

# Bristol City Council Annual Report for Tenants and Leaseholders

April 2020 - March 2021



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# Welcome

Welcome to the latest Housing and Landlord Services annual report for tenants and leaseholders. Here we share information about our performance in the last financial year between April 2020 and March 2021.



It was a year dominated by COVID-19, bringing significant change and challenge across the world. We are proud how our colleagues and residents worked to protect the vulnerable and help those most in need. You can read more about this in the article below.

Despite the difficulties we have continued work to improve services through our Moving

Forward Together programme. Our pledge to better meet residents' priorities remains, and residents and staff have helped shape our approach. We continue to focus on better communication with our residents and training for staff that focuses on customer care and setting clear expectations around our values and behaviours.

This year we have seen an increase in the number of residents and leaseholders interested in, and attending, online residents meetings, including lots of new faces coming along for the first time. We always welcome feedback from residents and look forward to meeting and working with many more of you. To find out about our resident groups and meetings visit: [Tenant participation: ways to get involved - bristol.gov.uk](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/tenant-participation-ways-to-get-involved)

**Councillor Tom Renhard, Cabinet Member for Housing Delivery and Homes.**

## COVID-19

2020-21 was an unusual year. The pandemic has had a big effect on all of us. We have all had to adjust the way we live, work, learn and connect with others. The pandemic has also affected our work as a landlord, but we worked hard to continue to deliver essential services. This year, we made:

- 7,456 calls to our most vulnerable tenants during the first lockdown, to check if they needed any help or support
- Carried out 29,100 emergency repairs
- Responded to 3,404 anti-social behaviour, nuisance, domestic abuse or hate crime cases, including reports of noise nuisance and breaches of COVID-19 social distancing measures
- Ensured 107 homes were repaired and re-let through direct offers to people who were homeless and other urgent cases

Our colleagues in Private Housing, Accessible Homes and Housing Options also:

- Installed adaptations for approx. 3,000 disabled residents to enable them to be safely discharged from hospital and/or remain at home during the height of the pandemic
- Ensured that everyone who had been sleeping rough received an offer of accommodation
- Established two temporary sites for vehicle dwellers, where residents were able to access drinking water and washing facilities.

We have made some changes to the way we work to ensure we continue to safely deliver services. Those changes include: speaking to residents via the phone or intercom where possible, carrying out assessments to identify any risks before visiting (this may mean we are unable to carry out visits or repairs if we are unable to do so safely), calling ahead where possible to check it is still safe to visit and discuss any concerns the tenants may have, and in some situations staff may have to wear PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).

# Managing tenancies

1,083 empty properties were let



We built **36** new council homes.

It took us **50** days on average to re-let a standard empty property, where no major repairs were needed. (2019-20: 50 days)

Average for other large landlords: 56 days



**95%** of new tenancies lasted longer than one year. (2019-20: 95%)



We gave support to **23** households to help them downsize their home.

We had **220** empty properties intended for re-let on March 31



## Dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB)

### As at April 1 2021:

- We manage **28,487** rented and leased homes across Bristol.
- We had **30,523** tenants and 2,256 leaseholders.
- In total, we estimate around **64,000** people live in the homes we manage. This is about **14%** of Bristol's population.
- Around **8,500** homes (tenants and leaseholders) receive a caretaking service.
- **99.7%** of site inspections judged our cleaning as acceptable and 94.5% of inspections found the standard of cleaning to be high. (2019-20: 91.5% and 85.5%).

We responded to **2,084** cases of ASB, working in partnership with the police support agencies and mediators.



**141** ASB cases related to hate crime. We work with Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) to support those affected, tackling illegal/offensive behaviour.



**1,342** new possible cases of breach of tenancy conditions. Examples include homes/gardens in poor condition or having unsuitable pets.



**213** cases of possible tenancy fraud were investigated, resulting in 14 homes being recovered

# Managing tenancies

## Adaptations and services for older people



## Do you know about the Housing Ombudsman Service?

As a resident of social housing you have a right to use the Housing Ombudsman Service when unhappy with how we have handled a complaint. They offer a free complaint resolution service and have recently been reformed to be given a more important role in housing.

You can also contact them for general advice about housing complaints and your rights when complaining. Their website has data and reports on complaints in social housing, including on Bristol City Council <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

You can call them on 0300 111 3000 Monday to Friday, 9.15am to 5.15pm or email [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

Last year they asked all social landlords to look at how they currently handle complaints. We were pleased to find that we resolve most of your complaints at the first stage of our investigation, however we are aiming to improve how quickly we respond when things go wrong. We have published our 'self-assessment' at [Housing Ombudsman: Complaint Handling Code - bristol.gov.uk](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/housing-ombudsman-complaint-handling-code)

We always want to improve and learn from our mistakes. If you have any feedback about how we have handled a complaint or service we would love to hear from you <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints-and-feedback/housing>

## Complaints

- Last year, we received **903** complaints.
- **69%** (623) were responded to within our target of 15 working days.
- **93.9%** of cases are resolved at Stage 1, 5.4% are resolved at Stage 2 and 0.7% progress to Ombudsman stage.

# Repairs and improving your home

## Repairs

- **88%** of appointments were kept. (2019-20: 88%)
- **89%** of repairs were completed in one visit. (2019-20: 87%)
- The average time to complete a standard repair (for our internal workforce) was **13** calendar days. (2019-20: 13 days)
- **95%** of emergency repairs were attended within 24 hours (New measure for 2020-21)



## Improving your home

**95.4%** of our homes met the government's Decent Homes Standard (2019-20: 93.8%)



**533** new boilers and/or heating systems were installed.



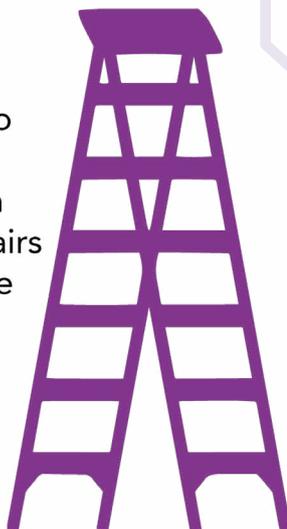
**1,984** homes had their exteriors repaired and/or painted.



**99.5%** of properties with working gas supply had a gas safety check in the last year. (2018-19: 99.7%).

Average for Other Large Landlords 99.96%.

**84%** of tenants who responded to us were satisfied with external repairs to their home



**185** new kitchens were installed.



**100%** of tenants who responded to us were satisfied with their new kitchen installation



# Rent management and finance

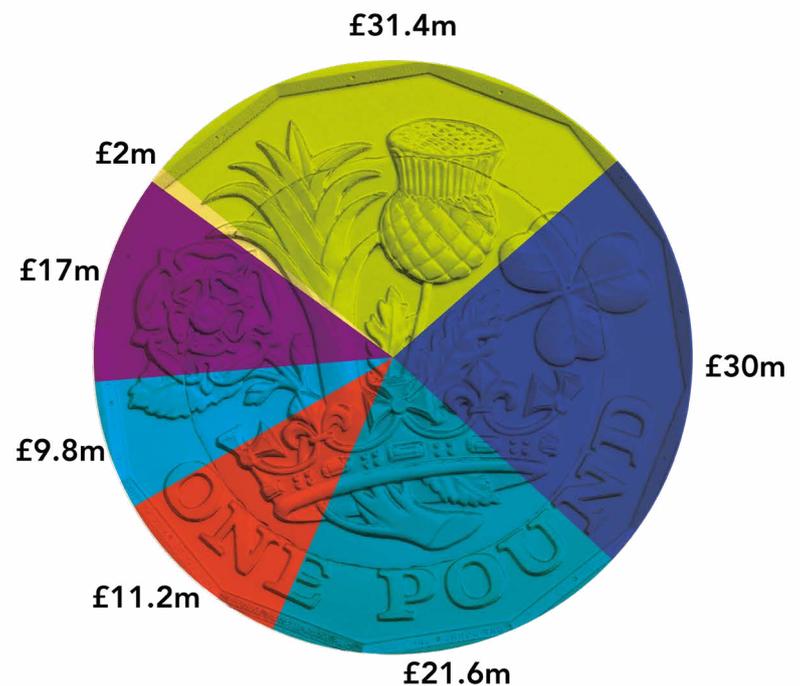
There is no funding from the rest of the council or central government to cover the cost of managing, maintaining and improving council housing. Most of our money comes from the rents and service charges we receive from you. This can only be spent on Bristol City Council homes and related services.

## Rent management

- 15% of tenants had more than seven week's arrears. (2019-20: 14%)
- Our Welfare Rights and Money Advice team helped our tenants to access over **£1.7 million** in one off lump sum benefit payments and £3.06 million ongoing annual benefit income

## What we spent:

<span style="color: #90EE90;">■</span>	Repairs and maintenance . . . . .	£31.4m
<span style="color: #000080;">■</span>	Managing tenancies . . . . .	£30m
<span style="color: #00CED1;">■</span>	Improvements to existing housing stock . . . . .	£21.6m
<span style="color: #FF0000;">■</span>	Interest on borrowing . . . . .	£11.2m
<span style="color: #00CED1;">■</span>	Special services (e.g. caretaking, services to older people) . . . . .	£9.8m
<span style="color: #800080;">■</span>	New builds and acquisitions . . . . .	£17m
<span style="color: #FFFF00;">■</span>	Other . . . . .	£2m
<b>Total . . . . .</b>		<b>£123m</b>



We did not increase our rents for 2019-20. This means that we did not receive any additional rental income compared to 2019-20, but we ensured that we still provided essential services to our tenants. We spent less than anticipated in 2020-21 as we were unable to carry out certain repairs, maintenance and improvement work due to COVID-19 restrictions.

# Understanding and responding to your needs

**Council tenants** represent **14%** of Bristol's population. They are a diverse range of people and reflect the diversity of our city:



## Moving Forward Together, improving your housing services

Our vision is to meet the needs of residents and make Housing and Landlord Services a great place to work, with equality and diversity at its heart.

We are working on making improvements in seven areas:

- Equality through inclusion** – we're working to create fairer, more accessible services that are welcoming and understanding to everyone.
- Resident experience** – we want you to have a great experience when you use our services.



Some of the things we're doing...

- We're reviewing our policies to make sure they are clear and set out what we do.
  - We're working together with you to set ambitions for how we would like our estates and blocks to look and be.
  - We've made it easier to speak to housing officers when you call us, by creating a duty team of housing officers who are always available to speak to during working hours.
- Values and behaviour** – we're encouraging everyone who works for us to remember our five values of respect, curiosity, dedication, taking ownership, and collaboration.
  - Tools and technology** – we're putting in place better systems to help us provide better services to you.

- People** – we're supporting the people who work with us to develop new skills through training, including customer service training and leadership coaching for our managers.
- Resident engagement** – we're working on making our communications better so we can keep in touch with you more and we're reviewing the ways you can get involved and give us your views.
- Achieving results** – And...we're making sure we learn from what we're doing to keep getting better results for you.

Please let us know any feedback you have through our feedback channels, including our [facebook.com/bristolcouncilhousing](https://www.facebook.com/bristolcouncilhousing) and the Housing Forums. Find out more: [bristol.gov.uk/housing/tenant-participation-ways-to-get-involved](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/housing/tenant-participation-ways-to-get-involved)

## Contact us



- We received 197,069 calls last year
- 87% were answered (2019-20 227,953, 87%)
- The average wait for a call to be answered was 7 min 01s (2019-20: 4 min 44 s)



You can access many of our services anytime quickly online, including:

- View your rent account balance
- Make a rent payment online
- Apply for a mutual exchange, a parking permit and much more!
- Go to: [www.bristol.gov.uk/councilhousing](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/councilhousing)

## Get Involved

The Housing Scrutiny Panel lets council tenants and leaseholders have a say and influence services that relate to the management of their homes. The panel are a small group of tenants and leaseholders who work as a team to improve services for all council tenants and leaseholders.

For more information visit:

[www.bristol.gov.uk/housing/housing-scrutiny-panel](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/housing/housing-scrutiny-panel)

If you're interested in getting involved visit:

[www.bristol.gov.uk/housing/tenant-participation-form](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/housing/tenant-participation-form)

## Useful Contacts

### Caretaking

[www.bristol.gov.uk/caretaking](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/caretaking)

### Complaints or feedback

[www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints)

Email: [complaints.feedback@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.feedback@bristol.gov.uk)

Tel: 0117 922 2723  
(Monday to Friday, 10am -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](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/counciltenants)  
Tel: 0117 922 2200 (Option 4)

### Housing benefit and council tax reduction

[www.bristol.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/benefits)

### Report repairs

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

### Rents and housing payments

[www.bristol.gov.uk/payrent](http://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](http://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](http://www.cse.org.uk/bristoltea)

### Tenant service online

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

[www.bristol.gov.uk/councilhousing](http://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



[facebook.com/bristolcouncilhousing](https://www.facebook.com/bristolcouncilhousing)