

North Lanarkshire Council

The inspection of North Lanarkshire Council took place in May and June 2005. Our purpose in inspection is to provide an independent external assessment of the effectiveness of housing and homelessness service delivery and make recommendations to help improvement. Inspections are conducted within a published framework of Performance Standards. We awarded the following grades:

Housing management	C	Fair	Some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses.
Property maintenance	C	Fair	Some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses.
Homelessness	C	Fair	Some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses.

Inspection findings

North Lanarkshire Council is located south east of Glasgow. It is the largest local authority landlord in Scotland providing housing for around 40,000 tenants, 34.8% of all the homes in the Council area. The Council has 19,714 applicants on its housing list and receives around 2,000 new applications each year. In 2004/05 it also received 4,005 applications for assistance under the homelessness legislation. In that year it allocated 3,645 houses, 37% of which were to homeless applicants. The Council carries out over 150,000 response repairs a year to its houses and in 2004/05 spent just under £39,000,000 on planned improvements. Most response repairs are delivered through three innovative partnership based contracts with the private sector.

The Council has 70 elected members and is run by a Labour administration. Services are managed through seven service committees. The housing service forms part of the Housing and Property Services Department. Services are delivered through 10 First Stop Shops and 8 Neighbourhood Offices, all of which are in accessible locations within the communities they serve.

The Council has made good progress in implementing its first tenant participation strategy. It has put in place local tenant participation action plans and undertaken a number of other initiatives that are having a positive impact on the involvement of tenants in service development. However tenants and tenants' groups we spoke to expressed some doubts about the effectiveness of the overall approach. There are 20 registered tenants organisations in the area and a further 32 active tenants' and residents' groups. These groups are well supported by the Council and receive a wide range of information and consultation material.

The Council has a well developed strategic and service improvement planning process. It has a good record of continuous improvement in a number of areas of service provision and reviewed a number of areas of service provision in preparation for inspection. Performance management is well developed in some areas but delays in the process of developing its ICT systems and a number of gaps and weaknesses in performance information means that the Council does not have a full picture of the effectiveness of all its services from a service user perspective. This has had a significant impact on the Council's ability to identify and respond to weaknesses in some important service areas.

Key strengths in North Lanarkshire Council's services are:

- the Council has significantly increased its investment in its houses over the last year and manages its investment programme well;
- it manages the cost and quality of its property maintenance service well;
- it has a good approach to responding to incidents of antisocial behaviour and has significantly improved its approach to managing the quality of its neighbourhoods;
- it has an excellent approach to managing rent arrears and ensuring that empty houses are relet quickly;
- it has low levels of evictions and supports vulnerable tenants well; and
- it works well with its partners in responding to homelessness and has made good progress with the implementation of some parts of its homelessness strategy action plan.

Key areas for improvement in the Council's services are:

- the extent to which its allocations policy is focused on meeting housing need;
- a failure to publish rules for the allocation of its houses that accurately and fully reflect its practices and significant failings in its administration of the process of letting houses;
- an absence of ethnic monitoring to ensure equal access to its houses;
- performance at completing response repairs on time is poor when considered from a service user's perspective;
- poor management of gas safety checks in its houses;
- high concentrations of homeless temporary accommodation in lower demand areas and the use of out of area bed and breakfast establishments;
- high and increasing repeat homeless presentations;
- inconsistencies and delays in making decisions on homeless applications and inadequate recording of evidence and outcomes;
- limited information on outcomes for many homeless applicants not accepted for housing and high levels of lost contacts; and
- low levels of satisfaction with significant areas of the service amongst tenants.

The inspection report sets out the key areas for improvement that the Council should address in its improvement plan for the service.

Next steps

North Lanarkshire Council should respond to our findings by submitting an improvement plan for agreement with us within eight weeks of the publication of this report. We require the Council to give this summary of the inspection report to all its tenants.

How to get more information and contact details

If you would like to see North Lanarkshire Council's improvement plan you should contact:

Mr Thomas McKenzie
Director of Housing and Property Services
Municipal buildings
Kildonan street
Coatbridge
ML5 3NG

Telephone: 01236 812 506
Email: McKenzieT@northlan.gov.uk
Website: www.northlan.gov.uk

The full report is on our website at <http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk>.

This Summary can also be made available on tape, in Braille, large print and community languages. For information please contact Janette Campbell on 0131 479 5162 or email janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk.

اپنی کمیونٹی میں بولی جانے والی زبان میں اس دستاویز کے ترجمے کے بارے میں معلومات کیلئے برائے مہربانی
جینٹ کیمل Janette Campbell کو 0131 479 5162 پر فون کریں یا اس پتے پر ای میل کریں

janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk

如果索取這文件的翻譯版本，請致電 **Janette Campbell**
0131 479 5162，或電郵以下地址
janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk

আপনার সম্প্রদায়ের ভাষায় এই দলিলপত্রের অনুবাদের জন্য জ্যানিট ক্যাম্পবেল-কে 0131 479 5162 নম্বরে
ফোন করবেন অথবা janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল
করবেন।

لمزيد من المعلومات عن ترجمة هذا المستند الى لغة جاليتكم، الرجاء الإتصال بـ:
Janette Campbell على رقم الهاتف 0131 479 5162. أو عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني على
التالي: janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk