

Leicester City Council

Tenants and Leaseholders

Annual Report 2020





Councillor Cutkelvin, Assistant Mayor for Housing

I am pleased to be able to welcome you to our 2020 / 21 annual report.

It's been another eventful year, and throughout all the challenges, we have kept tenants and leaseholders at the heart of everything we do.

Covid-19 has had a major impact on the way we are working. Despite this, we have still managed to provide crucial services to those who need them most. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you for your patience and co-operation and to staff for their hard work and commitment during this difficult period.

I would also like to thank all of you who have helped us improve our services with your feedback. Your views are crucial in helping us make sure we're getting things right and letting us know when we're not.

I would like to say a special thank you to the members of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum who give their time, experience and expertise voluntarily to help improve the services for all council tenants and leaseholders. They also helped in the production of this annual report.

I hope you enjoy reading the report and that, like me, you are excited about the way our housing services are going to develop over the coming year.



Welcome from Wendy Biddles, Chair of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum

As the Chair of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum, I'm delighted to have this opportunity to tell you about the important work that we have carried out on behalf of our communities over the past year. Myself and other members of the Forum are tenants and leaseholders with many years' experience of working to make sure the voices of local people are heard.

We are volunteers. One of our main aims is to work with the council to help ensure that services are as effective as they can be and that they are delivered to those who need them most in a way that they can access them. This year we've helped to review a number of key Housing services.

I hope you enjoy this annual report and that you find it informative and useful. You can find out more about the work of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum later in the report. There is also information about how you can become a Forum member; we would love to hear from anyone who is interested in joining us.

Your annual report

This annual report is to provide Leicester City Council tenants and leaseholders with information to enable them to judge our performance in respect of the housing services we deliver.

Rents and how we spent the money

The collection of rent is important because this money is used to pay for the maintenance of your home and other services you receive.

- The proportion of rent collected remains high at 98.55%.
- Leicester City Council weekly rents are significantly lower than similar rents in the private sector.

Bedsit: LCC rent 2020/21 = £56.03 / Private sector (city wide) 2019/20 = £97.62

1 bed: LCC rent 2020/21 = £63.49 / Private sector (city wide) 2019/20 = £120.46

2 bed: LCC rent 2020/21 = £74.97 / Private sector (city wide) 2019/20 = £153.23

3 bed: LCC rent 2020/21 = £83.26 / Private sector (city wide) 2019/20 = £169.15

4 bed: LCC rent 2020/21 = £95.74 / Private sector (city wide) 2019/20 = £284.31*

5 bed: LCC rent 2020/21 = £102.92 / Private sector (city wide) 2019/20 = £284.31*

6 bed: LCC rent 2020/21 = £117.51 / Private sector (city wide) 2019/20 = £284.31*

(* average for 4+ beds)

Each pound of rent and service charge income pays for:

- Repairs and maintenance: 55p in £ = total of £42.6m in 2019/20 expenditure
- Property management: 33p in £ = total of £26.1m in 2019/20 expenditure
- Interest: 12p in £ = total of £9.1m in 2019/20 expenditure
- Total spend = £77.8m

A profile of our council homes and the people who live in them

Leicester has a higher proportion of council owned homes than is the case nationally.

- Leicester: 14.9% of all homes are council housing
- Nottingham: 18.2% of all homes are council housing
- Derby: 11.6% of all homes are council housing
- East Midlands: 8.3% of all homes are council housing
- England: 6.5% of all homes are council housing

Leicester's council tenants are a diverse community reflecting Leicester's rich and varied cultures:

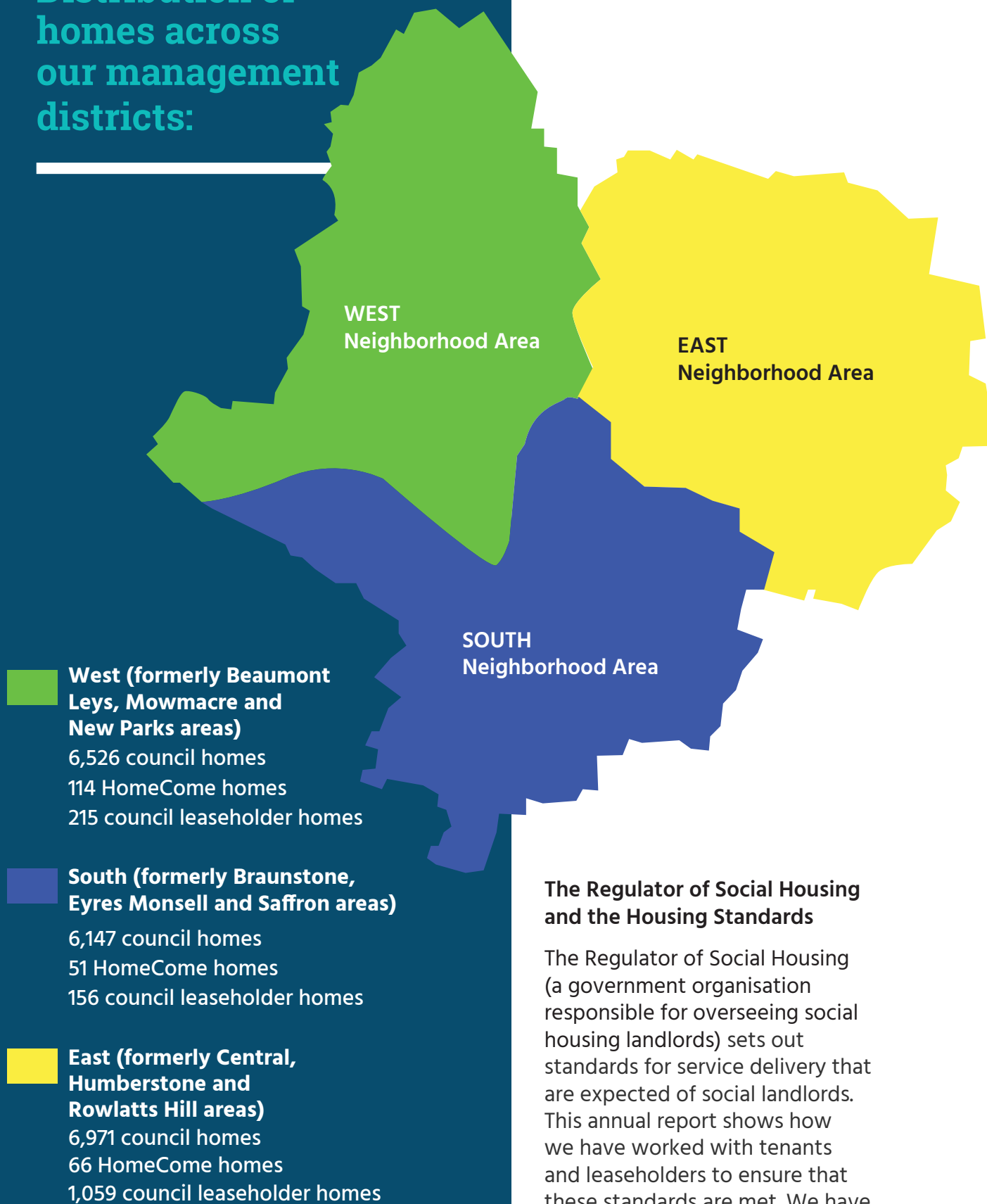
- Asian = 14.9%
- Black = 14%
- Chinese = 0.2%
- Mixed heritage = 2.6%
- White = 65.9%
- Other = 2.4%

Age of households:

- 16-21 = 1.4%
- 22-25 = 2.1%
- 26-34 = 11.3%
- 35-44 = 20.6%
- 45-54 = 21.4%
- 55-64 = 18.7%
- 65 and over = 24.5%



Distribution of homes across our management districts:



The Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Standards

The Regulator of Social Housing (a government organisation responsible for overseeing social housing landlords) sets out standards for service delivery that are expected of social landlords. This annual report shows how we have worked with tenants and leaseholders to ensure that these standards are met. We have included information about where we want to improve.

[1] The Tenancy Standard

To meet this standard, we must:

Allocate properties in a fair, transparent and efficient way

Our Housing Allocations Policy sets out the qualifying criteria to join the council's housing register, the reasons why people may not be able to join and who we will prioritise for re-housing. We regularly review our allocations policy to make sure it helps those in greatest need. [Find out more about our allocations policy.](#)

We let empty properties to people from our housing register through a choice-based lettings scheme called HomeChoice. It allows you to bid for the properties you want so that you can make choices about where you want to live. We carry out monthly checks to ensure the offers of accommodation we make are done correctly.

When developing our HomeChoice website we worked with our Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum members to ensure it is easy to use and accessible to all who need to use it.

[Find out more about HomeChoice and the housing register.](#)

- On the 01/04/2020, there were 6,486 households on the housing register, a 12% increase from the previous year (5,809).
- Overcrowding remains the biggest reason people join the housing register (3,751 households)
- Last year we re-housed 683 families and 566 single people or couples
- 589 (46%) of all lettings were for households who became homeless or were at threat of homelessness.

Enable tenants to gain access to opportunities to mutually exchange

Leicester City Council is a member of HomeSwapper, a national home swap scheme which has half a million households where exchanges could potentially take place right across the country. [Find out more about the HomeSwapper scheme here.](#)

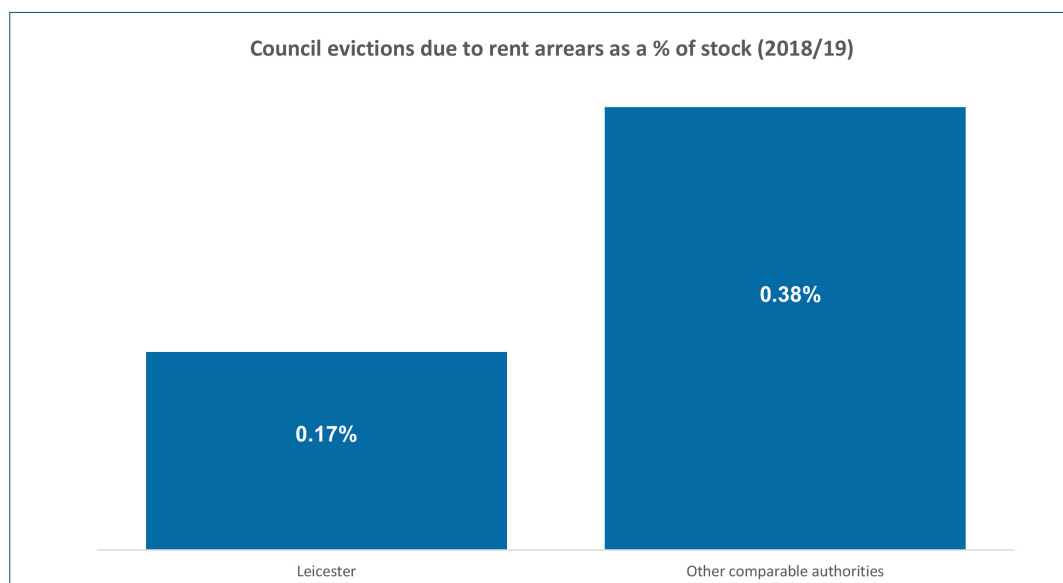
- Last year we supported 147 households to move through a mutual exchange.

Develop and provide services that will support customers to maintain their tenancy and prevent unnecessary evictions

The Council provides housing options advice, free of charge. Advice is available on the Leicester City Council website; through the MyHOME App (designed to help if you're at risk of homelessness); face to face appointments; and via the telephone.

- In 2019-20 we gave 4,803 households who approached our Housing Options Service advice and support.
- Our Housing Officers provide advice and support to tenants and our Leaseholder Officers specifically for our leaseholders.
- STAR (Supporting Tenants and Residents) is our dedicated tenancy support service.
- The Income Management Team helps tenants to maximise their incomes where they are having difficulties paying their rent.

- Arrangements are in place to identify households who might need extra support. We contact these people regularly to check they are coping and provide assistance where it is needed to prevent any issues from becoming more serious.
- Our sheltered housing schemes provide onsite support for older people. Tenants have access to the LeicesterCare emergency alarm system and other assistive technologies which help people to remain independent.
- All staff are trained in safeguarding to help them identify if someone is experiencing abuse and to take the necessary steps to address this.
- We work closely with other council services and agencies that provide support relating to domestic and sexual abuse, and anti-social behaviour.
- The council has low eviction rates when compared with other authorities – only 37 evictions took place due to non-payment of rent in 2019/20.



- Our Rent Management Advisors have successfully supported 447 tenants to claim and manage their Universal Credit claims.
- 91.1% of new tenancies were sustained for over a year.
- At the end of financial year 2019/20 7,643 tenants were in rent arrears. This means 62% of our tenants had paid their rent and had clear rent accounts.

It is your responsibility to ensure your rent is paid on time. We have several ways you can pay your rent. The easiest is online through our website. If you're struggling to pay your rent, please contact us as soon as possible on 0116 454 1007.

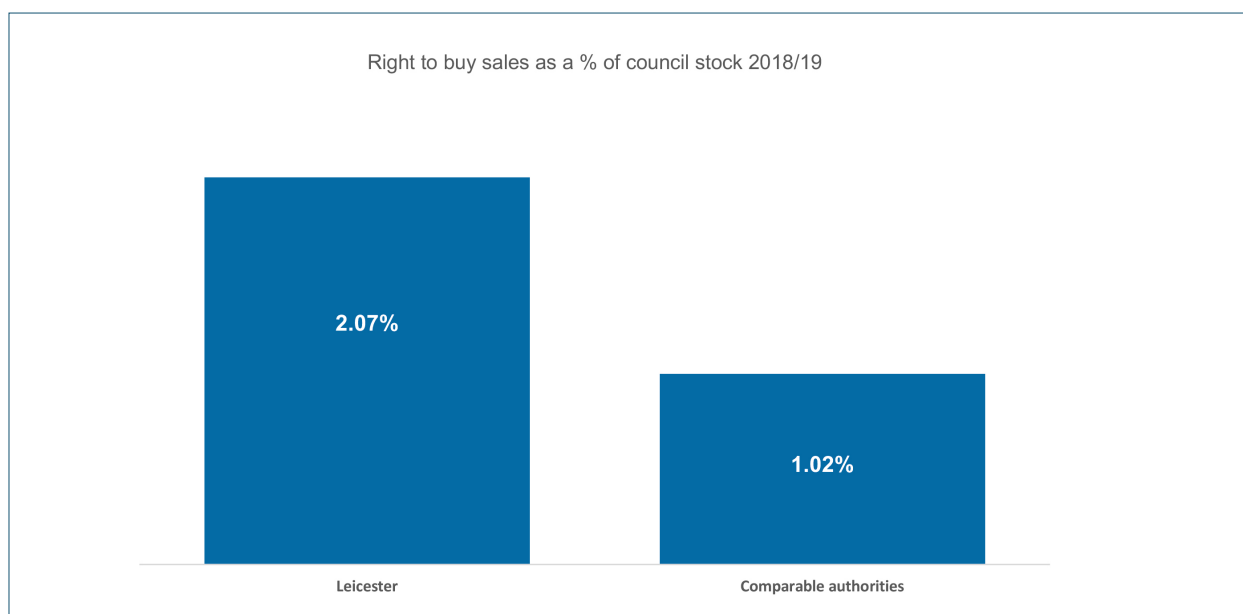
[Find out more about the payment of rent and contact details.](#)

Develop and deliver services to address under-occupation and overcrowding in homes

Overcrowding remains the biggest reason for households joining the housing register. We have reviewed the Housing Allocations Policy to strengthen re-housing priority for people experiencing overcrowding. This year we are also investing £500k to undertake home extensions and loft conversions for council tenants to relieve overcrowding in their current homes.



When compared with others, Leicester is a low-income city, and for many, affordable social housing is their only chance of living in their own home. We have been restricted on the number of new homes we can build as a result of the limited money we have available to us and the lack of available land to build on in the city. In addition to this Leicester has a relatively high level of Right to Buy sales, which reduces the amount of social housing we have available to let. In 2019 / 20, 409 of our properties were sold to tenants through the Right to Buy scheme.



Despite this, since 2004, 3,142 additional affordable homes have been built, of which 340 were bought last year.

Minimise the time that properties are empty between each letting.

Properties are advertised as soon as notice is given by the outgoing tenant so we can start the allocation process as soon as possible. We have a dedicated team who undertake repairs on empty properties to make sure that homes are made available as quickly as possible. We work flexibly to prioritise repair work to empty properties to help households most in need, for example, homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation.

- Reduction of ready to let to occupation times to a four day average where the target is 10 (prior to COVID impact)

Publish clear and accessible policies which outline the approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies

Our allocations policy sets out our commitment to ensuring that our homes are allocated in a fair way. The conditions of tenancy state both our and your responsibilities relating to a tenancy to make sure that living in our homes is a positive experience. The policies are reviewed to keep them up to date and to make sure they comply with regulations and legislation. We have a Tenancy Strategy in place that outlines our approach to tenancy management.

[Find out more about our Housing Allocations Policy](#)

[Find out more about our Conditions of Tenancy](#)

[Find out more about our Tenancy Strategy](#)

WHAT WE WANT TO DO

- We know overcrowding is an issue in the city and we want to build on the work we have already done to address this. We will be developing an Overcrowding Reduction Strategy that will outline the new approaches to tackle this.
- We want to improve our promotion of the mutual exchange HomeSwapper scheme to enable more tenants who would like to move, to do so. This is particularly important for households who have low priority for re-housing on our Housing Register. We also want to review how we support tenants to move through mutual exchanges locally.
- We understand that at times people need extra support to enable them to remain living in our properties. We want to review who is entitled to support and how this is provided to ensure we are supporting those most in need.
- Continue with our programme to deliver more affordable housing in the city. Phase 1 of the programme will see 29 new homes built and sites have been identified for a further 95 homes this year. Other strategies will involve working with our Adult Social Care service to deliver more extra care homes, working with housing associations to help them build more affordable housing and buying back ex-council homes when they become available for sale.



What the new homes will look like

[2] Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

To meet this standard, we must:

Enable tenants to review their landlord's performance and to make recommendations about how performance might be improved

There are several ways in which you can become involved in the delivery of services and make your views known to us:

- The Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum reviews our performance and works with us to improve services.
- The Leaseholders' Forum is a dedicated group which monitors our performance for those who lease their homes from us.
- By taking part in consultations.
- Responding to satisfaction surveys. Earlier in the year we carried out a tenant's and leaseholders' satisfaction survey. The results showed the services that are most important to tenants are repairs and maintenance to your home, dealing with anti-social behaviour and consulting you on how we can improve services.
- Making comments through the council's compliments and complaints procedure.
- Taking part in estate inspections.
- 52% of tenants who took part in the satisfaction survey rated our services good or very good

Joe Carroll – Member of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum

"The Forum is the voice of council tenants and leaseholders in the city. I'm passionate about improving my community. I believe that if we all work together, we can make a real difference to our neighbourhoods and the lives of the people who live there. As a member of the Forum, I've been able to use my position to work in partnership with the council, using my experience and understanding of people's needs in my local area to raise their concerns and make sure that they're met. Through the Forum I'm able to ensure our money is spent wisely and that services are meeting people's needs. I see to it that high standards continue to be met. I'm proud of the work I've been involved in and how it's improved the quality of life of council tenants and leaseholders. If you're passionate about helping your local community and improving local services, we would like to hear from you."

Provide support to tenants to build their capacity to be involved

Members of our Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum are supported to undertake their role by officers. They are also provided with information prior to meetings to enable them to actively take part in discussions. New members of the Forum take part in training and information sessions to gain an understanding of how services are delivered and how the council operates.

Demonstrate how we respond to tenants' needs in the way we provide services

We identify tenants' needs using a variety of activities, including feedback from the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum, the views of local Tenant Associations, satisfaction surveys and the day to day contact we have with our tenants and leaseholders.

Examples of how we have responded to the information we have received are:

- At the request of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum we now text tenants after they have had a repair completed to give them the opportunity to give us feedback on their satisfaction with the work carried out.
- Recruited our Rent Management Advisors to support tenants to apply and manage their claims for Universal Credit as a result of concerns raised through the introduction of the new benefit.
- Introduced a planned communal maintenance programme in response to concerns raised about communal cleaning and the appearance of some of these areas.
- Undertaken work on our estates to improve the appearance of neighbourhoods, such as clearing overgrown areas, renewing paths, external painting and providing additional car parking. This work has taken place in response to issues raised locally by tenants and leaseholders.
- Recruited our Leaseholder Officers and launched the Leaseholder Forum as a direct response to concerns raised by leaseholders in terms of service delivery.
- Our sheltered housing tenants told us they would like their communal areas to be modernised. This year, as a result of this feedback, we will undertake a programme of refurbishments for our sheltered accommodation schemes.
- We have implemented a range of measures to support our repairs service to enable them to be better equipped to respond to cold weather repair issues including: installing 'boiler buoys', new emergency staffing arrangements; training other staff to help out; prioritising work in emergency situations and liaising with contractors should additional help be needed. This has taken place in response to feedback from tenants as a result of service disruptions in previous spells of cold weather.

Provide customers with accessible, relevant and timely information about the service information available to them

General information about our services is published on the Leicester City Council website. We also use social media to update people on services. One of the ways we do this is through Your Leicester, an email newsletter that keeps you up to date with news, services and events in Leicester. [Find out how you can subscribe to Your Leicester and our other newsletters.](#)

We use a range of methods to stay in touch with tenants and leaseholders about specific service requests, including face to face appointments, telephone calls, emails, text messaging and by letter. Our aim is to take an individual approach and communicate with people by the method they most prefer.

We are currently undertaking a project to provide free wi-fi in communal areas on our estates, to help more people access our online services and information.

We have carried out work to make sure information is accessible for our tenants and leaseholders. Examples of this include:

- The Leicester HomeChoice website uses symbols to explain the facilities in the properties we are advertising to let to support people where English is not their first language. There is also an auto bid system in place to help people who struggle to use the HomeChoice technology, which will make their bid on their behalf
- The Council's Community Language Service offers a translation service to customers.
- Information on the council's website meets online accessibility standards

Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly

Leicester City Council has a formal procedure in place for people to make comments, compliments and complaints. [You can find out more about our compliments and complaints procedure here.](#)

During 2019 / 20 the Housing Service received a total of 171 complaints which was 42% less than the previous year. Of these, following investigation, 28 were upheld.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO

Although we have a system in place to involve and empower tenants' we think there is more we can do to make our approach more effective. Working with tenants and leaseholders, we intend to review how we do things and develop a Tenant Involvement Strategy that will reflect our new approach.



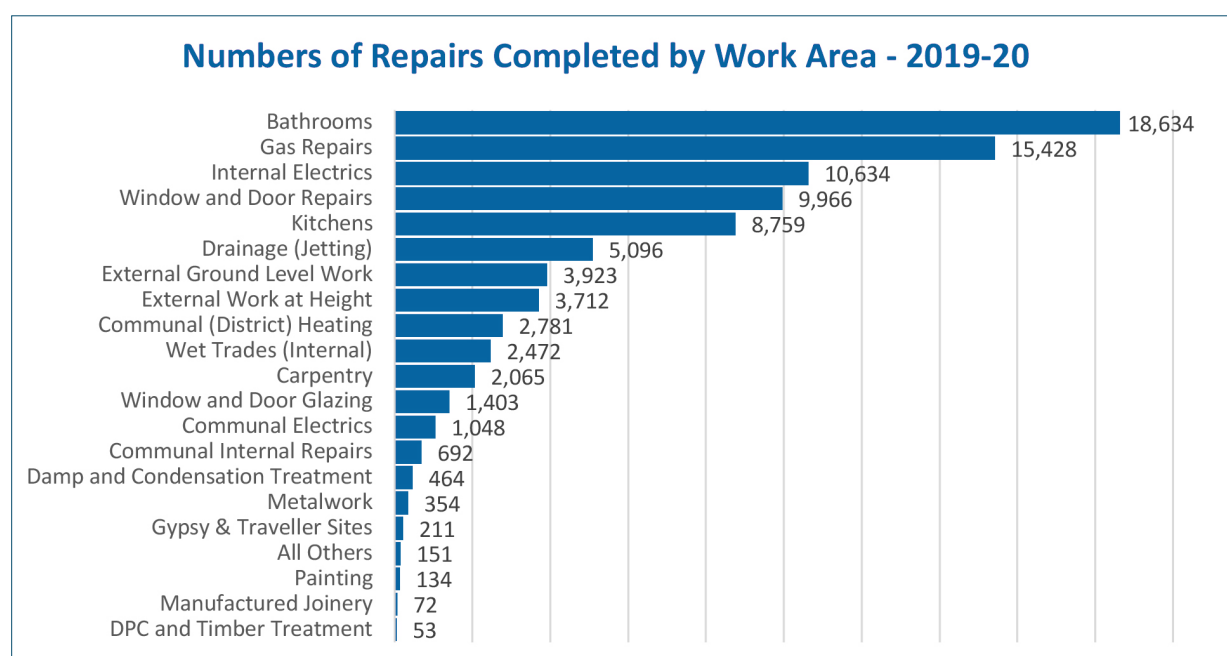
[3] The Homes Standard

To meet this standard, we must:

Provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas

During 2019 / 20 we spent nearly £25m on carrying out just over 88,0000 repairs and maintenance jobs to our properties and estates. The council employs its own workforce to carry out these repairs.

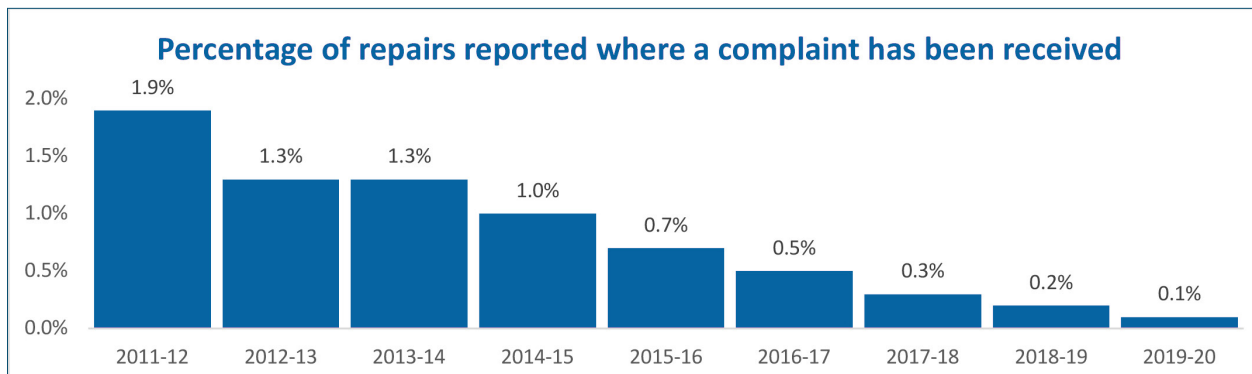
We will carry out most of the repairs to the main structure of your home, but there will be certain things, such as minor repairs and replacement items, which you will be responsible for. [This is explained in the Repairs Handbook.](#)



Provide a repairs service which has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time. There should be an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs and value for money.

In 2019 / 20, 86.6% of repairs were completed within the target times set. We completed 77% of repairs reported on the first visit. Unfortunately, the main reason why we were unable to complete all repairs at the first visit was as a result of tenants not being at home for the appointment to give us access to their properties.

In 2019 / 20 we completed 88,039 reported repairs. Where tenants provided feedback on these, 99.9% stated they were happy with the work that took place.



As well as the money spent on repairs and maintenance, last year we spent a further £48m on planned repairs, such as installing new kitchens and bathrooms, fitting new boilers and re-wiring properties. Where it is established that the cost of carrying out work is too expensive for our own workforce, we will use contractors to do this at a lower price.



Meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes

Health and safety for our customers is at the heart of all the services we provide.

- We have a comprehensive system of fire inspections and personal evacuation plans in place for those living in our flats and houses of multiple occupation. Sprinkler systems are being fitted to our tower blocks in the centre area of the city.
- A re-let standard is in place to ensure empty properties meet health and safety requirements prior to re-letting.
- We have a dedicated Gas Servicing and Repairs Team who are responsible for carrying out annual gas safety checks on all our properties. Last year we completed 99.9% of these safety checks
- We operate a Safe System of Work to protect both households and staff while work is carried out in the home. As part of our recovery planning for the Covid 19 pandemic, we have put in place safe working practices to protect you and our staff.

Ensure that homes meet the standard set out in the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain properties to this standard

Since 2010, all our properties meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. We have an IT system to analyse the condition of all our properties, which is used to plan when items in the home need replacing, to ensure we continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

The work required each year, such as boiler replacements, rewires and new roofs is financed through our planned maintenance programme.

Climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the world. Leicester City Council is committed to tackling this issue; we declared a climate emergency in February 2019. The Housing Division has an important part to play in addressing climate change by making our properties as energy efficient as possible. Up until March 2017 we had reduced our carbon usage by 58, 523 tonnes, well above the 20,268 tonnes target we had been set. This has been achieved through window replacements, new central heating installations, new energy efficient boilers and controls, internal and external wall and roof insulation, and solar panels.

Provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs

We carry out adaptations to our properties where tenants need these to support their independence and allow them to continue living in their homes. Disabled Facilities Grants are also available for non-council tenants, including our leaseholders. [Find out more about our adaptations services.](#)

In 2019, 529 homes were adapted, with a total of over £3m invested to achieve this.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO

- The high number of tenants not at home for repairs appointments is a concern to us because the work is delayed. We want to work with tenants to find ways as to how we can resolve this issue.
- At present tenants can report repairs online through the council's website. We want to be able to develop this facility to enable people to choose an appointment slot themselves and re-arrange appointments if these are no longer suitable.
- Our response to the climate emergency will continue to be a priority for us and as funds become available we will be looking to complete external wall insulation on suitable properties, install individual meters for tenants on district heating schemes and completing specialist work on those homes which are the hardest to heat.



[4] Neighbourhood and Communities Standard

To meet this standard, we must:

keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that we own clean and safe

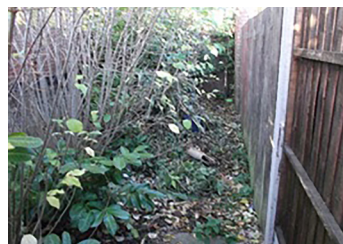
Our Environmental Works and Communal Areas Fund helps us to deliver significant environmental improvements on your estates, such as landscaping, new security measures, communal facilities improvements, pathway repairs, providing additional car parking and replacement fencing. Tenants, leaseholders and ward councillors help decide where this money should be spent, based on their local needs and priorities. Last year we invested £750,000 making these improvements.

- 51% of tenants rate their neighbourhood as a good or very good place to live.

Promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing

The Housing Division's Neighbourhood Improvement Scheme helps long-term unemployed people by giving pre-employment training and a period of work experience. During 2019/20, 10 people completed 6-month fixed employment contracts as Neighbourhood Improvement Officers and a further 10 people have started employment with the council under this scheme. Their valuable work on your estates includes painting, clearing overgrown areas, tidying unsightly spots, cleaning UPVC windows and removing rubbish.

We also continue to provide an apprenticeship scheme for people to train to be craft operatives. Last year 15 people started their apprenticeship with us.



Co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where we own properties

Examples of where we work in partnership with others to meet this standard include:

- Undertaking fire safety inspections, liaising with the Fire Service.
- Working with our Environmental Health Service, particularly the estate wardens who deal with local environment issues, such as fly tipping and pest control.
- Working with our Parks and Open Spaces team to assist with keeping the local environment in good condition, including, grass cutting and grounds maintenance.
- Working with Tenants and Residents Associations to highlight and address local issues.
- Involvement with quarterly ward community meetings - the meetings give you the opportunity to work with us and other agencies such as the police and NHS, to identify local issues and improve your neighbourhoods.

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- Joint Action Groups - working with the police and other agencies to address community safety. Also contributing to the Safer Leicester Partnership along with the police, fire and rescue service and the NHS.

Publish a policy for maintaining and improving neighbourhoods

Our approach to improving your local environment can be found in our Maintaining and Improving Neighbourhoods Policy. [You can read more about it here.](#)

Publish a policy on how we work with relevant partners to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in areas where we own properties.

We work within the council's overall approach to tackling anti-social behaviour. [Find out more about the council's policy here.](#)

We try to put in place as many checks as we can to prevent anti-social behaviour from happening in the first place. For example, our Conditions of Tenancy (which were recently revised) has clear guidance on what is unacceptable behaviour and the outcomes which will result when this happens.

Despite this, anti-social behaviour does still happen. When it does, tackling it is a priority for us and we will take the appropriate measures required to address it, including working with those affected and other agencies to resolve the issues. Each case of anti-social behaviour is different. Our actions will depend upon the nature and severity of each incident.

- Last year our housing officers investigated 1,487 anti-social behaviour cases.

Strong partnership arrangements with key agencies are in place to help us to resolve anti-social behaviour, including the police, victim support services, youth services and probation.

We also have a variety of arrangements in place to support victims of anti-social behaviour. These include referrals to specialist support agencies, attending court with victims and witnesses, providing security packages to support tenants to remain in their homes and, where it is not safe to do so, we will support tenants who need to move.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO

- It is important to us that housing estates are attractive and safe places to live and we know this is a priority for our tenants and leaseholders. To carry out the work needed to ensure this, in addition to the £750k we will spend this year on communal and environmental works, we are spending an additional £1.2 million as part of the Public Realm project, increasing the amount on money we spend making improvements to our estates this year to £1.95 million. This will rise to a combined £2.65 million for the next 2 years afterwards.
- Although we have a Maintaining and Improvement Neighbourhood's Policy in place, we want to review this to make sure our work is targeted on what you think is important on your estates.
- With access to new technology we want to develop options for people to report incidents of anti-social behaviour online via the council's website. Also, we are looking to develop on-line self-help guides to improve the information we provide to tenants.



CONTACTING US

We are currently working to develop the ways you can contact us online. Housing Online is what we call the digital access point for many of our services. This can be accessed 24/7. Through this you can already view and download rent statements, receive important messages from us and update your contact and security information. We are currently working on developing this service to enable you to report repairs and select appointments slots for these. [You can register and log onto Housing Online here.](#)

We are mindful that some service users do not have access to the internet to use online services. We still have our existing communication channels in place for you to contact us.:

By telephone

Call our Tenants Advice and Repairs Service on 0116 454 1007.

In person:

Visit one of our customer service centres:

- Beaumont Leys Library (Beaumont Way, Beaumont Leys, LE4 1DS)
- Pork Pie Library (Southfields Drive, LE2 6QS)
- New Parks Library (321 Aikman Avenue, New parks, LE3 9PY)
- St Matthews Centre (10 Malabar Road, LE1 2PD)
- Customer Service Centre (91 Granby Street, LE1 6FB)

Please check to see if these centres are open due to the pandemic before visiting.





Chris Burgin – Director of Housing

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to helping us deliver our services. Your views are important to us and that's why we have launched a new tenants' and leaseholders' satisfaction survey earlier this year. If you couldn't take part, we hope you will next time.

This has been a particularly challenging year for all of us with the Covid-19 pandemic. I would like to thank our staff for the way they've continued to work through the crisis, in often difficult circumstances. Although some of our services have had to be temporarily reduced, I'm proud to say we have continued to provide them to those in most need. Your patience and co-operation in helping us work through this period has been vital in making sure those who need help most are getting it.

Going forward we will be doing all we can to bring our services back up to the standards that you are used to receiving, whilst continuing to prioritise your safety and our staff's safety.

Finally, I would like to say a special thanks to our Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum who have continued to work throughout the crisis to ensure that their local communities get the help that they need.

Contact us

Telephone: 0116 454 1007

Out of hours emergencies: 0116 254 9439

Email: tenantsadvicecentre@leicester.gov.uk

Website: www.leicester.gov.uk

