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Landlord Report to Tenants 2018/19

Information on
the performance
of East Lothian
Council as a
housing provider



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We'd love to hear from you...

We really value your view on our report – in particular what you like about it and what information you'd like to be included in the future. You can let us know by emailing tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk or leaving a message on our freephone **0800 413 721**.



Versions of this leaflet can be supplied in Braille, large print, audiotape or in your own language. Please phone Customer Services if you require assistance on 01620 827199

Welcome



Welcome to our ***Landlord Report to Tenants*** covering the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. The information in the report shows our tenants and the public how we are performing as a landlord. We explain in the report what we have achieved over the year, where we are making improvements and how we will continue to improve things further.

We work in partnership with *East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP)* and they have helped produce this report and influence the content and design. We have also included, in some areas, the local authority average figures to allow comparison of our performance to be made with other councils in Scotland.

I am pleased to see improvement in many areas including overall tenant satisfaction, satisfaction with the repairs service, rent collection, tenancy sustainment and consistent high performance in areas such as gas safety and the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. However, improvement is still required in a number of areas and the report shows our plans to address these as we work hard with ELTRP to deliver excellence in all of the Social Housing Charter outcomes.

In addition, we can all look forward to see the delivery of more new council houses and other affordable housing tenures in the coming years through our Affordable Housing Delivery Programme that will help address the housing needs of those on our housing list.

The comparison information is provided by the Scottish Housing Regulator which publishes performance information for all social landlords in Scotland. Anyone wishing to see the full published report, can access this via the Regulator's website at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

Douglas Proudfoot

Head of Service (Development)
East Lothian Council



East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) continue to work in partnership with East Lothian Council to deliver and improve services for tenants. We continue to encourage people to be involved in scrutiny and consultation events knowing the importance of local groups working together to improve their area and the wellbeing of folk living in East Lothian.

ELTRP will work with the council, listen to tenants' and residents' concerns and views on all aspects of council work. We hope you enjoy this year's report which shows a wide range of performance information. If there is anything you would like us to include in next year's report, please let us know.

This year, I am very proud to announce that ELTRP, some groups and individuals were nominated for five out of the eight categories at the TIS Annual Awards for Excellence – winning two! Well done to everyone who was nominated and to the winners who were Leah Hay (Young Achiever of the Year) and ELTRP (Tenant Group of the Year).

Mark Ormiston

ELTRP Chairperson



*Tenants Group of the Year 2019 winners
ELTRP at the TIS Excellence Awards.*

Achievements

Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019
East Lothian Council:

Delivered 20 new build properties

25 properties acquired through
open market acquisitions

Improvement in Rent Collection

Reduced Rent Arrears

Repairs performance
continues to improve overall

Tenancy refusals have reduced

Operating within our targets
for void turnaround times

Carried out 102 major
adaptations to assist those
with mobility issues

Improving performance
in estate inspections

Tenant scrutiny activities
continue to improve services



Tenant Information Service Excellence Awards 2019
Young Achiever of the Year winner: Leah Hay

Key highlights



866 HOMELESS
HOUSEHOLDS OFFERED
TEMPORARY
ACCOMODATION

107 EMPTY
44 UNDERGOING
MAJOR WORK



You said – we did

The Social Housing Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that the council should be achieving when delivering our housing services.

The charter has helped us focus on how we are performing and has provided good information to our tenants. We regularly gather feedback from tenants through satisfaction surveys, our feedback policy, and through our work with ELTRP. Here are some of the outcomes as a result of what you told us...

You told us What we did

we take too long to carry out day-to-day repairs

We are continuing to work hard to improve our internal procedures and invest in new technology to improve efficiency. Our time to complete emergency repairs has improved and we need to work on our non-emergency repair times and introduce mobile working solutions.

The average time to complete an emergency repair has improved from 2.96 to 2.06 hours. The average time to complete non-emergency repairs has increased from 7 days to 8.98 days.

in our satisfaction surveys that only 70% are satisfied with the standard of your home on moving in

We carried out a review of our Voids Policy and consulted with tenants on this. The proposals included, introducing a Decoration Paint Pack Scheme, Preferred Energy Supplier, post-void repairs, void cleans and a Void Clean Standard. We are aiming to reduce the time that properties are empty to help tenants to move in as soon as possible. We hope that this will increase tenant satisfaction in this area.

The average time we take to re-let our properties has increased from 28.12 days to 39.92 days.

that some aspects of estate inspections were not working

We made changes to our estate inspection and local initiative processes. We are constantly monitoring the performance of estate inspections and are pleased to report that this continues to improve.

In 2018 93% of inspections planned were carried out, this is an improvement on the previous year when only 85% were completed. In 2017 local initiative spend was £97,124 however this dropped to £49,311.60 in 2018/19.

we need to update the tenants' handbook

We are producing a new handbook which provides key tenancy information, with signposting to other related sources of information and organisations.

Working together

The customer – landlord relationship

Tenant Participation

Tenant participation is central to the way we work and our aim is to maximise our tenants' involvement in influencing and scrutinising our housing services. We want tenants to get involved in a way that suits them. How tenant participation works in East Lothian is set out in our Tenant Participation Strategy. The aim of tenant participation is to improve housing conditions and housing services.

Tenant Scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny is a way of giving tenants greater influence and the ability to hold their landlord to account. In 2017 we achieved Gold Scrutiny Accreditation. We have developed a number of scrutiny activities and have carried out some mystery shopping, desktop audits, job shadowing and realtime reporting. Our main aim is to scrutinise the parts of our service that tenants want to look at, helping them become more tenant focussed.

During 2018/19 our scrutiny activities have focussed on the repairs service and this work continues.

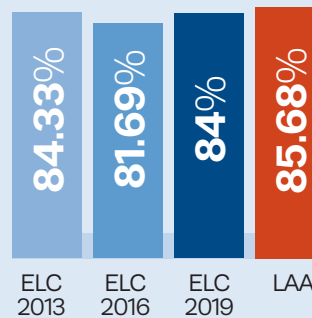


Tenant Satisfaction

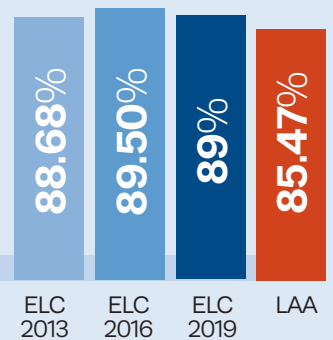
The council carries out a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey every three years. The last survey was carried out in 2019. These surveys give us good information about what parts of the service our tenants are most satisfied with and identify areas where we need to make improvements.

The tables below summarise tenant satisfaction levels from our last three surveys, alongside Local Authority Averages (LAA) for 2018/19.

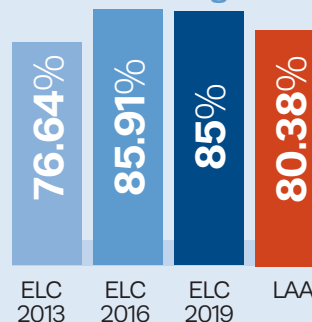
Overall service provided by landlord



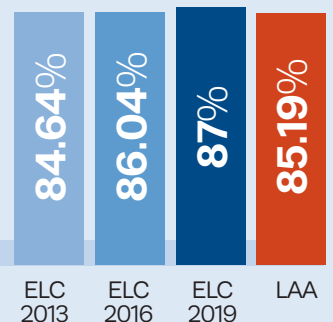
Being kept informed of decisions



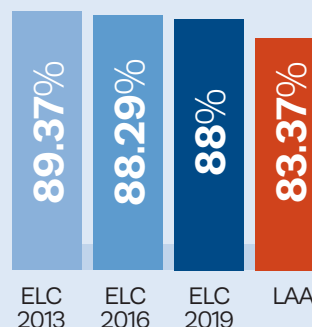
Opportunities to participate in decision making



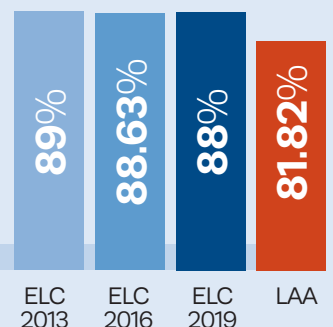
Quality of home



Management of neighbourhood



Rent represents good value

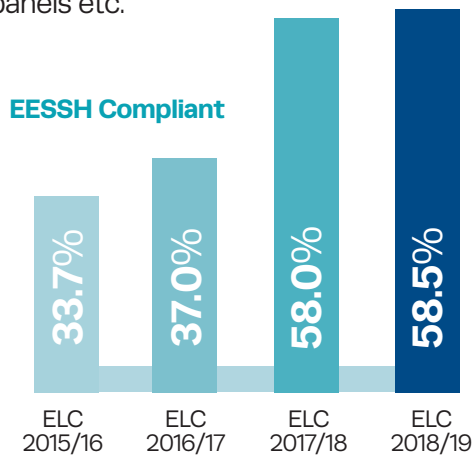


Housing quality & maintenance

Making sure our properties meet certain standards and are well maintained

Energy Efficiency

The Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH) aim to improve the energy efficiency of social housing. The standards are set by the Scottish Government for use by all councils and housing associations in Scotland. The council must ensure that our properties meet the EESH standard by December 2020. The aim of the standard is to improve energy efficiency through a range of measures including; boiler replacements, insulation, solar panels etc.



There are many benefits for tenants who have more energy efficient homes. This supports the Scottish Government's vision of warm, high quality, affordable, low-carbon homes. The council carry out stock condition surveys to find out what work is required. This helps to plan our improvement work to ensure that our homes meet these standards by the timescales required.

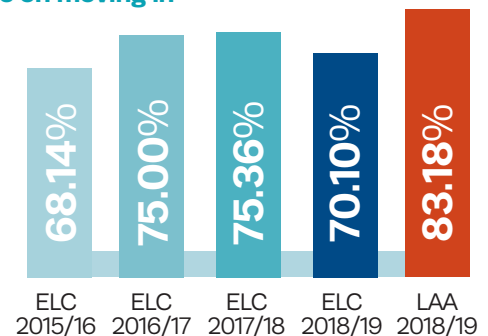
To maximise our compliance, we have recently decided to phase out the provision of focal point fires in council tenancies. These are a source of secondary heating which have historically been fitted in council tenancies, typically during a central heating upgrade or a full house rewire. Focal point fires may be powered by electric or mains gas, but are not deemed as an efficient source of heat.

We are also in the process of providing our properties with Energy Performance Certificates (EPC), which measure the energy efficiency of a house. In 2018/19 we carried out 916 EPC surveys. The total number of our properties that currently have a valid EPC is 2,211.

As part of our regular surveys we ask tenants how satisfied they are with the standard of their home when moving in. We ask all new tenants to complete a survey after they have moved in. In 2018/19 we sent out 529 survey forms (this includes 20 new-build properties), of which 99 were returned. This is a return rate of 18.72%.

Tenants' comments and suggestions are taken on board and are part of the reason that we recently reviewed our Voids Policy (we use the term 'void' to describe a property where a tenant has moved out and the property is having the necessary repairs/checks before a new tenant can move in). We have carried out the review in partnership with ELTRP and have made changes to some of our internal procedures. We hope that this will lead to improved tenant satisfaction in the year ahead.

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home on moving in



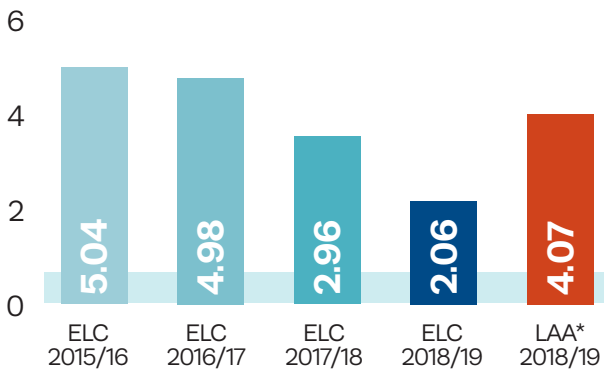
Void house Prestonpans

Housing quality & maintenance

Emergency Repairs

In the last few years there have been improvements to the average time taken to complete emergency repairs. In the last two years our performance has been well within the target of four hours.

Average time in hours to complete emergency repairs

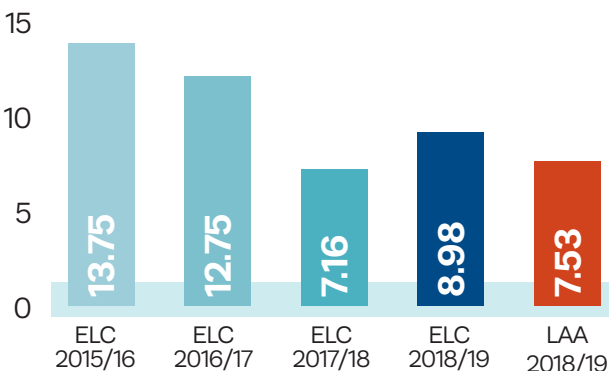


At the beginning of 2017/18 repairs categories were changed. We now report two different categories – the first is within four hours (emergency) and the second within 20 days (non-emergency). These are our current timescales for our emergency and non-emergency repairs.

Non-Emergency Repairs

We want to improve the time it takes to complete non-emergency repairs. We plan to build on improvements made in this area by introducing mobile working to our repairs service.

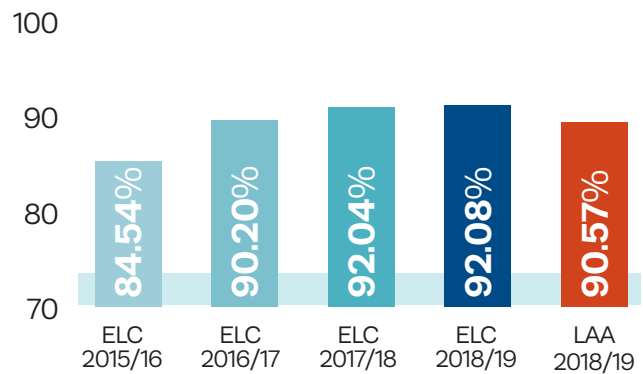
Average time in days to complete non-emergency repairs



We regularly ask for tenants' views on how satisfied they were with non-emergency repair work.

- We carried out 19,639 non-emergency repairs last year
- We sent out 11,548 survey forms to tenants who had a non-emergency repair completed
- We received 2737 returns from tenants – a response rate of 24%.

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service



This table shows how our performance with repairs satisfaction has increased over the years and how it compares to the local authority average.



ELTRP visit to the Property Maintenance Stores

*LAA – Local Authority Average

Neighbourhood & community

Estate Inspections

These provide an important opportunity for tenants and tenants and residents groups to get involved in identifying issues in their local area and to really make a difference.

Inspections are arranged by local Community Housing Officers.



Playpark at Pencaitland

2018 Estate Inspections

Area Housing Team	Planned	Carried out	Percent completed
East	20	20	100%
Prestonpans	19	19	100%
Musselburgh	25	19	76%
Tranent	20	20	100%

The Estate Inspection Working Group consists of staff and ELTRP representatives who regularly meet to monitor estate inspections. In 2018 93% of planned inspections were carried out – an improvement on the previous year when only 85% were completed. The group have also recently reviewed the process to make it easier to carry out local initiatives.



Harkness Crescent Local Initiative BEFORE

Local Initiative Projects

These are often identified through estate inspections and are considered by the Local Housing Partnership. Projects are currently limited to a maximum of £30,000 per project and must meet a set criteria and often require a feasibility study. The council's Local Initiatives Budget aims to provide funding for projects that deliver improvements benefiting the local community.

There are many good examples of local initiatives which have resulted in improvements to areas for tenants. These include: improvements to drying areas in Tranent, increased parking bays for tenants in Innerwick, resurfacing and creation of parking bays in Prestonpans, improved street lighting in Dunbar.

There are also a number of potential projects in the pipeline across all the Area Teams in Harkness Crescent, Tranent, and The Antiquaries in Prestonpans.

Local Initiative Projects 2018/19 budget	£200,000
Prestonpans	£1,339.62
Musselburgh	£0.00
East Area	£4,209.60
Tranent	£40,000.00
Fees	£3,762.38
Total actual spend	£49,311.60



Harkness Crescent Local Initiative AFTER

Neighbourhood & community

Antisocial Behaviour

We promote tolerance and the right of every resident to enjoy peace and quiet in their own home with respect for and from their neighbour. Antisocial behaviour can include loud music, shouting, swearing, verbal abuse, vandalism, graffiti and physical violence.

Our Local Area Housing Teams and specialist Safer Communities Team work in conjunction with Police Scotland in responding to antisocial behaviour complaints. We continue to tackle and resolve antisocial behaviour whilst considering the needs of those impacted by such behaviour. There were 786 complaints made in the last year.

Types of Antisocial Behaviour	Reports
Noise Related	453
Neighbour Disputes	99
Other <i>e.g. vandalism, drug related, threats, intimidation.</i>	234
Total reports	786

Targets for resolving antisocial behaviour cases are agreed in advance with ELTRP. The number of cases and how many were resolved within the local agreed targets is shown below. Some cases may take longer to resolve for a variety of reasons.

Number of antisocial behaviour cases resolved within the following locally agreed targets	
Closed within 1 month	497
Closed within 2 months	73
Closed within 4 months	77
Closed within 1 year	40
Closed greater than 1 year	99
Total resolved within target	87.4%

Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)

During the reporting period, the council, with the support of Police Scotland, obtained 34 ASBOs (from Edinburgh Sheriff Court) against persons from a number of different types of housing tenure. ASBOs were applied for against those who engaged in persistent and serious antisocial behaviour and who failed to desist, despite having received a number of warnings under the council's Antisocial Behaviour Policy.

ASBOs are seen as an effective way of addressing behaviour where all other interventions have failed and they will continue to be used in the future where appropriate.



East Lothian Council Community Warden Team

Dog Fouling

Our Safer Communities Team also deal with dog fouling complaints. During the year they received 360 complaints and issued three Fixed Penalty Notices to residents.



Abandonments

Over the year there have been a number of properties that tenants abandoned. The table below shows how many of our properties were abandoned in the year and which area they were in.

Area	No.
East Area (Dunbar, North Berwick, Haddington)	8
Musselburgh	7
Prestonpans	7
Tranent	6
Total	28

Evictions

There has been a reduction in the number of evictions. During 2018/19, we evicted 10 tenants.

Reason for eviction	No.
Antisocial Behaviour	1
Non-payment of rent	9
Total	10

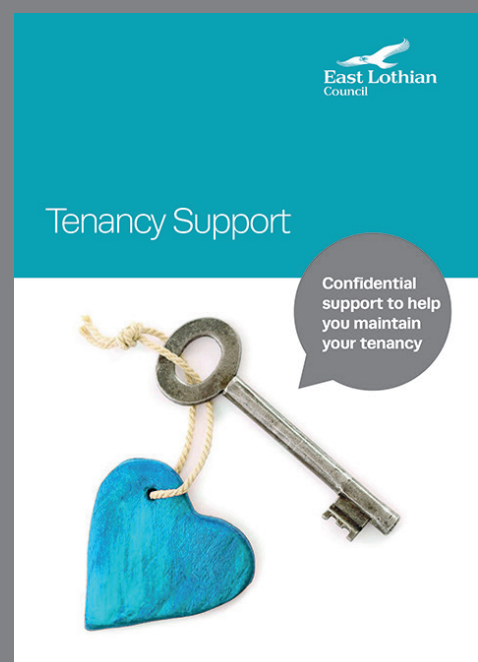
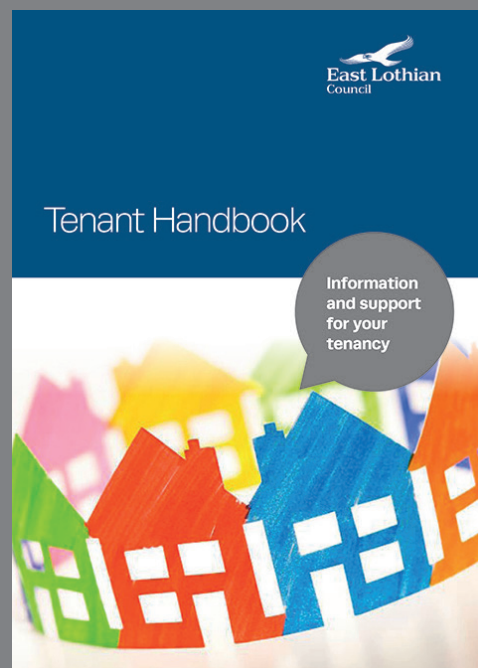
Eviction is a last resort. We aim to work with our tenants and have developed a preventative approach to deal with antisocial behaviour, using a range of interventions to deal with those who perpetrate such behaviour.

To maximise our income and reduce rent arrears we offer tenants confidential support to make sure they get the help that they need.

The percentage of court actions which have resulted in the tenant being evicted has decreased over the years. Although this increased last year, it is still close to the local authority average figure.

Court actions which resulted in eviction	%
2015/16	31.15%
2016/17	27.59%
2017/18	14.91%
2018/19	19.61%
LA Average 2018/19	18%

Look out for the new *Tenant Handbook* with key information for tenants and *Tenancy Support* which provides confidential support to maintain a tenancy.



Access to housing & support



Tenancy Support Officer

Osborne Court Sheltered Housing Complex

Following the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, we have reviewed the way we allocate our housing stock. The Act has made changes to the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement which we have explained to tenants advising that they need to make sure that they tell us about any changes to their household.

Housing needs

It is important that there is turnover of our housing stock to allow applicants to move to suit their needs. We offer incentives to encourage stock turnover such as financial incentives to move to a smaller property. Of the 509 homes we let in the year 299 went to homeless applicants, 123 to existing tenants and 87 to general housing list applicants. We do not have any hard-to-let areas and the total number of offers refused in the year were 120.

Properties which became vacant

2015/16	409	4.87%
2016/17	536	6.39%
2017/18	581	6.90%
2018/19	509	5.97%
2018/19 LA Average		8.44%

Average time taken to re-let properties

2015/16	19.62 days
2016/17	34.88 days
2017/18	28.12 days
2018/19	39.92 days*
2018/19 LA Average	33.75 days

*Which is within our 42 day target.



Local authority (LA)

Homelessness

There is a very high demand for our properties. As at 31st March 2019 we had 3,409 applicants on our housing list. The turnover of our stock is very low with only 509 properties let in 2018/19. This means that we cannot meet all the demand for council housing. We can however provide housing options advice to applicants.

Under the homelessness legislation we have a statutory requirement to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applicants. Due to the shortage of housing there is an acute blockage of the flow of households through our temporary accommodation and very long lengths of stay.

The council has a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which aims to transform the use of temporary accommodation and reduce the length of time spent in it. Our vision is to *put in place a new partnership arrangement which enables a holistic approach to housing options ensuring everyone has a home that meets their needs and a commitment to work towards ending homelessness in the longer term.*

The figures here highlight the current situation with our temporary accommodation and the average number of days spent in temporary or emergency accommodation.

Average number of days spent in temporary accommodation

2015/16	163 days
2016/17	192 days
2017/18	216 days
2018/19	187 days
2018/19 LA Average	116.46 days



Average amount of days spent in temporary accommodation – by type

	Private sector leasing	Housing Association	Council house	Hostel	Bed & breakfast
2016/17	411	329	351	132	61
2017/18	470	455	416	226	71
2018/19	398	0*	361	261	57
2018/19 LA Average	212.03	249.51	211.49	114.79	38.49

*Housing Association accommodation is now incorporated in council house figures.

Getting good value

Housing stock & rent

Each year we consult with tenants on our proposals to increase rents and last year we proposed a 5% increase. This was our estimate of what it would take to maintain existing services, continue with the investment in new housing and the maintenance and improvement of existing council houses.

The feedback we received from tenants showed that 78% thought the council was proposing a fair increase of 5%. The undernoted table shows the number of properties we have by area and by size.

Apartment 'apt' size refers to the livingroom plus the number of bedrooms.



Russell Walk, North Berwick

Number of properties in each area						
	1apt	2apt	3apt	4apt	5apt +	Total
Dunbar	10	132	496	271	25	934
Haddington	16	232	374	237	30	889
North Berwick	0	144	322	135	16	617
Musselburgh	14	545	1,314	582	64	2,519
Prestonpans	3	364	907	473	57	1,804
Tranent	0	374	1,044	526	33	1,977
Total	43	1,791	4,457	2,224	225	8,740

Average weekly rent for each property						
	House	Four in a block	Maisonette	Tenement	Total	Average weekly
1apt	0	0	0	43	43	£56.82
2apt	690	545	2	554	1,791	*£65.94
3apt	2,673	1,154	94	536	4,457	£64.43
4apt	1,806	267	42	109	2,224	£67.44
5apt+	205	16	0	4	225	£68.72
Total	5,374	1,982	138	1,246	8,740	£65.60

**The average rent for two bedroom apartments is higher due to the number of sheltered housing properties in this category which have a service charge.*

2018/19 RENT INCREASE



This table uses our Peer Group – local authorities of a similar size to ELC.

Percentage rent collected of the total due

We collected 100.57% of rent due from both current and former tenants in 2018/19. This meant we collected £28,554,520 out of £28,392,115 rent due.

At end of 2018/19 we had 8,416 current tenants of which 30.23% had rent arrears. Of those with rent arrears, 45.48% owed less than £250 and 18.67% owed more than £1,000.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
CURRENT TENANTS WITH RENT ARREARS	2,479	2,531	2,544
FORMER TENANTS WITH RENT ARREARS	549	420	312
TOTAL VALUE OF RENT ARREARS	£2,418,533	£2,508,915	£2,152,638
TOTAL RENT DUE	£25,638,726	£26,805,352	£28,392,115
TOTAL RENT COLLECTED	£25,164,987	£26,602,905	£28,554,520
% RENT COLLECTED	98.15%	99.24%	*100.57%

*This figure is over 100% because we have collected some rent arrears which were due in the previous year and also received some arrears from former tenants.

Lost rent through empty properties %

2015/16	0.55%	£135,911
2016/17	0.74%	£192,245
2017/18	0.82%	£220,312
2018/19	1.19%	£341,581

2018/19 LA Average 0.88%

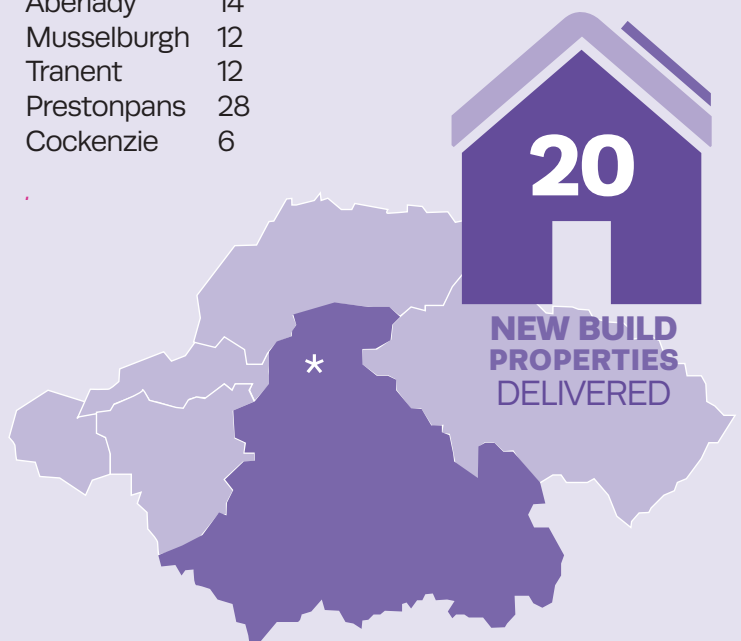
The percentage of the rent due that we lost through properties being empty during the last year has increased and is above the Local Authority average figure.

New build

We continue to invest in new homes for East Lothian and delivered 20 new council houses in 2018/19 in Haddington*

We've budgeted to complete a further 99 in the financial year 2019/20:

Haddington	15
Gullane	12
Aberlady	14
Musselburgh	12
Tranent	12
Prestonpans	28
Cockenzie	6



Contact us

Call

East Lothian Council Contact Centre	01620 827827
Advice on difficulties paying rent	01620 827528
Community housing offices	01620 827827
To request a repair	01875 824311 (or 01875 612818 out of hours)
House contents insurance scheme	01620 827255
Antisocial behaviour helpline	01875 824307
Advice on homelessness or in an emergency call	01620 827536 (duty officer) 0800 169 1611

East Lothian Tenants And Residents Panel 0131 665 9304

Visit

www.eastlothian.gov.uk

www.eltrp.co.uk

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

Write

East Lothian Council
Community Housing Service
Service Development Team
Penston House
Macmerry EH33 1EX

Data Protection

East Lothian Council uses the personal data you provide for purposes associated with the delivery of our services. For more information go to:

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/communityhousingpn

Personal data will be retained in line with East Lothian Council retention policies. Data Protection Officer, East Lothian Council, John Muir House Haddington, EH41 3HA. Email: dpo@eastlothain.gov.uk



It is your responsibility to ensure your rent is paid on time. Please contact East Lothian Council's Rent Income Team on **01620 827528** if you are experiencing financial difficulties. Failure to deal with your rent arrears could result in action being taken against you and you could be at risk of losing your home.

Make paying your rent a priority.

You could lose your home if you don't.