improvement and how we perform in the five Charter areas which apply to us, before going on to compare our performance with other landlords and asking for your feedback on how we present this information to you.



Improving our services to you

The last year has been one of consolidation for the Association. When we emerged from the pandemic and returned to normal service delivery in early 2022, we were aware of the overall impact of the pandemic on our customers, and that their needs and aspirations will have changed over the previous two years. In response to this we rolled out a comprehensive consultation with all our customers which we named 'The Big Conversation', to try and find out what services our customers want from us in a 'post Covid' world, and how we need to adapt and change to improve customer satisfaction. In total 615 customers provided feedback to shape the future delivery of our services. This consultation was completed in October 2022 and an action plan implemented to:

- Work more proactively with customers to improve our local neighbourhoods and communities,
- Support customers through the cost-of-living crisis to sustain their tenancies.
- Improve our digital service delivery options to make it easier for customers to access our services online.

We have redesigned our service offer based on this feedback and implemented a significant organisational restructure to invest more resources in frontline service delivery. Customers can now contact their Tenant Partner directly or pop along to a monthly drop-in session within their community to discuss any housing issues. Our new Customer and Community Engagement Officer is committed to working in partnership with our customers and newly established tenant scrutiny group to continuously improve our services. Know that most of our complaints relate to our repairs service. Following a comprehensive options appraisal process throughout 2021, we appointed new repairs and maintenance contractors from 1st April 2022. We have been busy working to embed these new services and will continue to work with our contractors to drive forward and improve performance over the coming year.

At the outset of the pandemic we contacted every tenant to ask them if they needed any support or assistance during this difficult period. These calls were well received, and we are now carrying out annual Tenancy Welfare Checks for all tenants, starting with those who we have not been in contact within the past year. This will enable us to be more proactive and help tenants to resolve any issues as early as possible.

Our new customer enquiry system, Salesforce, has enabled us to delve deeper into complaints that have been made to identify any patterns and key areas of dissatisfaction so that we can take appropriate action. We have now established a single point of contact for all complaints and complete 'lessons learned' reviews for all those that escalate to the second stage of our complaints process.

As a landlord, we are very aware of the impact increasing rents can have on our customers, which is why we are aiming to minimise rent increases as far as possible over the coming years. We will continue to make every effort to keep our rents affordable to our customers, whilst ensuring that we have enough funding in our business plan to improve and maintain our properties to required standards.

Average weekly rent*

On 31st March **2023** we owned **2,443** homes. The total rent due for the year was **£11,148,816**.

	Riverside Scotland 22/23	Riverside Scotland 21/22	Riverside Scotland 20/19	Scottish Average	Local Housing Association Average	Local Council Average
1 apartment	£65.00	£63.06	£62.61	£78.26	£73.72	£73.12
2 apartment	£82.70	£80.67	£79.74	£83.46	£82.78	£76.33
3 apartment	£90.64	£90.90	£87.79	£86.28	£93.65	£79.46
4 apartment	£98.67	£96.30	£93.90	£93.96	£102.26	£83.40
5 apartment	£106.90	£99.77	£99.60	£103.72	£111.10	£87.58

*All figures are based on the calculations carried out by the Scottish Housing Regulator, and taken from their website on 26-10-2023.

Getting good value from rents and service charges

Ensuring we provide services that represent good value for money is essential to our business. We continuously work hard to achieve the right balance between the delivery of high quality services to our customers and keeping rents affordable. Over the reporting year we have:

- Continued close joint working between our Tenant Partners and Income Collection service, ensuring customer accounts are managed effectively, using early intervention with support to claim the right benefits.
- Implemented new repairs and maintenance services with increased focus on quality of works and customer care.
- Re-let empty homes far more quickly than the Scottish average, despite the added pressures and challenges the pandemic brought with it.
- Employed an Affordability Officer who provides advice and support to tenants who are struggling to pay their rent or heat their homes.

	Riverside Scotland 22/23	Riverside Scotland 21/22	Riverside Scotland 20/21	Scottish Average*	Local Housing Association Average*	Local Council Average*
% of rent due collected in the previous year.	98.5	98.8	97.9	99	99.3	98.9
% of rent due not collected through homes being empty in the last year.	0.8	0.3	0.3	1.4	0.5	0.9
Average length of time in days taken to re-let homes in the last year.	37.2	21.1	22.6	55.6	25.6	35.7

* Scottish averages and figures from other landlords were obtained from the Scottish Housing Regulator's website on 26-10-2023.

Access to housing and support

Our Housing Options team has worked hard during the year to allocate 117 new build homes. We continued to work very closely with our Local Authority partners to identify suitable applicants for available properties and to identify housing solutions for people in the greatest housing need.

We are committed to the prevention and alleviation of homelessness across all our operating areas, and we have fully supported our Local Authority partners to provide permanent accommodation to homeless households, and support to our existing tenants at risk of homelessness.

To support customers amidst the cost-of-living crisis we recruited an Affordability Officer to the team in March. The new service has been welcome support to those experiencing difficulties with payment of rent, utilities, and wider debt issues. On signing up for a tenancy we ensure that all benefit entitlement is correct and support existing tenants to maximise their income. The Affordability Officer also ensures that repayment arrangements for rent arrears are affordable and manageable.

Our new Tenant Partner team is now well established and provides person-centred help and assistance to tenants to deal with housing issues and support to sustain their tenancy through a range of measures including life skills support, budgeting advice, income maximisation and benefit claims, switching to a cheaper utility supplier, and facilitating access to required health services.

As well as supporting customers to find a new home, we are committed to carrying out adaptations to enable tenants to remain living independently in their own home for as long as possible. Since 2017 we have continued to provide additional funding to progress the increasing demand for property adaptations. In conjunction with Scottish Government grant funding, we spent a total of £200,440 to deliver much needed adaptations to tenants struggling with mobility issues.

We are committed to transforming lives by providing well maintained, good quality affordable housing, and through our housing and tenancy sustainability services we enable people facing a wide variety of challenging circumstances to lead more resilient and independent lives. Since establishing our partnership with Veterans First Point and NHS Ayrshire and Arran, we have housed 23 military veteran households.

Our Housing First for Families service, which provides intensive support to tenant families at risk of homelessness has supported 36 families throughout 2022/23, all of whom have successfully remained in their tenancy.



Neighbourhood and community

We have extended our estate caretaker service to Dumfries and employed a dedicated Asset Officer based within the area. This has enabled us to respond more effectively to issues such as fly tipping, garden maintenance and abandonment of vehicles.

Our new Tenant Partners have utilised available budgets to improve the quality of our local neighbourhoods and resolve anti-social behaviour and fly tipping issues.

We believe that all residents have the right to enjoy the peace and quiet of their home. To help us achieve this, we work in close partnership with a number of agencies, including local councils and Police Scotland, so that any anti-social behaviour reported is dealt with firmly and fairly. 90.9% of all anti-social cases were resolved within the reporting year.

Our new organisational restructure has enabled us to invest more in frontline service delivery. Our Tenant Partners are now more visible across our estates and neighbourhoods, and we have progressed clean up events and estate walkabouts in partnership with the Local Authority to improve the quality and environment of our local communities.

	Riverside Scotland 22/23	Riverside Scotland 21/22	Riverside Scotland 20/21	Scottish Average*	Local Housing Association Average*	Local Council Average*
% of antisocial resolved behaviour cases within the last year.	90.9	81.9	82.4	94.2	94.5	92.9



The customer landlord relationship

We are committed to supporting and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion. We have updated our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy and continue to work towards delivering the action plan which supports this.

To be as accessible as we can be to our customers, our Customer Service Centre takes calls 24 hours a day every day, and we have an Income Collection team available from 8am until 8pm Monday to Friday and Saturdays from 10am until 4pm.

We have worked hard during the year to enhance the number of ways we can contact our customers. We have increased the use of text messages and have trialled using WhatsApp. We have also held online meetings using Microsoft Teams and have offered information webinars.

We continue to use social media to increase the information we provide to customers, using it as much as possible to distribute key messages about service changes and improvements. However, in response to customer feedback from The Big Conversation that many tenants still prefer to receive letters in the post, we have introduced a new regular information bulletin called 'Word on the Street' which provides updates and information on new services, initiatives, and performance. We continue to produce service updates three times a year to let you know how we are performing; if there are any new services, and if there are any consultations happening.

We know that we need to improve how we engage with our customers across our estates and neighbourhoods, to make it as easy as possible for you to tell us what you think of our services and what you need from us. Our new Customer and Community Engagement Officer has been attending local tenant and resident groups, estate walkabouts, and our drop-in surgeries to listen to local concerns and issues. Community events such as our estate clean up in Pennyburn, and work to develop the local community garden in Dumfries have been progressed in response to tenant feedback.

	Riverside Scotland 22/23	Riverside Scotland 20/21	Riverside Scotland 19/20	Scottish Average*	Local Housing Association Average*	Local Council Average*
% of tenants satisfied with the overall service.	66.2	74.5	78.6	86.7	86.7	91.9
% of tenants who felt their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions	73.3	75.7	78.2	89.7	90.5	91.9
% of tenants satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the landlord's decision	60.5	64.6	66.8	85.9	89.7	89.7

Housing quality and maintenance

Ensuring that we provide quality housing to our customers is extremely important to us. Over 82.5 % of our homes comply with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and just over 97 % comply with the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

We have increased the capacity of our investment programme to progress towards the achievement of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) and improve the quality of our homes for tenants. We have integrated our ESSH work programmes with our general investment plans, to ensure we carry out multiple improvement works to a property at the same time to achieve best value and minimise disruption to customers as far as possible.

As we look forward, we want to deliver significant improvements to our assets, focusing on improving the homes we own and manage, striving for Net Zero standards, and looking at how we can regenerate some of our existing estates. Earlier this year we successfully secured £1.5m of ECO funding to install new internal wall insulation within our Dumfries properties. This has been extremely successful and has considerably improved the energy efficiency of these homes.

We have taken a proactive approach to the installation of new LD2 smoke and heat detection systems. As of 31st March 2022 all our housing stock is LD2 compliant. We are currently reviewing the process we have in place for electrical safety testing to ensure that we are completing recommended 5 yearly electrical safety checks on every property and being as proactive as possible to gain access to complete these checks within timescales.

We are working with our repairs and maintenance contractors to drive forward improvements in this service. We are sharing training and development opportunities with external service providers and have put in place a shared action plan to address issues relating to customer communication, and quality of works. 78.9 % of repairs carried out last year were completed right first time, and 74.1 % of customers were very or fairly satisfied with our repairs services.

	Riverside Scotland 22/23	Riverside Scotland 21/22	Riverside Scotland 20/21	Scottish Average*	Local Housing Association Average*	Local Council Average*
% of homes meeting SHQS	82.5	92.1	98.8	79	85.8	84.2
Average number of hours to complete emergency repairs	4.7	6.4	3.8	4.2	2.4	2.4
Average number of days taken to complete non-emergency repairs.	13	9.1	7.2	8.7	8.9	7.8
Percentage of reactive repairs completed right first time.	78.9	95.1	95.6	87.8	89.2	92.8
Percentage of tenants who have had repairs in the last 12 months who were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance.	74.1	74.4	82.4	88.0	84.6	90.4

Customer feedback

Last year we introduced a new system for managing customer enquiries and complaints called 'Salesforce'. This system provides us with more performance monitoring information to help us review how we handle complaints, who has been involved, how quickly they have been responded to, and most importantly help us to identify 'lessons learned' from the complaints process. You can find out more about our complaints process on our website.

	Riverside Scotland 22/23	Riverside Scotland 21/22	Riverside Scotland 20/21
Stage 1 Complaints	263	176	86
Stage 1 Complaints Upheld	102	124	33
Stage 2 Complaints	19	8	2
Stage 2 Complaints Upheld	4	5	0
Compliments	12	6	7

Complaints top 3 service areas:

We received **282** complaints, **93.26%** (263) were resolved at Stage 1 with **6.74%** (19) resolved at Stage 2.



81% of complaints related to **Repairs**

11% of complaints related to **Tenancy Management**

8% of complaints related to **Property Improvement**



The average time for a complaint to be resolved at Stage 1 was **10.85** days and the average time for a complaint to be resolved at Stage 2 was **17.37** days.

We received 12 compliments.



84% of compliments related to **Income Collection**

8% of compliments related to **Repairs**



What do you think?

We would love to know what you think of our Landlord Report. If you have any comments or suggestions on what we have included or if there is something that you would like to see next year, please get in touch with us using the details at the bottom of this page.

Join our online customer panel

Our online customer panel is made up of a growing number of customers who want to have their say on our services and how we deliver them. Customers who have signed up are emailed regular opportunities to influence decisions which could affect them for example, by taking part in consultation events, short online surveys, quick polls and small focus groups.

We ask our Customer Panel questions about key customer-facing policies, for feedback on the information we provide to customers and how we do this, as well as sharing key performance information along with opportunities to get involved in scrutiny activities.

Why not try it and see what difference you could make?

To find out more, or sign up, please get in touch with us at involvement@riversidescotland.org.uk or by calling our Customer & Community Engagement Officer on **07970 348 724**





100
NO. 6



Part of The Riverside Group Limited

Riverside Scotland is a trading name of Irvine Housing Association Limited.
Registered office: 44-46 Bank Street, Irvine, Ayrshire KA12 0LP. Registration No. 2459 R(S)
and Registered with The Scottish Housing Regulator No. HAL 280. Registered Scottish Charity No. SC042251

October 2023

Details correct at time of publishing
Indv_10/23