



**Scottish Housing
Regulator**

Repairs services in Scotland

A thematic inquiry

February 2018

About us

We are the independent regulator of social landlords in Scotland.

Our one **objective** is to **safeguard and promote the interests of:**

nearly
610,000
tenants
who receive services of social landlords

over
123,000
owners
who receive services of social landlords

around
40,000
people & their families
who may be homeless and seek help from local authorities

over
2,000
Gypsy/Travellers
who can use official sites provided by social landlords

We regulate:

around
200
Social landlords

around
160 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
32 Local Authorities (LAs)

Our **role** is to **monitor, assess** and **report on** social landlords' performance of housing activities and RSLs' financial well-being and standards of governance. We intervene, where we need to, to protect the interests of tenants and service users. Our **Regulatory Framework** explains how we regulate social landlords. It is available on our website www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

About this thematic inquiry

This report presents the findings of our thematic inquiry into repairs services provided by social landlords in Scotland.

Tenants and service users have told us repairs is one of the services that matters most to them.

We require social landlords to report on the following annually to help us monitor and assess how well they provide repairs services:

- average hours to complete emergency repairs
- average working days to complete non-emergency repairs
- percentage of reactive repairs completed right first time
- percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service

We aimed to



review the repairs services' performance of social landlords in Scotland



highlight examples of positive practice



identify the aspects of repairs services that are most important to tenants & service users

What we did



Reviewed repairs performance from the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC)



Asked a sample group of landlords how they deliver effective repairs services

Gathered **feedback from tenants** on their views of repairs services by:



holding focus group sessions with tenant representatives



reviewing the findings of our National Panel of Tenants & Service users



issuing a questionnaire to selected tenant representative bodies



Identified positive practice examples from feedback from tenants, tenant representative organisations & landlords

Repairs services in Scotland

Main messages

Overall landlords are performing well in relation to repairs services and performance has improved

repairs services are a key priority for tenants & service users



Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) reported a better performance than Local Authorities (LAs)

LAs reported a greater rate of improvement for the majority of the performance indicators



Areas of repairs service most important to tenants & service users

- ✓ being treated with courtesy and respect
- ✓ speed and efficiency of repairs
- ✓ landlords having clear and consistent repairs policies
- ✓ flexibility of the repairs service
- ✓ being kept informed

The Scottish Social Housing Charter requires that



“Social landlords manage their businesses 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.”

What we found

Landlord performance

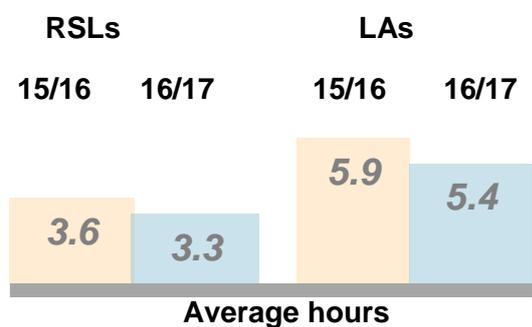
Average hours to complete emergency repairs

Improved



All landlords over the last 4 years

13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
6.9	5.9	5.1	4.7
Hours			



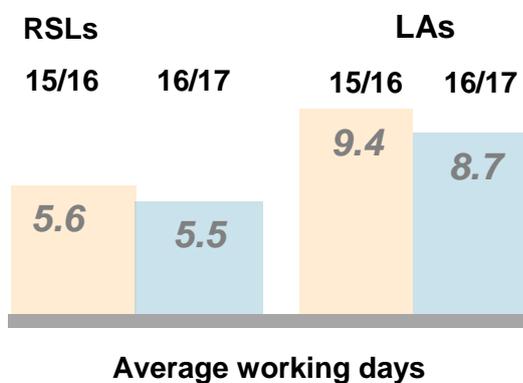
Average working days to complete non-emergency repairs

Improved



All landlords over the last 4 years

13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
8.2	7.9	7.5	7.1
Working days			



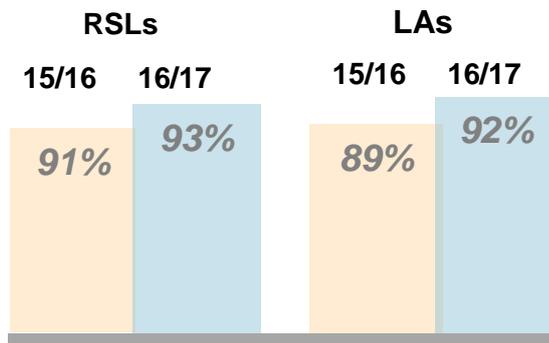
Percentage of reactive repairs completed right first time

Improved



All landlords over the last 4 years

13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
87	89	90	92
%			



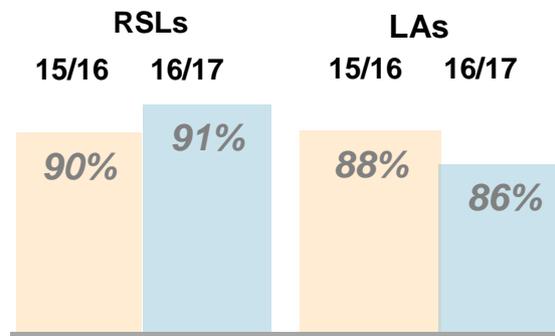
Percentage of all tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service

Improved



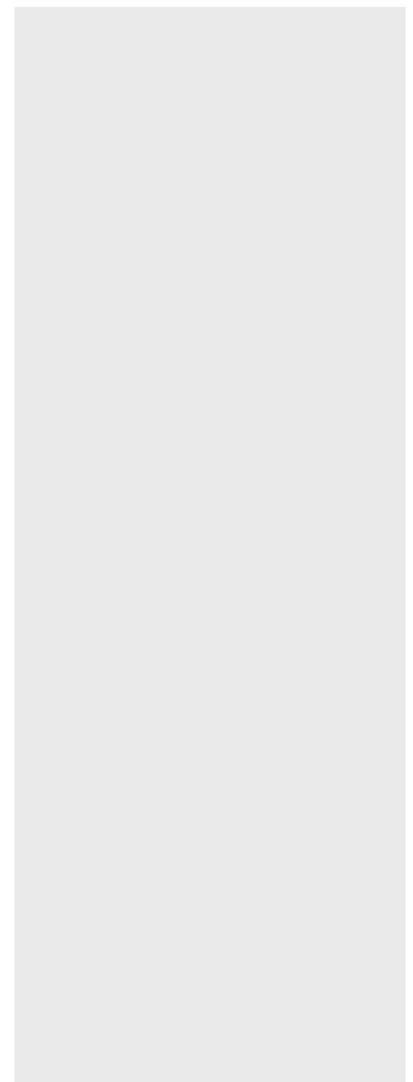
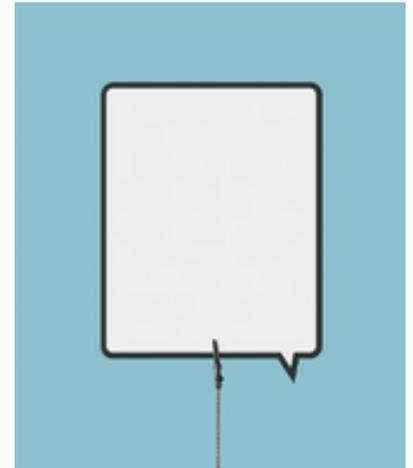
All landlords over the last 4 years

13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
88	89	90	91
%			



What tenants told us

- We obtained feedback directly from tenants on their priorities and experiences of repairs services. Tenants told us speed and efficiency of repairs, being kept informed throughout the process and being treated with courtesy and respect were important to them.
- All tenants reported that they had some good experience of the repairs service. The main reasons given for the positive experience were the job being done correctly and on time and the workers involved being courteous and respectful in the tenant's home.
- Around a quarter of the tenants who provided feedback told us that they had also had a poor experience of the repairs service. The main reasons for this were the wrong workers, parts or tools being sent out and repeated appointments required.
- Most tenants considered that their landlord had clear, accessible and understandable repairs policies. However some reported that the policy was not sufficiently clear.
- Tenants rated being kept informed during the repairs process as very important. Tenants placed great value on being kept informed about what was happening with a repair at each stage of the process.
- Flexibility of the repairs service was very important to tenants. This included having a reasonable choice for the date and time of repairs appointments and providing repairs services outwith usual office hours to accommodate tenants' availability.
- Most tenants were aware of the processes that landlords had in place to manage repairs services for tenants with particular requirements, such as difficulty with mobility or communication.



What social landlords should do

- Ensure repairs policies and procedures are clear, understandable and readily available to tenants.
 - Ensure workers with the right skills and equipment are sent to fix the repair at the first visit wherever possible.
 - Consider tenant feedback and complaints about repairs and make changes to processes and procedures to improve the service.
 - Ensure all workers who deal with repairs have good customer service training and treat tenants with courtesy and respect.
 - Ensure tenants are kept informed of what is happening at each stage of the repairs process.
 - Offer a flexible choice of appointment dates and times and consider offering repairs services outwith usual office hours.
 - Have clear and publicised processes and good training to manage repairs services for tenants with particular requirements.
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What we will do

- Continue to monitor repairs service performance through the ARC and include this in our annual risk assessment of RSLs and LAs.
- Use the findings from this thematic inquiry to inform how we engage with RSLs about their repairs service performance.
- Consider what our findings mean for how we regulate as we develop proposals for our new Regulatory Framework during 2018.

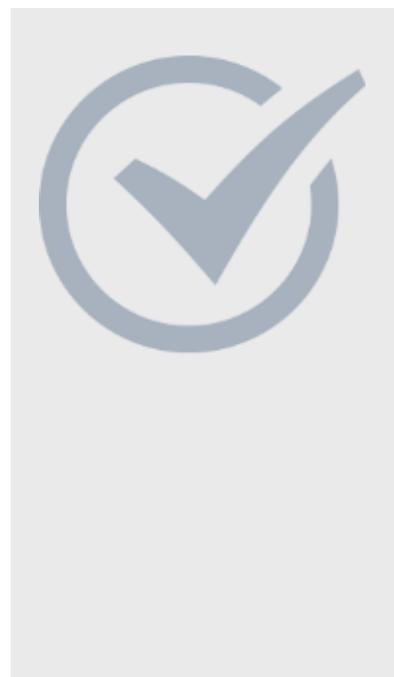
Positive practice

Improving the service

East Lothian Housing Association acted on feedback about how it communicated appointment times to tenants and contractors. It amended its process to ensure written confirmation would be provided in advance of repairs being carried out.

Stirling Council acted on feedback from its tenant survey about the way issues with damp were handled. It made improvements to the service by creating a dedicated work team and setting up an email address for tenants specifically to receive and respond to dampness queries. It has also produced a tenant leaflet giving advice on how to avoid condensation.

Waverley Housing (Scottish Borders) has developed a multi-skilling approach which allows the trades team to coordinate the completion of repairs more effectively, and has introduced shadowing between trades which has been supported by a programme of training throughout the year.



Communication

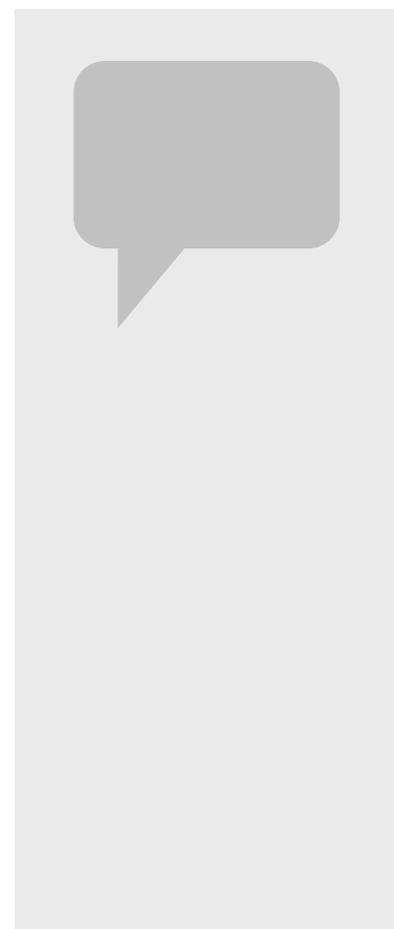
Calvay Housing Association (Glasgow) introduced text messaging to update tenants about ongoing repairs and issue appointment reminders or confirmations. It also holds focus group sessions to encourage tenants to help influence the way services are delivered.

East Lothian Housing Association introduced “My Home”, a development of its web services for tenants to access all of its services online. East Lothian also issues auto-generated text messages to tenants confirming the repair reported and telling them their selected appointment slot.

Stirling Council, in response to tenant feedback, now sends text message reminders the day before appointments, with details of how to cancel or reschedule, and on the day of the repair to confirm when the operative is on their way.

Waverley Housing has considered tenant feedback and continues to adapt its website to provide greater self-service options for tenants, particularly in reporting repairs. This is in addition to the previous mix of telephone, email, text and face-to-face via staff on site.

A tenant of **West Lothian Council** told us that their landlord sent text messages when the workers are on their way which they considered to be very helpful.

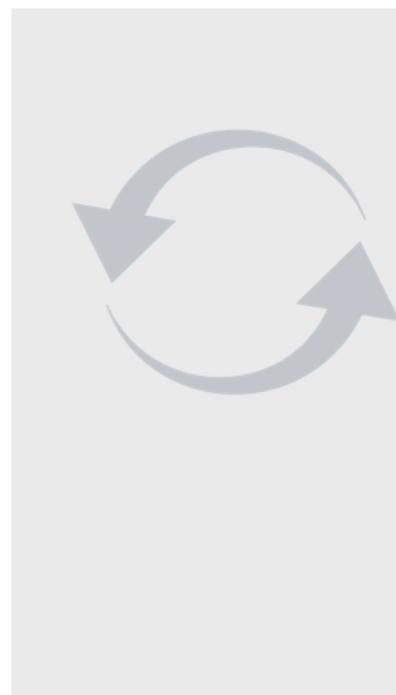


Flexibility

Calvay Housing Association moved to an appointments-based repairs system a number of years ago as a result of feedback from tenants. Some service appointments can be arranged outwith normal working hours to accommodate tenants' availability.

Stirling Council has employed shift heating engineers who will attend appointments at any time between 8am and 9pm every day of the week including weekends. This was introduced as a result of feedback from tenants.

Waverley Housing carried out a consultation exercise based on feedback from tenants who wished to have repairs carried out outwith normal working hours. As a result it introduced an appointments system where tenants who cannot meet an appointment during working hours can be offered an early evening or Saturday morning appointment.



Taking account of different needs

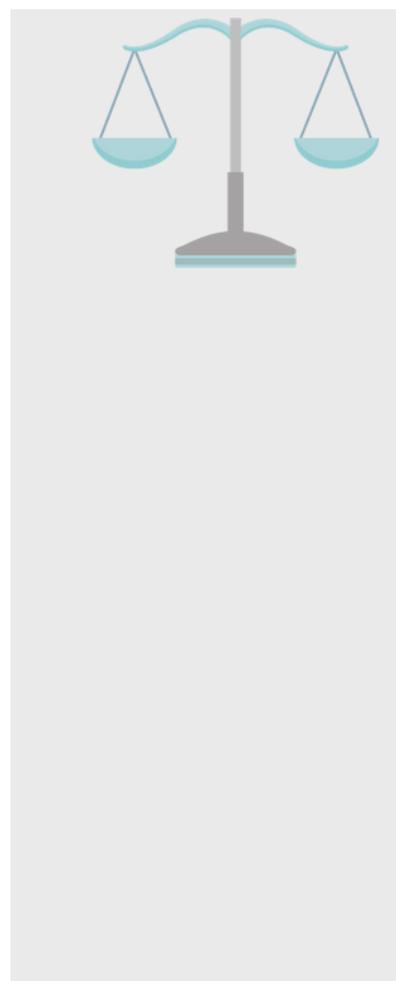
Calvay Housing Association records tenant profile data where it knows of tenants with issues such as mobility, hearing, or sight and makes provisions for appropriate instructions to contractors ahead of repair visits.

East Lothian Housing Association makes contractors aware of particular requirements via its IT system ahead of repairs visits. It offers translations and an interpreting service as well as a live online chat system to help guide tenants having any problems negotiating their website. Its repairs contractor has had an operative attend dementia awareness training.

Tenants of **Parkhead Housing Association's** (Glasgow) sheltered housing reported that they received an excellent service from their landlord which was co-ordinated by designated wardens who arrange the repairs and manage the communication between the tenants and the repairs service staff.

Stirling Council tries to adapt its processes to suit the particular needs of tenants and their households. Interpretation and translation services are offered and additional assistance is provided to vulnerable tenants as appropriate.

Waverley Housing offers translation services when required and holds information about particular needs of tenants on its database to assist in delivering a personalised service.



Terms we use in this report

Annual Return on the Charter (ARC)	Each year all social landlords must provide us with information about their performance in delivering services to tenants and other service users against the Charter requirements.
Emergency repairs	These are repairs that are: to prevent serious damage to the building; are a danger to health; a risk to safety; or, a risk of serious loss or damage to the occupier's property. Landlords should report their performance in hours.
Happy to translate	An initiative to improve the quality of life of people in Scotland who speak or read little English or who use a non-verbal language. Member organisations display a logo to indicate that they will provide language assistance in the form of confidential translation and interpretation.
Inquiry	The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 gives the Scottish Housing Regulator powers to obtain information and carry out inquiries. An inquiry can be used to get assurance about an issue, assess an issue or concern with a landlord, or scrutinise or investigate a landlord's performance.
Landlord	These are registered social landlords (RSLs) such as housing associations and housing cooperatives, local authority landlords (LAs) or a local authority which provides homelessness services.
Non-emergency repairs	These are any other repairs that are not dealt with as emergency repairs and social landlords should report their performance in days.
Reactive repairs	These are non-emergency repairs which are not planned or included in a programme of maintenance or improvement works.
Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	A social landlord registered and regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator, such as a housing association or housing cooperative.
Right first time	These are reactive repairs which the landlord completes fully, to the tenant's satisfaction and within the appropriate timescale. Repairs which require one or more visit can still be reported as Right First Time if this is discussed and agreed with the tenant.
Scottish Social Housing Charter	The Scottish Government's standards and outcomes that social landlords should be achieving for their tenants, people who are homeless and other service users.
Tenants and other service users	Tenants are those that currently live in a home owned and managed by a social landlord. Other service users are those who are not tenants but use services provided by social landlords such as Gypsy/Travellers, people who are homeless and owner occupiers who receive factoring services.



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