

EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL

HOUSING SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024



Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Equality, diversity and inclusion	5
How are we performing	5
Transparency, Influence and Accountability	7
Engagement and Communication	7
Come and Meet our Tenant Engagement Officers	9
Complaints	10
Responding to your Complaints	10
Safety and Quality	10
Improving our repairs service	11
Keeping you safe	11
Neighbourhood and Community	13
Anti-social Behaviour	14
How to contact us	15

Foreword

Welcome to East Suffolk Council's (ESC) Housing Services annual report for 2023-2024. We are committed to promoting community pride in our homes and neighbourhoods and over the past year, we have continued to work hard to ensure that our tenants remain at the heart of our housing services. You will see examples of what we have achieved throughout this report.

Our focus is on improving our tenants and residents' experiences by actively listening to you. Together we have achieved significant milestones, from restructuring our leadership team, implementing a new repairs service, delivering staff training and recruiting two new Tenant Engagement Officers. Despite these accomplishments, much remains to be done to fully achieve our ambitions.

We are committed to involving tenants in decisions about your homes and neighbourhoods. This year, we will adopt our Tenant Engagement Strategy and aim to launch a tenants panel that will provide scrutiny and monitoring of the Housing Services performance. We are proud of our progress to date and the steps we are taking to improve our Services. We are not yet where we want to be but are determined to get there by working together, and striving to improve every day.



David Beavan
**Southwold Independent
Ward Councillor**

Cabinet Member for Housing; Chair, Southwold Harbour Management Committee; Rep on Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Partnership Health; Chair, Health and Wellbeing Board; Freeport East Board member; Chair, Suffolk Coastal Forum; Suffolk Housing Board Chair

Welcome from Head of Housing

Housing for me is very much about people as well as property, and there is a suitable emphasis on that throughout this report.

April 2023 to March 2024 was a challenging year. The ongoing cost of living crisis and decommissioning of St Peter's Court resulted in a higher than usual pressure on our Housing Services. However, we have remained committed to providing the best possible support to our tenants.

There is a lot to be proud of, including improving fire safety, building much needed new council homes and creating thriving estates and communities. That said, there is still much room for improvement. This report explains some of our plans to advance our services, but to really make a difference to our communities, we need YOU! There are lots of ways to get involved with shaping the services we provide and you can find out more about this on page 9.

We are committed to developing services which better meet our tenants needs. Our ambition is to make all homes in East Suffolk safe, suitable and sustainable, in communities where residents are proud to live. We look forward to working with you to achieve this.



Heather Fisk
Head of Housing

Introduction

Our Housing Service Annual Report highlights how we are performing in key areas, from repairs, to communications, to safety, and what we are doing to improve. While we haven't always been where we want to be, we are working hard to listen to your feedback and make real changes as a result.



Promote community pride in homes and neighbourhoods

We will promote community pride in our homes and neighbourhoods to help people respect and enjoy where they live and to help maintain and improve quality of life standards.

Our Direction - Sustainable Housing

All homes in East Suffolk are safe, suitable and sustainable, in communities where residents are proud to live.

Help us to keep in touch with you

We want to keep you updated with what we are doing in your community. It's therefore important that we hold correct contact details for you.

If your contact details have changed, please let us know in one of the following ways:

Online – by logging in to your MyHome account. If you do not have a MyHome account, you can register for an account on www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/myhome

Email – estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Phone – 0333 016 2000

OR

Post – write to us at 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0EQ



Equality, diversity and inclusion



Communicating with you and delivering our services, in a way that meets your needs, is important to us.

We recognise that to allow us to do this, we need to improve the information we hold about you. This includes details of any vulnerabilities and the adjustments we need to make to improve our communication with you, and when delivering services to you.

During 2025 we will be commencing a Tenants' Census and tailoring our services to tenants.

How are we performing

With effect from 1st April 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) required all registered housing providers to report performance for 22 Measures of Tenant Satisfaction.

Tenant Satisfaction surveys are conducted for East Suffolk Council (ESC) each month, using a sample generated from a list of all council housing tenants.

The sample includes General Needs and Retired Living tenants. The results of the perception surveys are available at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/tenant-satisfaction.

This report gives the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that we reported to the Regulator of Social Housing at the end of the 2023-2024 financial year.

We are also keen to see how our performance compares with other housing providers and use data reported to the Regulator of Social Housing. The 'RSH Median' below comprises approximately 300 submissions from large landlords covering TSM results for the period between April 2023 and March 2024, for low-cost rental accommodation (LCRA) in England.

During 2023-24, 1,977 tenants were contacted successfully, and 655 (33.1%) tenants agreed to provide a response. We are hoping to increase our response rate over the next 12 months through further engagement with you.

With effect from 2025, East Suffolk Council use a company named Acuity to carry out our Tenant Satisfaction Surveys. Your views are crucial in allowing us to make any improvements needed and we are grateful to those who have taken part. If you are contacted by Acuity, please continue to help us by providing your views.

In addition to those relating to Tenant Satisfaction, we also collate and compare data relating to how we manage our services.

Tenant Perception Measures	ESC Result (TSM definition)	RSH Median
Overall satisfaction	81.2%	71.3%
Satisfaction with repairs	84.7%	72.3%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	83.5%	67.4%
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	77.6%	70.8%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	82.7%	76.7%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	61.3%	60.4%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	71.6%	70.3%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	84.4%	76.8%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	29.7%	34.5%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	73.8%	65.1%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	68.2%	63.1%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	53.1%	57.8%

Data from April 2023 - March 2024

Management Measures	ESC Result (TSM definition)	RSH Median
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (Stage 1 per 1000)	20.7	42.5
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (Stage 2 per 1000)	4.8	5.7
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 1	81.1%	82.3%
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 2	85.7%	83.6%
Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	18.1	35.5
Anti-social behaviour cases involving hate incidents relative to the size of the landlord	1.1	0.6
Emergency Repairs completed within target timescale	77.4%	95.3%
Non-Emergency Repairs completed within target timescale	78.2%	81.3%
Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	Unavailable*	0.5%
Gas safety checks	99.9%	99.9%
Fire safety checks	100.0%	100.0%
Asbestos safety checks	100.0%	100.0%
Water safety checks	100.0%	100.0%
Lift safety checks	100.0%	100.0%

Data from April 2023 - March 2024

* We are unable to report the number of non-decent homes for the 23/24 submission year with confidence, due to gaps in our stock condition data. We are working hard to resolve this. A programme of work has started to undertake stock condition surveys on all ESC properties, and we will report on this when the data is available.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability

Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	61.3%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	71.6%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	84.4%



Engagement and Communication



We recognise that we need to improve communication with you.

We want you to feel confident that we will listen to your views and opinions, act on these where possible, and let you know the outcome.

Tenant Engagement Strategy

We have created a Tenant Engagement Strategy which outlines ways in which you can contribute and how we will keep you informed.

In July, we sent this strategy to you and asked you to let us know your thoughts. We received feedback from 50 tenants and thank everyone for their input.

As a result of the feedback, we have made some changes to the strategy. We have:

- reduced the size of the strategy
- removed repetition of topics
- adjusted some of the language to make it less technical

We recognise through the feedback given that we need to work on listening to you, delivering what we agree and communicating better. These are all reflected within our plans for the strategy and we are confident that we will do this.

We also received positive feedback from tenants, some of which were:

'An excellent idea. We all like to have our voices heard.'

'Great idea.'

'It's always nice to be updated with everything, I'm please with everything since being a tenant and like the way it is run. Always good communications and may it continue. Great to see a long-term plan and know that our needs are at hand when needed.'

It's good to get people involved with decision making to talk with each other and there may be a better way.'

'A really good idea to include us in what's happening with things involving us.'

'You seem focused and have tenants interest at heart.'

'Very interesting and nice to know as a tenant that our views matter on any issues that arise.'

'It takes a village to raise a child. It should take the voices of the people to shape the policies that matter for them.'

'Happy enough, repairs are good, flat nice.'

'It's a good strategy to be inclusive.'

'Very important to be involved.'

'I think it is a great initiative to start asking tenants what they want.'

'Very commendable and necessary.'

'A very good idea, it certainly makes sense.'

The feedback from one tenant summed up our aims perfectly: **'create a community and environment that people can feel part of and happy with, so people can actively be encouraged to take an interest in, and be proud of.'**



And **'If you can build a bridge yourselves and the wider community, that's almost perfect, like most things it all comes down to respect and good manners, also making a conscious effort to understand and take on board other people's problems.'**

You can view the updated strategy, along with our Action Plan at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/tenant-engagement-strategy

If you would like a copy to be posted to you, please let us know.

To show our commitment to Tenant Engagement, we welcomed Leah Anderson in August 2024 as an additional Tenant Engagement Officer.

In line with the strategy, we are creating opportunities for you to have a real say in how the housing service is run which will help to influence decisions that affect you, your household, your home and your community.

The variety of engagement opportunities mean that there are ways in which you can be involved that suit your interests and the time you have available.

Depending on your time and interests, this could range from completing surveys, being a voice within your community, or being on a Scrutiny Panel or Tenants' Board.

We have attached a form at the back of this report with more details about these opportunities. If you are interested in being involved in any of these ways, please either:



Complete the on-line form at my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Tenant_engagement



Email ESCTenantEngagement@eastsuffolk.gov.uk



Return the enclosed form by post to us at **East Suffolk Council, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, NR33 0EQ**



or phone **0333 016 2000** and ask for either Trudi Robinson or Leah Anderson

Come and Meet our Tenant Engagement Officers

We have also carried out and arranged further drop-ins in local areas to give us an opportunity to meet you. Come and meet our Tenant Engagement Officers, Trudi Robinson and Leah Anderson, to hear about how you can be involved and help to shape our services.

They will be at the following locations:

Bungay Community Library,
Wharton Street, Bungay
Thursday 13 March, 10am – 1pm

Southwold Library,
Field Style Road, Southwold
Saturday 5 April, 10am – 12pm

Guntton Community Hall,
Hollingsworth Road, Lowestoft
Tuesday 25 March 2025, 4pm – 6pm

St Luke's Church Hall,
Rigbourne Hill, Beccles
Saturday 12 April, 9am – 11am

Halesworth Library,
Bridge Street, Halesworth
Saturday 29 March,
10.30am – 12.30pm

Whitton Life,
4 The Green, Lowestoft
Thursday 17 April, 10am – 1pm

Lowestoft Library,
Clapham Road South, Lowestoft
Thursday 3 April, 10am – 12pm

We will publicise further dates/locations for the drop-ins on our website, social media and at community venues.

If you would like us to write/email you with this information, please let us know by either, phoning us on **03330 162000** and asking for either Trudi Robinson or Leah Anderson, or emailing us at ESCTenantEngagement@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Complaints

Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	29.7%
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (Stage 1 per 1000)	20.7
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (Stage 2 per 1000)	4.8
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 1	81.1%
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales - Stage 2	85.7%

Responding to your Complaints

We are currently analysing the complaints we have received to identify the root cause of concern. We will follow this up by reviewing our process and services to allow us to make improvements.

We are keen to create a scrutiny group as part of our tenant engagement opportunities and within this, we hope to explore how we can improve your experiences with us, particularly when things have gone wrong.

Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code:

[The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#) became statutory in April 2024. The Code lays out best practice for landlords' approach to complaint handling and landlords are required by law to follow the requirements of the Code.

The aim is to embed a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector. Landlords are required to monitor their performance and annually submit a return of their performance against the code. The links to the Self-Assessment Guidance and Form can be found further down [the Complaint Handling Code webpage](#).

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Safety and Quality

Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	TBC
Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	77.6%

We are unable to report the number of non-decent homes for the 23/24 submission year with confidence, due to gaps in our stock condition data. We are working hard to resolve this.

Many of you will have been contacted by Penningtons property surveyors who we have enlisted to carry out stock condition checks on all ESC properties, and we will report on this when the data is available.

Satisfaction with repairs	84.7%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	83.5%
Emergency repairs completed within target timescale	77.4%
Non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale	78.2%

Improving our repairs service

We recognised repairs and maintenance as an area where we could make improvements. As a result, we have implemented a new computerised system of recording, allocating and monitoring the completion of repairs.

This will allow us to monitor repairs more closely, in line with our agreed service levels. We will also improve our communication with you around repairs that you report and provide regular updates as to when these will be carried out.

We want to further improve the repairs service and would really appreciate your help with this. Following completion of any works, we will send you a satisfaction survey and would be grateful if you could complete this, giving us your thoughts on the repair and service we have provided.

TSMs - Safety and Quality

Gas safety checks	99.9%
Fire safety checks	100.0%
Asbestos safety checks	100.0%
Water safety checks	100.0%
Lift safety checks	100.0%

Keeping you safe

Your safety and the safety of your home is our highest priority.

There have been legislative changes over recent years, which require us to comply with safety requirements and the safety check results show our commitment to this.

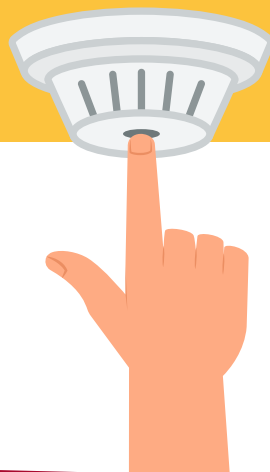
We need your help to keep you and everyone safe.

Smoke Alarms/Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Check that BOTH your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detectors work at least once every month by pressing the button on them – if you press the button and there is no sound, contact our repairs team on 03330 162 000. We will visit you to resolve the issue.

If the batteries in either of these are low, they will beep - please also contact us so that we can attend and replace the battery.

If you hear a neighbour's smoke alarm, alert the resident. If they don't respond, call 999 and ask for the fire service.



Although these are not included in the TSMs, we also complete Electrical Safety Checks. We complete these every 5 years, and during 23/24 we completed 98.3% on average.

We want to keep you safe, and carrying out these checks helps us to do this. It is really important that when we contact to arrange appointments, that you engage with us so that we can attend and complete them.



Keeping Communal Areas Safe

We will shortly be introducing new signs in our housing communal areas. These signs will remind residents and visitors of the importance of keeping communal areas free of clutter and hazardous items which ensures there is a clear route to exit in the event of an emergency.

The signs will have a dedicated QR code on them, which will enable residents to report hazardous items online.

As a reminder, you should never store items, or leave flammable materials, such as rubbish or cardboard, in communal areas.

Large items such as pushchairs and bicycles should be stored inside your property, your shed, or in dedicated storage areas, such as communal bicycle sheds.

You must never store or charge items with lithium batteries in communal areas - this includes mobility scooters, electric scooters and e-bicycles.

[Please see our 'Keeping Communal Areas Safe Policy' on our website for more details.](#) If you would like a paper copy to be sent to you, please let us know and we will arrange this for you.

To report hazardous items in a communal area, please contact our Customer Contact Team on 0333 016 2000.

Keeping Communal Areas Clean

We are expanding our cleaning and inspection schedule to include all communal areas.

Should your home have a communal area, such as a shared entrance, lobby or stairwell, our team will be visiting shortly.

The team will sweep, mop, and dust internal communal areas to make sure they are clean and tidy. They will also check communal areas for any health and safety issues, such as hazardous items or repairs.

To assist the team, please ensure you do not leave or store items in your communal area, as these may prevent the team from cleaning. Should items be found in the communal area when we visit, they may be removed.



Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Neighbourhood and Community

Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	73.8%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	68.2%

We want to hear your views! To make improvements within the community and increase satisfaction with positive contributions to neighbourhoods, we will carry out Estate Action Days and estate inspections so that we can identify and deal with any issues on East Suffolk Council land. Where issues are found and it is not our land, we will make efforts with the landowner to resolve the issue.



If you have a suggestion for an estate improvement, please contact our customer contact team on 0333 016 2000 to arrange a visit by our Estates and Inspections Team.

Our Housing Team have held three Estate Action Days so far in Lowestoft, Beccles and Bungay and collaborated on a fourth with our Communities Team and other partners.

There will be further similar events planned for 2025.

What we achieved during these events:

- Numerous tenancy audits and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans completed for those needing assistance during emergencies
- Skips/vans were provided to allow our tenants to dispose of any unwanted belongings responsibly
- Fly-tipping removed
- 28 bags of litter picked
- Many engaging conversations with our tenants allowing feedback to be given around the area and their homes
- Further opportunities to work with our tenants on issues that matter the most to them

Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	53.1%
Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	18.1
Anti-social behaviour cases involving hate incidents relative to the size of the landlord	1.1

Anti-social Behaviour

We understand that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) can severely impact residents' quality of life and sense of safety within the community.

The Housing and Tenancy team have a dedicated ASB Officer who investigates complaints made in relation to our tenants, where their behaviour is suspected to be in breach of their tenancy. If there is a breach of tenancy identified, our Anti-Social Behaviour Officer will investigate the complaint to try to achieve a resolution.

This includes researching any previous history, visiting neighbours and obtaining statements where necessary, conducting CCTV enquiries and liaising with other agencies.

They may also request that diary records are completed to build further evidence and assist in the investigation.

They will also work in partnership with other departments or agencies who can assist with the complaint such as the Environmental Protection Team, Social Services and Suffolk Constabulary for example.

Within the Housing Team, we are unable to investigate complaints which relate to non-tenants, for example, privately owned/rented properties or those properties owned by another Registered Provider. These complaints should be directed to our Communities Team at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour

However, it could be that the complaint would fall under the remit of another of our ESC Teams, such as Environmental Protection, Community Safety or even Suffolk Police, depending on the nature of the complaint. If this is the case, we would pass the complaint to the relevant team to investigate.

In the first instance we would advise that if it is safe to approach the tenant, try to raise the issue directly with them and to resolve it in an amicable way. If the other party is unaware of the problem, and the first they hear of it is when a council officer visits them, it can make things worse.

If you are not comfortable raising this problem with the tenant, or you have concerns around any potential reprisals then please report your complaint directly to our Customer Services Team on 03330 162 000 or by email to customerservices@eastsuffolk.gov.uk, who will then ensure that the complaint is recorded and forwarded to the correct department for investigation.

Our ASB officer will aim to contact you as soon as possible to discuss this complaint, they will be honest with you and explain what we can and cannot do in relation to the problem.

An appointment can be made to visit you at home to discuss the issue further if you prefer to see someone face to face, this can be arranged with them at the time of contact.

How to contact us

Gas Leak

In the event of a gas leak, telephone **CADENT** on **0800 111 999**

Repairs

- Online through your **MyHome** account - If you do not have a MyHome account, you can register for an account on **www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/myhome**
- Call our customer service centre on **03330 162000**
- To report emergency, out of hours repairs – phone **0800 4402516**
- For gas, oil or solid fuel heating faults call Gasway on Freephone **0800 047 0120**

For housing management issues email **estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk**

Paying your rent

If you are having financial difficulties or are struggling to meet your rent payments, please contact our Financial Inclusion Officers. They offer helpful, clear and non-judgemental advice and support to tenants, whether it's budgeting, debt, benefits, credit or ways to make your money go further, the team are here to help

Alternatively, if you are unsure if you are eligible to receive help with your rent and also want to check your eligibility for other benefits, websites such as **www.entitledto.co.uk** and **www.citizensadvice.org.uk** can be a helpful tool.

How to find out who your Housing Officer is:

[Find the Housing or Rent Officer for your road on our website](#) or phone **03330 162000**

Estates and Inspection Team:

Our team of Caretakers carry out regular visits to East Suffolk Council housing estates, ensuring they are safe and clean. They clean internal communal areas on a regular basis, carry out minor repairs and also respond to incidents such as spillages. Whilst on site, they report safeguarding concerns, incidents of anti-social behaviour and arrange the removal of fly-tipping as required. In addition, they test fire safety equipment, carry out health and safety inspections and issue removal notices for any items causing hazards to communal areas.

Phone 03330 162000

Changes to Customer Services:

East Suffolk Council's face-to-face customer services facility has relocated, moving temporarily to the Council's Riverside offices before moving permanently to Lowestoft Library in the early part of 2025.

The Council's Customer Services reception is open five days a week at Riverside (4 Canning Road, NR33 0EQ). Additionally, to ensure a Customer Services presence is still available in the town centre, a limited service is available at Lowestoft Library on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Customer Services at Riverside is open for face-to-face visits from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. The desk at Lowestoft Library is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays (9am-12pm and 1pm-4pm) and on Wednesdays (9am to 1pm).



Strategic Lead - Housing Services

Lisa Farrington

lisa.farrington@eastsuffolk.gov.uk



Operational Lead - Housing Services

Elizabeth Allen

elizabeth.allen@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

01502 523424



Neighbourhoods Manager

Jody Pallett

estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

01502 523120



Income and Service Charge Manager

Jo Barber

estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

01502 523516

Housing Officers



Angie Woodrow

estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

07979 721838



Jemma Lethbridge

estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

07584 445558



John Barber

estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

07881 674825



Rio Herrod

estates@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

01502 523125

Income Officers



Myles O'Connor
estates@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
01502 523126



Tracey Blowers
estates@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
01502 523122



Angela Felton
estates@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
01502523577



Marcella Hudson
estates@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
01394 444321



Anti-Social Behaviour Officer

Ian Richardson
customerservices@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
01502 523127



Financial Inclusion Officer

Tracey Pike
estates@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
01502 523578

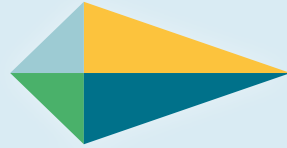
Tenant Engagement Officers



Trudi Robinson
07586 811897 **OR** 01502 523519
ESCTenantEngagement@eastsoffolk.gov.uk



Leah Anderson
07350 372092 **OR** 01502 523165
ESCTenantEngagement@eastsoffolk.gov.uk



EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk

