

Our Annual Assurance Statement

West Lothian Council's Council Executive confirms that we comply with the regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Framework. Regular scrutiny of service performance and improvement plan are undertaken via our governance structure of committees and tenant scrutiny. This assurance includes that we:

- West Lothian Council complies with duties, obligations, and responsibilities placed on landlords by legislation and through statutory guidance and is working towards delivering good outcomes as set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services.
- The one exception to this is in relation to eight breaches of The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2017, where 8 households were placed in unsuitable accommodation for more than seven days during the reporting year. This order places a statutory limit of 7 days on the time families with dependent children and pregnant women spend in unsuitable temporary accommodation unless there are exceptional circumstances. The underlying reason behind these breaches is a lack of suitable accommodation and turnover/low number of lets within West Lothian, and increasing demand for housing. The service has increased our volume of temporary tenancy stock and have increased our percentage lets to homeless to decrease the possibility of any breaches of this order.
- The Rapid Housing Transition Plan 2019-2024 has been approved by council executive and seeks to reduce the pressures on the service through the development of a collaborative approach with local housing providers to tackling homelessness, reducing use of bed and breakfast and achieving settled accommodation for people who are homeless.
- The council recognise the range of risks and pressures associated in delivering on the standards and outcomes in relation to homelessness, and improvements in this area of the service and the availability of suitable accommodation is one of the key areas of focus for the service as we deliver the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in 2021/22.
- The council understands the ongoing impacts of UK Government welfare reforms on tenants, and in particular, those most vulnerable to social deprivation. The service has made practical support and guidance a cornerstone of our service development programme, in order to help mitigate future impacts/pressures on tenants and our ability to respond. The planned migration of legacy benefits and ongoing impacts of Universal Credit remain the biggest threat to stable household income and service revenue collection.
- West Lothian Council are prioritising the recovery and renewal of services as Scotland and the housing sector moves out of Covid-19 related restrictions on our activities. The service has spent considerable time and resources on mitigating the worst impacts of the pandemic on tenants in 2020/21, and is understands the pressure this has placed many of our tenants under. Ensuring support and easing access to key services remains a service priority, and the progress made on embedding digital service delivery is built upon in the coming year.
- The service has an ARC improvement plan in place to ensure continuous improvement is a key focus for all service areas.

We confirm that we have seen and considered sufficient evidence to give us this assurance.

We approved our Annual Assurance Statement at the meeting of our Council Executive on 5th October 2021.

CLr Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Chair of West Lothian Council Executive

Marjory Mackie

Interim Head of Housing, Customer & Building
Services