

Tenant and Leaseholder Annual Report 2020-2021

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Once again we bring you your Annual Report in what has not been a usual year. It has brought many challenges for all of us: customers, leaseholders and City of York Council officers. Housing officers have had to deliver services to some of the most vulnerable people in the city in different ways and have supported us through this difficult time. This report highlights some of the work they have done to support customers through this very challenging year.



“During the pandemic, the housing management service has faced some unprecedented challenges. Supporting our most vulnerable customers and ensuring the continuation of essential services has been a key priority, and this has involved taking a flexible approach and quickly changing how we deliver our services. This report shows how officers rose to the challenge and supported our customers whilst continuing to deliver on our Housing Delivery Programme and new IT system. I'd really like to thank them for all their hard work.”



Cllr Denise Craghill, Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods



A new approach to delivering services to you

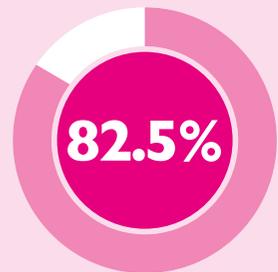
Through lockdowns and while working from home, we couldn't deliver our services as before because we weren't able to meet with customers. We implemented a three-step approach to ensure that we could continue to provide a high quality service to you, while maintaining the safety of staff and customers.

Where appropriate, we provided services virtually through video calls on Skype, messaging via WhatsApp and by our new services, Attend Anywhere and Remote Assist.

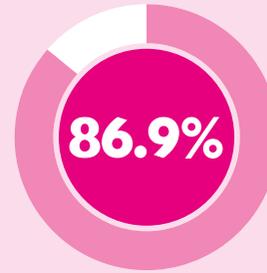
If we were unable to provide our service in this way, we met customers in community venues while following all the Government guidelines in place at the time.

If a home visit was necessary, the tenant was asked to ensure all guidelines were adhered to.

This approach meant that we could maintain a responsive service to customers throughout.



of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live
up 4% on last year



of tenants are satisfied that the rent provides value for money
up 3% on last year

Welfare calls to customers

During the first lockdown, in March 2020, we made phone calls to all our customers over 60 years old and to other vulnerable customers, making sure they had access to everything they needed: shopping, medication etc.



Those customers we were unable to reach by phone were visited by a volunteer (keeping to Government guidelines) with 39 volunteers making 344 visits.

Once these calls were complete, we started to contact all other customers, speaking to 68% of all customers before June 2020.

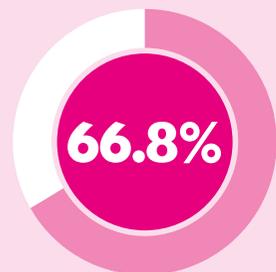
Customers who told us they were feeling isolated or very lonely were offered social phone calls by a volunteer each week, 102 customers asked for these phone calls, which were delivered by 65 volunteers. Some of these conversations have continued throughout the whole of the pandemic and are still being made.

Independent Living Communities

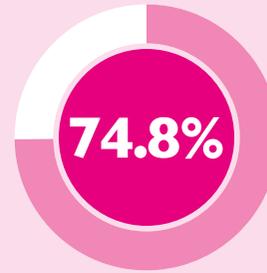
Over the course of the pandemic, ensuring that our Housing Management Officers (HMOs) were on site in our 11 Independent Living Communities (ILCs) was a priority. Being on site, they could offer a constant and familiar face, during a time of extreme isolation and anxiety for many people. This proved to be invaluable and ensured that welfare needs were met and any signs of isolation or health needs were picked up quickly.

At Christmas time, they also provided a festive treat for customers including gifts, cards, trees and activities. The HMOs, our Active Communities Officer, local schools and local organisations successfully put a smile on customers' faces at one of the most challenging times of the year.

To support the NHS's vaccine rollout to older customers, we worked with GP practices in York, to deliver vaccines to 340 people across our ILCs. The vaccines were given in covid-safe conditions either in the ILCs' communal areas or in customers own home. This was possible due the amazing work and co-ordination of our HMOs on site.



of tenants are satisfied that we listen to their views and act on them
down 3% on last year



of tenants are satisfied with the overall quality of their home
down 2% on last year

Building repairs service

The pandemic posed real challenges for our Building Services team. Working from home wasn't an option for many and maintaining the safety of our customers and our tradespeople was a real priority.

We constantly reviewed our methods of working as the Government's advice and guidance changed. We focussed on the way in which customers reported repairs – you may have noticed the additional questions we now ask on every call to ensure we can operate in a covid-secure way.

Our new approach includes:

-  calling ahead before many of our visits to ask customers to go in a different room to our tradesperson
-  increasing our cleaning regimes and use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

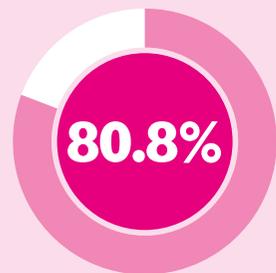
Throughout the pandemic we have continued our emergency repair service, the Gas Servicing Programme and our work to prepare empty properties for new customers. Since the first lockdown ended we have been able to offer our full repairs service.

'Everybody In' supports 111

The 'Everybody In' initiative was put in place during the first lockdown offering safe accommodation to all people who were faced with rough sleeping. The number of emergency beds on offer had to be reduced to allow for social distancing. However, in partnership with some hotels which had unused rooms, we were able to offer covid-safe accommodation to everyone.

We assessed each individual needing accommodation. Those who needed less support were placed in the hotel accommodation, and those with higher needs were placed in our hostels' emergency beds where support was to hand.

Through this approach we provided covid-safe accommodation for 111 people using a mix of accommodation with support, privately-rented accommodation and supported housing.



of tenants are satisfied with the overall service provided by Housing
down 2% on last year



of tenants are satisfied with the attitude of the repairs workers
up 4% on last year

New homes on Lowfield Green

We are delighted to welcome our first customers onto the new housing development at Lowfield Green. This is a development of 165 new homes as part of our Housing Delivery Programme. The site includes new social rent, shared ownership and market sale homes.

There are homes for all ages and we are delighted that our first family houses and bungalows are now complete and customers have now started to move into their new, energy-efficient homes. The next phase will see a new, one-acre public open space open and the completion of apartments for people aged 55 and over.



Financial support for customers

The pandemic saw some of our customers hit financial crises, being unable to feed and clothe their families, pay their utilities, rent and other bills whilst trying to look after their health and wellbeing.



As we know, debt and health and wellbeing can go hand-in-hand. So, to support our customers cope with the annual rent increase of 1% due in April 2020, we refunded this increase.

Customers were asked to pay their rent as usual and, those eligible, were repaid the extra rent for the first three months from 1 April to the end of June 2020.

Housing's Financial Hardship Fund has supported customers who meet the criteria. One-off payments were made direct to the tenant's rent account to help with rent arrears, meaning one less worry for customers, and a little more towards necessities like food, utility bills etc.

Housing staff have worked proactively with customers, colleagues and other organisations to ensure that they can access advice and support with any financial hardship, and to remain as healthy as possible through the challenges of the pandemic.

Marjorie Waite Court

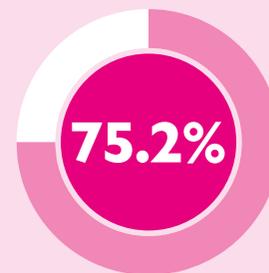
The new, high quality apartments at Marjorie Waite Court are ready to welcome people aged 60 and over who have an assessed care and support need.



There's a choice of one-bedroomed apartments and two-bedroomed bungalows to rent, each with level-access wet rooms. Some are designed to support people living with dementia.

You can relax outdoors in the lovely gardens or indoors in three private residents' lounges with kitchenettes and two have spacious balconies. Or enjoy the large residents' and community café, dining area and lounge: a great place to relax with visitors or enjoy a freshly prepared meal.

For more information please call Sharon Homan on 01904 554095 or email sharon.homan@york.gov.uk



of tenants are satisfied with repairs and maintenance
down 4% on last year

Tracey Carter, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Housing

“This year there have been some significant changes within the Housing department with a restructure of our senior management team. We have a strong ambition to improve how we engage with you as customers of our services and residents of this city. We want your views and ideas to help shape our priorities for the coming years. We want to continue to improve how we communicate, so that people understand what is happening in the council and in your community. We also want to make sure we create more chances for you to tell us what you think is important about your homes and local areas. We want to be more open and transparent, saying sorry when we don't get things right first time and using any mistakes to learn and continue to improve.

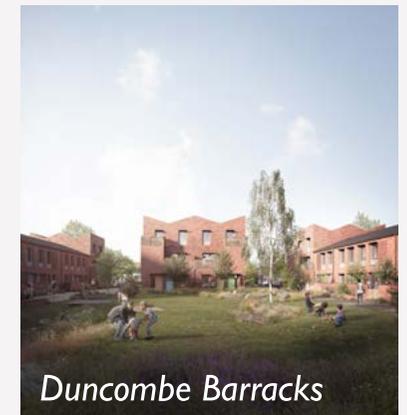


The first step in doing this is providing the results of the most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey much earlier than in previous years. It is really important to us that these results are shared and prompt discussions about what we are doing well and where we need to improve. It is clear in the results of the survey that, as customers, that whilst satisfaction levels remain generally high you feel we can get better at listening to views, responding positively and keeping you up to date. This has prompted the planning of an engagement event later in the year to understand more about your priorities and how we can include these in the work we do. The team and I look forward to working with you to make great places to live that meet your needs.”

New housing projects

We have secured planning permission for two new projects as part of the council's Housing Delivery Programme. These are at Duncombe Barracks in Clifton and Burnholme in Heworth where we will start work on building a total 117 new homes. All homes will be 'zero carbon in use', meaning that they will generate as much energy as they need to use every year.

The developments will also include new public open spaces and planting lots of new trees. Watch this space for further updates on this and the next new housing projects to come forward.



New ICT system

Later this year, a new ICT systems is going to be brought in to give you more control of your account and even better support from us.

We will remove several old and outdated systems and replace them with one new system. This will mean that when you contact us we will have all the necessary information at our fingertips to answer your questions there and then or, where appropriate, re-direct you to the correct person.

You will have more control of your account yourself. The system has a portal which will give you access to your rent account. There, you can check your balance, make payments, report repairs, log a request to speak to a member of staff, directly log any issues you have, and apply for re-housing.

Look out for further information over the coming months when we will let you know how and when the new system will be introduced and how it will work. Please bear with us if there are 'teething issues' – it will be worth it!

Apprenticeships

Despite the challenges of recruiting in a pandemic, we have recruited seven new apprentices this year. These are the tradespeople of the future who you may find working on your home!

Recruiting 15 apprentices over a five year period had been agreed to start in April 2020. Six apprentices were due to be recruited in the first year but that was put on hold during the first lockdown. We were very keen to overcome the challenges and offer these excellent opportunities at a time when they seem more important than ever. So, as soon as we could, we advertised seven apprenticeships - the additional one was funded as part of an arrangement with one of our contractors.

We had over 200 applicants, all seven positions were filled and our apprentices started work in September and October 2020. Despite the challenges of the pandemic all are doing really well with their college courses and learning their new trades through mentoring with our existing tradespeople. Building on this great start, we will soon be advertising for this year's intake.

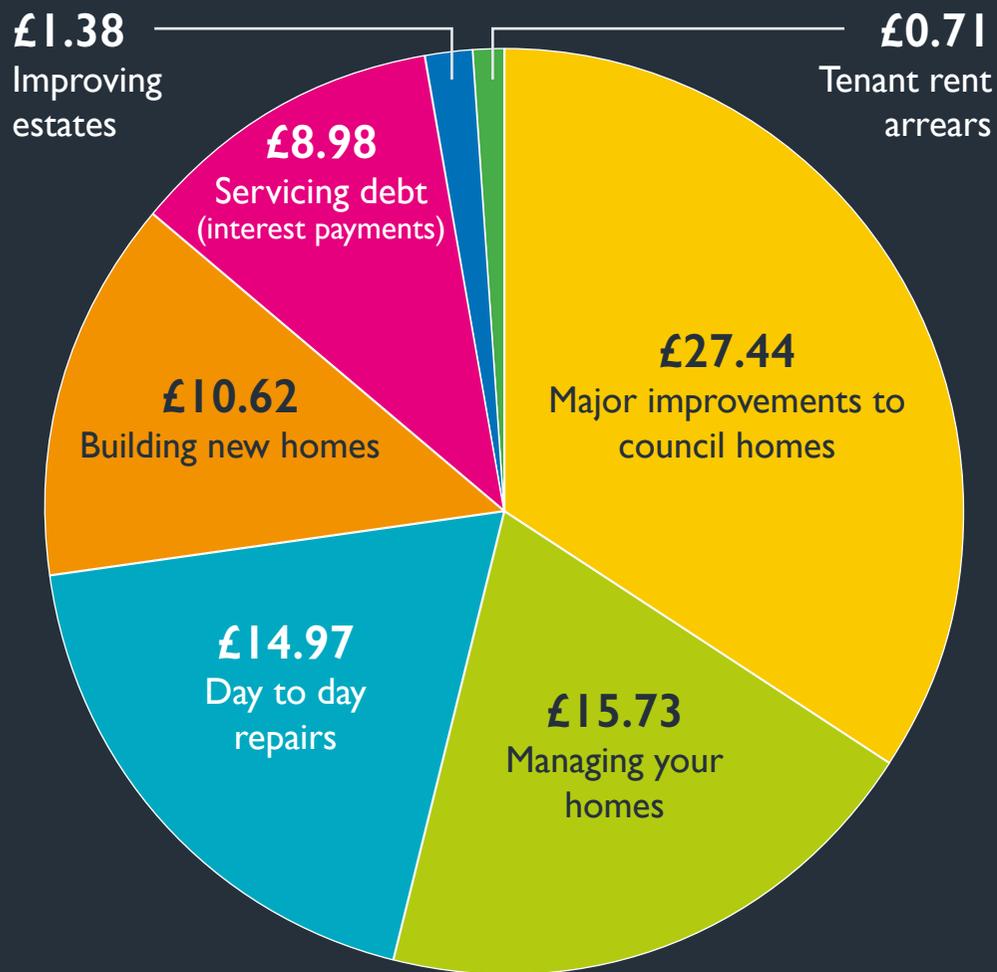
Tenancy and wellbeing visits

We are looking at introducing regular tenancy and wellbeing visits as part of a move towards a more rounded approach to our services. These visits were planned prior to the pandemic, and will include all customers to check on issues relating to their tenancy and wellbeing.

Housing Management Officers (HMOs) will make around four visits a week, prioritising customers who are most likely to need extra support. The HMO will talk with the tenant about their home, their tenancy and their household in a holistic way, in order to get to know everyone better and to encourage them to get even more involved in their tenancy, where this is possible.

How your rent was spent:

£79.83 Average weekly rent



Further financial information can be found on York Open data via the following link york.gov.uk/YorkOpenData

Join the conversation about Willow House, Walmgate

We are working with residents, local groups, businesses and other stakeholders to see if we can provide more high quality and affordable housing for current and future generations as part of the council's Housing Delivery Programme. We also want to bring about other improvements in the area for the whole community.

To do this, we need your help to put together a high quality design which is financially viable and in keeping with this prominent and unique location.

So, please help us understand more about the wider neighbourhood and get involved!

We'll announce details shortly of an online survey. Hopefully, this will be followed by an interactive workshop and an exhibition of our design proposals which you'll be invited to comment on. We hope to submit a full planning application by mid-2022.

To find out more please email housing.delivery@york.gov.uk

Register your interest via the QR code or at york.gov.uk/HousingDeliveryProgramme



If you would like this document in an alternative format, please email: ycc@york.gov.uk

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