



ANNUAL CHARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT
2017



INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the Castlehill Housing Association Landlord Report 2016-2017. Another year has passed and it is time again to tell our tenants about how we are doing. This year there has been a particular focus on the development of new housing with a number of projects being handed over and others close to completion. With 161 new homes currently under construction on sites at Westgate and Portstown, in Inverurie and at Countesswells and Muggiemoss, in Aberdeen. On completion, this will bring the Association 133 affordable rent properties. This represents a significant addition to

our housing stock. Aberdeenshire and Moray and makes an important contribution to meeting the needs of people looking for suitable housing. We have plans to progress with sites at Maiden Craig in Aberdeen and at Balmedie and Mintlaw in Aberdeenshire over the next few years.

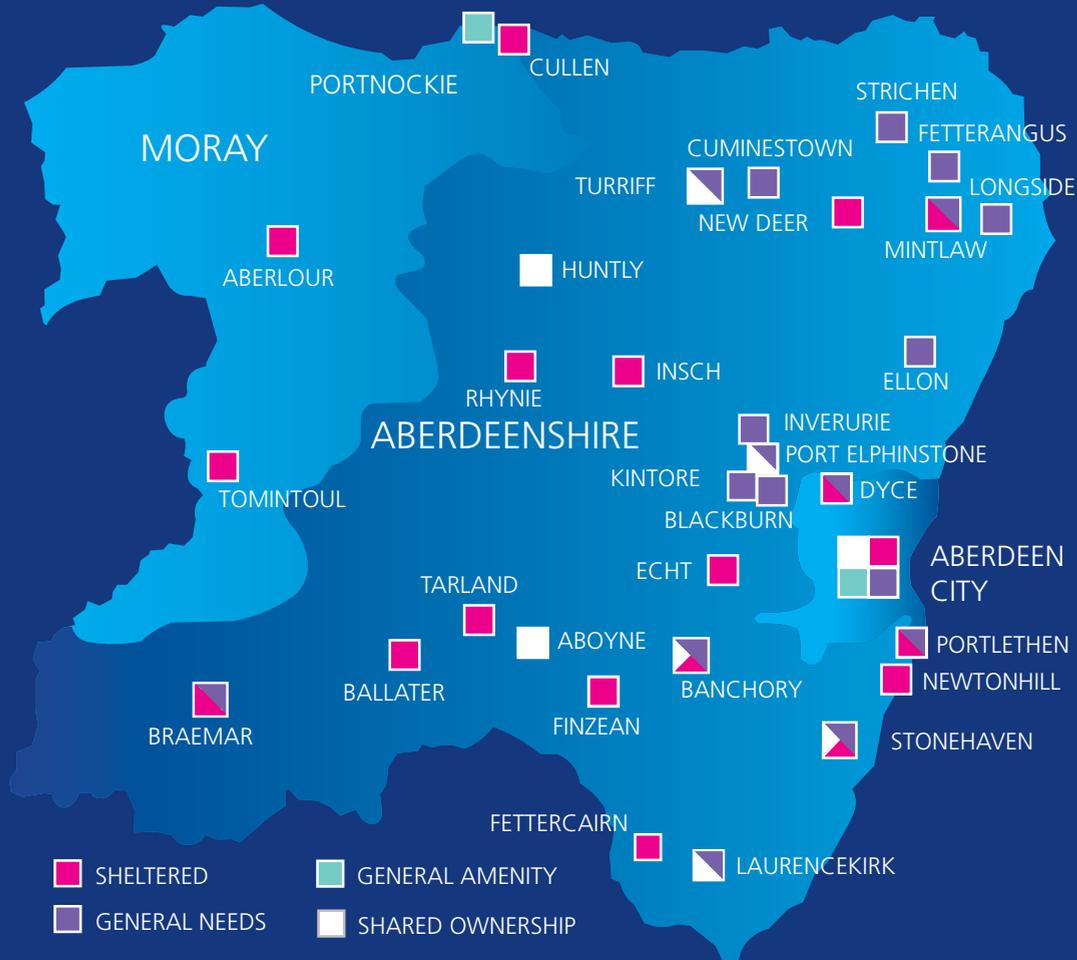
Maintenance and improvement of our housing remains one of our most important activities. During the past year, we have invested over £2million in reactive and planned maintenance, including a programme of kitchen and bathroom replacements and upgrading of lifts. We carried out over 3700 reactive repairs, completing emergency repairs in an average time under 2 hours and all other works in an average time of 7.4 days. 93% of jobs were carried out "right first time" and we maintained 100% compliance on gas safety certificates. We have targeted resources at surveys to produce Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) across our stock and so far, based on EPCs completed, we can now demonstrate that 91% of our housing already meets EESSH (Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing) in advance of the due date in 2020.

Our Housing Management staff are the main point of contact for tenants and applicants for housing. We continue to perform well in key areas, despite pressures from factors such as welfare reform impacting on a number of our tenants. Our Key Project continues to be a vital part of helping vulnerable people to successfully sustain their tenancy. One example of this is that 94% of tenants who had previously been homeless successfully sustained their tenancy for more than 12 months.

As in previous year, if you are keen to find out more about our performance and the opportunities to get more involved with Castlehill please contact Catherine Coutts, Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 628109.

Janice Lyon

Convenor of Management Committee



About This Report - How We Compare?

This year we have once more compared our performance against the previous year (2015/16) along with the Scottish Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) average. The RSL average figure has been calculated by the Scottish Housing Network (SHN) and is based on the RSL average of their members who are RSLs.

The traffic light system

The traffic light faces are to help provide an easy and clear indication of our level of performance. Tell us what you think? Do the traffic light colours make it easy to see how well we are doing or where we need to improve?



Green indicates that our performance is better than the Scottish Registered Social Landlord (RSL) average.



Amber indicates that performance is on a par with the RSL average.



Red indicates that performance is not as good as the RSL average and where improvement is needed.

Our Staff

Castlehill Housing Association has 80 full-time equivalent posts across all our services. Staff are based between our Carden Place and Waverley Place offices and our Sheltered Schemes throughout Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Staff turnover this year was 4.48%.

OUR PROFILE 2014/15

Total number of houses



Total rent due in the year

£6,906.677

Percentage average weekly rent increase applied

3.3%

The average rent increase across all Registered Social Landlords in Scotland this year was

2.3%

2015/16

Total number of houses



Total rent due in the year

£7,187.670

Percentage average weekly rent increase applied

1.8%

2016/17

Total number of houses



Total rent due in the year

£7,355.878

Percentage average weekly rent increase applied

3%

Number of Bedrooms	Number in Stock	Average Weekly Rent	Scottish Average
x 1	86	£64.08	£66.55
x 2	928	£88.53	£71.67
x 3	462	£87.24	£73.13
x 4	185	£96.43	£79.42
x 5	16	£108.67	£88.02

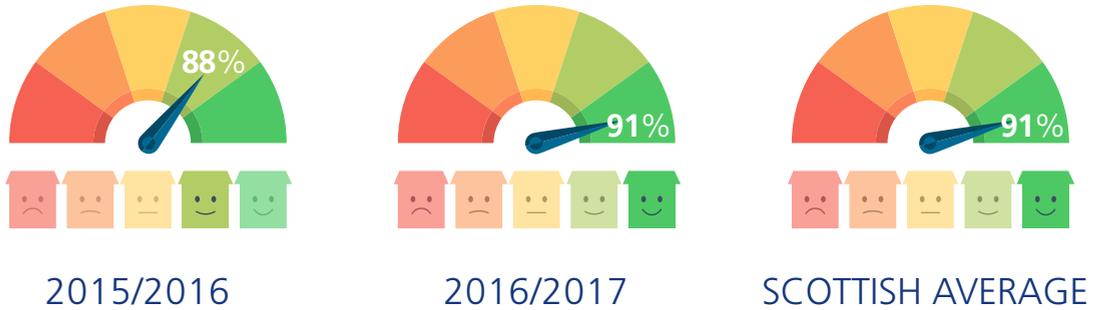
Affordability

Castlehill commissioned housing consultants Arneil Johnston to carry out research on the levels of housing affordability locally. The reason for carrying out this research was to provide the Association with valuable information to help inform future policy and service provision.

The research indicated that Castlehill rents are significantly lower than alternative housing options in the market sector and that Castlehill rents are affordable for most households in the local area.

TENANT PARTICIPATION & SATISFACTION

Percentage of tenants satisfied with overall service



Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and outcomes



Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the landlord's decision making



TENANTS SATISFACTION SURVEY 2017

TENANT VISIT HAILED A SUCCESS

Castlehill tenants were involved in three days of learning, discussion and sharing ideas with a group of tenants from East Ayrshire.

NETRALT (North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together) tenants and staff worked together to plan a meaningful and fun event for our visitors and our local tenants.

The programme included a tour of new developments, the Community Safety Hub, C-Fine (Community Food Initiatives North East) and Aberdeen City Council's new £5.5 million homelessness accommodation unit and support facility. A conversation café provided the ideal forum to discuss allocations, ways to involve tenants in participation and the new build process. Tenants enjoyed afternoon tea with some great live music thanks to a Castlehill tenant, and a civic dinner at the Beach Ballroom.

Feedback was extremely positive and there is potential for North East tenants to visit the East Ayrshire tenants in the future.



TENANTS SATISFACTION 2017

Thank you to everyone who took part in our tenant satisfaction survey. We appreciate you taking the time to tell us your views on how we deliver our services.

We are pleased to report that 90% of tenants are satisfied with our overall service and 85% are satisfied with the quality of their home.

The next step is for each department to use the relevant results in their work plans, with action points addressing specific areas for improvement. These work plans are updated quarterly and go to our committee.

Some of the statistics are used in our Annual Return on the Charter, and are also included in our annual performance report. Our Tenants Panel/Readers Group has a say as to which of the non-statutory statistics are included, so if this is something that interests you, please do get in touch.

If you asked that staff contact you regarding the survey, we will be in touch soon, once the research company pass on your details to us.

The reports will soon be available on our website. The Tenants Panel (CaRTO) and Readers Group have been provided with copies of the reports. If you would like to request a copy, please contact Catherine Coutts on 01224 628109 or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

SCRUTINY PANEL 2016/17

– by Colin Stewart, Panel Member



We completed our first scrutiny exercise, 'Sheltered Allocation & Voids' in October 2016 and presented it to the board in November and it was very well received.

It took us a year to complete, in the report there were 20 recommendations, of which 6 were implemented during the scrutiny exercise, 3 were being actioned at the time of the report going to print and 11 were still to be considered by the Housing Management Sub Committee. It helped us along when, whilst we were working through the exercise, some of our suggestions were being taken on board immediately.

What worked well and what challenges did we face?

We found no objections, resentment or wariness from anyone at Castlehill. Both tenants and staff attended training provided by TIS (Tenant Information Service). The training explained what a scrutiny exercise was all about from both a tenants and a member of staffs point of view. This enabled the staff to fully understand their role and were therefore very helpful. Scrutiny will only work well if staff and tenants work together. So, we actually had an easy time when speaking to staff, asking for information and visiting sheltered properties and speaking to scheme managers.

We realised a little bit late that we weren't keeping good enough notes and we needed to start writing the report sooner rather than later. We were finding that when we asked a question

and were given the answer, that answer created three more questions.

The benefits

It has created an open and ongoing dialogue between the tenants and the Management Board. It has opened our eyes to the obstacles that our landlord faces and it has shown the landlord how useful the tenants can be in looking past the trees and seeing the wood.

It has also encouraged tenants to participate, that it is worthwhile and that your voice is listened too.

The challenges

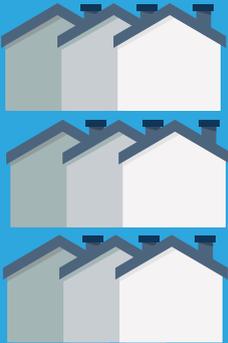
One of the major challenges we faced was meeting on a regular basis. With the Tenants panel, people can dip in and out, but with Scrutiny, you need those involved to attend as many meetings as possible.

One of the 'lessons learnt' that we put in our scrutiny report was that it is advisable for future scrutiny panels to be able to hold online meetings rather than always have to be face-to-face.

During the scrutiny process, speaking to other scrutiny groups and being involved with NETRALT, it encouraged me to talk to the tenants panel and to get it turned into an RTO (Registered Tenants Organisation), now called CaRTO.

We now have a new Scrutiny Panel about to start training and we will be choosing the next topic to be looked at during the training.

Percentage of stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard



100%
2015/2016

99.76%
2016/2017

94%
Scottish Average

Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs



4.4 hours
2015/2016

1.87 hours
2016/2017

3.3 hours
Scottish Average

Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs



6.9 days
2015/2016

7.39 days
2016/2017

5.4 days
Scottish Average

Percentage of reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed first time



100%
2015/2016

93.21%
2016/2017

88.8%
Scottish Average

Percentage of repairs appointments kept



100%
2015/2016

99%
2016/2017

90.9%
Scottish Average

Percentage of tenants who had repairs and maintenance carried out in the last 12 months who were satisfied with the service



84%
2015/2016

96%
2016/2017

90.6%
Scottish Average

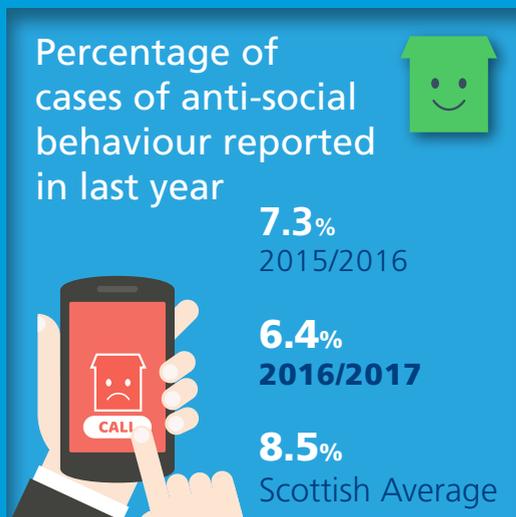
A photograph of a man in a dark shirt working on a sink faucet. He is using a tool, possibly a wrench, to adjust the faucet. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'HOUSING QUALITY AND MAINTENANCE' is centered over the image in white, uppercase letters.

HOUSING QUALITY AND MAINTENANCE

The figures show a substantial improvement in the average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs for 2016/17. The level of service for emergency repairs provided to tenants generally remains consistent, however it only takes one or two late repairs to have a significant impact on the average time, for example, as happened in 2015/16, with a small number of emergency repairs being even just one day late, and performance being measured in hours. It should also be noted that our target response time for emergency repairs is 6 hours, so the actual average times for 2016/17, and in fact 2015/16 are well within our own target figure.

The average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs for 2016/17 has increased by almost half a day compared to 2015/16 at 7.39 days, and this is also virtually 2 full days more than the Scottish average. Although this is obviously disappointing, especially that we are over the Scottish average, the response times for non-emergency repairs are closely monitored throughout the year and recorded quarterly. For further information, we actually split non-emergency repairs into two categories i.e. "Urgent" (target time 3 working days) and "routine" (target time 15 working days) and generally manage to have around 90% of all non-urgent repairs completed within our own target response times. For 2017/18 we have actually introduced a fourth repairs category of "non urgent" which has been added in recognition of jobs where we know the maximum 15 working days allowed for routine repairs will not be sufficient, for example, when there is a known long delivery period likely for required materials.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY



Did you know that there is an easy way for you to get involved with Castlehill at scheme level, where you can have the opportunity to discuss the things that matter to you, without the need for attending a meeting?

Scheme walkabouts are a great way to have your say about your neighbourhood. Our staff will be on-site, making it easy for you to give us feedback about your scheme and identify any concerns, maintenance or management issues.

Scheme walkabouts usually take place twice a year for general needs schemes. Sheltered and very sheltered tenants can raise any concerns with their scheme manager.

Your Housing Officer will notify you when these visits take place and we encourage you to join in.

GETTING GOOD VALUE FOR RENTS & SERVICE CHARGES



The time taken to get a property ready for a new tenant to move into has reduced this year, however is still slightly above the Scottish average. As a result the amount of rent lost during the vacant period has also fallen.

Housing Officers and Maintenance Officers are doing joint visits when a tenant advises they are giving up their tenancy. The visit is to provide advice to the tenant about they need to do before they move out. This covers things like cancelling direct debits, discussing payment of any outstanding rent, identifying repairs that are their responsibility and must be done before the end of their tenancy.

Officers are also recording when they complete each stage of the re-let process, as this will help show where any delays are occurring. Housing officers and maintenance officers meet every Tuesday morning to discuss the progress of each empty property to try and keep delays to a minimum.

The Association will continue to review its processes to help ensure the improvement in performance continues this year.

Percentage of total rent due collected in the previous year



2015/2016	103%
2016/2017	101%
Scottish Average	99.6%

Court Actions initiated



2015/2016	26
2016/2017	24
Scottish Average	72.8

Court Actions initiated which resulted in eviction due to non payment of rent



2015/2016	1
2016/2017	2
Scottish Average	11

Percentage of abandonment



2015/2016	0.2%
2016/2017	0.3%
Scottish Average	0.59%

Percentage of gross rent arrears



2015/2016	3.1%
2016/2017	2.54%
Scottish Average	4.1%

Number of mutual exchanges



2015/2016	25
2016/2017	18
Scottish Average	19.6

Percentage of lettable homes that become vacant in the last year



2015/2016	11.7%
2016/2017	10.27%
Scottish Average	8%

Percentage of rent lost through properties being empty in the last year



2015/2016	1.42%
2016/2017	0.88%
Scottish Average	1.0%



RENT ARREARS COLLECTION

Rent collection remains a priority for the Association and the performance figures reflect this. The Housing Officers receive a report at the start of each month. The report lists all tenancies that have rent outstanding on their account. The Housing Officers then prioritise their cases, contact the tenants who have not paid their rent or failed to keep to a rent arrears arrangement. In the event a tenant does not make contact with housing officer or make payment, the case will be escalated to the next stage of the arrears policy.

The policy enables the housing officers to work with tenants facing financial problems and take account of their circumstances. For example if a tenant has returned to employment, the housing benefit may stop before they receive their first pay. In this situation an arrangement would be entered into to ensure any outstanding balance is short term.

In cases where payment has not been made and the balance is increasing month to month, the arrears policy will be escalated which can result in a Notice of Proceeding for Repossession being served; which can in a small number of cases lead to a tenant losing their home.

In the vast majority of cases early intervention prevents legal action being necessary. The Housing Officers are all very experienced and can provide advice along with signposting to other organisations for specialist financial advice, for example Shelter Scotland, Citizens Advice Bureau, SMART money advice project or Gordon Rural Action.

QUICK GUIDE TO YOUR TENANT PARTICIPATION OPTIONS

86% of tenants rate Castlehill as being good at keeping them informed. There has been a significant increase in tenants who are satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making (from 61% in 2014 to 72% in 2017) but we want to aim much higher.

CASTLEHILL REGISTERED TENANTS ORGANISATION (CaRTO)

CaRTO is our Tenants Panel, an independent, autonomous group of Castlehill tenants who meet six times a year to discuss and influence our housing and housing-related services, give feedback on policies, publications, suggest new ideas and give us their opinions. CaRTO's focus is on improving services, standards and performance.

Don't worry if you have never done this sort of thing before. CaRTO is open to all our tenants and new members are welcome. We can even arrange for you to have a "buddy" to meet up with before you attend a meeting.

Meetings are held in various locations throughout Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray so that everyone can get involved.

SCRUTINY PANEL

If you have more time to spare and are looking for an in-depth way to get involved, our Scrutiny Panel could be just what you are looking for. Tenant scrutiny is when tenants independently scrutinise landlord performance. Tenants review an area of our housing services and make recommendations for improvement. You will receive training and support to ensure you have the knowledge and skills to get the most out of your scrutiny experience.

READERS PANEL

We understand that meetings aren't an option for everyone. Lots of people struggle to find spare time, juggling family, work, caring, studying...and of course, some people just don't like meetings!

If this sounds like you, you can join our Readers Group. You can choose whether we keep in touch with you by email, post or phone. We will keep you up to date with what CaRTO are doing and ask you for your opinion, feedback, and ideas.

SCHEME WALKABOUTS

Scheme walkabouts are a great way to have your say about your neighbourhood. Our staff will be on-site, making it easy for you to give us feedback about your scheme and identify any concerns, maintenance or management issues.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

We encourage you to become a lifetime member of the Association.

Members may stand for election to the Management Committee, attend all general meetings and vote in the election of the Management Committee. Lifetime membership only costs £1.00.

NORTH EAST TENANTS, RESIDENTS AND LANDLORDS TOGETHER (NETRALT)

We are proud to be part of this award-winning group of tenants and staff from social landlords across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray. NETRALT is recognised nationally for good practice in partnership working. Highlights include our housing cafes, youth radio show, tenant visits to/from other groups in Scotland, social media training and various housing-related events.

MORAY TENANTS PARTNERSHIP

Moray Tenants Partnership aims to make a difference to housing services, to widen tenant involvement and to provide our tenants with value for money. We work together for the benefit of our tenants.

Other members include Grampian Housing Association, Osprey Housing, and Moray Council.

There are ways to get involved to suit everyone. Please contact our Tenant Participation Officer for more details.

Catherine Coutts

Tenant Participation Officer

Monday to Thursday

01224 628109

catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

Feedback

We value your feedback and would like to hear what you think about our report. The aim of the report is for you, the tenant, to clearly see how we are performing, so if you have any ideas on how we can present this information to you, please let us know.

SUMMARY

It has been a great year for the Association with a number of new build properties being let with more to come at the start of 2018.

Our first tenants scrutiny panel completed their initial review which resulted in a number of changes in how we allocate Sheltered housing. For example, advertising rent and housing support costs in a more simplified way, contacting applicants to support them to actively bid for sheltered housing and underway is a revamp of the Homehunt advert that is in the Press and Journal every two weeks.

Our new website has gone live. There is still more development to come, however the design and new look is very exciting. We hope tenants will find it easy to use and we would love to hear your feedback.

As the end of the 2017 approaches, we will be setting our priorities for 2018. We hope to maintain performance where we perform well and plan to make improvements for the areas of service that need improvement.

If you would like to be involved with the work of the Association, please contact Catherine Coutts and have a chat about the opportunities.



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