

Bristol City Council Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders

April 2018 - March 2019



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Welcome



Julian Higson,
Director: Housing and
Landlord Services

Welcome to the 2019 Housing and Landlord Services annual report for tenants and leaseholders. Here we share information about our performance in the last financial year between April 2018 and March 2019, as well as some of our priorities for the current year.

I have enjoyed my first year in this role, especially

getting to meet so many of Bristol's residents – both in organised meetings and out and about on our estates. It really matters that we deliver a great service to you and we are always looking at how we can do things better. Understanding your views and opinions are a vital part of this, so we have recently developed some new ways you can make your voice heard.

In 2018, we started holding Local Housing Forums as a new way for us to engage with tenants and leaseholders across the city. It has been fabulous to see an increasing number of people attending these meetings. Participants have had the opportunity to select topics for discussion and so far we have explored improving methods for contacting us, how we deal with anti-social behaviour and household waste. These discussions are helping us to get a proper grip of the issues and are generating new ideas.

This year we want to reach out to even more tenants and leaseholders, to understand what matters most to you about your housing. We are currently carrying out a city-wide survey, phoning and emailing tenants and leaseholders to seek your views. We will use the results to shape our services around the priorities you identified.

Finally, thanks to those of you who contributed to the celebration of one hundred years of council estates in Britain this year. We all appreciate how important it is to have a good home and to celebrate the significance of council housing to the city.

Our priorities for 2019/20

- **Improving the quality of relet council homes.** We want to improve new tenants' satisfaction with the moving in process and the quality of the accommodation (see page 3).
- **Improving security in our estates.** We know feeling safe and secure in and around your home is of vital importance (see page 4).
- **Building Safety.** Keeping residents in our blocks safe from fire remains a priority (see page 5).
- **Universal Credit and welfare reforms.** We will support tenants who find it difficult to maintain their tenancy. This includes offering advice and support to those struggling to pay their rent or manage their finances (see page 7).
- **Tell us what matters.** We will be conducting a survey this autumn to find out more about what you think of our services and how we can improve them (see page 8).

Homes for Heroes 100



This year we are celebrating 100 years of council estates in Bristol. The 1919 Addison Act, after the end of the First World War, triggered the construction of large scale council house estates across Britain – originally promoted as homes for returning soldiers and their families. To mark this anniversary, residents around the city are taking part in events and projects to highlight the stories of their neighbourhoods and the people who have lived there. You can find out more online at: www.ideasfestival.co.uk/themes/homes-for-heroes-100, or on Twitter with the hashtag: **#HomesfoHeroes100**



Managing tenancies

 We manage **28,597** rented and leased homes across Bristol.

 We have **30,938** tenants and **2,144** leaseholders.

 In total, we estimate around **64,000** people live in the homes we manage. This is about **14%** of Bristol's population.



 **1,420** empty properties were let.

 On average, it took us **41** days to re-let an empty property (not counting time for major repairs, such as installing a new kitchen). (2017-18: 44 days)

 **89%** of new tenants felt they had a successful start to their new tenancy. (2017-18: 93%)

 **94%** of new tenancies lasted longer than one year. (2017-18: 97%)

 We gave extra support to **27** households to help them downsize their home.

Improving our lettings process

We want to improve new tenants' experience when we relet our empty homes, to increase satisfaction with the moving in process and the quality of the accommodation. We have made some progress, but there is still more that we could do. We are carrying out a review of the entire lettings process, from when the previous tenant gives us notice until a new one moves in. Areas that we want to look at include the type of the repairs we do while the property is empty and how we can manage the different tasks required to let homes more efficiently. We are also reviewing the application process, which currently operates through HomeChoice Bristol.

Our new IT system

We upgraded some of our housing IT systems in October 2019. Some things have worked well, but there were a few problems, which have meant that we have not

been able to deliver certain services as well as we would like. Thank you for your patience if you have been affected by this.

www

Great neighbourhoods

Estates safety

We have set up an Estate Safety Group following safety concerns from residents living in high rise and low rise blocks of flats across the city. It is made up of leaseholders and tenants, as well as representatives

from the council, police and other agencies. A number of different sites around the city have been visited by the group, in order to view and discuss the issues being experienced by residents and staff. The group will be looking at examples of good practice

from across the country such as how CCTV is used in blocks, concierge services and different interventions which have worked. The group will take this learning and these ideas and determine what the priorities are for residents and Bristol City Council.

New Build Programme

Since the Council's New Build Programme began in 2014, we have built 132 new homes including the latest completion of 32 new homes at Richeson Close in Henbury.

We are proud of the quality of our new homes, which have won several awards for design and sustainability.

We are continuing to look at every opportunity to accelerate our new build programme. To help fund the construction of more council homes, we have taken the decision to build a mixture of homes on new build developments including homes for low-cost ownership or market sale. Altogether, we intend to build approximately 1,000 new homes over the next five years.



Dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB)

- We responded to **2,069** cases of ASB, working in partnership with the police, support agencies and mediators.
- **146** of these cases were hate crime reports. We work closely with Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) to support those affected and to tackle perpetrators behavior.
- **52%** of tenants were satisfied with the way their ASB complaint was dealt with (2017-18: 51%).
- **1,630** new possible cases of breach of tenancy conditions were reported to us (for example leaving homes/gardens in poor condition or having unsuitable pets).
- **278** cases of possible tenancy fraud were investigated, resulting in **46** homes being recovered.

Building safety

We are committed to ensuring that our residents are safe and that they feel safe in their homes. Fire safety is a top priority for us and we work closely with Avon Fire and Rescue Services who have endorsed our safety procedures.

We ensure that all housing blocks have an up-to-date fire risk assessment in place, that every home has a smoke alarm fitted on each level and that advice on what to do in the event of a fire is clearly displayed at the entrance of each block. Caretakers check each block for fire hazards on a daily basis.

Since 2012, we have been investing around £2.5 million each year to improve fire safety in our blocks of flats. This has included compartmentation work to prevent fire spreading between flats and upgrading to high performing fire doors made in our own joinery shop. This work programme is now complete in our high rise and sheltered scheme blocks, and we are starting work on our low rise blocks.

Following the tragic Grenfell fire in June 2017, every aspect of our fire safety policy has been reviewed. We have also commissioned independent safety assessments of our oldest

high rise clad blocks. These assessments may recommend that some further works are carried out to enhance the safety of the blocks – and money has been set aside by us for this purpose. Once we receive the full reports from the assessments, we will write to inform residents of the blocks what the findings are and what our plans are. The use of sprinklers in our high rise blocks is also being considered and we are developing a pilot scheme to trial this.



Additional services — Adaptations and services for older people

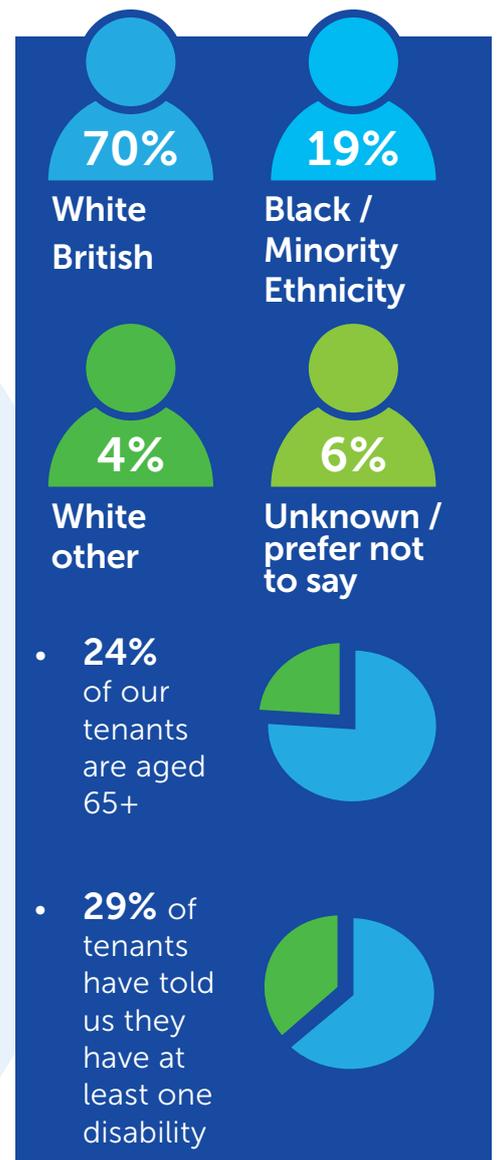
- The Services to Older People team responded to **1,147** emergency call-outs from elderly or vulnerable tenants.
- **88%** of response teams arrived within their **30** minute target (2017-18: 85%).
- **518** major adaptations were made to tenants' homes to help them live independently.

Caretaking

- Around **8,500** homes (tenants and leaseholders) receive a caretaking service.
- **96%** of site inspections we carried out judged our cleaning as satisfactory. **86%** of inspections found the standard of cleaning to be high (2017-18: 97% and 89%).



Our tenants



Repairs, maintenance and home improvements

Repairs



- **94%** were satisfied with how we dealt with their repair. (2017-18 90%)
- **96%** were satisfied they could book a convenient appointment time for a repair. (2017-18 96%)
- **88%** of appointments were kept. (2017-18 88%)
- **83%** of repairs were completed in one visit. (2017-18 88%)
- The average time to complete a standard repair, for our internal workforce, was **9.5** working days. (2017-18: 7 days)
- **95%** of new tenants were satisfied with the quality of their new home. (2017-18: 94%)

Success for our repairs apprentices

We are currently training 27 apprentices in our repairs teams, across multiple trades. Once again their hard work was recognised in the annual Onsite Bristol, an award ceremony for construction apprentices across the city. Seven of our apprentices and other staff were nominated for awards, with four of them winning. Due to our excellent apprenticeship programme, the repairs service was also shortlisted for an award for its work in supporting apprentices in the workplace.



Improving your home

- **95.7%** of our homes met the government's Decent Homes Standard. (2017-18: 94.4%)
- **933** new boilers and/or heating systems installed.
- **2,105** homes had their exteriors repaired and/or painted.
- **1,347** new kitchens were installed.
- **99.0%** of our properties with a working gas supply had a gas safety check in the last year. This had improved to 99.6% by August 2019. (2017-18 99.8%)
- **98%** of tenants who responded to us were satisfied with planned works done to their home. (2017-18: 97%)



National recognition for joinery shop

Congratulations to our talented joinery shop team, which has been nominated for the Association for Public Service Excellence Best Service Team of the Year award. They are the only joinery shop in the South West to produce such a wide range of products. Much of their work is providing replacement doors to our council homes, together with bespoke work for other council owned buildings. They have received recognition for the quality of their fire doors, which have been tested and proven to last for up to 58 minutes in the event of a fire (over and above the required 30 minutes). All of our 59 high rise blocks have now been fitted with these doors.

Rent management and finance

What we spent:

Repairs and maintenance	£30.6m
Managing tenancies	£27.2m
Improvements to existing housing stock	£22.6m
Managing our debt	£11.5m
Special services (e.g. caretaking, services to older people)	£8.3m
New builds and acquisitions	£13.2m
Other investment (e.g. new technology)	£1.0m
Total	£114.4m

We receive no funding from the rest of the council or central government. Most of our money comes from the rents and service charges we receive from you. This can only be spent on Bristol City Council homes and related services.



Rent management

12% of tenants had more than seven weeks arrears (2017-18: 11%).

Our Welfare Rights and Money Advice team helped our tenants to access over **£2 million** in welfare benefit payments.

Universal Credit update

Universal Credit is claimed from the Department for Work and Pensions and replaces the six means-tested benefits and tax credits (including Housing Benefit). New benefit claimants in Bristol are now receiving Universal Credit.

Universal Credit is paid monthly straight into the claimants bank accounts, unlike Housing Benefit which is paid straight to the landlord. Tenants receiving Universal Credit are at an increased risk of falling behind on their arrears. It is therefore really important that tenants who are or may be Universal Credit claimants:

- Have a bank account ready to receive Universal Credit payments
- Talk to us about moving to monthly payments and how to get yourself into advance on your rent
- Consider paying by direct debit
- Contact us as soon as you can if you are struggling to pay your rent, or need advice on other debts.

You can contact our team by ringing: **0117 922 2200** (8.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday) to talk through how best to manage your rent payments.

You can also access more information and advice about Universal Credit on our website: www.bristol.gov.uk/universalcredit

Understanding and responding to your needs

Tell Us What Matters

Throughout autumn 2019, we are conducting a survey with our tenants and leaseholders to understand what you think of our services. You may receive a phone call, text or email asking you to take part. **This is really important to us as we intend to use your feedback to improve our service, so please do use this opportunity to share your views.**

Local Housing Forums

In 2018, we launched our new Local Housing Forums. The forums are a place for tenants and leaseholders to discuss local housing issues that are important to them and provide a link with other local organisations and service providers. Topics chosen by tenants for discussion at meetings so far include anti-social behaviour, waste management and other local estate issues.

The new forums meet four times a year and can each nominate a tenant representative to the Housing Management Board.

Over 225 tenants and leaseholders have attended a meeting so far, and we're pleased to report that 94% of those who attended told us that they felt their views had been listened to.

Get Involved

Find out about Local Housing Forums and other resources at:

www.bristol.gov.uk/tenantparticipation

Contacting us



We received 264,124 calls last year. 85% were answered (2017-18 80%)



The average wait for a call to be answered was 2 minutes 29 seconds (2017-18 2 minutes 49 seconds)

We received 982 complaints last year. (2017-18: 1119)

69% of complaints were dealt with inside our target of 15 working days. (2017-18: 73%).

Useful Contacts

Caretaking

www.bristol.gov.uk/caretaking

Complaints or feedback

www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints

Email: complaints.feedback@bristol.gov.uk

Tel: 0117 922 2723
(Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm)

Emergency repairs

Please call the Emergency Control Centre:

8.30am to 6pm (office hours):
Tel: 0117 922 2200 (option 1)

6pm to 8.30am (out of hours):
Tel: 0117 922 2050

Textphone: 0117 922 3892

Estate management

www.bristol.gov.uk/counciltenants
Tel: 0117 922 2200 (Option 4)

Housing benefit and council tax reduction

www.bristol.gov.uk/benefits

Report repairs

www.bristol.gov.uk/reportarepair
Tel: 0117 922 2200 (option 1)

Rents and housing payments

www.bristol.gov.uk/payrent
If you are struggling to pay, call:
0117 922 2200 (Option 3)
(Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 6pm)

Manage your tenancy online:
www.bristol.gov.uk/tenantaccount

Smell gas?

Report gas immediately to National Grid Gas Emergency Service. Tel: 0800 111 999

Tenants energy advice

www.cse.org.uk/bristoltea

Tenant service online

View your rent account balance, make a payment or request services

www.bristol.gov.uk/councilhousing

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, audio tape, large print, easy English, BSL video or CD rom or plain text, please contact: 0117 352 5935



Bristol Council Housing
www.bristol.gov.uk/councilhousing