

Our Performance Report 2022–2023

**Meeting the Scottish
Social Housing Charter**



Welcome to your report on Places for People Scotland's performance between April 2022 to March 2023

Customer Scrutiny

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets Customer outcomes that the Scottish Housing Regulator expects us to achieve. Places for People Scotland closely monitor and review these outcomes to ensure we are meeting these requirements

Places for People Scotland are passionate about putting Customers at the heart of everything we do. That's why it's important to us we involve Customers in the scrutiny of our performance.

Getting feedback from Customers was an essential part of preparing this Performance Report.

We invited Customers and members of our National Customer Group, to a scrutiny event in August 2023. We shared our performance information and listened to Customer feedback to help us understand what we are doing right and where we can improve.

If you would like to get involved with scrutinising our services, please find out more by visiting the Get Involved page on our website: www.placesforpeople.co.uk/about-us/our-social-impact/how-we-make-a-difference

[Get involved | Ways to get involved](#)

We have set out the key performance and satisfaction statistics for April 2022 to March 2023 and also shared the areas for improvement.

Scottish Housing Regulator

You can read about our performance on the Scottish Housing Regulator's website. This includes their reports on our performance, how we compare with others, our full Charter return, and our audited accounts. You can access all the information here:

www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/castle-rock-edinvar-housing-association-ltd

Please note that we are trading as Places for People Scotland, and our legal name is Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association Limited.

Please call us on **0131 657 0600** if you need any support in accessing the report.

You can view the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes we are reporting on by visiting www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-november-2022/pages/2

You may notice in the Scottish Social Housing Charter that outcomes 12 and 16 (Homeless People and Gypsy/ Travellers) are not included. This is because we don't support this service in Scotland at the moment.

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“I am proud of what we have achieved this year to support our Customers. We will continue to work with our partners to maintain safe, thriving Communities and build more affordable homes across Scotland to address the housing shortage”

A warm welcome from

Katie Smart

Director, Places for People Scotland





It has been a busy and productive year; I have loved every minute in my new role as Director for Places for People Scotland. With almost 12 years of experience in the housing sector across different roles, it's great to use my combination of skills and expertise to lead Places for People Scotland.

I am very proud of all the Community initiatives we have been able to offer this year and by listening to our Customers, we have been able to act promptly to their needs and provide solutions to a variety of challenges. We have also increased our range of Customer services, from digital inclusion, early intervention support, mentoring and weekly food pantries and warm spaces.

Delivering these services cannot be done in isolation and our teams have established strong working partnerships with local authorities, emergency and public services, corporate partners, and other charities. Our combined efforts and drive have ensured we are able to support our Customers and extend our offer to all our Communities, a fantastic example of how we're stronger together.

Our local teams need to be visible in our Communities with the resources and tools to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. That's why we are will be increasing the number of Customer front line housing roles and introducing new technologies to achieve this. We put our People first and supporting them is a key objective for myself and the Places for People Group.

Whilst we need to focus on providing support to our existing Communities we know that the housing shortage in Scotland is a huge problem however we are part of the solution. We will continue building more affordable homes whilst looking at other opportunities to increase our presence across Scotland. Everyone in Scotland deserves a safe, warm home in a thriving Community, and we won't stop until this vision is a reality. We are in a strong position supported by Places for People Group to ensure this can happen.

It is an exciting, challenging time and I am looking forward to the year ahead.

Katie Smart
Director, Places for People Scotland

Equalities

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says that social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

We assess how our policies, actions, and services impact different groups of People. These are called Equality Impact Assessments, and they help us to identify if any group could be affected and how we can fix that.

All our People complete equality training. This training gives our teams the essential skills needed to maintain an inclusive approach for Customers.

Customer feedback

Customers told us that whilst there was already a wealth of support for Customers, more resources could be focused on People with complex needs.

What we're doing

We are now approaching some of our Customers with more complex needs to better understand how they would like to be supported by us.



Communication

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says that social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Communication comes in many forms, including a quick update on the phone, meeting Customers in their homes, newsletter updates, letters, social media and website content.

When we communicate with our Customers, we aim to provide a range of communication methods and formats in a timely, clear, transparent, and accessible way.

Customer feedback

Customers told us that they would like it to be made clear who their housing officer is and how they can contact them. In the coming months we plan to review our Customer communications, as part of this we will ensure that each Customer has clear information on their housing officer and their contact details. We are also increasing our front line resource so housing officers have more time to visit their communities.

Complaints

Of all complaints received by Places for People Scotland,

93%

were responded to within the target timescale

Stage 1 complaints were resolved in an average of

3.76

working days

Stage 2 complaints were resolved in an average of

21.9

working days



Participation

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says that social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

In the last year, we have continued to create more ways for Customers to get involved and have their say. This engagement aims to give Customers the opportunity to tell us what they think about our services, policies, and processes so we can make insightful and fulfilling improvements.

We consulted Customers on changes to emergency repairs, rent increases and the new flexible, fairer approach to rent increases.

There are national and local groups with flexible opportunities for involvement, with almost 100 Customers taking part in Scotland.

Our National Customer Group (NCG) represents the Customer voice and works with local Customer involvement groups to ensure continued two-way communication between the Places for People Scotland Regulated Board and our Customers - ensuring we can

get to know our Customers and enhance their experience.

The NCG is made up of 15 Customers from across the UK, including Customers from Scotland. They play a key role in influencing key issues, policies and services.

In the past year, the NCG has met quarterly with the Places for People Group Board to share Customers' views directly with the leadership team, including Greg Reed, our Chief Executive.

The NCG scrutinises our performance and the services we deliver while providing feedback on matters affecting Customers and their homes.

We are in the process of bringing together a Regional Customer Group in Scotland which will give Customers the opportunity to have a direct impact on life in their own Communities.

The Places for People Scotland Tenant Participation Strategy is a legal requirement that the whole Places for People Group has adopted as a best practice strategy when involving Customers.

Customer feedback

Our customers told us they would like to receive a local newsletter with Community activities they can get involved in.

We plan to review all Customer communications in the coming months with the aim of introducing as much location-specific information as possible with the aim of introducing more region specific information.

To find out more about the national and local groups you can join at Places for People please visit: www.placesforpeople.co.uk/about-us/community/customervoice/ or call **01772 667002**.



Quality of housing

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says that social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) when they are allocated; are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair; and also meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH1) by December 2020.

Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS)

- The SHQS is in place to ensure homes are energy efficient, safe and secure, not seriously damaged, and have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition.
- By the end of March 2023, **81%** of our homes met the standard against a 100% target.
- Abeyances and failures have increased year-on-year, mainly due to the Fire Alarm System and Electrical Installation Condition Report requirements not being

fully met. We have plans in place to improve our performance and tackle this shortcoming this year.

When something is in abeyance, it means that it has been put on hold and will be looked at again in the future. The homes currently in abeyance will be reviewed again in coming months.

330

were classified as abeyances due to Customer refusals. We regularly review these to see if we can get access.

425

were classified as fails and will be addressed in 2023/2024.

505

were classified as exemptions, due to technical reasons or disproportionate costs.



Letting Standards

- During last year, we invested in

379

empty homes for re-let.

- for example some empty homes needed essential repairs before they could be let.

Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH1)

92%

of our homes meet the standard against the target of 100%.

- By the end of the year, 402 homes were still to meet the standard and 140 were exempt.

Customer feedback

Our Customers have told us they would like to receive a newsletter with updates on upcoming investments to their homes and estimated timeframes. We plan to review and improve our Customer communications about planned investment works.



Repairs, maintenance and improvements

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says that social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.

Routine repairs

- We make sure all routine repairs are attended to within our **28-day** target.
- **94.16%** of repairs were completed right first time.

Last year we attended to

13,842
routine repairs

99.8%

of repair appointments attended within our **28-day** target



Emergency repairs

- We make sure emergency repairs are made safe within our **24 hours** target.
- The average time taken to make an emergency repair safe for a customer was **16.7 hours**.
- We carried out **6,870** emergency repairs.

Gas checks

99.95%

of properties have received their annual gas service.



Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)

At the end of March 2023

95.13%

of homes had an EICR dated within 5 years.

99.4%

satisfaction with the annual gas and electrical safety checks against the

90%

target in our Gas Servicing and Electrical Testing surveys.

Fire Alarm Systems (LD2s)

Over the year,

97.82%

of our blocks of flats have had a fire risk assessment.

Of the 437 classed as non-compliant, there are now 16 outstanding. These 16 are also outstanding an electrical test. We are working to get to 100% compliant as a priority.

Customer feedback

Customers asked if they could have opportunity to give feedback on the service after a repair has been carried out. Our Repairs team are going to explore sending Customers a text or an email after having a repair, asking them to let us know about their experience.



Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure as far as reasonably possible that tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.

Estate Management – stair cleaning

- The cost for contracted stair cleaning was

£463,390

for the year, covering 251 of our Communities.

- The cleaning standard is based on an agreed specification, and Communities receive a weekly or fortnightly clean, depending on building age and condition.
- The contractor's operations manager inspects the cleaning daily, and we aim to check each staircase every three months.

- 5 ad hoc cleans are also carried out as needed when issues are reported by Customers and Colleagues, this totalled to

£7,713.

Estate Management – landscape maintenance

- The annual cost for landscape improvements was £16,639. This figure covers improvements over 215 of our Communities.
- The contractor works to agreed specifications and standards, which are inspected and monitored by the contractor, our inspectors, and the grounds maintenance consultant. We also rely on feedback from Customers.



Anti-social behaviour (ASB), neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

- we supported and closed

113 ASB cases in the year

- We saw a **3%** increase in neighbour related contacts from Customers.
- **100%** of the cases were responded to within our five-day response time, an increase from 97% last year.

Partnerships

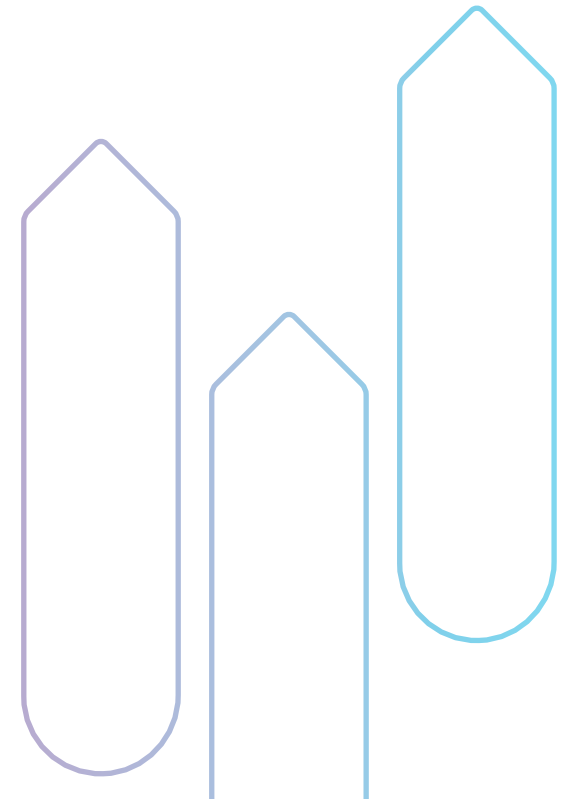
We take Community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour very seriously and recognise that it is one of the most important issues affecting Customers in their home and surroundings.

However, we recognise that other agencies have duties and powers that may be more appropriate to lead on some matters, such as the Police and Local Authority Environmental Health Teams - we continue to work closely with these agencies.

We also work with partner agencies and other stakeholders in their Communities to ensure that the appropriate action is taken. Where there are gaps in services we look to develop initiatives with partners. Examples of this include: youth diversionary interventions, assertive outreach for those impacted by substance abuse, mentoring programmes, Community drop-in surgeries and days/weeks of action.

Customer feedback

Some Customers said they hadn't had a visit from a housing officer at the beginning of their tenancy. We are recruiting more front line roles to help reduce the size of the areas covered by a housing officer. This will enable more in person visits to take place.



Housing options

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says social landlords work together to ensure that people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them. People at risk of losing their homes get advice on what they can do to prevent this. Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.

- Our Lettings Team are available to give information and advice on housing options. We also have information on our website.
- We share information on housing options in the following ways. We don't rely on digital only information to make sure it's accessible:
 - Website
 - Email and phone enquiries
 - Sign posting to other organisations such as local councils and others for specialist advice.

- We are members of Edindex common housing register for Edinburgh. We have our own common housing register called Home Search for East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian. Applications are reviewed every year for both.
- Changes in Customers' circumstances are easily updated and can be made by Customers themselves online.
- We support local authorities with their homeless applicants as required by law, with their Rapid Rehousing plans and Housing First initiative.



Access to housing

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.

- We are Edindex partners along with other housing associations in Edinburgh.
- Edindex is run by The City of Edinburgh Council. Customers only need to complete one application to gain housing support.
- The Edindex website has a full range of information and our own Home Search for other council areas has a useful 'help' facility.
- Our Customers can apply for mutual exchanges and transfers. However, some of our homes are let for transfers only.

- Where we don't have a common housing register in place, we get nominations from the local councils. These are Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, East Dunbartonshire, and Falkirk.
- We support Customers with their applications especially if they have difficulty with online access.
- A breakdown of our lets for the past 4 years are detailed in the table

Customer feedback

Our Customers suggested that up to date photos should be used when advertising available homes, as some homes have been outdated and changed since the last photos. To improve this, we plan to review our website content at regular intervals to make sure that content is as up to date as possible.

Source of let	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Existing customers	27	27	62	63
Applicants	184	147	131	262
Mutual exchanges	56	45	33	57
Nominations from councils	15	128	99	85
Homeless applications	238	231	133	212
Other sources	60	44	34	109
Total	580	622	492	788

Tenancy sustainment

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says social landlords ensure that tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

Support for customers

- We have a risk-based approach to our support, focusing on Customers who need the most help to sustain their tenancies.
- We support tenancies from the early allocation of new homes. Our Housing Officers and other Colleagues help Customers with issues at an early stage, including support needs identified through the allocation process and working closely with vulnerable Customers.
- For Customers at a higher risk, our Housing Officers will help in the short term to resolve whatever issue affects their tenancy. This could include rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, and their home and garden condition.

- In 2022-2023, we supported

1,520

Customers with energy advice and benefits.

- The support we provided Customers this year created a social value figure of

£961,557

- We provided practical help through our tenancy sustainment fund, including issuing starter packs and access to hardship funds.
- We made referrals to and partnered with other organisations for support, including health and social care and outreach services for addiction and homelessness.



Financial Inclusion Team

- Our Financial Inclusion Team provide a range of individually tailored services for any Customer who needs it, including energy, money, debt and benefits advice, benefits appeals representation, grant applications and more.
- We provided face-to-face and home visiting services while also offering telephone and email advice. We assign a caseworker to the Customer until the matter is resolved.
- Our Customers received a total financial gain of over **£1.6 million** including rent related, disability and earning replacement benefits.



Cost-of-living crisis

- We are providing support for Colleagues and Customers in response to the increasing challenges in society from energy costs, inflation, rising interest rates and food prices.
- The Cost-of-Living Taskforce is a cross functional team with Colleagues from across the business.

The support in place includes:

- Hardship funds - Customers can access our hardship fund to get help towards essential household items.
- Engaging with partners - supporting food banks in our Communities to ensure Customers can access support if required.

- External forums and training – our Colleagues attend welfare rights forums to share best practice, information, and challenges. They deliver training for Customer facing Colleagues on understanding fuel poverty and identifying this at the earliest opportunity to support Customers.
- Improved referral process and communication to make referrals by Colleagues for Customers easier and quicker.



Value for money

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says that social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

What we are doing to maximise value for money

- Sharing resources for some services which gives us expert central teams and cuts down on duplication.
- Working smarter with improved processes and technology helps make the Customer and Colleague experience smoother and quicker.
- Accessing external grants such as for adaptations ensures we can help our Customers and Communities thrive whilst reducing the impact on our own budgets.
- Striking the right balance between quality and price when procuring suppliers and material.



Our performance

	2019	2020	2021	2022	Target
Total losses from empty homes	0.70%	0.71%	1.96%	2.11%	1.35%
Average repair cost for each empty home	£1,577	£2,516	£2,096	£2,910	£2,555
Average re-let times	24 days	22 days	47 days	86.3 days	22.5 days
Current arrears	4.24%	4.66%	5.29%	5.41%	3.65%

Arrears and bad debts

We are committed to help prevent our Customers falling into debt and provide advice, support, and guidance to Customers whose arrears are increasing.

Our Income Collection Team manually review increasing cases to ensure every effort to contact the Customer and potential personal visits by themselves or other teams is made. We also have a fund to help Customers at risk of eviction and who are trying to resolve the issue, making payments and every effort they possibly can to sustain their tenancy.

Customer feedback

Our Customers have suggested that there should be more promotion of the financial support available for those who don't have online access. We plan to review our Customer communications in the upcoming months and we will look to increase awareness of these services.

Rents and service charges

The Scottish Social Housing Charter says that social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that a balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and service users can afford them. Tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including details of any individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.

Rent Affordability

Since 2018, we have used the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) affordability tool for our rent affordability testing. It uses a “moderate incomes” approach using incomes just above the level that would make households typically eligible for Housing Benefit. The lowest 30% of earnings is the benchmark, then adjustments are made for differences between single households, families, and pensioners. Our aim is to balance rents for Customers and align their rents to an average of 30% of their income.

A New Rent Increase Approach

The Scottish Housing Regulator guidance asks registered social landlords to balance affordability and the ability to deliver services and manage homes. The rent increase policy at Places for People Scotland has traditionally been retail price index (RPI) in September plus 1%.



Rent Consultation

In 2022 we invited feedback from Customers on a proposed flexible range of rent increases from April 2023. The purpose of the more flexible approach was to address the broad range of affordability rates across homes and to improve fairness. Based on that feedback, here are some key findings:

- The range we consulted on was between

0% and 5.9%.

- The consultation was conducted via an email campaign.
- The consultation paper was also posted on the website with paper copies and the survey available in our retirement developments.

• **532**

Customers completed the rent increase survey.

• **73%**

of respondents agreed with our flexible approach to improve affordability and fairness.

- We also asked about the flexible range of increase of 0% to 5.9% we proposed. This means different increases will be applied to achieve the affordability and fairness we are seeking. 49% agreed, 50% did not, and 1% gave no answer.
- There was no clear majority on the proposals, and we agreed to go ahead with our proposals based on the positive feedback for improved affordability and fairness.
- Holding some rents at the same level allows us to improve affordability for Customers in some local authority areas where the average income spent on rent is higher than 30%. Increases in other areas up to 5.9% allows us to continue to invest in our homes in line with our business plan, this includes:

- **£8.4 million** of planned investment, which allows us to replace kitchens and bathrooms, improve the energy efficiency of homes, and invest in other things such as enhancing building safety systems to make your home safer.
- Increase in zero carbon and energy efficiency work to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH2).
- Continue to build new homes across Scotland.

Customer feedback

Our Customers suggested more communication on support that is available with rent and service charges (online and offline) and a clearer breakdown of what service charges cover within the cost. In the coming months, we will review the communications our Customers receive relating to rent and service charges and how this could be improved.

Terms used in this report and what they mean

Housing management

This is the cost of the teams who provide lettings, income collection, tenancy management and support services including office administration and equipment costs. Includes senior management, finance, and human resource functions.

Service charge

A charge in addition to the rent for provision of a specific service. For example, the cost of an onsite Colleague in a retirement development would be charged only to each home within that development. When we measure affordability of rents, we include any service charges.

Rent loss from bad debt

This is money that is due to us in rent that we have been unable to collect. An example would be rent arrears owed by current and former Customers.

Routine maintenance

Often referred to as day-to-day repairs. These are not planned as we can't anticipate where repairs will be required.

Planned maintenance

Repairs and servicing that we know we will carry out during the year such as annual gas servicing and electrical testing.

Major repairs investment

These are projects that improve homes. Examples are windows, heating, kitchen and bathroom replacements. It also includes any work to bring homes up to energy efficiency standards.

Depreciation

When we have made a long-term investment into improving a home, rather than recording the full value of this cost in a single year we spread it over the life of the asset. As an example, the cost of £2,000 to replace a kitchen would be spread over 20 years at £100 each year.

Interest charges

When we borrow money, we pay interest on our loans.

Available for reinvestment

Cash generated from our rental income that we directly invest in building new homes and investing in existing homes. Any money left over from our rental income, after paying all our costs, is available to spend on building new homes and improvements.





Because Community Matters

If you are struggling with the impact of increasing costs, please get in touch. We are here to help. For more information visit

www.placesforpeople.co.uk/costofliving

Visit placesforpeoplescotland.co.uk

Call 0131 657 0600

Email PFPScustomer@placesforpeople.co.uk

X [@pfpScotland](https://twitter.com/pfpScotland)

Instagram [@pfpScotland](https://www.instagram.com/pfpScotland)

LinkedIn [Places for People Scotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/places-for-people-scotland)

Places for People Scotland

1 Hay Avenue, Edinburgh, EH16 4RW

A Scottish Charity No. SC006035

