



Housing Services

Annual Report 2023 - 2024

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Introduction

I am delighted to introduce the 'Annual Report' for tenants and service users for financial year 2023 to 2024.

The process of producing our 'Annual Return against the Charter' and publishing an annual report has become well established.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter was developed by the Scottish Government. It aims to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide. It will also support the Scottish Government's long-term aim of creating a safer and stronger Scotland. It will do so by:

- Stating clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords and helping them to hold landlords to account.
- Focusing the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their customers.
- Establishing a basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess and report on how well landlords are performing. This assessment will enable the Regulator, social landlords, tenants and other customers to identify areas of strong performance and areas needing improvement.

The Council is required to produce an Annual Assurance Statement which covers Housing Services' performance and we must submit it to the Scottish Housing Regulator by October each year. This information must also be made available to tenants and service users on the Council's website. This information is available from: [Housing Services web page](#)

The annual report for tenants has grown and developed over the last few years and will continue to do so over the coming years. In developing this report we've compared performance over the last three years and have highlighted trends.

Orkney Islands Council has shown strong performance in many areas – our properties are in good condition, we have a low number of repairs per property, we have delivered well against the energy efficiency standards we are required to meet, our current rent collection is high and our response to homelessness is good.



We undertook a tenant satisfaction survey between March and May 2024 and this recorded some challenges in relation to satisfaction levels across the areas of performance reported through the Annual Return against the Charter. We have really focussed on improving satisfaction through tenant engagement, as outlined in the section of this report on tenant engagement. We will undertake our next tenant survey in spring 2026.

During 2023 and 2024, we completed a significant piece of work around the level of housing need in Orkney. This includes the needs of residents and the needs of essential workers, some already resident, and some of whom will move into Orkney. Our Housing Need and Demand Assessment was approved by the Scottish Government in October 2023. A consultation on our draft Local Housing Strategy for the next 5 years was undertaken in early 2024. This built on wider community consultation led by the Council in late 2021 and early 2022 "Orkney Matters" with findings feeding into the Housing Need and Demand Assessment. The Local Housing Strategy for 2024 to 2029 was approved this summer. This sets in place the vision for the Council and partners for the future of housing across all tenures and types of accommodation, taking account of national priorities as well as local needs.

In respect of social rented housing, the Council also faces significant challenges in the form of restricted budgets. While we have delivered a significant programme of newly built housing in recent years, this has now reduced as a result of financial pressure on the Housing Revenue Account and the impact on tenants' rents. Whilst there were no new builds during 2023/24 there have been 14 properties at Carness, Kirkwall which came on stream during the summer. Our next new builds are scheduled for Autumn 2024, these are 4 properties at Moar Drive, Kirkwall. We have also purchased 7 properties during 2024. While the Council's development programme has reduced, we work with other partners including Orkney Housing Association Ltd to ensure affordable housing continues to be developed. Areas where performance could be improved include the time it takes to return empty properties to an appropriate standard so they can be re-let, time to complete emergency repairs and recovery of rent arrears.

The reporting period covered by this report, is up to the end of March 2024. A period with a range of challenges for our staff, our contractors and our tenants. This included rising costs of supplies to undertake repairs and improvements and delays in deliveries. We continued to make progress following an issue arising with the data relating to our electrical installation condition reports (EICR) and the installation of remaining interlinked smoke alarms. We have also worked closely with the Scottish Housing Regulator to improve standards in certain areas including EICR, emergency repairs and tenant engagement. We have been very aware of financial challenges which continue to affect our tenants as a result of the ongoing cost of living crisis. Please remember that our staff are here to help support tenants through these difficult times and will be happy to provide advice and assistance as required.

For the last three years the Service has published the annual report electronically only, originally as a result of the pandemic. This was intended to minimise the use and handling

of paper by all involved. This approach is more cost effective than physically printing and posting annual reports to all our tenants and therefore we would propose to continue to publish it annually through our website. We recognise however, that not everyone has access to the internet and therefore if you would still like to receive a paper copy, we will make one available on request or if you need a copy in a different language or format that can also be provided, on request.

I'd like to thank staff and our contractors for all their work and for their commitment over another challenging year. I'd also like to thank our tenants for taking the time to contribute to the development of this report and for taking part in our enhanced tenant engagement. We really appreciate all of your feedback on our services and also the style of this report, and on the information contained within. This helps us to improve our services.

I hope you find this report interesting and informative. If, however, you feel there is room for improvement please let us know.

Yours

Councillor Gwenda Shearer

Chair of Education, Leisure and Housing Committee

Annual Report

Annual Report

Performance figures for 2023-2024 are shown first with figures for 2022-2023 and 2021-2022 shown below to allow comparison. This information allows you as a Council tenant to see the work we are doing to improve housing services, and how we compare to some similar Scottish Councils. We have chosen both Highland and Shetland Islands Councils. Although Western Isles and Argyll and Bute Councils would be broadly comparable, both have transferred their housing stock to a Housing Association which represents a significant difference and therefore they have not been included.

We are required to carry out a wholesale tenants' satisfaction survey every three years. However, because the tenants in properties change over a period of time, we have taken the decision to undertake the tenants' satisfaction survey every two years instead. The section on Tenant Engagement is based on the survey which was undertaken between March and May 2024 and therefore we will undertake another one in the Spring of 2026.

Throughout this report we have used both thumbs up / thumbs down symbols for highlighting performance. In addition, we have used a coloured traffic light system. This is as follows:



Good progress made; action plans continue to show how further improvement will be achieved.



Evidence of progress and understanding of the issues but with more to do to achieve real impact.



Poor performance where improvements could be made.

A web accessible version of this report is available from www.orkney.gov.uk In order to allow the web accessible version to be read with a reader, a full stop has been inserted after every figure to ensure a pause is inserted.

Your Home

Your Home



Our Housing Stock

As of March 31, 2024, our Council owned 1,011 homes, which is a slight decrease from the 1,012 homes we had the previous year. The Council began a programme of building additional social rented houses in 2009 -2010, and by March 31 2024 we had successfully completed 275 new homes, marking a significant 37% boost to our housing stock.

In the 2023-2024 financial year, the total rent payable to us by our tenants for the year amounted to £4,201,561. To ensure our housing remains affordable, we increased our weekly rent by just 6.70% on average from the previous year. It's worth noting that this increase of 6.70% is lower than the 10.1% Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate we saw in September 2023.

We are committed to continuing to build new houses and working in partnership with Orkney Housing Association Ltd to address housing need. However, the sheer size of our former building programme is not something we could continue to deliver in the long term for reasons of affordability. Therefore, it is likely that future build programmes will become more modest.

Size of home	Number owned		
	March 2024	March 2023	March 2022
Bedsit	28	28	28
1 Bedroom	384	384	387
2 Bedroom	325	326	324
3 Bedroom	246	245	245
4 Bedroom and larger	20	22	21

When we see our property count drop, it's typically because we've sold a few that we no longer need. It's worth noting that the Right to Buy scheme concluded on August 1, 2016. Additionally, we might choose to sell a property. This may be because we have too many properties in an area with decreasing demand. Alternatively, we may sell a property if it needs a significant upgrade to meet standards and is vacant. There are also times when we also acquire properties. We do this to strengthen our housing stock when there's a shortage in a specific area or for certain housing types. Our goal is to keep our housing options responsive to our community's needs.

Quality of Housing



The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is a challenging standard which ensures a property is in a good standard of repair, meets challenging energy efficiency standards, is provided with modern facilities and services and is healthy, safe and secure. The Council was required to meet this standard by March 2015 and continue to do so thereafter.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Percentage of stock meeting the SHQS	2023-2024	80.38%	72.22%	44.60%	84.36%
	2022-2023	52.82%	65.01%	40.27%	79.02%
	2021-2022	81.99%	28.94%	76.09%	72.87%
Percentage of stock regarded as exempt, in abeyance or fail	2023-2024	19.62%	27.78%	55.40%	15.64%
	2022-2023	47.18%	34.99%	59.13%	20.98%
	2021-2022	18.01%	71.06%	23.91%	27.13%

We've been making a series of improvements, including the installation of new kitchens, bathrooms, and windows. These upgrades not only align with required standards but also with the preferences of our tenants. We're also actively working on installing new heating systems and enhancing insulation to boost energy efficiency and meet the necessary standards.

In 2023-2024, we saw a significant progress in the percentage of properties meeting the SHQS. with 80.38% of our properties now meeting compliance, up from 52.82% in the previous year. This improvement highlights our commitment to addressing previous challenges, including issues identified with our electrical installation condition reports (EICR). Thanks to a focused improvement plan, 99.2% of our properties now hold valid EICR certificates. For the remaining properties, other issues have temporarily prevented us from completing this work. Additionally, we've successfully installed interlinked smoke alarms in 98.2% of our properties. We're continuing to collaborate with our tenants to gain access to the remaining few, and we extend our thanks to them and our contractors for their support.

A property may be classified as being in abeyance when work cannot be done for 'social' reasons relating to tenants' or owner-occupiers' behaviour. For example, where the tenant is elderly or suffering from a medical condition such that they do not wish work to be undertaken on their home at this time.

The number of abeyances decreased from 31 in 2022-2023 to 18 in 2023-2024, while exemptions stayed the same 11 in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Regarding the SHQS, there were 426 properties that did not meet the standard in 2022-2023, and this number decreased to 166 in 2023-2024, as previously explained.

In addition, social landlords were required to meet a challenging energy efficiency standard by December 2020, known as the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). We've performed well in meeting this standard and are in a favourable national position. Looking ahead, a more demanding energy efficiency standard is expected by 2032, with the Scottish Government currently revising its guidance. These standards work in conjunction with the SHQS to ensure the quality of our housing remains high.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Properties meeting ESSH	2021-2022	96.13%	80.10%	76.30%	87.56%
	2020-2021	88.12%	76.80%	74.60%	86.45%
	2019-2020	85.76%	74.79%	73.92%	85.76%

2021-2022 marked the final instance in which we reported the SHQS and ESSH separately. We are committed to enhancing the quality of our housing stock through our housing investment programme. In the financial year 2023-2024, we allocated a total of £1.6 million for repairs and maintenance. This investment ensures that our tenants' homes, at the very least, continue to meet the SHQS and ESSH, and we are steadily addressing properties in abeyance to bring them up to the required standards as issues allow. It also keeps us on track to meet the ESSH2 by December 2032 (pending any adjustments following the Scottish Government's consultation results).

Our tenants have shared their thoughts, and the feedback is positive:

- 76% of tenants expressed satisfaction with their homes when they moved in.
- 68% of tenants were content with the overall quality of their homes.

We have made progress towards meeting the ESSH and will continue to do so over the coming year. We will continue to develop our plans for meeting ESSH2 by the expected deadline of 2032.

Repairs, Maintenance and Improvement



The area of repairs is one where context is particularly relevant with some Councils setting very challenging timescales for completion well ahead of the legislative requirement. Orkney's geography does present some challenges in that respect.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Average number of hours to complete emergency repairs	2023-2024	8.98	2.3	4.13	3.96
	2022-2023	9.12	2.46	5.47	4.17
	2021-2022	10.06	2.49	5.82	4.16
Number of emergency repairs per house	2023-2024	0.34	0.23	0.81	0.97
	2022-2023	0.28	0.21	0.87	1.00
	2021-2022	0.27	0.25	1.18	1.01
Average working days to complete non-emergency repairs	2023-2024	17.23	10.30	9.16	8.95
	2022-2023	15.16	21.58	7.59	8.68
	2021-2022	15.34	14.57	7.53	8.87
Number of non-emergency repairs per house	2023-2024	1.43	2.22	1.29	2.26
	2022-2023	1.50	2.27	1.30	1.87
	2021-2022	1.26	2.04	1.41	2.10

The Council's ability to keep repairs per house at a minimum is a sign of our effective performance. This is largely due to our ongoing investment in maintaining our housing stock, ensuring it's in good condition, and resulting in fewer necessary repairs.

The time taken to deliver emergency repairs has improved slightly for financial year 2023-2024.

The requirements for contractors recording emergency repairs are complex. We undertake an analysis of repairs which are outwith the timescales and work with our contractors to seek to improve this.

The time taken to deliver non-emergency repairs has improved slightly from last year. The Council continues to work closely with contractors and aims to improve its performance wherever possible.

Issues which have arisen include some of those which have affected housing providers nationally including difficulties with the supply of some parts and challenges with recruiting enough staff in certain trades.

When we asked tenants, during 2023-2024 about their experience of repairs undertaken, 88.64% were satisfied with the repair and 6.25% were dissatisfied with the time to undertake the work. This compares with 2022-2023 when, 89% were satisfied with the repair and 7% were dissatisfied with the time to undertake the work.

Value for Money

Value for Money

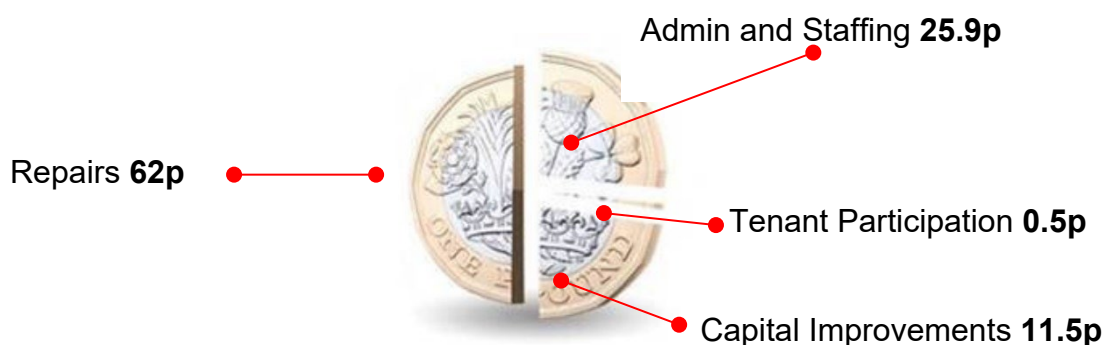


Average Rents

Orkney is Scotland's smallest Local Authority Housing Service and as such economies of scale are a factor in the rental charges. However, Orkney Islands Council's rental charges are broadly comparable to other similar areas.

Size of home	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Bedsit	2023-2024	£65.74	£55.36	£74.15	£82.24
	2022-2023	£63.82	£53.04	£70.10	£78.26
	2021-2022	£62.21	£53.05	£68.53	£75.92
1 Bedroom.	2023-2024	£79.61	£72.50	£76.27	£87.87
	2022-2023	£77.23	£69.38	£73.44	£83.46
	2021-2022	£75.27	£69.22	£72.85	£81.32
2 Bedroom.	2023-2024	£94.76	£83.51	£84.86	£90.29
	2022-2023	£92.00	£79.96	£81.52	£86.28
	2021-2022	£89.45	£79.85	£80.58	£84.18
3 Bedroom.	2023-2024	£93.27	£98.52	£94.43	£98.30
	2022-2023	£90.45	£94.22	£90.65	£93.96
	2021-2022	£88.10	£94.23	£89.75	£91.48
4 Bedroom+	2023-2024	£115.17	£120.32	£105.65	£108.27
	2022-2023	£111.82	£115.14	£101.33	£103.72
	2021-2022	£108.98	£114.73	£100.06	£100.74

The cost of providing and maintaining Council housing is funded by our tenants' rents. The chart below shows how every £1 in rent you pay is spent.



The percentage of our tenants who feel their rent represents good value for money decreased to 65% from 69.30% previously, compared with the Scottish average of 81.58% for financial year 2023 -2024. We will take this information into account when we consult with our tenants on any rental increase for 2024 -2025.

Rent collection is very important to the Council. We are committed to being efficient and have processes in place to help us collect as much rent as possible. Performance in 2023-2024 declined slightly from the previous year but we are slightly higher than the Scottish average.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Rent collected as a percentage of the total rent due in the reporting year	2023-2024	102.47%	100.04%	99.04%	99.42%
	2022-2023	99.33%	100.96%	98.02%	99.03%
	2021-2022	99.50%	100.59%	99.56%	99.28%
Percentage gross rent arrears of rent due	2023-2024	12.58%	10.97%	7.16%	6.74%
	2022-2023	12.65%	11.27%	7.05%	6.86%
	2021-2022	14.35%	11.38%	5.46%	6.34%
Percentage of rent due lost through properties being empty during the last year	2023-2024	1.49%	1.84%	0.87%	1.39%
	2022-2023	1.32%	2.25%	0.96%	1.40%
	2021-2022	1.42%	2.26%	1.02%	1.43%

The Council places great emphasis on rent collection and remains committed to improving its efficiency. We have put in place processes to collect as much rent as possible. Our performance in the 2023-2024 period saw a slight increase compared to the previous year, for current rent collection. However, it is important to highlight that we still maintain a marginally higher performance than the Scottish average in this area.

During the 2023-2024 period, rent arrears continued to pose challenges, mainly due to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is some positive news: as of 31 March 2024, gross rent arrears decreased by 0.07% compared to the previous year. These arrears include both current arrears and those from tenants who left our properties while still owing money (former tenant arrears).

To address these challenges, we've worked in partnership with Orkney Citizen's Advice Bureau so tenants are referred for assistance at an early stage. We have also been working on improving our internal processes and providing support to tenants facing financial difficulties.

It is important to highlight that we are making every effort to recover outstanding arrears, including those from former tenants. This is important as arrears impact on the rent charged for everyone. We are committed to ensuring rents remain affordable for all our tenants.

Despite the ongoing challenges, it's worth noting that the overall rent collected has remained relatively stable at 102.47% for the year 2023-2024, slightly higher than the 99.33% collected in the 2022-2023 period. This stability demonstrates the effectiveness of our efforts to manage rent arrears and our commitment to ensuring we collect as much rent as possible. The collection rate above 100% means that, along with this year's rent, we've also been able to collect some outstanding arrears from previous years, helping us keep finances stable for the benefit of all tenants.

Your Tenancy

Your Tenancy

Access to Social Housing

Housing allocations to household by type are as follows:



	Reporting Year	Homeless Households	Waiting List Applicants	Transfer Applicants	Other
Orkney Islands Council.	2023-2024	64.56%	32.91%	2.53%	0.00%
	2022-2023	51.25%	41.25%	7.50%	0.00%
	2021-2022	39.53%	34.88%	17.44%	8.14%
Scotland Average.	2023-2024	44.20%	33.12%	17.57%	5.11%
	2022-2023	41.22%	35.58%	18.40%	4.80%
	2021-2022	39.10%	37.66%	19.07%	4.17%

In general, the allocation of council properties has seen a rise in properties being let to homeless households, as shown in the table above. Primarily this increase in the number of homeless households being housed is due to the high numbers in temporary accommodation awaiting permanent housing.

Sometimes, households may decline an offer of accommodation. This can happen if their circumstances change, and they no longer wish to live in a specific area. The percentage of tenancy offers refused in 2023-2024 was 12.09%, which is an improvement compared to 29.92% in 2022-2023.

We are actively monitoring the reasons for refusals to find ways to reduce them. We had initially planned to introduce a new lettings policy that would make choice central to our allocations process by 1 April 2021. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 and staffing shortages, this has been delayed and is now scheduled for 1 April 2025. This change should help reduce the number of refusals and speed up re-letting properties.

In 2023-2024, 79 properties became available for re-let.

Tenancy Sustainment



We also carefully track how many tenancies last for more than a year, although this can be influenced by a household's personal choices. Overall, our performance in tenancy sustainment remained stable throughout 2023-2024.

Various reasons can contribute to tenancies not being sustained for longer than a year. These include situations where tenants go into the hospital, pass away, move out of Orkney, or seek housing in another sector, such as purchasing a property.

To provide extra assistance for households that may require support in managing their tenancies, we maintain a small housing support service. This service aims to help households who may benefit from additional guidance to ensure the success of their tenancies.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Tenancies began in previous year remaining for more than a year - existing tenants.	2023-2024	100%	90.00%	96.22%	94.16%
	2022-2023	100%	89.66%	96.09%	94.45%
	2021-2022	93.33%	87.50%	97.55%	94.21%
Tenancies began in previous year remaining for more than a year - applicants who were assessed as statutory homeless.	2023-2024	95.12%	76.92%	91.42%	90.31%
	2022-2023	94.44%	96.43%	88.57%	90.33%
	2021-2022	91.18%	93.55%	90.85%	90.22%
Tenancies began in previous year remaining for more than a year - applicants from your organisation's housing list.	2023-2024	81.82%	82.09%	94.71%	91.38%
	2022-2023	89.47%	81.01%	94.47%	90.98%
	2021-2022	86.67%	84.62%	91.88%	89.88%

Empty Homes



The time taken to re-let properties is influenced by a few factors including the need to undertake remedial works, the level of demand for property in an area and Orkney's geography. Properties must meet a certain standard before being re-let.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Number of lettable self-contained houses that became vacant in year	2023-2024	79	113	1180	44501
	2022-2023	83	122	1348	49957
	2021-2022	73	113	1346	47214
Percentage becoming vacant in year	2023-2024	8.70%	7.17%	8.10%	7.18%
	2022-2023	9.06%	7.70%	9.42%	7.42%
	2021-2022	7.95%	7.05%	9.61%	7.76%
Average number of days to re-let property	2023-2024	71.43	73.79	38.68	56.73
	2022-2023	57.94	87.69	32.07	55.61
	2021-2022	52.1	101.85	35.77	51.57

The percentage of self-contained properties becoming vacant during the year saw a slight decrease in 2023-2024, to 8.70% from 9.06% in 2022-2023 and 7.95% in 2020-2021. This figure varies from one year to another.

There has been an increase from the previous year in the average number of days to re-let properties. In some cases this was around material supplies and contractor issues. We will continue to try and reduce the number of days to re-let properties.

Homelessness



We are committed to ensuring that homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice and are offered good quality temporary accommodation where this is needed. In addition, we are committed to continuing to offer support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.

We work in partnership with Orkney Housing Association Ltd (OHAL) by offering permanent accommodation to homeless households through a process called Section 5 referrals. The table below shows the number of homeless households permanently housed in this way.

During 2023-2024, there were 144 homeless presentations. For the same period, the Council had a statutory obligation to secure permanent accommodation for 101 households by 31st March 2024. Of these, 14.78% (equivalent to 21 households) were referred to Orkney Housing Association Ltd for permanent rehousing.

	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022
Percentage of homeless households referred to Registered Social Landlords	20.79%	25.29%	40%
Number of households permanently rehoused by OHAL	20	21	30

Since the financial year 2019-2020, we have only needed to report a very modest amount of information in the Annual Return against the Charter regarding homelessness. However, we continue to use additional indicators because we believe they offer valuable information for our tenants and service users.

In 2023-2024, the number of homelessness presentations increased. It's important to note that this is something beyond the Council's control. The time it takes between a homelessness presentation and the household being permanently rehoused, increased slightly to 29.7 weeks from 26.7 weeks the previous year. The reason for this increase was solely related to the availability of permanent accommodation of the right size and in the right area. During this period, a total of 15 cases waited over a year to be permanently rehoused.

	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022
Number of Homeless Presentations	144	142	132
Average length of time (days) in temporary accommodation	191	187	187.80
Number in Temporary accommodation at financial year end	75**	70**	46**

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Number of Permanent Lets to Homeless Applicants	2023-2024	51	28	607	*
	2022-2023	41	26	633	*
	2021- 2022	73	28	527	*

* Comparator information not available due to changes in reporting requirements.

** This information relates to the position on one day of the year being 31 March. In addition it does not include households who have chosen to stay temporarily with family and friends.

Your Neighbourhood



Your Neighbourhood

Estate Management and Anti-social Behaviour

We are committed to maintaining the appeal and safety of our schemes and residential streets, making them pleasant places to live.

Orkney has a low level of anti-social behaviour, with few cases of serious anti-social behaviour. The relatively low-level anti-social behaviour in Orkney includes concerns like noisy parties, issues related to pets, parking, and shared areas. The number of complaints raised can vary from year to year. However, our performance in resolving these issues is notably strong. In the year 2023-2024, there were a total of 13 cases, and all were successfully resolved within the designated timeframe.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Percentage of reported anti-social behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets.	2023-2024	100.00%	100.00%	86.43%	94.28%
	2022-2023	100.00%	100.00%	49.04%	94.21%
	2021-2022	80.00%	0.00%	78.02%	94.67%
Percentage satisfied with management of the neighbourhood they live in.	2024	59.04%	81.50%	74.31%	84.67%
	2022	66.86%	83.36%	88.01%	85.09%
	2020	86.01%	83.36%	67.99%	84.26%

The feedback relating to the management of the neighbourhood has declined. Previously we have undertaken some consultation with the Residents Panel around this area and found that this related to grounds maintenance in council schemes but in addition included footpaths and playparks not within the Housing Service's remit. There were also concerns raised around abandoned cars in car parks within schemes. This is something that should be reported to the Housing Service directly. We will undertake further consultation around this area.



Tenant Engagement

Tenant Engagement

The Council provides various opportunities for tenants to actively engage in decisions that affect them. Tenants have the chance to participate in resident groups, join the Residents' Panel, or join our Armchair Panel. We also use a range of surveys, including the annual rental increase survey.

This year's Customer Satisfaction Survey results showed a decline in satisfaction regarding the opportunities for tenants to participate in their landlord's decision-making processes. This satisfaction level increased to 72.0% up from 60.46%, two years previously. We are eager to encourage tenants to get involved in shaping policy decisions or changes to service delivery. We would now expect that large events such as tenants' day will be able to resume.

We have regular smaller events for our tenants to attend, to contribute feedback. The Residents' Panel is a joint venture with the Orkney Housing Association Ltd (OHAL). While OHAL has both tenants and shared owners on the panel, the council seeks purely tenants. Initially the panel attracted a lot of interest from tenants, but we are keen to again attract additional members to the panel.

This year the panel has looked at several areas including the Annual Assurance Statement which looks at Housing Service's performance. It has also been involved in discussions around the Council's performance in comparison to other small Councils. The panel's feedback has a direct influence on any changes / improvements made to these services.

The panel works closely with the Wick Interested Tenants' Group usually meeting annually for an update on how each group are getting on and the work they have been doing. This is a good opportunity to get new ideas and also a good social occasion.

In addition, to the Residents' Panel, there are opportunities to join a residents' group. Grieveship Residents' Association (GRA) is very active and always keen to attract new members. GRA provide a regular update to our Tenants' Newsletter, Housing News. This may be about the new projects they have undertaken to improve their area for everyone.

We have created a Facebook page for the Housing Service where we are posting regular updates and information. This can be found at www.facebook.com/OIChousingservices. We have hosted pop-up events around tenant participation in Kirkwall, Stromness and St Margaret's Hope which have been well attended. We have also promoted becoming part of an Armchair Panel which gives tenants the opportunity to take part in consultation opportunities from the comfort of their own homes. Tenant participation is an area which is

adapting and has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and there have been more opportunities to engage by electronic means.

Your views are important to us and allow us to assess whether there are things we could do to improve our services.

Claire Pritchard, our Tenant Participation Officer continues to try and engage with tenants and provide help with the creation of tenants' organisations in other areas; where some funding may be obtained.

If you are interested in finding out more about tenant participation or have an interest in coming along to the Residents' Panel then please contact Claire Pritchard on 01856 873535 or e-mail claire.pritchard@orkney.gov.uk .

Satisfaction



Our tenants told us:

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided.	2024	73.59%	79.00%	72.12%	86.49%
	2022	75.77%	79.48%	85.91%	87.74%
	2020	91.86%	79.48%	78.30%	82.59%
	2018	84.27%	78.85%	78.30%	90.12%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the Council keeping you informed.	2024	74.00%	*	*	*
	2022	69.80%	78.68%	92.51%	91.15%
	2020	92.44%	78.68%	69.14%	86.41%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with opportunities to participate.	2024	70.87%	52.83%	81.85%	87.66%
	2022	60.46%	59.77%	93.81%	86.81%
	2020	83.78%	59.77%	55.95%	81.48%

Communication and Participation



Complaints and compliments

Complaints concerning our Housing Service are dealt with using the Model Complaints Handling procedure which is used by all Local Authorities and Housing Associations. It consists of two stages:

Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution

These complaints are dealt with as close to point of service delivery and as promptly as possible. The target for completion is 5 working days.

Stage 2 – Investigation

In these complaints an independent investigation is undertaken by an allocated Investigating Officer. The target for completion is 20 working days.

Stage 1 Complaints	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Complaints received.	2023-2024	27	*	*	*
	2022-2023	29	8	116	**
	2021-2022	17	7	237	*
Percentage of complaints upheld.	2021-2022	77.77%	*	*	*
	2020-2021	50.00%	*	*	*
	2022-2023	86.21%	100.00%	98.31%	95.34%
Percentage of complaints responded to in full.	2023-2024	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.70%
	2021-2022	100.00%	100.00%	98.75%	96.76%
	2020-2021	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	96.95%

* Comparator information not available due to changes in reporting requirements

Stage 2 Complaints	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Complaints received	2023-2024	14	*	*	*
	2022-2023	14	6	74	*
	2021-2022	10	6	101	*
Percentage of complaints upheld	2023-2024	44.44%	*	*	*
	2022-2023	42.58%	*	*	*
	2021-2022	28.57%	*	*	*
Percentage of complaints responded to in full.	2023-2024	100.00%	100.00%	90.37%	90.69%
	2022-2023	77.78%	50.00%	85.37%	92.53%
	2021-2022	63.34%	100.00%	96.77%	93.79%

* Comparator information not available due to changes in reporting requirements

There has been a decrease in the number of complaints that were responded to as at 31st March 2023. We received a total of 14 stage 2 complaints, and out of these, three were not resolved by the end of the financial year. If we exclude these three cases, our rate of responding in full would have been 100%.

We are dedicated to addressing complaints as quickly as possible while ensuring that each situation is thoroughly and comprehensively resolved. The decline in this indicator is primarily due to a small number of complex complaints that have posed challenges in meeting the response timeframes.

Complaints by Topic	Total	Complaints Upheld
Repair timescales	18	16
Quality of Repair	8	3
Council policy/procedure	3	2
Staff conduct/attitude	1	0
Condition of property	2	1
Other	9	1



In 2024 - 2025 we aim to continue to improve the number of complaints responded to within the target timescales and our monitoring of these.

Compliments

We really appreciate the 32 compliments we received in 2023-2024, relating to our repair services.

Looking Forward

Overall, our performance is generally positive and shows improvements in some areas on the previous year. We are committed to further improvements and will endeavour to evidence this over future years.

Future Plans for improvements:

- Energy Efficiency Measures.
- Re-roofing works.
- Continue to improve performance on re-lets to minimise rental loss.
- Improve the planned renewal and upgrade works to provide better information to tenants and enable us to predict and plan works more efficiently.
- Continuing to expand tenant participation and endeavour to improve opportunities to participate in decision making.
- Continue to improve our performance regarding delivery of repairs.
- Improve our performance regarding rent arrears collection.
- Improve tenant satisfaction generally.

Accessibility

This document has been created with accessibility standards applied. This means that best efforts have been made with the goal that every person, no matter what their abilities, can access the information included effectively.

This document uses a clearly laid out design, using the Arial font with a minimum size of 12pt. Clear paragraph spacing has been applied to the document to enable readers to clearly follow the order in which the information included is best read.

The web based, electronic version of this document has passed accessibility tests so that assistive software for people with visual impairments will read out all information included correctly. All images included within the document also contain alternative text so that they will be described by assistive software.

The contents section of this page has been created with hyperlinks to each section of the document to make the navigation of the document easier. At the end of each section there is a link back to the contents section to reduce the amount of scrolling required to find relevant information.

If you have accessibility issues when reading documents, Orkney Islands Council's Housing Service would encourage any feedback you would like to submit regarding the accessibility of this document. This feedback can be sent in a number of ways with details available in the 'Contact Information' section.

If you require this document in another language or format, please let us know.

Contact Us – Housing and Homelessness

Address	Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NY
Telephone	01856 873535
Email	housing@orkney.gov.uk Please state 'Annual Report' in the email title if you are sending accessibility feedback for this document.
Website	www.orkney.gov.uk/housing

If you have any views or ideas as to how we could improve the design and content of this report for next year, please either complete the form overleaf or contact Housing Services.

Question 1: How did you find the length of the report? (Please tick)

Too long. Just right. Not long enough.

Question 2: How satisfied are you with the following? (Please tick)

	Very satisfied.	Fairly satisfied.	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.	Fairly dissatisfied.	Very dissatisfied.
Format.					
Information.					
Layout.					
Comparison with previous year's performance.					
Comparison with other local authorities.					
Comparison with the Scottish national average.					

Question 3: How easy or difficult did you understand the following? (Please tick)

	Very easy.	Fairly easy.	Neither easy nor difficult.	Fairly difficult.	Very difficult.
Performance information.					
Traffic light thumbs up/down.					

Question 4: Is there anything you would like to see included in future or general comments on this year's performance report?