

West Lothian Council

This inspection was carried out by Communities Scotland under section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 on behalf of Scottish Ministers. 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. The inspection of West Lothian Council took place in May and June 2006. We awarded the following grades:

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

Inspection Findings

West Lothian Council is in eastern central Scotland with a population of 161,387. Two thirds of its area is rural with the main centres of population in Livingston, Bathgate and Linlithgow. The Council owns around 13,500 houses and 32% of the population rent from a social landlord.

The Council delivers its services through four main service groupings including a joint board arrangement with the local health board, The West Lothian Community Health and Care Partnership. The Council brought most housing management functions and building services together to form Housing and Building Services early in 2006. Strategic planning for housing and homelessness and homeless services for young people are managed through the health and care partnership arrangement.

The Council's approach to responding to tenants' views is a major strength. Tenants we spoke with feel that the Council listens to their views. The Council's commitment to continuous improvement was a major factor our assessment of its services.

The Council's approach to delivering its homelessness service including access to temporary accommodation and assessing applications needs to improve significantly.

Key strengths are:

- good access to its housing list and repairs service;
- it meets housing need in most of its allocations;
- its good support for homeless people in temporary accommodation and new and vulnerable tenants;

- its clear environmental standard and excellent approach to managing the quality of housing areas;
- its excellent approach to responding to antisocial behaviour across all tenures;
- its excellent approach to performance management in Housing and Building Services;
- its approach to tenant participation and commitment to using tenants' views to improve its service; and
- its systems to ensure value for money and effective cost control for response repairs and capital works.

Key areas for improvement are:

- reviewing its allocations and lettings process and management of short Scottish secure tenancies;
- its use of abandonment procedures;
- its approach to the use of Notices of Proceedings for Possession;
- reviewing how it calculates its repair performance figures;
- its compliance with its legal duties regarding the right to repair;
- its need to increase the supply of temporary accommodation and how it is accessed to ensure it meets its statutory duties;
- its management of the quality and consistency of homeless assessments and case management; and
- its underdeveloped performance management and reporting systems for its homelessness service.

Next steps

West Lothian Council should produce an improvement plan for its homelessness service to show how it intends to respond to our findings within 8 weeks of the publication of this report. The plan will be agreed with us.

How to get more information and contact details

If you would like to see West Lothian Council's improvement plan for homelessness services or to find out how it plans to respond to the findings of this inspection you should contact:

Penny Hasling
 West Lothian Council
 West Lothian House
 Almondvale Boulevard
 Livingston
 West Lothian
 EH54 6QG

Telephone: 01506 777305
 Email: Penny.Hasling@westlothian.gov.uk

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

Painel de Tradução

Este documento pode ser traduzido, se assim for pedido, para a sua língua comunitária. Por favor contacte Janette Campbell, Communications, Communities Scotland, número de telefone, 0131 479 5162 ou email, janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk.

Zespół tłumaczy

Na życzenie, niniejszy dokument zostanie przetłumaczony na język mający zastosowanie w danej społeczności. Prosimy o kontakt z Janette Campbell, Komunikacja, Społeczności Szkockie, nr telefonu, 0131 479 5162 lub drogą mailową na adres: janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk.