



# Providing Quality Services



## Forth Housing Association Performance Report 2012-2013



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# Chairperson's Report

Forth has had a long and proud history of placing the delivery of quality services to tenants right at the heart of the organisation. As a result we are pleased that the publication of the Scottish Social Housing Charter means that this subject has now become a national priority.

This report summarises how we performed in the main areas of service delivery in the year to 31st March 2013. Under a variety of headings we have provided a short narrative about the past year along with statistics reflecting how we performed against our agreed targets.

This is followed by some comments regarding how we feel about this performance and what, if anything, we have planned to change in the current year.

This is our first attempt at such an annual performance report and we would welcome feedback regarding how you have found it. Can we improve things further and if so how?

Please give us your thoughts by contacting Angela Laley, Projects & Communications Co-ordinator, on **01786 446066** or by emailing **[angela@forthha.org.uk](mailto:angela@forthha.org.uk)**.

In addition if you would like to join our Tenants' View Forum, which meets 3 or 4 times a year to monitor and influence our service delivery, you can again contact Angela for further details.

Enjoy your reading and I look forward to hearing your feedback.

***Margaret Turner***

**Chairperson**



# Applications and allocations



New homes at Old Doune Rd

**The number of people wishing to obtain a Forth house remains high. 531 households applied for housing during the course of the year but only 7 new homes and 47 existing homes became available for letting. We also facilitated 8 mutual exchanges.**

The impending introduction of the “bedroom tax” or under occupancy charge caused us to revise our Allocations Policy, in order to avoid under occupancy wherever possible. During the year we were able to assist 15 households to move to a smaller home and avoid unnecessary charges.

We aim to visit every tenant in their new home within 6 weeks of tenancy sign-up. This is to ensure that tenants are settling in well and to allow tenants to ask any questions that arise. This is an important part of our tenancy sustainment process and every effort is made to help new households settle in and establish a secure future.

## How did we perform?

Category	Target	Achieved	Result
Applications processed within 10 days	100%	99%	😞
New tenant visit within 6 weeks	100%	94%	😞
Average time to re-let a home	<2 days	0 days	😊
Rent lost due to empty homes	<0.05%	0.00%	😊
Tenants sustaining their tenancy for more than 1 year	<85%	90%	😊
Homes abandoned during the year	<5	4	😊
Homes becoming vacant during the year	<10%	7.0%	😊

### Allocations breakdown



“I feel the Association helped me a lot, guided me with everything I needed to get the tenancy.”

New tenant, March '13.

## How we feel about our performance

The Committee and staff are relatively pleased with how we performed regarding applications and allocations in 2012/13.

Demand for our housing still far outstrips supply and large numbers of applications are received. Whilst we did not succeed in processing 100% of application forms within our 10 day target this was only missed in 5 cases.

Average relet times and rent lost from empty homes would be hard to beat with only £360 being lost in the whole year.

We failed to achieve our target of visiting all new tenants in their homes within 6 weeks of the tenancy starting in 3 cases. This can sometimes be due to tenants failing to keep appointments or establish alternatives but in some cases we simply failed to establish contact quickly enough.

We are pleased however that 90% of the tenancies established in 2011/12 have lasted at least 12 months. Furthermore, only 4 homes were abandoned by tenants in the year.



## What do we plan to change?

We believe that we can perform better when processing applications without changing our target of 100% processing within 10 days. If we still fail this target in 2013/14 we will review this position.

Similarly we will continue to aim to keep our average relet time below 2 days and our rent loss due to empty homes below 0.05%.

In order to improve our performance regarding the visits to new tenants within 6 weeks we will be starting our appointment process earlier. We hope that this will allow us to achieve our target even if appointments are missed or rearranged.

We believe that the Welfare Reform agenda may have an impact on our tenancy sustainment because more households are likely to find themselves under financial pressure. For this reason we have actively supported a collaborative project with Start Up Stirling. This aims to increase the support available to vulnerable households. We don't however intend changing our targets for tenancy sustainment or abandonments.



# Tenancy Management



**Generally speaking people want to live in a nice home, in quiet and pleasant surroundings. Our aim is to provide and maintain just that for our tenants.**

In order to maintain the environment around our homes we have always chosen to provide landscape maintenance and cleaning services for all common areas.

We also aim to inspect every development, to ensure that our contractors are performing to expectations. These visits also allow staff an opportunity to identify tenants who are not fulfilling their own obligations under the tenancy agreement.

As a consequence of staff visiting tenants to prepare for the Welfare Reforms, Committee reduced these specific estate inspections to once per month but standards do not appear to

have fallen. This is largely down to the frequent general visits to our tenants.

Satisfaction surveys to obtain feedback on both landscape and cleaning contractors are undertaken and the 2012 results again confirmed high levels of tenant satisfaction.

We have long established quick response targets for anti-social behaviour complaints. These ensure tenants reporting serious matters are guaranteed a response within one working day. We also liaise closely with Stirling Council and the Police whenever this is necessary to deal with problems.

## How did we perform?

Category	Target	Achieved	Result
Proportion of estate inspections completed	100%	100%	😊
Very serious complaints responded to within 1 day	100%	100%	😊
Serious complaints responded to within 3 days	100%	100%	😊
Low level neighbour complaints dealt with within 5 days	100%	100%	😊

"I do cut my own back but it's nice that the fronts are kept tidy as maybe some wouldn't do their front green and it keeps the place nice and tidy."

Tenant feedback , summer '12



Archie Bone Way, Fallin

## How we feel about our performance

We are pleased that over the past year our performance regarding Estate Management inspections and dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints has met all our targets.

Despite the fact that we moved from 2 Estate Management inspections for each development each month to a single monthly inspection the standard of our developments does not appear to have deteriorated.

The number and nature of anti-social behaviour complaints received during the course of the year has not changed markedly. Only 43 complaints were received and 2 of these involved very serious cases.

Most of our tenants are therefore able to live peacefully in their homes and enjoy well kept environments.



## What do we plan to change?

Due to the increasing pressures on staff time, as a result of the welfare reform changes, and the need for us to maintain our rental income we intend changing our Estate Management inspections again.

We will be trialling a system where each development has a specific Estate Management inspection at least once a quarter. However, where any problems arise with landscape maintenance, stair cleaning etc we will ensure that more frequent visits occur to the affected developments so that we can deal with these issues.

No changes are planned to the way we respond to anti-social behaviour complaints, as we remain committed to responding quickly to complaints, and enforcing tenancy conditions wherever possible.



# Rent Control



**With 98% of our turnover being generated by our rents we have always made rent recovery a number one priority.**

Our belief regarding rent control is to act early, be supportive but firm too. We recognise that rent payment can be a struggle but we do people no favours if we turn a blind eye or fail to take it seriously.

Following tenant consultation Management Committee increased the rents for 2012/13 by a below inflation rate of 4.0%. This resulted in the average rent for a 2 bedroom home rising to £65.31 per week (below the Stirling average).

From the point that a new tenant signs the tenancy for their home we aim to provide whatever help is required with rent payments. All new tenants are offered assistance with Housing Benefit claims and a meeting with our Income Maximisation Officer. Similar help is also available to existing tenants at any time.

At the end of the year, 28% of our tenants had rent arrears, which ranged from a few pence to over £2,000.

Only 11 court actions were started during the year and none of these proceeded to an eviction. This is a good indication of the huge amount of work that goes into solving problems without people losing their home.

Our total arrears did increase over the year, which was disappointing, but figures from the Scottish Housing Regulator, produced during the year, showed that our rent arrears were the lowest of any similar landlord working in the Stirling Council area.

## How did we perform?

Category	Target	Achieved	Result
Proportion of rent collected	100%	100.3%	
Tenant rent arrears	1.6%	1.9%	
Total rent arrear (including technical arrears)	2.6%	2.0%	
Arrears cases over £750	1.5%	1.6%	
Percentage of tenants receiving Housing Benefit	N/A	57%	N/A

## How we feel about our performance

We are pleased that we managed to collect over 100% of the rent that was charged for the year. It was however disappointing that the overall level of arrears rose slightly and was above our target.

This performance, with arrears still below 2%, is still amongst the best in the country as most landlords seem to have experienced a rise in tenant arrears during 2012/13.

The fact that total arrears, including technical arrears, was maintained below our target is encouraging and reflects the good working relationship we have with the Housing Benefit section at Stirling Council.

Again the fact that the number of tenants with arrears over £750 rose above our target is disappointing but reflects the general rise in debt levels.



## What do we plan to change?

The introduction of the “bedroom tax” and other “Welfare Reform” changes are expected to create further pressure on rent payments. The arrears target for 2013/14 has been increased to 2.0% to reflect this.

We still consider rent control and arrears prevention as one of our main priorities. Therefore, we have decided that the staff time made available by reducing the frequency of estate management visits should be focussed on this area of work.

This will allow us to continue to take a very proactive approach to advice and prevention work.

We will also be continuing to prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit which will result in the direct payment of Housing Benefit to us ending, except where arrears have already built up.

We are reviewing our Income Maximisation provision to see if we should change the focus or priorities. Moreover, we have also joined with other landlords in Stirling to seek to secure funding for extra advice provision.



# Reactive Maintenance

**We believe that the reactive maintenance service is the number one priority for most tenants and therefore we will “pass” or “fail” depending on how this service is delivered.**

During 2012/13 1761 job lines were issued to address repair faults or breakdowns which had occurred in tenants’ homes. This equates to two and half repairs for every home we own, although we recognise that many tenants require no repairs and others may be less fortunate.

We spent over £162,000 on day to day repairs and staff carried out 230 inspections, to make sure that our contractors carried out quality work. In only a total of 14 cases did contractors have to return to put right faults. This is testimony to the quality of work our contractors undertake.

Many of our maintenance contractors have now worked with us for many years. We believe this brings benefits for tenants, as contractors know our homes and standards and tenants know our contractors. Value for money and quality services are shared aims we all aspire to achieve.

**“As usual, repair was carried out to excellent standard: all repairs are done very efficiently keep up the good work”**

**Tenant March’ 13**

## How did we perform?

Category	Target	Achieved	Result
Emergency repairs completed within 4 hour target	100%	98%	☹️
Average time to complete non emergency repairs	<3 days	2 days	😊
Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs	100%	99%	😐

### By trade

Joiner	26%	🏠🏠🏠
Plumber	25%	🏠🏠🏠
Electrician	21%	🏠🏠
Gas repairs	18%	🏠🏠
Roofer	2%	🏠
Builder	1%	🏠
Painter	1%	🏠
Sundry trades	6%	🏠

### By category

Emergency	12%	🏠
Urgent	39%	🏠🏠🏠🏠
Routine	49%	🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠



## How we feel about our performance

The failure to achieve 100% completion of emergency repair works within our 4 hour target was due to failures with 4 jobs.

This is a very small number but we still recognise that for the tenants involved the delays caused inconvenience.

The 2 day average timescale to complete all our non emergency repairs is a very

encouraging performance and indicates that in many cases tenants repair work is attended to the same day as it is reported.

This partly reflects the very high level of reported satisfaction regarding repairs. Although we failed to achieve our 100% target the failure rate was minimal.



## What do we plan to change?

We do not intend to make any major changes to the way that we provide our reactive maintenance service and will maintain the same targets for 2013/14.

We will however begin measuring additional targets, such as how many repairs are dealt with right first time. This will allow us to report against the Social Housing Charter requirements.



# Planned Works



**Ensuring that our homes are maintained to a high standard in the future is as important as building them in the first place. We therefore concentrate on regular planned maintenance and improvement works.**

## Painterworks

2012/13 saw us undertake painting to 120 homes. This was carried out in collaboration with the other members of the StrathFor Housing Alliance. A very competitive price was achieved with a saving against budget. This proved the value of joint working, which we intend to repeat.

## Gas Safety

Another area where we continue to work with one of our StrathFor partners, Rural Stirling HA, is gas safety.

This was the second year of our contract with Saltire and they have continued to provide an effective service. This ensures that tenants can have confidence in the safe operation of their gas boiler.

## Boiler Replacements

Boiler replacements were carried out at Gillespie Terrace and we will continue to replace boilers as they reach the end of their viable working life. When such replacements are undertaken we are installing energy efficient condensing boilers, to reduce fuel bills and improve flexibility.

## Fuel Switch

By far the largest planned contract carried out during the year was the work to switch around 150 homes from electric to gas heating. This work cost in the region of half a million pounds but the result is that all our tenants have now been given the choice to switch to efficient gas heating. Where tenants have chosen to stick with electric we will switch the heating before a new tenant arrives.

## How did we perform?

Category	Target	Achieved	Result
Gas safety check carried out within 12 months	100%	100%	😊
Gas safety checks post inspected	10%	10%	😊
Smoke detector safety checks completed	75%	75%	😊

"So warm and cosy now, I feel like I have a proper home. Thank you very, very much."

Fuel switch tenant

"My windows looked great when finished— boys and Boris did great job."

Painterwork tenant

## How we feel about our performance

Given that all our targets were met and 100% of our gas safety inspections were carried out within 12 months of the previous check, we are delighted with this performance.



## What do we plan to change?

We will be keeping our targets and arrangements for gas safety checks and post inspections exactly the same for 2013/14.

However, because most of our homes now have gas heating our gas safety engineers

will in future check these smoke detectors at the gas safety visit. We have therefore increased our completion target for smoke detector checks to at least 80% for 2013/14.