

Landlord Report to Tenants 2023



Introduction

Welcome to Falkirk Council's latest edition of our landlord report. This report is to update you on how your Housing Service performed against the standards and outcomes set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) in our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) during the reporting year 2022/23. Within the Charter there are a set of standards and outcomes that local authorities and social landlords in Scotland should aim to achieve. Under each standard there is a clear statement of what tenants and service users should expect from their landlord. Performance against the standards and outcomes is measured via a range of performance indicators which are submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator each year. This report provides details of our performance and covers the period March 2022 to April 2023.

We have continued over the last year to make positive changes to our Housing Service. These changes include:

- Improved access to support and income maximisation services through our Household Support Officers.
 - Continued progress with our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, which improves homelessness outcomes.
 - We are making services more accessible to you and have introduced a new Housing Management System, including a new customer online portal.
 - We are making improvements to how we work digitally and are developing our digital housing strategy.
 - We continue to invest in your home and have set out £184m of improvements through our Housing Investment Programme over the next 5 years. In addition, we will provide 200 new homes.
 - We continue to increase our housing stock through our buy back and new build initiatives and have purchased 762 homes since the start of our buy back scheme.
 - We have achieved full International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) accreditation for the Housing Service.
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The Scottish Housing Regulator recognises that the last few years have been particularly challenging for social landlords and their tenants. We recognise the additional financial pressures our tenants now face with rising inflation and record high energy prices heavily impacting household budgets. We continue to do all that we can to support the most the most vulnerable households.

Our performance over the past year has been affected by the challenges we now face. Where we want to improve performance in certain areas, we have detailed improvement plans in place and are making good progress in areas such as repairs, capital improvement works and eradicating fuel poverty. Further information on our latest improvement and modernisation strategies can be found at Policies & strategies | Falkirk Council.

To compare how we performed with other landlords across Scotland, view our engagement Plan or Annual Assurance Statement or find out more about the Charter, you can visit the Scottish Housing Regulator's website at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk.

We hope you find the information in the report useful and easy to understand.

If you feel you could make a positive contribution to your local area by becoming more actively involved and helping us improve our service, please contact our Community Engagement Service on 01324 590706 or email tenant.participation@falkirk.gov.uk.

We would like to thank all tenants and residents, whether you are involved in our groups or not, for your feedback and participation. By telling us what you think, this allows us to shape our service as it continues to change and improve in these challenging times.

Kenny Gillespie
Head of Housing & Communities.
Housing Services | Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services

The Customer Landlord Relationship

Indicator 1

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord

We are required by the Scottish Housing Regulator to carry out a large-scale survey at least every three years. Our latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey was carried out in Autumn/Winter 2021/22. We asked an independent research company, 'Research Resource' to carry out the survey on our behalf. Following guidance issued by the Scottish Housing Regulator, 1000 of our tenants were randomly selected to participate in a telephone survey. A variety of questions about levels of satisfaction with the Housing Service were asked during the survey. This information was collected during that survey.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	86.7%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	91.8%
Charter 21/22	75.3%
Charter 22/23	75.3%

Indicator 2

Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions

This information was collected via our latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey which was carried out during Autumn/Winter 2021/22. We have listened to what our tenants told us about preferred methods of communication and made changes to reflect this. In response, we use personal letters where the information to be communicated is of a personal nature. Other more general information is published in the tenants' magazine, 'Tenant Talk' and/or available on the Falkirk Council website. The introduction of the new Housing Online portal this year means that we will be able to tailor individual preferences for communication to each tenant.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	89.2%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	95.2%
Charter 21/22	85.2%
Charter 22/23	85.2%

Indicator 5

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes

Our most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey shows that most of our tenants are happy with the opportunities Falkirk Council's Housing Service offer them to participate in decisions that affect them. We continue to promote all options for involvement and encourage tenants to give their views using a method they are comfortable with at the level they feel most comfortable with.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	80.8%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	92.9%
Charter 21/22	98.0%
Charter 22/23	98.0%

Our Properties and Rent

Indicator C5

Rent Increase to be applied next year

In the reporting year, the weekly rent was increased for all our properties by 2%, as agreed by tenants as part of the three-year rent consultation carried out in 2020.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	5.1%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	2.0%
Charter 21/22	2.0%
Charter 22/23	2.0%

Our Housing Stock

As at 31st March 2023, the council had 16719 properties available for rent. Here we show the size and average weekly rent for our housing stock.

Size of home	Number of homes owned	Average Rent	Scottish Average
1 Apartment	13	£55.88	£78.26
2 Apartment	2721	£62.77	£83.46
3 Apartment	8968	£73.02	£86.28
4 Apartment	4511	£81.69	£93.96
5+ Apartment	506	£93.57	£103.72

Housing Quality and Maintenance

Indicator 6

Percentage of properties meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) at the reporting year end

The number of properties meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) has increased this year. We have a five-year investment programme in place to ensure our stock continues to be maintained to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and progress is made to attain Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) targets. This ensures that our stock continues to be maintained in accordance with the SHQS capital and revenue funding is aligned with future investment requirements as specified in our Housing Asset Management Plan. This approach is an integral part of the development of our Housing Investment programme and our budget and decision making processes. A total of £184m will be invested over the next 5 years for priority housing improvement work to maintain and improve our stock to specified standards set out in the SHQS and ESSH.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	79.0%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	90.0%
Charter 21/22	59.9%
Charter 22/23	70.0%

Indicator 7

Percentage of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home

This indicator was last surveyed in our latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out during Autumn/Winter 2021/22. We continue to invest in tenants homes and have a £184 million capital investment programme in place for the next five years to ensure our stock is maintained in accordance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	84.2%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	93.5%
Charter 21/22	77.0%
Charter 22/23	77.0%

Indicator 8

Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)

Due to the implementation of our New Housing Management system, the average time to complete an emergency repair was based on a representative sample of all available data. The implementation of the new IT system has impacted our repairs service as the required reports to monitor properties and productivity daily have taken longer than anticipated to refine. The final figure for this indicator may be subject to a correction.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	4.17
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	5.03
Charter 21/22	4.59
Charter 22/23	4.30

Indicator 9

Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)

Due to the implementation of our New Housing Management system, the average time to complete a non-emergency repair was based on a representative sample of all available data. The implementation of the new IT system has impacted our repairs service as the required reports to monitor properties and productivity daily have taken longer than anticipated to refine. The final figure for this indicator may be subject to a correction.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	8.68
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	13.88
Charter 21/22	16.99
Charter 22/23	10.14

Indicator 12

Percentage of tenants who have had repairs carried out in the last 12 months satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service

Levels of satisfaction with the overall repairs service have increased slightly from last year and we are pleased to report that levels of satisfaction with our repairs service remain high in comparison to the Scottish average.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	88.0%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	93.7%
Charter 21/22	92.4%
Charter 22/23	93.5%

Neighbourhood and Community

Indicator 3

Percentage of all complaints responded to in full at Stage 1

This year we received a higher volume of complaints and enquiries in comparison to the previous year. The percentage of complaints responded to in full at Stage 1 decreased slightly this year, in comparison to the previous year. We always aim to answer complaints as quickly as possible, and within the required timescales. However, some complaints will cross over into the next reporting year.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	93.8%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	90.6%
Charter 21/22	93.2%
Charter 22/23	90.9%

Indicator 3

Percentage of all complaints responded to in full at Stage 2

The percentage of complaints responded to in full at Stage 2 increased this year in comparison to the previous year. This demonstrates that although we received a higher number of complaints and enquiries this year more stage two complaints were answered in full. We value all complaints and feedback and have a strong focus on ensuring all complaints are responded to in full and resolved as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	92.5%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	81.8%
Charter 21/22	84.3%
Charter 22/23	96.0%

Indicator 4

The average time in working days for a full response at Stage 1 (complaints)

This year the overall volume of complaints and enquires has increased from the previous year which has impacted our response time in answering complaints. We will continue to focus on the value which complaints bring and the trends which underlie the figures. We aim to use complaints as a tool to help us identify areas where our service can be improved, and to drive that improvement forward.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	5.8
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	4.9
Charter 21/22	4.8
Charter 22/23	7.8

Indicator 4

The average time in working days for a full response at Stage 2 (complaints)

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	19.3
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	23.3
Charter 21/22	20.7
Charter 22/23	24.1

Indicator 13

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the contribution to the management of the neighbourhood that they live in

The percentage of tenants satisfied with contribution to the management of the neighbourhood that they live in has reduced following our latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey which was conducted in Autumn/Winter 2021. In response to this our Housing Operations staff are working in a more flexible manner to make them more visible and approachable in our communities. We will continue to utilise customer feedback as a continuous driver for service improvement.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	84.3%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	94.3%
Charter 21/22	84.0%
Charter 22/23	84.0%

Indicator 14

Percentage of tenancy offers refused during the year

We made changes to our Allocations policy in October 2020 to ensure those who were most in need were able to access housing as quickly as possible. The changes help applicants make more informed choices when bidding on a property. So that we can learn about why an applicant decided to accept or refuse a property, the way we record refusals has changed and we are now recording more detailed information regarding refusals. The percentage of tenancy offers refused has reduced this year and we are recording lower numbers of refusals. This is in part due to the changes that have been introduced to the way we advertise properties which help better inform bidding choices.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	30.9%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	34.5%
Charter 21/22	33.2%
Charter 22/23	25.5%

Indicator 15

Percentage of antisocial behaviour cases reported in the last year which were resolved

The number of cases resolved has reduced from the previous year. However, our new procedures and resources meant that we can respond quickly more efficiently. Not all reported incidents lead to an antisocial behaviour (ASB) case being opened and this means that many are now resolved with no requirement for a case to be opened. In comparison to the previous year where every incident opened a case we believe this approach allows us to concentrate on the more serious cases of ASB.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	94.2%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	88.9%
Charter 21/22	80.1%
Charter 22/23	75.3%

Indicator 22

Percentage of the court actions initiated which resulted in eviction

The number of evictions has increased this year as the restrictions put in place to prevent possession action have now been lifted. Eviction is always a last resort and we continue to seek positive engagement with our tenants prior to and during any court action.

Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	7.0
Charter 21/22	0.0
Charter 22/23	7.0

*we do not compare this indicator to other landlords, as it is not appropriate to make comparisons for evictions.

Access To Housing and Support

Indicator 16

Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year

Our approach to tenancy sustainment is based on building positive relationships with tenants. To enable tenants to sustain their tenancy effectively we acknowledge that supporting tenants in the early stages of their tenancy is vital. We are currently working with the homeless team to ensure the best possible start to a tenancy and continue to support tenants through our programme of Annual Tenant visits. We have a working group from across the housing service who meet regularly to review our practice to ensure tenant support is maximised.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	91.2%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	92.9%
Charter 21/22	94.5%
Charter 22/23	94.5%

Indicator 17

Percentage of lettable houses that became vacant during the year

The percentage of lettable houses becoming vacant has decreased slightly this year. However, it is considered in part that this is due to the effective interventions of Housing Operations Housing Needs and Finance assisting tenants to retain their tenancies, through support or financial assistance. We continue to explore ways to increase our stock through our new build and buy back Initiatives.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	7.4%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	6.7%
Charter 21/22	6.5%
Charter 22/23	5.9%

Indicator 19

Number of households currently waiting for adaptations to their home

The number of households waiting on adaptations to be carried out has increased this year and we have received a higher number of applications than the previous year. Meanwhile the number of adaptation applications completed this year reduced which means there are now more people on the waiting list for adaptations. Due to the implementation of our new Housing Management System and the inability to produce the required reports to monitor productivity, the actual number of completions may be higher than reported as performance for this indicator is based on completions that have been recorded.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	30.5
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	268
Charter 21/22	202
Charter 22/23	573

Indicator 20

Total cost of adaptations completed in the year

The amount spent on adaptations reduced this year, which reflects the lower number of adaptations work which took place during the year.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	£252,365
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	£432,908
Charter 21/22	£768,204
Charter 22/23	£483,478

Indicator 21

The average time to complete adaptations (days)

The average time to complete household adaptations has increased this year. There are several reasons which explain why the average time to complete household adaptations has increased, these include back logs in our general repairs and maintenance service, shortage of materials and tradesmen and the need to balance adaptations work with general and planned maintenance improvements. We continue to monitor performance in this area.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	54.3
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	32.0
Charter 21/22	62.6
Charter 22/23	67.0

Indicator 30

Average time to re-let properties

Over the last few years, the average time to relet properties has increased across the housing sector. Restrictions put in place during the pandemic affected how quickly properties were relet and created a backlog of properties which required work. We have employed additional resources to tackle the backlog and improve relet times. We have created a void working group to prioritise and monitor this work and have implemented processes to improve relet times and minimise rent loss. We continue to monitor our performance in this area and are focusing on improving our void performance to maximise available stock for those in the most housing need.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	55.6
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	66.8
Charter 21/22	77.0
Charter 22/23	97.9

Getting Good Value From Rents and Service Charges

Indicator 26

Rent collected as percentage of total rent due in the reporting year

During 2022/23 we implemented a new Housing Management System, and this slowed our rent collection activity due to system upgrades. We also recognise the increased cost of living and record high energy prices have heavily impacted household incomes. In recognition of financial strain placed on households we have explored ways to better support our tenants and have employed Household Support Officers to provide additional support and assistance to our tenants. Reducing rent arrears is a priority for our Housing Officers, who regularly engage with tenants to provide support, maximise income and reduce arrears.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	99.03%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	97.15%
Charter 21/22	98.19%
Charter 22/23	96.60%

Indicator 18

Percentage of rent lost through homes being empty during the last year

Increased rent loss through homes being empty reflects the average times to re-let properties increasing during the reporting year.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	1.40%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	1.58%
Charter 21/22	1.79%
Charter 22/23	1.97%

Indicator 25

Percentage of tenants who feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money

We asked this question via our Tenants Satisfaction Survey which was carried out in Autumn/Winter 2021/22. Results from this survey show the percentage of tenants that feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money decreased. We are currently looking at more ways to communicate with our tenants about rent affordability and value for money. Our rents continue to be set at one of the lowest rates for a social landlord in Scotland.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	81.8
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	85.4
Charter 21/22	76.6
Charter 22/23	76.6

Other Customers

Indicator 31

Average weekly rent per pitch

Our rents for the travelling person site increase in line with our other rents. The rent increase for 22/23 was 2% which was agreed by tenants as part of the three-year rent consultation carried out in 2020.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	£73.31
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	£87.08
Charter 21/22	£88.76
Charter 22/23	£90.51

Indicator 32

Satisfaction with management of Gypsy/Traveller site

Over the last two years we have seen a reduction in the number of tenants using our travelling person site and this has ultimately affected levels of tenant satisfaction. We continue to support our existing tenants and have installed WIFI to allow tenants to access online services and have also installed additional security barriers to increase our tenants safety.

Scottish Average	
Charter 22/23	75.6%
Falkirk Council	
Charter 20/21	100.0%
Charter 21/22	100.0%
Charter 22/23	40.0%

Tenant Feedback Contact Details

Falkirk Council Community Engagement Team

The Forum
Callendar Business Park
Falkirk FK1 1XR
Tel: 01324 590796
Email: tenant.participation@falkirk.gov.uk
Web: www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant

Scottish Housing Regulator

Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow G4 0HF
Tel: 0141 242 5642
Email: shr@shr.gov.scot

You can compare Falkirk Council's performance with other social landlords across Scotland, view our Engagement Plan, and learn more about the Charter by visiting the Scottish Housing Regulator's website at www.housingregulator.gov.scot

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, LARGE PRINT or audio tape, please contact one of our Advice & Support Hubs.

How can you get involved?

Falkirk Council's Community Engagement Team is here to help you tell us how Housing Services could improve its performance.

With your involvement, you will be able to tell us what you think about the services we provide, make suggestions on how we could do better, and check out how we are performing.

There are many ways that you can get involved and help Housing Services to keep you informed. These include:

- Tenants' & Residents' Forum
- Open Days
- Questionnaires & Surveys
- Comment Cards
- Consultation Register
- Customer Scrutiny Panel
- 'Tenant's Choice' Project Award Scheme
- Housing Asset Management Plan Group
- How Your Rent Money is Spent Group
- Registered Tenants' & Residents' Organisations
- Editorial Panel
- Estate Walkabouts

If you would like to be involved, please contact the Community Engagement Team on 01324 590796 or by email at tenant.participation@falkirk.gov.uk

FALKIRK COUNCIL

