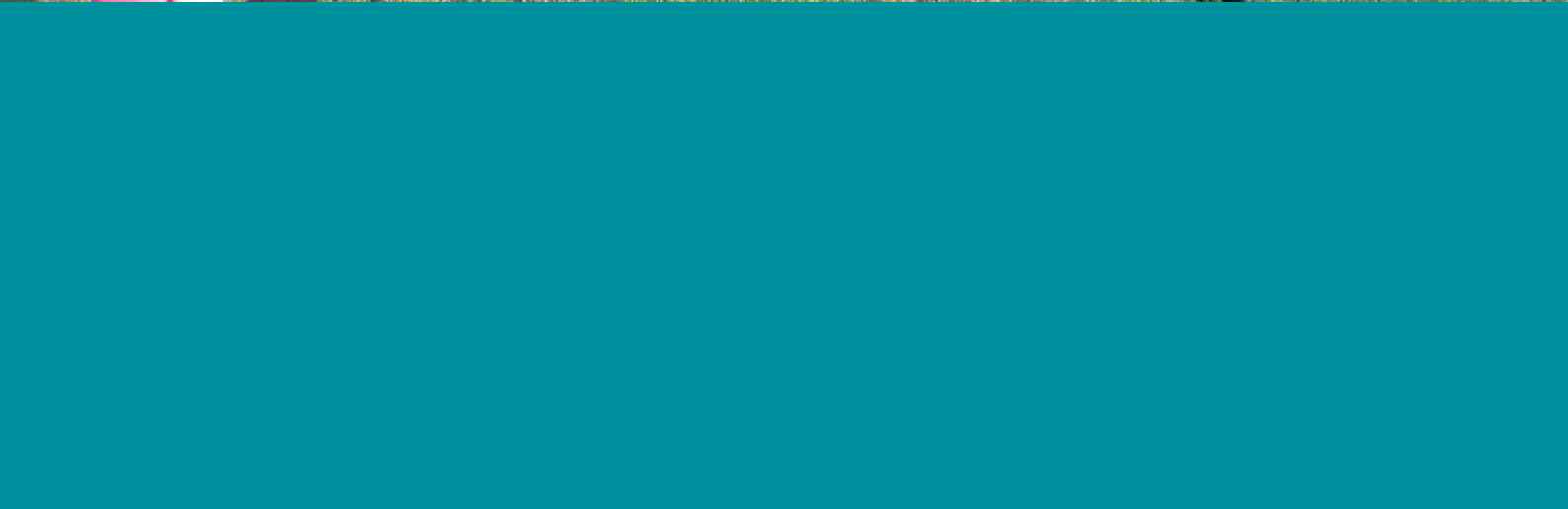




Tenants' Annual Housing Report 2015-16

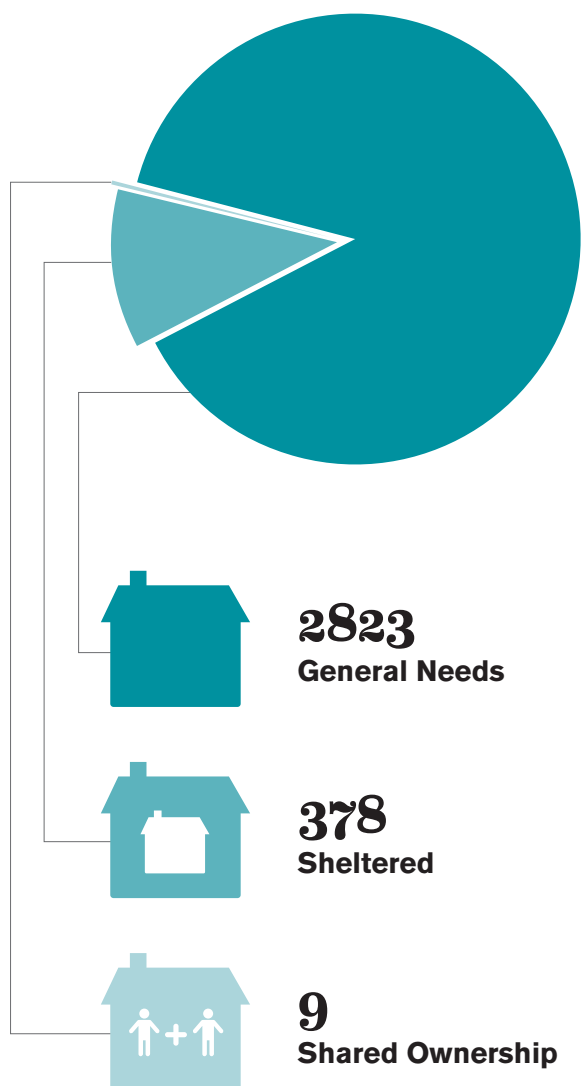




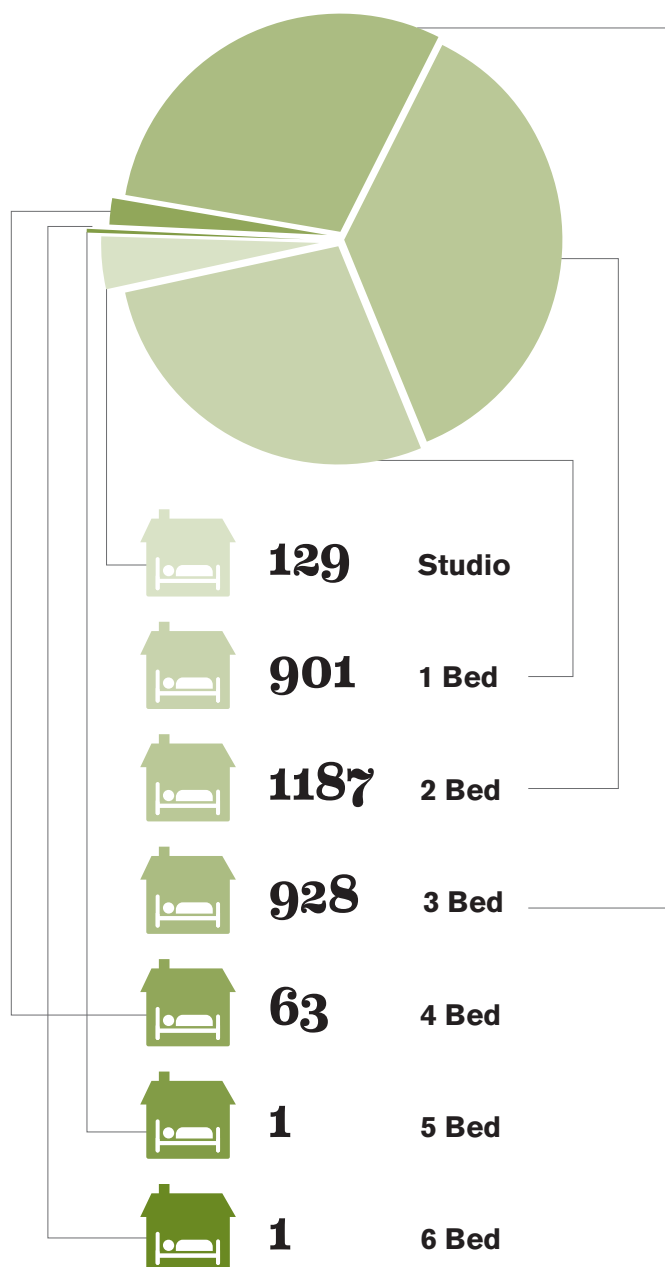
3210
Properties



We let **170** council properties this year. We were able to nominate 61 people to become tenants of homes owned by Housing Associations. The average time it took to re-let our council homes was **30 days**.



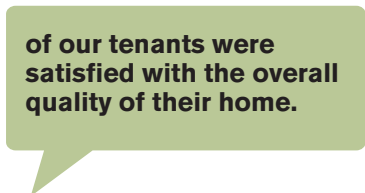
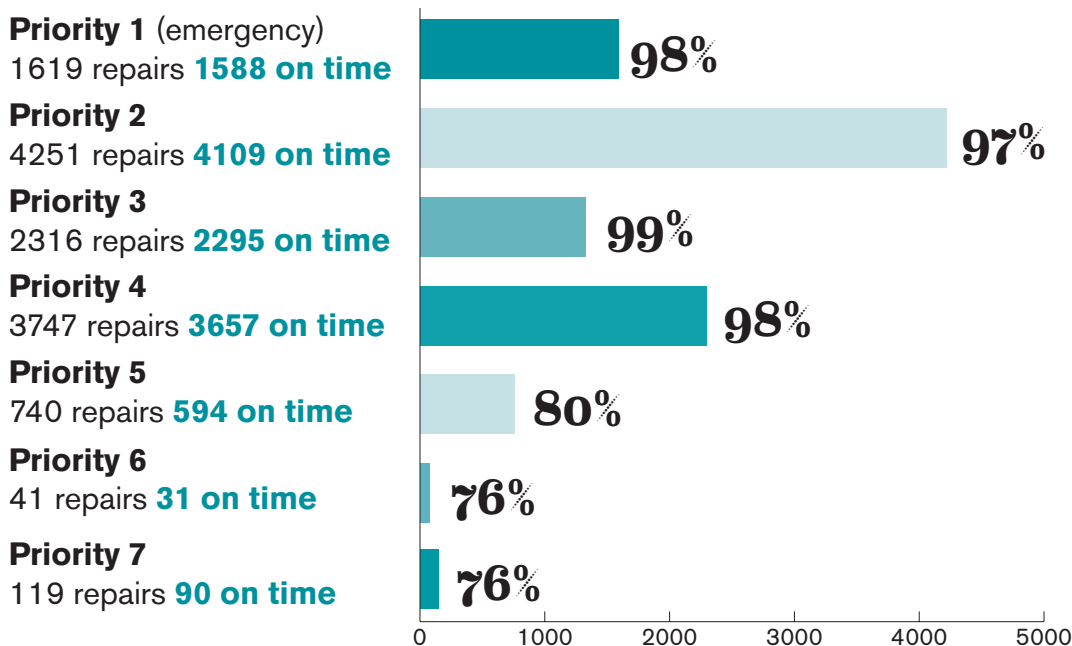
We also have **257** leasehold properties.



This year we built an additional 2 bedroom flat in Peacehaven and 7 tenants purchased their council property under the Right to Buy Scheme.



We carried out **12,833** repairs this year.



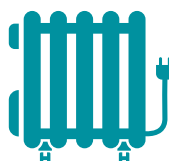
As part of our Major Works programme, this year we installed:



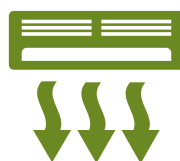
71
Kitchens



58
Bathrooms



128
Central heating system upgrades, 8 of which were radiators and/or pipework only upgrades



103
Air source heat pumps



71
Homes with new UPVC windows



303
New front doors

£2.587 million was spent on responsive repairs and empty properties in 2015/16. We plan to spend £2.641 million in 2016/2017.

£964,280 was spent on planned repairs in 2015/16 and we plan to spend £1.200 million in 2016/17. £4.416 was spent on major repairs and improvements in 2015/16 and we plan to spend £5.530 million in 2016/17.

It is estimated that **97.5%** of our homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. The data which is used to measure the condition of the housing stock against the Decent Homes Standard is out of date. To remedy this, the Council has invested in a condition survey of the housing stock which will be undertaken in 2016 by specialist survey company Rand Associates. The survey will be completed in October 2016.



- **9 active tenants and residents associations** across the district worked to improve their local area and fundraised to enable them to hold community events, such as summer play-schemes for children and community barbecues.
- **9 training events** were held for tenants on subjects including Asperger's Awareness, First Aid, Food Hygiene and networking events which included an award winning scrutiny team visiting from London to provide training and guidance on successful Scrutiny. A total of 71 training places were taken up by tenants.
- **71 tenants** attended our Tenants Annual Conference (Open Morning).
- **Two tenants associations** continue to be involved in supporting local foodbanks in their local area.

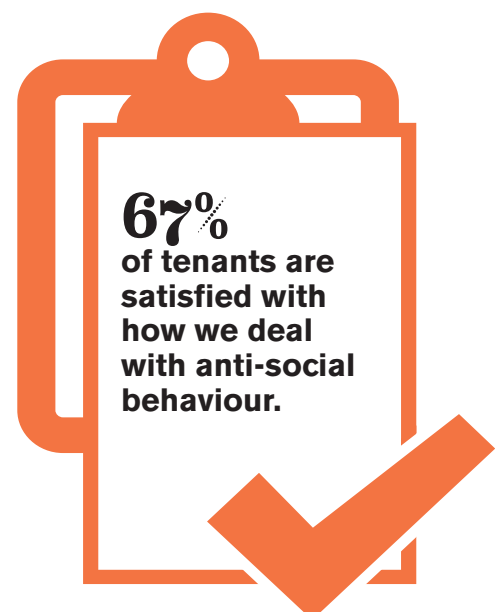
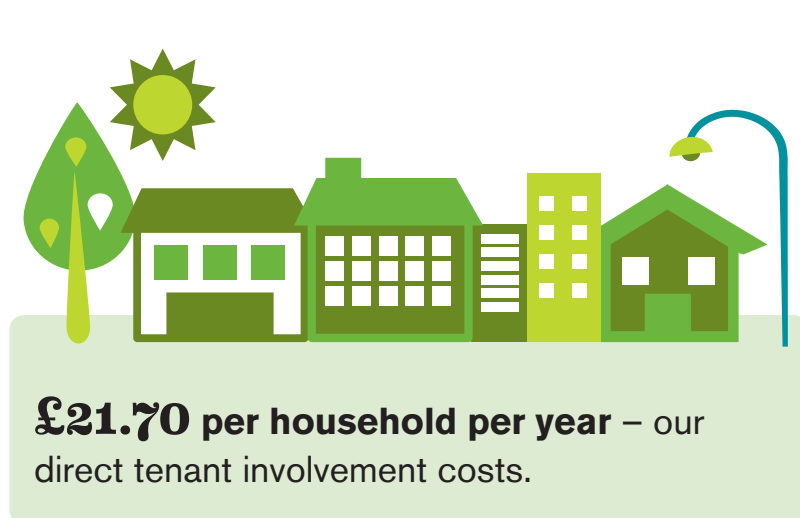
72%
of tenants are
satisfied that their
views are listened
to and acted upon
with 17% neither
satisfied or
dissatisfied.

Neighbourhood and Tenant Involvement



Involving you helps us to deliver better services to you. Over the period of this report our main tenants organisation, Tenants Organisation of Lewes District (TOLD) have worked with us to deliver improvements to many of our services including agreeing our plans to build new council homes on garage sites, helping us to help tenants affected by welfare reform and helping us to agree our new Tenancy Agreement.

- **The Tenant Scrutiny Panel investigated** our repairs reporting service, and our antisocial behaviour service and recommended a number of improvements.
- **Our Tenants' Complaints Panel has not yet reviewed any complaints.**
- **We have developed a new system to enable us to text or email you, to find out your views on any housing issues as they arise.**



Supporting our Tenants

We have continued to work hard to support tenants throughout the year:

Last year we agreed for a contractor to provide **700 of our properties with solar panels on their roofs**, which could give those tenants **up to 40% savings on their electricity**. **During 2015/16 we fitted 597 of these solar panels for our tenants.**

Our **Tenants Resource Centre in Lewes** is available to support tenants who are carrying out community business. During 2015/16, 191 meetings were held here, including weekly

foodbanks, TOLD meetings, Housing Surgeries and advice services, including Financial capability, Skype training and East Sussex Family Mediation sessions. For more information on using the centre, please contact 01273 487249.

Although we do everything in our power to help tenants who are having difficulty paying their rent, we do evict tenants who continually fail to pay. Sadly, in this period we evicted 2 households due to serious rent arrears.

57

The number of people in temporary accommodation at the end of March.

196

The number of disabled adaptations fitted this year.

25

We assisted 25 households to downsize with our Tenants Incentive Scheme.

133

The number of homelessness applications we received.

332

The number of households that we and our partnering agencies assisted to prevent or relieve homelessness.

89%

of our tenants were satisfied with the overall service that they receive from us.

60

The number of homelessness applicants that we accepted a duty to house.

Compliments and Complaints

We need to know when we get things wrong so we can improve in the future. This year we received **18 complaints**. We received **89 compliments** from our customers, which included prompt attention as well as politeness/helpfulness/professionalism of staff.

80% of our tenants are satisfied with how we deal with their enquiries



Successes and Future Plans

New Council Homes – The first phase of building 22 new Council homes is now underway and due to be completed by May 2017. These homes are being built in Seaford, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Telscombe on former garage sites and also on a vacant piece of unused land. The Council will continue to look at future opportunities to develop truly affordable housing on sites that are not being well used.

Repairs & Maintenance – The Council has invested in an asset management software system called Keystone and we have also commissioned a condition survey of our housing stock. The new system will enable us to use condition survey information to improve the planning and delivery of repair and improvement programmes needed to keep the housing stock in a good state of repair. We are currently evaluating the range of contracts we have for repairs with a view to procuring new contracts in 2017 – 2018. Resident involvement along with joint working with our partner Eastbourne Council will play a key role in developing repair services and procuring new contracts.

Rental Exchange – There is an information gap in the credit history of tenants all over the country which often results in tenants being more likely to be declined for credit by reputable companies or pay a higher price for credit, some insurance and other basic goods and services than those with a mortgage. We joined the rental exchange in July 2016 because we want to help our tenants to address this gap. To date, over 90% of our tenants will be benefitting from having their rental account work for them.

Asbestos survey – The Council will be conducting a survey to validate and update our existing asbestos data and to increase the number of surveys for dwellings held on the asbestos register. The project is due for completion in January 2017 and will be carried out in two phases. Phase 1 will focus on re-inspecting the exterior, common parts and garage sites of general needs and sheltered accommodation blocks. Phase 2 will focus on a sample survey of the interiors of 700 flats and houses. Arrangements are in place to manage defective asbestos materials should any be discovered during these surveys.

Self-assessment – This year, we started working with our tenant scrutiny team on a four year programme of self-assessments. The team, alongside housing managers, assess a service and give a score rating on the Council's performance. If necessary, an action plan of proposed service improvements is provided to the Senior Management team. This year the team assessed our tenant involvement service and our day to day repairs service. As a result a number of improvements, to both services have been introduced. The next self-assessments are due to be carried out in 2016/17. These will include how we deal with anti-social behaviour, our rent collection service, void property service, customer care and complaints.

Fraud – The Council's Investigation Team is now operating a new policy of checks on all Right to Buy (RTB) applications to prevent and detect fraud, and protect the Council against money laundering. These checks have been developed in association with other local authorities who have recognised the potential risks arising from the RTB scheme.

Successes and Future Plans

Key amnesty – The Council launched a key amnesty to stop tenancy fraud by gave tenants who are either illegally subletting or not living in their Council homes the chance to hand their keys back with no questions asked and avoid any legal action. The campaign was a great success and shows that by raising the awareness of Tenancy Fraud and by working with local residents and the local community we can make a big difference. We received numerous referrals of potential tenancy fraud which led to a number of keys being returned during the amnesty. The Council will take legal action against tenants who continue to commit tenancy fraud.

Fire awareness – The Council has been raising awareness about fire risk with information in Tenants Voice and District News. This work will continue in the next year and will feature in our 2016 tenants' conference where the fire service will be delivering an information session.

Tenancy Audits – The Council has a programme in place to visit our properties so we can update our records to reflect who is living in the property and to carry out a property inspection. Over 1400 of these visits have been completed. Some of the outcomes from visits include: Advice on transferring to more appropriate accommodation provided to an elderly couple and a disabled tenant who were struggling with getting in and out of their properties. A number of tenants in Newhaven had been struggling to get into their bath but had not pursued help as they did not want to bother staff. We advised them on the procedure to get bath aids or showers installed. Action is in place to gain access to a property where the tenant refused entry to the property and was verbally abusive towards the Council Officer. The case has also been referred to Fraud for investigation.

Supporting people cuts – Funding for our Sheltered service has been withdrawn by East Sussex County Council which resulted in the need to make changes to the service to reduce costs as well as finding ways to raise additional income. Tenants living in sheltered accommodation are now paying a personal support charge to cover some of the shortfall. The Council has also raised additional income by converting 2 scheme community bungalows in Peacehaven as well as the guest room suite in Seaford House back into rental properties. These have now been let. The scheme managers based in the area hub offices have moved into alternative offices on their schemes and work to convert the remaining area hub office suites at Reed Court, Seaford House and Meridian Court into flats has started. The Council hope to have these available to rent soon.

Move to Saxon house – Some of our staff work out of Saxon House in Newhaven, a new facility which is shared with East Sussex Fire and Rescue, Sussex Police and the Council.

Open Morning – The Tenants Open Morning, also known as the Annual Conference, was held in Seaford in October 2015. 71 tenants attended and took part in interactive sessions on new affordable housing developments and making best use of Information technology such as mobile phones and laptops. There were also presentations on topical housing issues, our new "Tenant of the Year" award and a range of information stands - including housing contractors, police and the fire service. Many of our housing staff were also in attendance to meet tenants and answer questions.

Sheltered Housing

We have **378 sheltered housing properties** across our district which consist of a mixture of flats and bungalows.



99%

of sheltered scheme residents confirmed that sheltered housing supports them to maintain their independence all or some of the time. This is an improvement on last year's 91%.



56%

of tenants who responded confirmed there were more or the same level of activities as the previous year, which shows a significant improvement on the 46% of tenants who gave the same response previously.



97%

of sheltered scheme residents feel sheltered housing helps them to maintain their independence, which compares favourably with the 82% last year.



91%

of sheltered tenants who responded feel confident in their ability to make a complaint about any aspect of the service.



Lewes District Council, in partnership with local Housing Association **Amicus Horizon**, has continued to support **"Join Us"** which uses digital media to promote social activities for tenants and older people in the wider community.

Over the past year, sheltered tenants took part in a wide range of social activities including:

- lunches, brunches and afternoon teas;
 - bingo, snooker club, arts and crafts groups, gardening clubs and competitions, arts exhibitions, Xbox and fitness sessions and cinema and theatre outings.
 - Specific events included a VJ Day event, Christmas quiz and lunch, 1940's Tea Dance held at the Fort as well as Reminiscence sessions, Easter Themed activities, an Autumn Fayre and fundraising for Macmillan.
- There were also coach trips to Sheffield Park, shopping and garden centres and the sea side.
 - In addition, tenants attended training on the Treasurers role and Food Hygiene and many of the schemes held information sessions on aids and adaptations, meal delivery services, fire safety, loan sharks and benefits advice.
 - Last but not least, Mel, one of our scheme managers, organised a five day summer holiday to the Cotswolds which was attended by over 20 residents.



For every £100 we had available to spend:

£88.80
came from rent payments for housing



Value for money

We're committed to getting the most value for money out of the income we receive. Average rent for one of our general needs properties is **£90.32**. In 2015/16 we collected **96.44%** of rent that was due.



£7.49
came from service charges



£2.65
came from rents from commercial properties like shops and garages



92p
came from the Council's General Fund towards the upkeep of open spaces used by both Council tenants and residents



14p
came from insurance settlements



£29.27
went on putting money aside for future repairs



And for every £100 we spent:

£26.52
went on repairs and maintenance



£20.18
went on servicing the money we have borrowed for our housing



£13.02
went on running the organisation



30p
went to help pay for major works to our properties and the modernisation of IT support systems



£5.62
went on providing site specific services such as grounds maintenance and lighting



£2.40
went on the Supported Housing Service



£2.17
went on a range of other expenditures



52p
was added to the balances to use in future





Tenants' Annual Housing Report 2015-16



Lewes District Council
Southover House
Southover Road
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 1AB
Telephone: 01273 471600
lewes.gov.uk
lewesdc@lewes.gov.uk
Minicom 01273 484488
twitter.com/LewesDC
facebook.com/lewesdistrictcouncil

If you need this leaflet in large print, braille, audio format or another language please contact us on 01273 471600 or equalities@lewes.gov.uk

If you have any questions about anything you read here or you would like to find out how you can get involved please contact us at: Tenants Resource Centre, 2a Horsfield Road, Lewes, BN7 2TA. Email tenant.participation@lewes.gov.uk Telephone: 01273 487249.