

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Tenants and residents – this is your Annual Report from the Council Housing team for 2024. We have worked together with residents to create something we hope you'll enjoy reading.



“The introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures in 2023 assesses how we are doing at providing good quality homes and services, as well as being transparent with our performance and where there is room for improvement.

Key to achieving this is your feedback and involvement, which has gone from strength to strength over the past year and is helping us to shape our services. This collaborative approach has produced this Annual Report, with what matters most to customers at the forefront of its layout, design and content.

This coming year, we’re creating even more opportunities than ever to hear from you, and we welcome your attendance at events and activities so our teams can listen to what’s important to you. I’m positive through this we’ll continue to make the improvements to our services you want and it’s great to see some of those improvements making an impact through the detail underneath.”

Jo Wilkinson

Jo Wilkinson, Chief Officer Housing and Property



“I hope you enjoy reading this report and are as impressed as I am about how much is going on with the housing in our district. It reflects a lot of hard work, day in, day out, so if you see a Lancaster city council staff member out and about round you, I know they would love a word or two to say you appreciate them being there.

There’s so much to say that this is quite a long report. If you read nothing else, please look at Page 4 which tells you about our performance, good and great areas but also what we need to do better. And don’t miss Page 6 with all the pictures of activities happening in our communities. 2024 has been an excellent year for housing; congratulations to everyone, tenants and officers for all your efforts.”

Caroline Jackson

Caroline Jackson, Housing Portfolio Holder



“My Name is Barbara Walker, and I am a Lancaster City Council tenant at an Independent Living Scheme.

Having been a Council tenant for many years - and having seen the numerous changes made to the provided services over time (such as how repairs are managed) in order to make them more accessible - I found myself wondering how I could – from a tenant’s perspective of course - help assist them in ensuring that access to these services continues to be made more accessible and streamlined for everyone, as well as easier to use, which is why I joined the Tenants Voice Group – and from that first meeting, I was hooked.

I now sit on the Tenants’ Voice Building Safety and Scrutiny Panels, helping to implement better communications between Tenants and the Council. I really enjoyed being part of the team who put this report together, and I hope you enjoy reading it.”

Barbara Walker

Barbara Walker, Tenant



MAINTAINING YOUR HOME

We know that your home is more than just a roof over your head, it is the place where you expect to feel safe, happy and secure. Many of us also work from home nowadays too, so perhaps this is more important than ever. As your landlord we never take lightly our commitment to keeping your home safe and well maintained.

It is likely you've had a visit from our contractor carrying out our stock condition survey in recent months. At time of writing, we have visited around 90% of council homes. Thank you for helping us to achieve this!

We are now developing planned programmes of work using the information gathered to make sure your homes are maintained in the best condition possible. Once these programmes are ready, we will share them with you so you can see when your home is due to receive planned maintenance works.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE DID DURING 2023/24:



85% of all repairs were successfully completed on the first visit.

.....



£450,000 roofing programme was initiated on Ryelands Estate.

.....



£300,000 was invested in major and minor adaptation work to support tenants living independently.

.....



7 empty properties underwent complete renovation through our whole house improvement programme before



99% of emergency repairs were carried out within 24 hours of reporting.

.....



354 cases of damp and mould were successfully inspected and resolved.

.....



380 properties across rural estates and Independent Living schemes were fitted with interlinked smoke/heat alarms and carbon monoxide detection systems.

.....



£500,000 was invested in replacing old gas boilers with 'A' rated energy-efficient models across the district.



A total of **11,500** responsive repairs were delivered during this period.

.....



126 homes on Ryelands Estate received new kitchen installations.

.....



The average time taken to re-let empty homes was

20

days (excluding properties requiring major works).

Adaptation work included a much-needed two-storey extension with ground floor bathroom, extended living area and through floor lift for a family with a disabled child in the district

KEEPING YOU SAFE AND WARM'

A big part of the job of the Housing Service is to carry all those important checks and inspections and put the right safety measures in place to protect you and your family.

OUR COMPLIANCE TEAM ARE SPECIALISTS IN THIS AREA, AND DURING 2023/24 THEY DELIVERED:

Fire safety improvement works totalling over

£1.4 MILLION

were completed, including fire doors, fire stopping, and fire compartmentation works.

100%

completion rate achieved for annual gas safety checks in residential properties.

98%

of all required electrical safety checks were successfully completed.

100%

completion rate achieved for fire safety checks.

99.24%

of smoke alarms were tested and verified.

99.54%

of carbon monoxide alarms were tested and verified.

With support from Government funding, we are busy delivering a £1.3 million project to work with tenants living in poor energy efficient homes, installing energy efficiency measures and reducing energy bills. The project is on target to benefit 105 council homes!

ALLOCATING AND LETTING COUNCIL HOMES

A change to our online lettings system was launched during 2024, with the new system providing an upgrade on the previous one. A big improvement for housing applicants is the ability to download supporting documents directly on to the application rather than having to bring in or post paper copies.

See www.idealchoicehomes.co.uk for more details.

The Housing Service also signed up to the Homeswapper service, allowing residents to register on there for a Mutual Exchange to find another tenant to swap their home with, and access the whole process free of charge.

Homeswapper can be found at www.homeswapper.co.uk.



HOUSING WAITING LIST: 2023/24 IN REVIEW:

Lancaster City Council Housing has over **3,000** applicants on the housing register



- One-bedroom = 50%
- Three-bedroom = 15%
- Two-bedroom = 29%
- Four-bedroom = 5%



3028

There are **3028** total households currently on the waiting list.



1500

households require either a one-bedroom home or bedsit accommodation.



900

Just under **900** households are in need of a two-bedroom home.



450

Approximately **450** applicants require a three-bedroom property.



150

Just over **150** households on the register require four or more bedrooms.



228

A total of **228** Council homes were let during this period.



152

Of these lettings, **152** were allocated to new tenants of social housing.



103

103 new tenants opted to take out a furniture package.



20

The average re-letting time for our homes was **20** days.



31

31 Mutual Exchanges were completed during this period.

OUR PERFORMANCE, FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE

In July and August 2024 many of you took part in our annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey. We love hearing about how we are doing as it helps us understand how and where we need to improve to deliver the services you want. It was also great to hear about how we've improved since last year.



Please visit lancaster.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/tenant-satisfaction-measures for further details.

WHAT DO THESE RESULTS TELL US?

You have clearly told us that you are generally more satisfied this year than 12 months ago with the services we are delivering, which is great!

However, we can also see there are some areas where we need to improve: the way we handle complaints, the way we approach anti-social behaviour, and how well communal areas

are maintained and looked after, for example – we are working hard to improve these things.

We are very happy that 8 out of 10 tenants believe we treat you fairly and with respect, and we are totally committed to making sure this continues!

SUPPORTING YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY



Our neighbourhood teams work hard to support residents and communities in a whole range of ways.

OUR RENT AND OTHER MONEY MATTERS

Our Income Management Team always take a supportive and proactive approach, helping you prevent rent arrears, maximise your available income, and sustain your tenancy successfully. The team are accredited by the Housing Quality Network for the supportive and effective way they work. If you ever need advice or support around your tenancy, or other money matters, you can contact them on 01524 582929

During 2023/24 the team:

£76,000

Achieved a record low in tenant rent arrears, with just £76,000 outstanding as of April 2024.

£71,200

Secured £71,200 in additional income for tenants through grants and eligible benefits.

22

Limited court proceedings to only 22 rent arrears-related housing possession hearings, thanks to our supportive approach focused on avoiding legal action where possible.

SUPPORT FOR YOU

The housing support team directly support a whole range of tenants who might need extra help, often multiple and complex needs. The team work hard to help as many people as possible successfully maintain their tenancies.

During 2023/24 the team:

186 The team received 186 referrals for households requiring support assistance.

98% Following the completion of support periods, 98% of residents supported by the team maintained successful housing solutions.

£169,000

Through ensuring access to entitled benefits and other financial support, we secured an additional £169,000 in extra income for tenants.

Here's just one example of how our Housing Support Team makes a real difference to residents' lives:

Recently, we had the chance to support a 55-year-old tenant moving into one of our Independent Living homes. The tenant was dealing with physical and mental health challenges, alcohol dependence, and a very low income. They were excited about the move but faced a lot of barriers, like struggling to manage finances, debts, and appointments due to memory issues caused by a brain injury.

When we met them during an early tenancy check, we saw both their strengths and the challenges they were facing. They had a great care package in place, they were eager to settle into their new home, and they were open to accepting support. However, they didn't have enough money to cover moving costs or buy the essentials they needed for their flat. On top of that, they didn't have access to their Universal Credit account, and their debts were becoming unmanageable.

We knew this was a big moment for the tenant, and we stepped in to help them through it. First, we created a communication diary to make it easier for the tenant, their carers, and our team to stay on top of appointments and share updates. We applied for extra funding to cover their

moving costs, provide flooring, and get them household essentials. With our help, they accessed their Universal Credit account and started a full benefit review to make sure their income better reflected their needs.

To make their home safer, we arranged a fire safety visit, where fire-retardant bedding and ashtrays were provided. We also connected them with debt advisors to explore options like a Debt Relief Order or bankruptcy.

Now, the tenant is thriving in their new home. Thanks to funding support, they have flooring, furniture, and household goods. Their benefits are under review, and their appointments have been adjusted to fit their mobility needs. They've even gained full access to their health records to help with future claims.

This success shows how working together—both with tenants and other services—can make a big difference. Our goal is always to ensure tenants feel supported and confident in their homes, and this story is a wonderful reminder of how our service can truly change lives.

During 2024 the Council also fully reopened the Town Halls in Morecambe and Lancaster, allowing you to visit us more easily in person.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, NEIGHBOUR NUISANCE, AND OTHER TENANCY MATTERS

Our neighbourhood teams are always out and about in the community delivering a wide range of services such as estate walkabouts and block inspections, tenancy audits and other home visits, enforcement of tenancy conditions, and identifying and supporting residents who may be having difficulty maintaining their tenancy,

Our specialist Community Safety Team continue to work hard on how they manage and respond to reports of anti-social behaviour across the district, taking care to deliver a service which takes into account the impact of any anti-social behaviour on the person reporting.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MAKING SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD

Our fantastic, engaged tenants have rebranded the long-established District Wide Tenants Forum and are now called the Tenant Voice.

This group comes together every other month and is increasingly well attended and vibrant, and a really fun and lively way for tenants to represent their communities. The Tenants' Voice has been 'on tour' in recent months to a range of community centres and community spaces which we know are the favoured venues for residents.

We'd especially like to thank Pat and Lillian from Branksome for helping us to shape our services



"It's been good meeting a group of people in the last year and making new friends."

Gordon, Mainway Resident.



"Being involved in the community engagement has been inspiring – I was really pleased to see our opinions had been recognised and acknowledged."

Michelle, Mainway resident.

"Being part of the Tenants Voice and the Scrutiny Panel has been an exciting learning experience. I am also part of the Tenants Voice committee where we discuss and plan the agenda for upcoming meetings." *James, Ryelands resident.*

IN RECENT MONTHS WE HAVE SUPPORTED:



Our big community fun day on Ryelands Park.



The well-loved gardening competition (which showcased the usual impressively high standards).



Training for tenants in food safety and community group skills.

Pumpkin carving at MelliShaw Park.



Neighbours enjoy summer BBQ together at Morley Close.



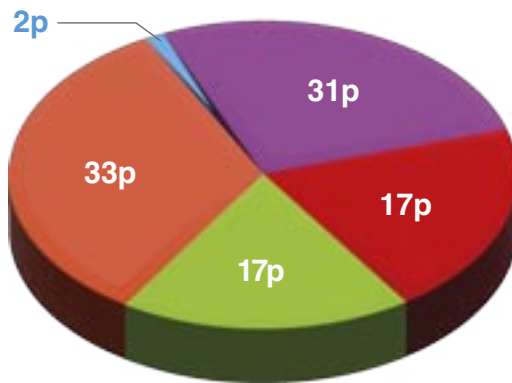
Residents worked together on a weeding project to transform Kingsway Court grounds.

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

WHERE YOUR RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES WERE SPENT IN 2023-24:

FOR EVERY POUND WE RECEIVED WE SPENT:

- Responsive / routine repairs
- Interest / loan payments
- Staff and management
- Planned / major repairs
- Other



£1.3 MILLION

We invested £1.3 million on boiler replacements and energy efficiency improvements



£392,000

We spent £392,000 on implementing fire safety and precautionary measures



£888,000

We allocated £888,000 to refurbish internal communal areas



£150,000

We dedicated £150,000 to environmental improvement projects



£493,000

We invested £493,000 in roof repairs and window replacement works

Contact us



Office Locations:

Lancaster Town Hall:

- **Opening Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9:00 am - 4:30 pm
- **Address:** Lancaster Town Hall, Dalton Square, Lancaster, LA1 1PJ

Morecambe Town Hall:

- **Opening Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9:00 am - 4:30 pm
- **Address:** Morecambe Town Hall, Marine Road, Morecambe, LA4 5AF



Customer Services:

- **Telephone:** 01524582929
- **Email:** councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk
- **Website:** www.lancaster.gov.uk
- **Opening Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9:00 am - 4:30 pm

Emergency Contacts:

24/7 Emergency Call Centre

For **emergency housing repairs outside office hours**, urgent housing issues that cannot wait until the next working day, or immediate safety risks related to council housing, please contact our **24/7 Emergency Call Centre**:

- **Telephone:** 01524 670999

For urgent emergencies involving **gas leaks**, please contact the **National Gas Emergency Services**:

- **Telephone:** 0800 111 999

Repairs and Maintenance

- **Telephone:** 01524582929
- **Email:** chreception@lancaster.gov.uk
- **Office Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9:00 am - 4:30 pm
- **Emergency Repairs (Outside Office Hours):** 01524670999

Community Safety & Reporting Anti-Social Behaviour:

- **Telephone:** 01524582929
- **Email:** chasb@lancaster.gov.uk
- **Non-Emergency Police Telephone:** 101



External Support:

If tenants have unresolved disputes or complaints about their social housing provider after following the landlord's complaints process, they may need to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service:

- **Telephone:** 03001113000
- **Email:** info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Social Media:

- [facebook.com/LanCityHousing](https://www.facebook.com/LanCityHousing)
- x.com/LCC_Housing

Calls may be recorded to improve our service standards and the accuracy of information.

This document can be made available in large print, audio, Braille, and other languages upon request.