

Housing Annual Report

2019 for tenants

Welcome to this year's Annual Report

We hope you enjoy this new pull out version of the Annual Report. Although the format's different this year, it still sets out our performance against national and local housing standards and how we have undertaken to provide value for money.

This year we piloted the Housing Information Event on the 17 September, which was a great success with well over 100 people attending across the day and evening sessions. The aim of the event was to provide you with updates on developments within housing services, and to give you a chance to tell us your views and concerns and to let us know what is important to you. We heard your concerns about maintaining a good standard for the external space around your homes and we intend to increase promotion and uptake of the funding for small scale environmental improvements, ie, tenant improvement and decent neighbourhood funds.

You told us that increasing housing supply was important and I'm happy to report that we are pushing forward with our high specification, new build housing developments in Reading. The completed Conwy Close development is proving to be very popular with new tenants and we have had an excellent response from those who have moved in.

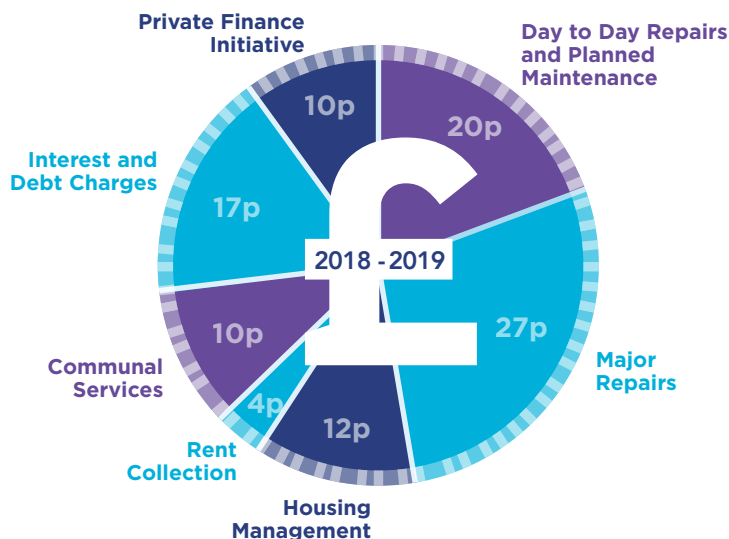
Overall our performance is good and this is highlighted in the report across a wide range of indicators. However, we are always striving to do better and are currently carrying out an end to end review of the void process to improve our turnaround time.

Finally I'd like to thank everyone who got involved last year, either by filling in our questionnaires, volunteering in their community, helping us scrutinise our services or by simply filling in our questionnaires. Please keep up this vital work as we need to work together to continually improve and develop our housing services.



Councillor Ennis,
Lead Member for Housing

How every £1 of your rent is spent



Key to Benchmarking Figures¹

- ↑ We have improved since 2017-2018
- ↔ We have stayed the same as 2017-2018
- ↓ We have got worse since 2017-2018
- ★ We were among the highest in our benchmarking group

¹ Benchmarking comparison figures are provided by 'Housemark'
<https://www.housemark.co.uk/>

The Tenant View:

"Tenant participation is all value orientated now but it's not just about saving money. It's about getting the best services for all, based on what works well – we help housing as motivated tenants to input, monitor and provide a voice to improve services."

By Larry Peele

83% of you were satisfied with the overall quality of their home

↑ **7.4%** more compared to 2016/2017
Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
93.5%	85.1%	61%

74 is the average SAP energy rating of our homes

↔ **Same** compared to 2017/2018
Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
78	70	62.8

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

From 2018 to 2019

The Tenant Involvement Team:

- Provided 7 free training courses on topics such as, contract monitoring, equality and diversity, the Social Housing Green Paper and conflict management. A total of 77 places were taken up by tenants across a range of courses.
- Held a tenant consultation day in August 2018 and the fourth Annual Tenants' Award Ceremony.
- Worked with a group of tenants to judge the gardening competition and once again a high standard of entries was received.

Customer Complaints Update

- We received 244 stage zero and stage 1 complaints.
- We informally resolved 78 stage zero complaints.
- We investigated 114 stage 1 complaints to an outcome.
- Service areas either fully or partially upheld 31 stage 1 complaints.

Thank you to all the tenants who kept us updated about changes to their contact details, making it easier for us to keep you informed.

In 2019/2020 we will be

- Working with you to identify your preferred method of receiving information from us, and contacting us.
- Extending the use of emails and texting to keep you updated about involvement opportunities and important information.
- Alongside other neighbourhood teams we intend to increase promotion and uptake of the funding for small scale environmental improvements.
- Consulting with you on how we can provide better services and customer service as your landlord.

The Tenant View:

"By linking Facebook and Twitter Tenantpower4U, I've been able to give something back to tenants and make a difference. All I had to do was contact the Tenant Participation Team, to receive free training, learn new skills and I have been able to

- **Speak up!**
- **Be heard!**
- **Make a difference"**

By Pat Watson



Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

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



In 2018/2019 we completed 509 disabled adaptations to 347 properties within our housing stock.

- 63 of these had major works including stair lifts, level access showers and ramps.
- 289 of the remaining properties had minor adaptations mainly consisting of handrails, key safe and other simple accessibility alterations.

94.1% of calls to our contact centre were answered

↓ 0.5% slightly fewer compared to 2017/18

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
97.6%	86.8%	48.1%

71% of you think that we listen to your views and act on them

↑ 3% compared to 2016/17

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
91.5%	69.8%	45%

40 services were either changed, implemented or withdrawn during 2018/2019 because of tenant involvement

↑ 13 compared to 2017/2018

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
55	15.5	1

It cost us the equivalent of

£56.93 per home to provide our tenant participation service in 2018/2019

Compared to others:

Lowest	Average	Highest
£4.66	£52.88	£234.72





Your Neighbourhood & Community

Neighbourhood

From 2018 to 2019

We completed Tenant Improvement and Decent Neighbourhood Fund projects across Reading in:

- Southcote – Florian Gardens, Southcote Lane and Virginia Way, where the communal gardens were landscaped.
- Orts Road estate – Patriot Place, where the gardens were closed in and raised beds were installed.
- Coley Park – Coley Park Towers, Lesford Road and Wensley Road, where bin stores were put in.
- Caversham Road and Knights Way, Emmer Green
- Tilehurst – Corwen Road, where bin stores were built.
- Hexham Road, Ringwood Road, Norcot, where bin stores were installed and Brunswick Street, where there was landscaping and car parking spaces were added.

Thank you to the building cleaning panel who gave up their spare time to help monitor and improve the cleaning in our blocks of flats.

We carried out:

- 172 new tenancy visits to make sure you are settling in well.
- 746 tenancy audit visits to check that everything is still OK.
- 122 fire safety checks.
- 1,620 block inspections to make sure you are safe in your home.
- 732 emergency lighting checks.
- Removed 160 tonnes of fly tipping and litter waste from housing land.
- Continued to refurbish the blocks of flats on the Hexham Road Estate.

The Tenant View:

"I personally appreciate very much the improvements carried out by RBC. Well done for putting more fire sensors in my kitchen and sitting room. I wish the whole country would do what you do to improve the safety of its citizens."

In 2019/2020 we will be:

- Reviewing our Service Level Agreements with other Council departments who provide a service for Housing to ensure they provide value for money.
- Continuing to work closely with the Building Cleaning Team to improve this service.
- Alongside other colleagues promoting the Tenant Improvement Fund and encouraging residents to put forward ideas for local neighbourhood improvements.
- Completing the final phase of the Hexham Road Refurbishment project towards the end of summer 2020.

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The Building Cleaning Panel continues to make a difference to cleaning service in blocks of flats.



In 2018/2019 the panel:

- Produced 'Love your Block' newsletters to keep people informed about the cleaning service.
- Carried out anonymous block inspections.
- Updated councillors at the Housing Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee about the work of the panel.
- Participated in discussions about the new Cleaning Services, Service Level Agreement.
- Received training to enable them to monitor the contract going forward.

Your Neighbourhood & Community Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)



From 2018 to 2019 we

- Were successful in obtaining our first closure order. This stopped a vulnerable tenant being exploited and provided respite from ASB for the tenant and other nearby residents.
- Obtained 5 Outright Possession Orders, 10 Notices of Seeking Possession (NOSP) and issued 70 Warning Letters.
- Launched the ASB web pages, which now provides better information for tenants, eg, what ASB we deal with, the process of how ASB is dealt with and how tenants should report ASB issues.

In 2019/2020 we will be introducing

- Online reporting to compliment changes being made to the ASB web pages and as a result increasing reporting options for residents.
- The 'Noise App', which is designed to simplify noise nuisance reporting.
 - Please note that reporting noise nuisance to the ASB team will still done in the same way, but now people will have the option of using the 'App' to log when the noise happens and making an instant record. This will make it easier for people to provide evidence to support their cases.

Thank you to tenants who worked with us to develop an ASB awareness video that helps tenants understand how we deal with issues.

The Tenant View:

After securing the above closure order the tenant said, "I'm very satisfied with what the ASB team has done for me."

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The ASB team helps tackle ASB issues and supports victims by

- Working with a range of services and agencies, eg, the police, Adult Services, MENCAP, Willow Project, 'Change, Grow, Live' (Drug and Alcohol support), Mental Health Services and Fire Service.
- Keeping you updated at least once a month on the progress of your case.
- Providing a mediation service to help resolve neighbourhood disputes and by offering advice and support to victims and witnesses within hours of an incident being reported.



85% of you were satisfied with your neighbourhood

↑ 6.5% compared to 2016/2017

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
95.6%	85.1%	71.4%

100% of all estate inspections were completed with their 'inspect every 3 months' target

↔ same compared to 2017/2018



85% of you were satisfied with your ASB case handling

↓ 10% compared to 2017/2018

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
100%	74.8%	52%

It cost us the equivalent of
£155.53 per home to provide our estate services in 2018/2019

Compared to others:

Lowest	Average	Highest
£27.16	£187.80	£776.24

It cost us the equivalent of
£54.53 per home to provide our ASB service in 2018/2019

Compared to others:

Lowest	Average	Highest
£6.93	£51.88	£131.66

Your Tenancy

Rent & Other Housing Charges



From 2018 to 2019

- The Welfare Reform (WR) Team assisted
 - 72 households into work.
 - 30 households to claim benefits, which means they are no longer affected by the housing benefit cap.
 - 42 households to budget and manage the benefit cap.
 - 26 households to report change in circumstances which brought them under the benefit cap.
 - 18 households to move out of the borough to cheaper accommodation.
 - 1 household to have the benefit cap removed as applied incorrectly.
- The team's work also resulted in
 - A total of 189 households either no longer being benefit capped or achieving more effective management of the benefit cap.
 - 37 cases being closed for non-engagement.
 - 2610 contacts being made to people affected by the benefit cap, which is an average of 10 contacts (approx.) per day.
- The Debt Advice Team, which provides advice and support to residents in financial difficulty and administers the Discretionary Housing Payment budget.
 - Assessed and awarded 154 Discretionary Housing Payments to Universal Credit claimants, which helps them pay their housing costs. This avoids rent arrears building up while they take steps to improve their situation.
 - Carried out 389 first appointments with resident and met a further 91 people for follow up appointments.
 - Assisted tenants to claim over £66000 in Housing Benefit entitlement and over £93000 in back dated Welfare Benefits (including Discretionary Housing Payments).
 - Made agreements totalling over £38000 to repay Council Tax.
 - Had over £11000 of debt written off, which helped tenants pay their rent and council tax.

- The Rent Team's ongoing preventative work carried out with tenants continued to have a positive effect.
 - 9 evictions in 2018/2019, a reduction from 12 in 2017/2018.
- 248 Notices of Seeking Possession were issued for rent arrears and 50 Possession Orders were granted to us.
- The Rechargeable Repairs Team collected
 - 6.2% of former rechargeable repairs debt.
 - 29.6% of current rechargeable repairs debt.

Thank you to tenants who paid their rent on time

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Right to Buy Sales

As a result of increased house prices in Reading and a more 'in depth' application process we received fewer Right to Buy applications this year, but have sold a similar number of properties.

- 2017/2018 – 42 applications were received and of these 12 houses and 6 flats were sold.
- 2018/2019 – 39 applications were received and of these 15 houses and 4 flats were sold.

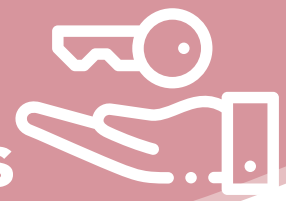
2019/2020 we will

- Support people to manage the impact of Universal Credit during its roll out, to ensure that 95% of rent due will be collected.

The Tenant View:

"I found attending my debt advice appointment and talking about my debt has helped me to address the problem. The advice I have received has been really helpful."

Your Tenancy Allocations and Lettings



From 2018 to 2019 we

- Increased the number of moves for under-occupying tenants from 37 in 2017/2018 to 44 in 2018/2019. This frees up family homes and provides existing tenants with more suitable and manageable homes.
- Have taken handover of some of the properties at Conwy Close, including 8 new 4 bedroom homes. These properties were made available fully carpeted for the new tenants and we are proud of the standard of accommodation offered.
- Carried out a further re-registration of the Housing Register to ensure that demand is a true reflection of the situation across the borough.

Thank you to tenants who left their property in a good condition.

In 2019/2020 we will be

- Further increasing the number of under-occupiers supported to more suitable accommodation.
- Improving the time taken to relet properties by carrying out by carrying out an end to end lean review of this process.
- Continuing to develop the on-line application form, making it easier for customers to use, while also providing more information on housing options.

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- 121 transfer tenants were successful with their bids via Homechoice at Reading.
- We let a total of 452 properties in 2018/2019, which is an increase from 385 in 2017/2018.

The Tenant View:

Another happy result for one of our older tenants! She was helped with a move to Chimney Court by RBC's under-occupation team and feedback received from her family since the move has been positive. She is enjoying the company found in the communal areas, the good sized accommodation and views from the windows.

Her family said "thank you for all your help with the move. RBC did an excellent job with all the care they provided. Please pass on our thanks to all concerned at RBC, for a really good job and to the removal men, who were very helpful & friendly."

100% of new tenants were visited within our 6 week target time

↔ Same compared to 2017/2018 ★

99.41% was the percentage of rent collected (excluding arrears brought forward)

↓ **0.45%** less compared to 2017/2018

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
100%	99.77%	96.67%

37.4 days was the average time taken to re-let our empty properties

↓ **8.3 days** longer compared to 2017/2018

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
13.1 days	29.8 days	63.5 days

It cost us the equivalent of

£115.24 per home to provide our Rent Arrears and Collection service in 2018/2019

Compared to others:

Lowest	Average	Highest
£33.41	£132.30	£232.23



Your Home Repairs & Maintenance Services

From 2018 to 2019 we

- Created 57 new council owned homes in Conwy Close.
- Identified 12 homes within disused offices and stores.
- Continued with feasibility studies on properties that we may be able to convert into homes in the future.
- Began updating our aging fleet of vans.
 - New vans will have reduced emissions, be more reliable and have a more efficient cargo space for holding relevant parts, making it easier for us to keep appointments and fix repairs first time as we carry the right parts, eg, for climate change emergencies.
 - Electric vans are also being trialled as future replacements to make us even greener.

The Tenant View:

"The service received was very good; the tradesman did an excellent job and left everything clean and tidy."

Thank you to tenants who make and keep appointments with us that helps to keep their properties safe.

In 2019/2020 we will be

- Continuing to develop plans for new sites across the borough to provide further council housing accommodation.
- Continuing to invest in our stock, spending an estimated £2m on kitchens and bathrooms across the borough, £3m on new water mains and sprinklers at Coley and in total we will be spending in excess of £14m on the maintenance and improvement of our housing stock.
- Actively looking at how we can cut our carbon footprint and use more environmentally friendly materials.
- Actively seeking alternative materials and innovative heating systems along with renewable energy solutions to help lower running costs, improve the environment and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

BULLETIN



- Over 22,500 responsive repairs were reported last year with over 95% completed within agreed timescale.
- 126 kitchens and 207 bathrooms were fitted.
- 387 properties had boilers replaced or heating upgraded.
- 220 properties had loft insulation topped up.
- In 2019/2020 we completed to time and budget 57 new builds at Conwy and Bevan Close and have had an excellent response from tenants who have moved in.

95.8%

of repairs were fixed at the first attempt

↑ **0.14%** more compared to 2017/2018

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
99.9%	89.7%	56.7%

100%

of homes have a gas safety certificate

↔ **same** compared to 2017/2018

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
100%	99.95%	98.93%

6.17 days

is the number of days taken to complete a repair

↑ **0.83** days fewer compared to 2017/2018

Compared to others:

Best	Average	Worst
4.83 days	10.95 days	22.3 days

£89.70

is the average cost of a repair in 2018/2019

Compared to others:

Lowest	Average	Highest
£80.65	£144.50	£304.90