

Housing Annual Report 2018



Housing



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Introduction

The annual report sets out what the Housing Service has been doing over the past year to meet national and local standards

National Standards

- [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment – page 5](#)
- [Home – page 10](#)
- [Neighbourhood and Community – page 13](#)
- [Tenancy – page 17](#)

Local Offers

These are standards set locally in consultation with you.

If you would like to get involved and influence the standards, please contact the **Tenant Participation Team** on **0118 937 2730**

“Performance improvement has been outstanding this year and I’ve seen a marked improvement in these standards since I became a Council tenant 10 years ago. Working in tenant participation has transformed my life and tenants working alongside tenant services have really made a difference.”

Welcome to the latest edition of our Annual Report that lets you know what we’ve been doing and the challenges we’ve faced over the past year. It also highlights some of the excellent work done by tenants and leaseholders just like you, and shows how by working together we can make a real difference.

It’s been another busy year for housing but the great news is that Reading is building new council homes again. As well as completing 28 new homes for temporary accommodation in Lowfield Road we’re also well underway building 57 new flats and houses at Conwy Close off The Meadway. The first of those new homes are nearly finished and local families will be moving in over the next few weeks. But that’s just the start and we hope to be able to announce many more new projects over the coming months.

Your health and safety has always been important to us and so we are very pleased that this year we carried out 100% of all necessary gas safety checks – so thank you for working with us and allowing us access to your homes. We also carried out a full review of fire safety in our blocks as well as reviewing all our fire safety literature and developing a comprehensive fire safety action plan. We have also brought in specialist support to advise us on what else we can do to improve even further.

A continuing area of concern and focus for us is around Welfare Reform, with the Benefit Cap and Universal Credit presenting challenges for all of us. We are monitoring the impact of this on all our tenants and have invested in additional staff to provide practical help and advice where needed. The new team can help with personal budgeting support and provide debt advice to help you stay in your home and get your finances back on track. We are here to help you so please get in touch if you are struggling.

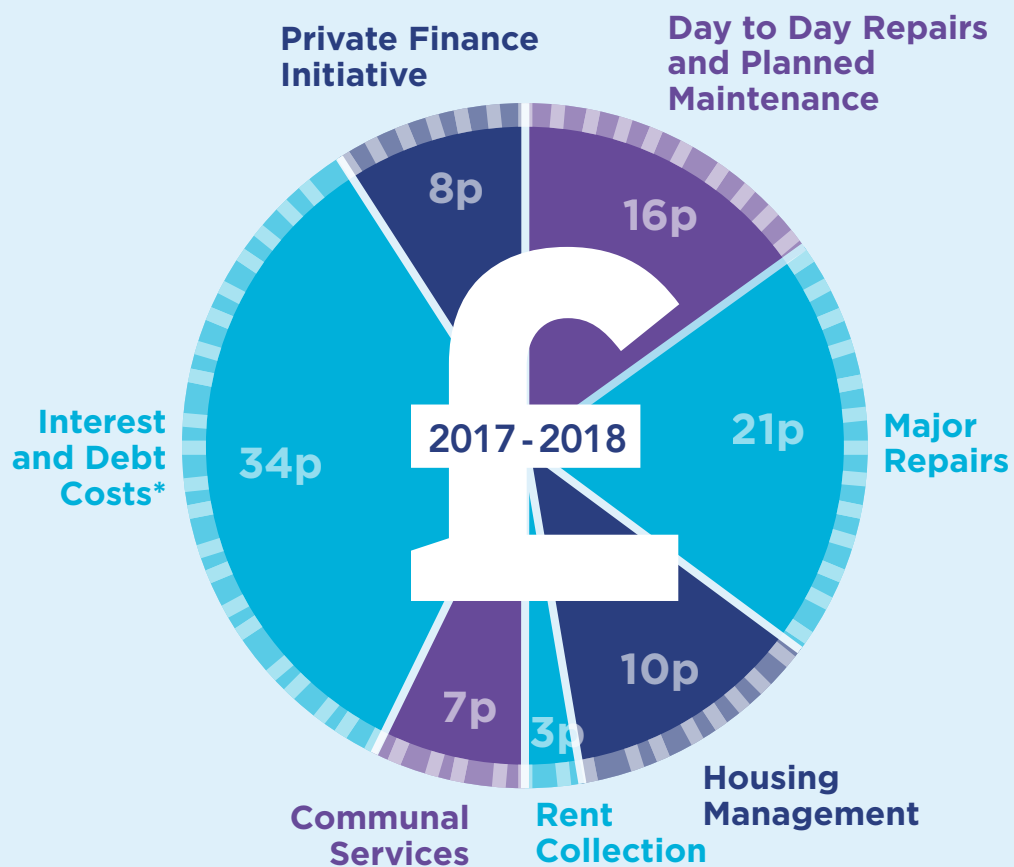
Finally I want to say a big thank you to all those tenants and leaseholders who have got involved and helped us improve our service over the past year. Your views and ideas are invaluable to us and it was great to see so many of you at the Annual Tenants Awards Ceremony and at the Annual Tenant Consultation Day. Thank you again for taking time to get involved and give us your feedback and I look forward to meeting and hearing from as many of you as possible over the coming year.

Summary of the year

from Councillor Ennis,
Portfolio Holder
for Housing



How your rent is spent



* In 2012 the government run funding system for housing services ended and was replaced with a new system of self-financing. As part of this process all Councils had to take on a share of the debt held by central government, and it is also standard practice to borrow funding for short term projects. Healthy Business plans budget to pay back this debt in 30 years, and this part of the budget funds the payments required to service this debt.

Nb. The figures are a draft as of December 2018



“ CASE STUDY

How to make tenants feel valued

“I recently took part in discussions around the new Housing Green Paper. One of the main topics (aims) of the Green Paper is to tackle the stigma that surrounds people living in rented accommodation. Personally I think one of the best ways to tackle this is to make people feel empowered, valued and as a result good about themselves. I recently took part in the annual Tenant Consultation Day and received a simple thank you letter from the Lead Councillor for housing and the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods for attending the event. This simple gesture made me feel that my participation at the event had been worthwhile, that I'd been listened to and that my input was important and useful. Saying thank you is still an effective way of making people feel they are making a positive difference, which is why we all get involved in the first place.



Keep up the good work housing peeps!”

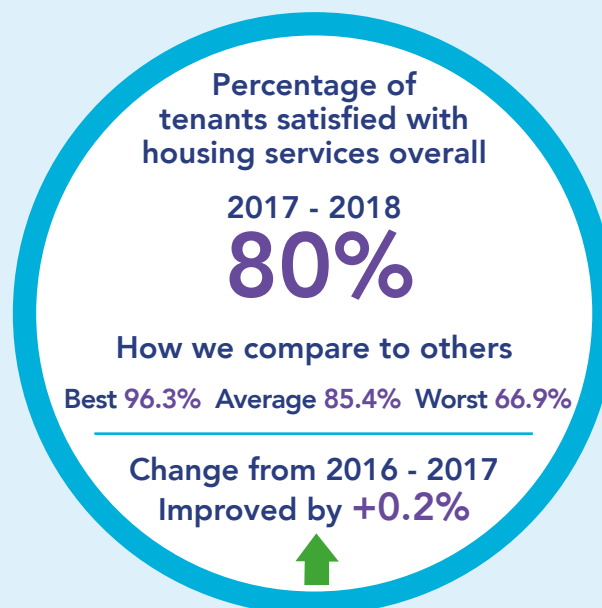
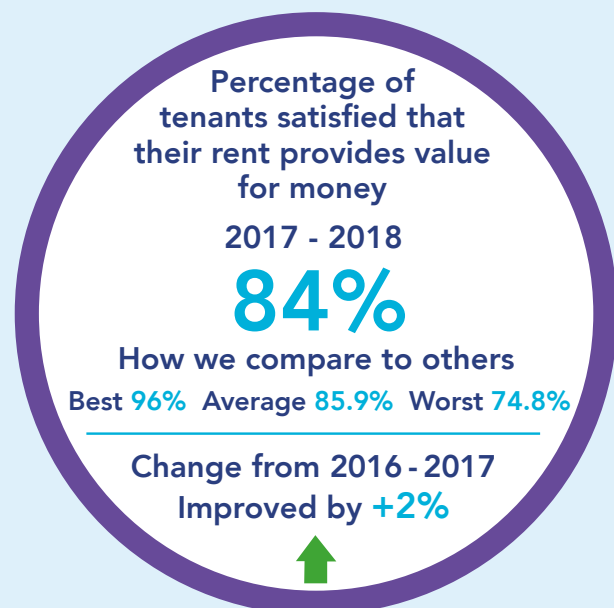
Audette

Keeping a check on our performance and costs

Each year Housing takes part in a benchmarking exercise where its tenant satisfaction results, performance data and cost data are compared and rated against other similar local authorities. This exercise lets us and you see how we are doing in the previous financial year and highlights where we are doing well, where we need to improve and where we need to allocate resources. We then publish these results every year in our annual report in the 'How are we doing?' sections.

This year we carried out a tenant satisfaction survey and you can see the latest results throughout the Annual Report. Thank you to everyone who took part and provided valuable feedback for the survey.

How are we doing?



Did you know?

Housing submits the latest performance and cost data selected from the its own surveys and records and passes them to Housemark, a national benchmarking organisation, who first check them for accuracy and validity, before comparing them against other similar local authorities based in the South of England and London.

What do the coloured arrows mean in the 'How are we doing' sections

↑ We have improved since 2016-2017



↔ We have stayed the same as 2016-2017



↓ We have got worse since 2016-2017

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

Looks at how we communicate and involve our tenants about what we do and how we make sure our services are suitable for those with specific needs

Key Successes

- We carried out a roadshow across sheltered housing units and spoke to current and future tenants about the sheltered housing services and what tenants' priorities were.

Feedback gathered via the roadshow was used to help reshape the sheltered housing service, which includes widening the support to individuals living in the community and lowering the age criteria to 55 years.

Thank you to involved tenants Avril, Ruby, Gary, Pat and Chris who helped with this consultation.

- We carried out a tenant census across the stock which resulted in

Over 70%
of tenant details
being updated

Over 300
Housing officer referrals made to other
services for extra help and support

The Tenant Census was carried out through letters, emails, texts and door knocking.

- We continued to inform you about what is happening in your area and across the council by producing

2 editions of
Housing News

2 local newsletters
per estate

2 editions of Love Your Block newsletters to
anyone in receipt of the block cleaning service

1 Grass and Hedge
cutting newsletter

1 Housing's
annual report

1 Lifts newsletter to 10
blocks of flats with lifts



Did you know?

- **239** stage zero + stage 1 complaints were received
- **118** stage zero complaints were resolved informally
- **97** stage 1 complaints were investigated to an outcome
- **35** stage 1 complaints either fully or partially upheld

Learning from complaints

We always try to provide a great service for you but sometimes we get it wrong.

To make things better we record your complaints and put action plans in place to address the issues you raised. Complaints range from us not informing you about water supplies being cut off to tenants being intimidated by a neighbours' unruly pets. Be assured our methods of communication and policies around keeping pets are constantly under review. Please visit the RBC website for up to date information. www.reading.gov.uk

Compliments received

This year we received compliments from you about the good work of the ASB team in sorting out problematic neighbourhood issues and the helpfulness of our repairs staff when visiting tenants.

One tenant said *“The man who came to fit the galvanised rail to the front stairs was wonderful. I’ve never known a workman to bring his own dustpan and brush. He should be promoted.”*

Our Tenant Groups' Key Successes

- **The Building Cleaning Tenants' Panel**
 - Carried out a survey of all tenants who had complained about the building cleaning service to make sure that tenants were happy with the way the complaint had been handled and resolved. The feedback from the survey was fed back directly to the Building Cleaning Manager so changes can be made.
 - Updated all the cleaning schedules in blocks of flats so tenants are clearer about the services they are paying for.

Thank you to members of the Panel, Pat, Molly, Audette, Laurence, Chris, Ruby and Gordon who put in a lot of time in order to drive up these service standards.



Chris

“I got involved in tenant participation because I wanted to improve the standard of cleaning in my block of flats. I got training on how to carry out block inspections and this helped me with the work.

I work as part of a team and still enjoy what I do. The team continues to make a difference and will be expanding its work to include other blocks of flats.

Please get involved because with more people we can make bigger improvements.”

- Groups of trained tenants carried out mystery shopping exercises and block inspections to review service standards in communal areas.
- 10 tenants from Reading attended a workshop in Oxford in November being hosted by the then Housing Minister, Alok Sharma.

The workshop was one of a number of events that were held up and down the country to find out what are the priorities and concerns for tenants living in Social Housing.

Tenant comments gathered at the event were used to develop the Housing Green Paper and in turn influence National Legislation.

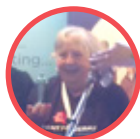


Making a Difference

The Tenant Participation Team worked with tenants to review their information pack. The aim of the review was to make the information pack easier for tenants to find out what involvement opportunities are available and how to get involved. As part of the review each member of the working group was sent samples of information packs from across the country which were studied to see what was good or not so good about each one. This was done in tenants own time and at home. We then ran a workshop for the involved tenants to attend, where they fed back their findings and then as a group they came up with a specification for the designer to follow. Tenants chose the presentation, content and design of the new packs as well as the colour scheme and branding for both the pack and future Tenant Involvement information. This will make it easier for tenants to identify future communication.

- The tenant scrutiny panel, TACT (Tenants and Council Together) carried out two reviews.
 - The first one was on the number and nature of Housing Officer visits with an emphasis on how the information collected is used in the delivery of services and tenant well-being.
 - Later in the year TACT carried out a review on Fire Safety and Prevention in High Rise blocks of flats.

Thank you to all the tenants from the high rise flats at Coley Park and Granville Road who took the time to complete surveys for TACT as they did their fire safety review.



Val

“I took part in the TACT review of fire safety and am pleased to report that our recommendations have been accepted by housing management. It’s great to feel empowered and that we are making a difference.”

- Carried out a satisfaction survey on TIF (Tenant Improvement Fund) projects to find out what impact they were having and how we can better promote the Fund.
- TACT and The Building Cleaning Group presented an update of their work to Councillors at the Neighbourhood Housing And Leisure committee in November. Both groups were very well received and Councillors thanked the members for their hard work on behalf of tenants across Reading.

Tenants and Council Together (TACT) – the tenant scrutiny panel



Pat

“I’m happy to say that we’ve just welcomed a new member to our tenant scrutiny panel – it’s great to meet new people. However, we still need more people to be involved, to help improve services and challenge housing decisions.

I got involved because I like to help people and see housing service improvements. Please catch up with TACT on the Tenant Power for U Facebook, where TACT has its own page or via TenantPower4U Twitter if you want further information.”

Thank you to...

Members of **TACT**, **Audette**, **Pat**, **Lulu**, **Gary**, **Veronica** and newer members **Val** and **Sue** for a year of hard work in their efforts to improve services for all tenants across the Borough.



How are we doing?

Percentage of
tenants satisfied with
the opportunity to make
their views known

2017 - 2018

81%

Change from 2016 - 2017
Improved by **+11%**



Percentage of
tenants satisfied that
they are being kept
informed

2017 - 2018

86%

Change from 2016 - 2017
Improved by **+9%**



Percentage of
tenants satisfied that
their views are being
listened to and acted upon

2017 - 2018

71%

How we compare to others
Best 91.5% Average 68.1% Worst 45%

Change from 2016 - 2017
Improved by **+3%**



Disabled Adaptations

These are adaptations we make to properties to enable people with mobility issues or disabilities to manage better in their homes and have an improved quality of life.

In 2017-18 we completed 447 adaptations to 305 properties within our housing stock.

Of these, 40 properties had major work done such as stair lifts, level access showers, ramps. The remaining 265 properties had minor adaptations mainly consisting of handrails, key safes and other simple accessibility alterations.

In 2018/2019 we will

- Extend the use of emails and texting to keep you informed of opportunities to get involved and share important information with you. Please ensure you keep us updated of any changes of phone number and/or email addresses.
- Work with you to identify your preferred method of receiving our newsletters such as Housing News and the Housing Officers newsletters.
- Work with you to raise the profile of the Tenant Improvement Fund and promote opportunities for tenants to submit bids to improve their local area.
- Work with our colleagues and local communities to identify local issues and solutions including small scale environmental improvements for TIF bids.
- Ensure tenants are aware of the Social Housing Green paper 'A New Deal for Housing' and its content.
- Following TACT's review on Fire Safety and Prevention in High Rise Blocks, ensure their recommendations are implemented.
- Hold our third Annual Tenant Award Ceremony.

Contact us

- **Housing Complaints:**
0118 937 3787
housing.complaints@reading.gov.uk
- **Tenant Participation:**
0118 937 2730
tenant.participation@reading.gov.uk



Home

Looks at how we provide homes that are safe, good quality and well maintained

Key Successes

- **New housing development**

- Following our success of building new properties at Cedar Court, we are continuing to develop more housing.
 - We completed the development of 28 new properties in Lowfield Road to be used for temporary housing. These were built using exciting new modular construction techniques.
 - We have started work on 57 new council homes for rent in Conwy Close, Tilehurst.

Although it is a challenge to find suitable land to build on, we have also a number of feasibility studies underway to look at our options for where we might do more.

- **We worked in partnership with the Homes Quality Tenant Panel to complete the Repairs Handbook, which is currently being quality assured by a wider group of tenants.** The handbook can be used to help describe and improve the repairs reporting and should enable us to complete more jobs 'right first time'. It will be published online and provided at new tenancy sign-ups.

Thank you to everyone who worked with us to develop and produce the Repairs Handbook.

- **Fire safety update** – Last year we carried out fire safety assessments on our blocks of flats and engaged the services of a specialist fire safety engineer to survey the flats independently. We asked the engineer to provide us with recommendations that would further improve fire safety.

So far we have started a programme of installing new alarm systems in our blocks of flats above 2 storeys, which will increase the number of detectors in each home. We are also installing alarms



Did you know?

- **19,956** responsive repairs jobs were completed, with **95.3%** done within agreed timescales
- **167** kitchens and **108** bathrooms were fitted
- **376** boilers were replaced; **240** of these had full central heating systems replaced and **50** of these replaced electric heating systems
- **258** properties had loft insulation improved



“ There was good teamwork between tenants and officers in the development of the Repairs Handbook, which will be issued to all tenants. I'm happy to say I helped produce it. **”**



Dave W



in the communal areas of blocks of flats, which will sound if a heat detector goes off in a flat. This will alert all the other homes that there's a fire in the block and is above the current required standard for fire safety legislation.

Starting in February 2019 following the connection of new water mains, we will be installing a sprinkler system in our Wensley Road high rise blocks.

We are aiming to have all this work finished by 2021.

Granville Road

In March 2018 the power supply to one of the Granville Road's blocks of flats failed, leaving flats and communal areas without electricity. While the battery-powered emergency lighting would continue to function for several hours it was already early evening; if the fault could not be quickly repaired, or alternative power provided, the block would need to be evacuated overnight for our tenants' safety.

When the Council's emergency repairs team arrived on site shortly after the repair was reported, they identified the fault but realised it could not be resolved that evening. Benefitting from the national supply chain of our new material supplier, the repairs team were able to get enough armoured power cable delivered that evening to create a safe, temporary patch between the blacked out block and a neighbouring block which still had power.

With the lighting patch in place residents were able to remain in their homes overnight and a full repair was then completed by our repairs team shortly after. Once repairs had been completed the specialist cable was removed and stored at the Council's depot as part of our emergency planning stores.

Because tenants reported the fault to us quickly, we were able to respond to it promptly with minimum disruption to tenants.

If you become aware of a fault please let us know.

“
CASE
STUDY

Thank you to Tenants who...

Worked with us to review fire risk assessments and our approach to fire safety. This includes members of TACT and those tenants who helped us by providing access to our high rise blocks.



How are we doing?

Percentage of repairs completed at the first visit

2017 - 2018

95.7%

How we compare to others

Best 100% Average 91% Worst 76.5%

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **+2.3%**



Average number of calendar days taken to complete repairs

2017 - 2018

7 days

How we compare to others

Best 4.1 days Average 10 days Worst 23.9 days

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **-3 days**



Percentage of homes with a valid gas safety certificate

2017 - 2018

100%

How we compare to others

Best 100% Average 99.91% Worst 98.49%

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **+0.04%**



Average energy efficiency rating of our homes

2017 - 2018

74.00

How we compare to others

Best 79 Average 71 Worst 63

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **+0.5%**



Contact Us

- **Repairs Freephone**
(Mon - Fri, 9am-5pm)
0800 318 296 or
0118 937 3757 (option 1)
www.reading.gov.uk/rbctenantrepairs
- **Repairs**
(out of hours emergencies)
0118 937 3737

Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance

2017 - 2018

81%

How we compare to others

Best 93.6% Average 80.4% Worst 65.0%

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **10.2%**



In 2018/2019 we will

- Develop and implement an on-line customer satisfaction feedback solution. For people without e-mail addresses we will continue to send paper forms and/or letters.
- Continue to deliver our 5 year programme of fire safety works to all our blocks of flats.

Neighbourhood and Community

Looks at how we manage and improve the neighbourhood where you live and how we deal with anti-social behaviour

Neighbourhood

Key Successes

- We completed Tenant Improvement and Decent Neighbourhood Fund Projects at:
 - Lulworth Road
 - Lambeth Court
 - Rupert Square
 - Coley Park Community Centre
 - Lowfield Road play park
 - Vincent House/Burford Court
 - Star Road communal gardens
 - Patriot Place

Here are some tenants' comments:

“People are very pleased with the new recycling bins, the area around the bins is much tidier now and residents are developing a sense of pride in their neighbourhood.”

“The playground-to-garden was considered a great success. Some friends and I had a picnic there and it was very pleasant.”

“The bollards are not intrusive and we know that cars will no longer be able to park there.”

“The new trees enhance the entrance to Patriot Place.”

Thank you to all the tenants who last year worked with us to improve their neighbourhood by giving us their views and ideas about what they wanted to see improved in the local area.



Did you know?

In the Old Age Pensioner (OAP) Grass and Hedge Cutting Survey...

79.6% of you rated the grass cutting service as good or excellent – compared to **56.7%** in 2015

33.1% of you said they thought the service had got better – compared to **20.5%** in 2015

83.1% of you rated the attitude of the gardeners as good or excellent

83.1% of you knew how to make a complaint if not satisfied with the service – compared to **61.8%** in 2015

Thank you to everyone who gave us their views for this survey

- We carried out 208 fire safety checks on blocks of flats.
- We received a really good response from you for our tenant census. 4,287 tenant census forms were completed, and this information will help us deliver a better, more targeted service for all our tenants.
- We organised another garden competition with the aim of promoting and encouraging tenants to maintain gardens to a good standard.
- We continue to refurbish the blocks of flats near to the Community Centre on the Hexham Road Estate.

Supporting Tenants

In 2017 the Housing Support Team received a new referral concerning a very vulnerable person with arthritis and mental health issues. As a result they had been neglecting their home and exhibiting signs of hoarding.

The team helped by arranging to have the property decluttered, repaired and redecorated via housing's Assisted Decoration Scheme. They also organised disabled adaptations to the property to make it easy to live there and arranged with the British Legion to have the client's property re-carpeted.

As part of the support, the team also reviewed and discussed welfare benefits and allowances with their client and liaised with a number of departments on their behalf. As a result of improved information sharing and communication with these departments close to £35,000 was awarded to the client in back dated welfare benefits.

With this substantial amount of money the client cleared their council tax and rent arrears and set up monthly payment schemes.

Finally to help their client get out and about they were put in touch with a friendly, neighbourhood social club.

There were many positive outcomes for this tenant as a result of the Housing Support that was put in place to help them out. If you think you need help or support to better maintain your tenancy please speak with your Housing Officer.

“
CASE
STUDY



Did you know?

In the 2017/2018 'Housing Officer Visits' survey

97.6% of you said your housing officer listened to the concerns you had.

91.8% of you thought the outcome of the housing officer visit was fair.

98.2% of you said your housing officer arrived on time.

In 2017/2018

We carried out

196 new tenancy visits

815 Tenancy audits

192 tonnes of dumped/
flytipped rubbish was
cleared from housing land

We supported

202 clients to help them
maintain their tenancy and/or
improve their quality of life

In 2018/2019 we will

- Carry out improvements to the building cleaning service.
- Give residents an opportunity to put forward ideas and make bids to fund improvements in their local area.

Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

Key Successes

- 100% of victims and witnesses of cases open to the ASB Team were contacted at least once a month.
- 15 notices of Seeking Possession (NOSP) were issued to perpetrators of anti-social behaviour living in Council accommodation. This is the first legal step towards eviction.
- 41 official tenancy warnings were issued to perpetrators of anti-social behaviour where breaches of tenancy have occurred.

Lulworth Road

An introductory tenant moved into a property in Lulworth Road and began causing problems for other tenants and residents. These problems related to racist comments, threats and the throwing of excrement at people and their property. This caused great distress to people living in the area. Despite warnings and support given to the tenant to try and help them change their ways, problems continued.

The ASB Officer worked closely with tenants and residents to gather evidence for legal action. A notice of seeking possession was served on the tenant but the problematic behaviour did not improve. The case went to trial and the judge considered all the evidence in the case, paying significant attention to the impact on other tenants and residents living nearby. The judge concluded that he had no option but to grant an outright possession order against the problematic tenant. In addition, the judge granted an injunction with powers of arrest as well; this was to further protect the tenants and residents.

One of the victims wrote:

“I would like to add that the service provided was very professional and discreet; I would be happy to approach this service again should the need arise.”

“
CASE
STUDY



Did you know?

The ASB Team also deals with unauthorised encampments on council land right across the borough.

Thank you to Tenants who...

Helped us by being our eyes and ears on estate areas and reporting dumped rubbish, block cleaning and graffiti issues.

In 2018/2019 we will

- Improve ASB information on the Council's website.
- Re-draft ASB letters that are sent to victims and perpetrators to make them more understandable.

How are we doing?

Percentage of
tenants satisfied with
their neighbourhood as
a place to live

2017 - 2018

85%

How we compare to others

Best 92.3% Average 84.1%

Worst 71.4%

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **+6%**



Percentage of
tenants satisfied with
ASB case handling

2017 - 2018

95%

How we compare to others

Best 100% Average 79.3%

Worst 42.4%

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **+5%**



Percentage of
estate inspections
completed on target

2017 - 2018

100%

Change from 2016 - 2017

Stayed the same



Satisfaction with
ASB case outcome

2017 - 2018

94%

How we compare to others

Best 100% Average 76.6%

Worst 45.5%

Change from 2016 - 2017

Improved by **+4%**



Contact us

- **Housing Officer**
0118 937 2161
neighbourhoodservices@reading.gov.uk
- **Anti-social Behaviour**
0118 937 2161
asb.team@reading.gov.uk
- **Environmental Services**
(rubbish and recycling)
0118 937 3787

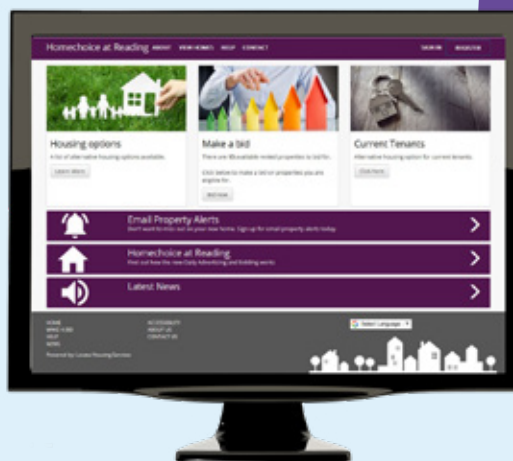
Tenancy

Looks at how we end tenancies, manage empty properties and allocate homes to new and transferring tenants. It also covers how we collect rent and other housing charges

Allocations and Lettings

Key Successes

- We moved to daily bidding and we have improved the customer facing website.
- We received an overwhelming response to the consultation and moved forward with the change. The new customer facing website contains more information regarding the properties being advertised, including links to local facilities and street views. It also shows the customer more information we hold on file for them giving them the opportunity to review this information and let us know if anything changes, meaning this information is more up to date and relevant.
- We produced an on line application form to join Homechoice making this process much easier for applicants to apply and which is better for the environment and reduces printing costs for the local authority.



Did you know?

In 2016/2017 we housed **385** applicants

- 253 to RBC properties and
- 132 to Registered Providers properties

32.5% of all lettings were made to transfer tenants, who already occupy social housing

In 2017/2018 we housed **499** applicants

- 297 to RBC properties and
- 202 to Registered Providers properties

23.5% of all lettings were made to transfer tenants, who already occupy social housing



Thank you to Tenants who...

left their properties clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.

“ CASE STUDY



- We extended the mobility scheme for under occupiers and have changed this package for tenants. The offer is now:
 - £1,000 payment on completion of a move and after the calculation of any recharges
 - Payment of removals
 - Payment for reconnection and disconnection of white goods
 - Decoration package
 - Support from a dedicated Officer to support through the process

Under-occupiers

One of our older tenants is now happily settled into sheltered housing accommodation. She had been struggling with the stairs in her previous home and by working with us we were able to assess her medical and mobility needs, assist her through the bidding process and provide practical help with her move.

Her daughter said: *“I would like to thank you once again for all your support. Mum loves her new home and is settling in well.”*

- At the end of March 2018 there were a total of 5,448 applicants on the Housing Register.

Breakdown by bands*:

- Band A less than 1%
- Band B 5%
- Band C 8%
- Band D 10%
- Band E 31%
- No Priority for Housing 46%

Breakdown by number of bedrooms required:

- one bedroom 44%
- 2 bedrooms 33%
- 3 bedrooms 18%
- 4 bedrooms 4%
- 5+ bedrooms 1%

Breakdown by type:

- Homeseekers 76%
- Transfer tenants 24%

* Meaning of different bands

A: Emergency need to move B: Urgent need to move C: Intermediate need to move D: Moderate need to move E: Low level need to move No priority for housing

Key Successes

- **Evictions show that the ongoing preventative work carried out with tenants by the Rents Team is continuing to have a positive impact.**
 - There were fewer evictions in 2017/2018. Only 12, which is a reduction from the previous year when there were 18 evictions.
- **Welfare Reform Update – we have continued to support tenants affected by the “Bedroom Tax” and the Benefit Cap. Our dedicated Benefit Cap Coordinator has worked with 581 affected claimants and helped 252 of them back into work.**
- **Universal Credit (UC) – full service was rolled out in Reading from December 2017.**
 - At the end of May 2018 there were 341 Council Tenants in receipt of UC.
 - Since December 2017 a specialist team of staff have provided:
 - 85 residents with assisted digital support to help them to get on line to make and maintain their UC claims.
 - Personal budgeting support to 48 UC claimants to help them manage their transition to UC, and the financial challenges it brings.
- **The Debt Advice Team has assessed and awarded 82 Discretionary Housing Payments to UC claimants. This helps them pay their housing costs and avoids them getting into rent arrears whilst they take steps to improve their situation.**

Did you know?

As a result of increased house prices in Reading and a more ‘in depth’ application process we sold fewer properties via Right to Buy this year than in 2016/17.

- | | |
|---|---|
| • 2016/2017
47 applications were received and of these 18 houses and 9 flats were sold | • 2017/2018
42 applications were received and of these 12 houses and 6 flats were sold |
|---|---|

Possession orders

- **2017/2018 209** Notices of Seeking Possessions were issued for rent arrears.
47 possession Orders were granted to us

Rechargeable repairs debts collected

- **6.9%** of former rechargeable repairs debts was collected
- **33.1%** of current rechargeable repairs debt was collected

“ CASE STUDY

Debt Advice

The Debt Advice Team continues to provide advice and support to those tenants in financial difficulty.

The work of the team includes checking that tenants are getting all the benefits they are entitled to, making sure they know what bills to pay first to avoid losing their home and services, negotiating with creditors and setting a budget. The team is also responsible for administering and managing the Discretionary Housing Payment budget.

The team has carried out 352 first appointments with tenants and saw a further 150 tenants for follow up appointments.

- Assisted tenants to claim over £84,000 in Housing Benefit entitlement and over £128,500 in back dated Welfare Benefits (including Discretionary Housing Payments).
- Made agreements totalling over £40,000 to repay council tax.
- Had over £60,000 of debt written off, which helped tenants to pay their rent and council tax.



**Thank you to
Tenants who...**

paid their rent
on time.

How are we doing?

Percentage of visits completed to new tenants within the first 6 weeks of their tenancy

2017 - 2018
100%

Change from 2016 - 2017
Improved by **+0.5%**



Average relet time in days (standard relets)

2017 - 2018
29 days

How we compare to others
Best 12 days Average 26 days
Worst 59 days

Change from 2016 - 2017
Slightly worse by **+3 days**



Percentage of current and former tenant arrears

2017 - 2018
2.14%

How we compare to others
Best 0.98% Average 3.41%
Worst 9.14%

Change from 2016 - 2017
Slightly worse by **+0.07%**



Rent loss due to empty properties (voids) as a % of rent due

2017 - 2018
1.3%

How we compare to others
Best 0.2% Average 1.1%
Worst 5.0%

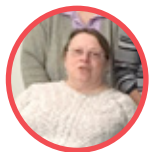
Change from 2016 - 2017
Slightly worse by **-0.5%**



In 2018/2019 we will

- Continue to try to collect the same percentage of rent and housing debts, despite the roll out of full Universal Credit in Reading from December 2017.

Are you thinking about getting involved?



Sue

“If you’re thinking of getting involved, a good place to start is the Annual Report. It’s packed with information about Housing and provides a very good learning platform.”

Last word ‘but not least’ from Gordon



Gordon

“I was encouraged by my sister to join tenant participation. So far I’ve benefitted from being out and about and meeting new people, which has given me an improved outlook on life. I’ve also found the user friendly training really enjoyable and as a result my knowledge of Housing and the workings of the Council has grown.”

Contact us

- **Rent Helpline**
0118 937 2784
- **Debt Advice**
0118 937 2197
debt.advice@reading.gov.uk
www.reading.gov.uk/debtadvice
- **Housing Benefits**
0118 937 3707
benefits@reading.gov.uk
www.reading.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport
- **Allocations**
0118 937 2172
allocations@reading.gov.uk
www.reading.gov.uk/find-a-home

Estate Walkabouts – 2019

Caversham

Front of Elizabeth House,
Gosbrook Road, 10am

- 15th January 2019
- 9th April 2019
- 9th July 2019
- 19th October 2019

Star Road, RBC flats car park,
11am

- 15th January 2019
- 9th April 2019
- 9th July 2019
- 19th October 2019

Scott Close car park, 12 noon

- 15th January 2019
- 9th April 2019
- 9th July 2019
- 19th October 2019

Dee Park

Catalyst Office Spey Road,
10am

- 16th January 2019
- 10th April 2019
- 10th July 2019
- 20th October 2019

Hexham

Hexham Community Centre,
10am

- 9th January 2019
- 10th April 2019
- 10th July 2019
- 9th October 2019

Katesgrove

Elizabeth Walk notice board,
9:30am

- 5th February 2019
- 7th May 2019
- 6th August 2019
- 5th November 2019

Norcot

'notice board' Lyndhurst Road,
10am

- 14th February 2019
- 16th May 2019
- 15th August 2019
- 14th November 2019

Orts Road

Weirside Court, 10am

- 13th February 2019
- 8th May 2019
- 14th August 2019
- 13th November 2019

Southcote

Southcote advice shop, 10am

- 25th January 2019
- 26th April 2019
- 26th July 2019
- 25th October 2019

Tilehurst

'notice board' Corwen Road,
10am

- 10th January 2019
- 18th April 2019
- 18th July 2019
- 17th October 2019

Coley Park

205 Wensley Road, 9:30am

- 8th January 2019
- 9th April 2019
- 9th July 2019
- 8th October 2019

Whitley Wood

Swallowfield
Community Centre,
11am

- 2nd January 2019
- 3rd April 2019
- 3rd July 2019
- 2nd October 2019

Whitley Green

Whitley Advice Shop,
10am

- 2nd January 2019
- 3rd April 2019
- 3rd July 2019
- 2nd October 2019

Woodley

Chequers Way shop,
10am

- 16th January 2019
- 17th April 2019
- 17th July 2019
- 16th October 2019



This annual report provides a summary of how well the Housing Service has performed during 2017/2018. If you need help to understand this information, please contact Housing Services on 0118 937 3757.

Niniejszy roczny raport zawiera podsumowanie wyników osiągniętych przez Służby Mieszkaniowe [Housing Services] w latach 2017/18.

Jeżeli potrzebują Państwo pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji, bardzo prosimy o kontakt ze Służbami Mieszkaniowymi pod numerem telefonu 0118 937 3757.

यो वार्षिक प्रतिवेदनले 2017/18 मा हाउजिङ सेवाले कतिको राम्रोसँग काम गर्यो भन्ने सारांश प्रदान गर्छ।

यदि तपाईंलाई यो जानकारी बुझ्न मद्दत आवश्यक छ भने, कृपया हाउजिङ सेवालाई 0118 937 3757 मा फोन गर्नुहोस्।

يقدم هذا التقرير السنوي ملخصاً حول مدى جودة أداء خدمة الإسكان خلال عامي 2017 / 2018

وإذا احتجت الحصول على أي مساعدة لفهم هذه المعلومة ، فيرجى منك الاتصال على خدمات الإسكان على رقم الهاتف:

0118 937 3757.

该年度报告 概述了在2017/18年度房屋服务处的业绩

如果您需要帮助以理解该报告内的信息，请和房屋服务处联系，号码为 0118 937 3757。

یہ سالانہ رپورٹ اس امر کا خلاصہ فراہم کرتی ہے کہ 2017/18 کے دوران ہاؤسنگ سروس کی کارکردگی کس قدر اچھی رہی۔

اگر آپ کو اس معلومات کو سمجھنے میں مدد کی ضرورت ہو تو برائے مہربانی ہاؤسنگ سروسز سے 0118 937 3757 پر رابطہ کریں۔

