



How We're Doing



How We're Doing

We publish information about how we are performing every year in our annual report. However, we like to give more detail on the issues we hope will interest our tenants – last year our ‘How We’re Doing’ booklet was very well received, so this year we’re expanding it a little more, to give a good look at how we’re doing.

Apart from the average rents all of the information in this booklet is for the year 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. If after you’ve read the information in this booklet, you think we’re doing well or there are areas for improvement and you have suggestions as to how we can do this, please let us know. You can e-mail us at enquiries@elha.com, phone on **01620 825032**, write to us at our office in Haddington, or go on-line and leave feedback using our ‘Praise or Grumble’ feature on elha.com.

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About Us

We have 1340 properties:

- 1049 general needs
- 99 amenity (over 50s)
- 57 shared ownership
- 29 wheelchair adapted
- 16 sheltered
- 20 ambulant disabled
- 1 hostel
- 5 workshop homes
- 7 workshops
- 33 garages
- 24 garage plots

We are a Registered Scottish Charity run by a Management Committee. At 31 March 2013 we had 14 Management Committee Members, who are all unpaid volunteers who live in or near East Lothian. Including R3 tradesmen, we employ around 85 members of staff.

From 31 March 2013 our average monthly rents are:

	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	5+ bedrooms
Number	312	549	310	41
Flat	£284.71	£319.34	£333.53	
Bungalow	£295.52	£342.36	£371.50	£387.88
House	£283.07	£341.69	£373.29	£407.30

At the 31st of March 2013, we had 3,333 households registered for housing with us through our allocation system, homehant.

Mutual Exchanges

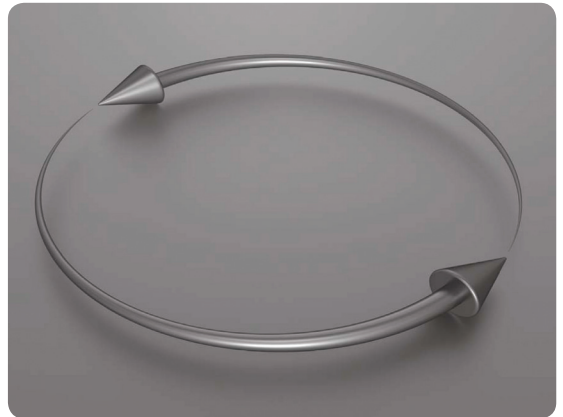
With the lack of properties available for reletting and the high demand for housing in East Lothian, mutual exchanges are fast becoming the most popular way for Council and Housing Association tenants to move home. To make it easier for everyone in East Lothian to find an exchange, we operate a joint exchange list with East Lothian Council called East Lothian Xchange.

In 2012-13 we received 69 applications for mutual exchanges.

- 38 were approved
- 13 were refused by us
- 13 were refused by the other landlord
- 5 were withdrawn by one of the applicants

The most common reasons we had for refusing an exchange were:

- One or more of the tenants had rent arrears
- The condition of one of the properties was unacceptable
- One or more of the tenants was not available for visits



Other reasons for refusal were:

- Antisocial behaviour
- The property not being suitable for the household which wants to move in
- One of the tenants was not living in the property

There is a legal requirement for us to make a decision on exchange applications within 28 days and we met this target for all but one application. On average we responded to applications within 19 days.

Complaints

While we try to ensure that all our customers are happy with our service, we're not perfect, and sometimes we will make mistakes. We always want to know



when someone who has used our services is unhappy so we can investigate and find out if we're doing something wrong and need to correct it.

How we deal with and record complaints about our service has changed this year. We now follow the Complaints Handling Procedure produced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and sent information about this to all our tenants last autumn.

In 2012-13 we dealt with 46 service complaints.

Financial Inclusion Service

The Financial Inclusion Service (FIS) has been a great success, helping over 150 tenants over the year. Our service is free, confidential, and available to any tenant who would like financial advice.

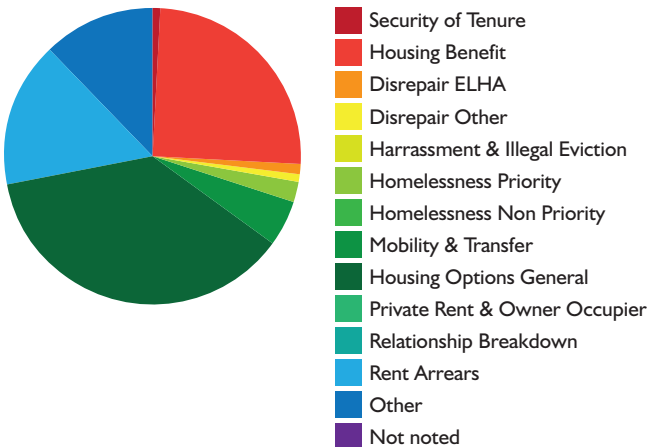
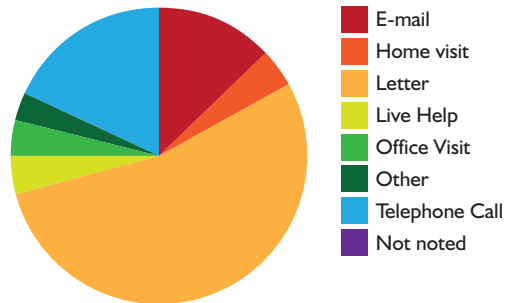
In 2012-13 184 cases were referred to the service, and 157 cases were completed and closed by the end of the financial year. The following gains were made for our tenants:

Backdated benefits	£20,636.95
Ongoing benefits value (annually)	£141,260.98
Social Fund awards	£5,627.00
Charitable Trust / Goods received in kind	£5,567.01
Total Gains	£173,091.94

That's an average of over £1,100 better off over the year for each person who used the service!

Information and Advice

Since we achieved accreditation for the National Standards for Information and Advice, we have monitored our information and advice service closely over the year. Based on a representative sample (20% of our working days), we offered information and/or advice to the equivalent of 5,100 people over the year.

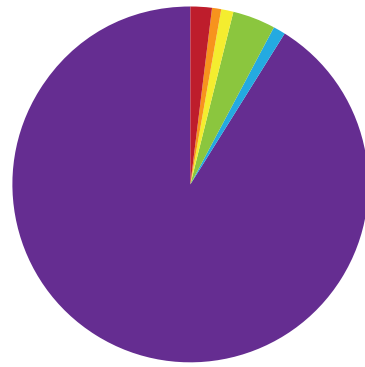
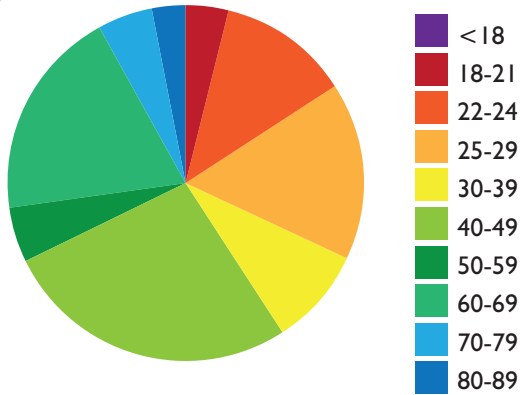


The majority of contact was by letter – this is because we send out letters to inform you about changes to Housing Benefit, consultations, etc..

Most of the people who contacted us wanted information about Homehunt, our allocation service.

Our New Tenants

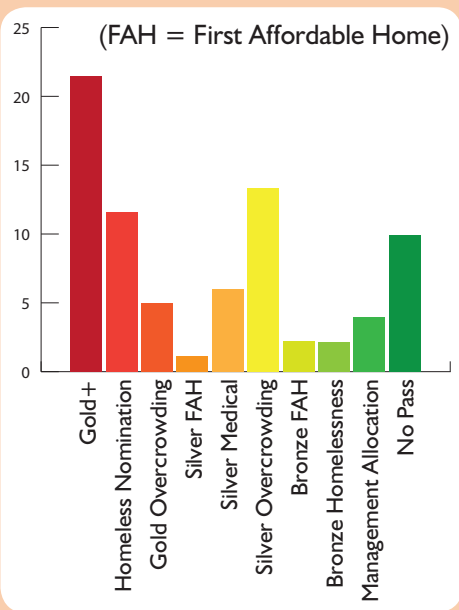
We housed 75 households last year (all relets as we had no new builds this year). These new tenants are from all age ranges:



The ethnic breakdown shows less of a range, with most new tenants being White Scottish:

- Caribbean
- Indian
- Other White
- White British
- White Irish
- White Scottish

Most new tenants got an offer of a home from us because they have a priority pass with our allocation service, Homehunt. Half our empty homes are allocated to households which East Lothian Council (ELC) have assessed as priority homeless (these are advertised as 'Gold Plus Priority Pass Valid', and if no one with a Gold Plus pass applies, we ask for ELC to nominate a homeless household), the other half of our empty homes are available to applicants with other levels of priority.



Occasionally we will make a management allocation – this is where we have a legal duty to rehouse someone, for example: when a tenant has died and a family member has the right to succeed to the property, but the property isn't suitable for them. In cases like this we would allocate the first suitable property to the family member instead of advertising it through Homehunt.

We ask every new tenant to complete an anonymous survey. We asked our new tenants: How satisfied they were with the information they were given at the start of their tenancy

Sufficient	100%
Too Much	0%
Not Enough	0%

How they found our staff

Friendly, helpful, polite	69%
Friendly	23%
Helpful	8%

Were they satisfied with the standard of repair in their new home

Yes	69%
No	31%

Repairs

Planned & Cyclical Maintenance

During 2012-13 our subsidiary repairs company R3 carried out the majority of our planned and cyclical maintenance. During the year we spent £1,309,603; and:

- Installed 136 new kitchens
- Installed 47 new bathrooms
- Renewed 27 central heating systems
- Repainted 109 properties

R3 also carried out the majority of our routine repairs, and most were completed within target response times. We carried out 5,182 routine repairs over the year – that's almost five repairs for each property we own.

Routine Repairs	Target	Outcome
Emergency repairs (make safe in 2 hours)	98%	100%
Right to Repair requests (complete in 24 hours)	100%	100%
Urgent repairs (complete in 3 working days)	95%	94%
Routine repairs (complete in 10 working days)	95%	95%
Pre-inspections completed on the agreed date	100%	100%
% of all repairs post-inspected	20%	24%
Void repairs (completed within 10 working days)	95%	97%
Overall satisfaction with service	95%	77%

96.6% of our properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS), and we aim to increase this to 100% through our maintenance programme.

We do not feel the figure of 77% of overall satisfaction with the service is reliable as it is based on a very low return of forms, so we are looking at ways to increase the number of forms returned. Last year, we only received an expression of dissatisfaction for 0.55% of all repairs ordered.

Adaptations

During the year we carried out 54 minor medical adaptations, and 15 major medical adaptations to tenant's homes. Adaptations included:

- Installing level access showers
- Installing stair-lifts
- Putting grab-rails in place

Alterations & Improvements

We approved 51 applications for tenant alterations/improvements to their home.



Tenancy Sustainment

We hope that there will only be good reasons for one of our tenants moving out (an expanding family, a better job in a new area, etc). Tenancy Sustainment is the name given to the procedures we use to help tenants stay in their homes when they are having problems. Given how hard it is to get a tenancy in the first place, it's really important.

When a tenant moves into one of our properties we offer help in a variety of ways – tenants on a low income and who have no furniture can be referred to ELVON's Recycling 1st Project. We can also help fill in Housing Benefit application forms, and refer the new tenant to our Financial Inclusion Service, etc. We aim to make sure that less than 10% of new tenancies fail.

Failed Tenancies

Any tenancy which lasts less than one year is considered a 'failed' tenancy. During 2012/13, we had 5 tenancies which ended within one year, which is 4.3% of new tenancies. The reasons for these failed tenancies were:

- Moving in with partner
- Disliked area
- Eviction for rent arrears

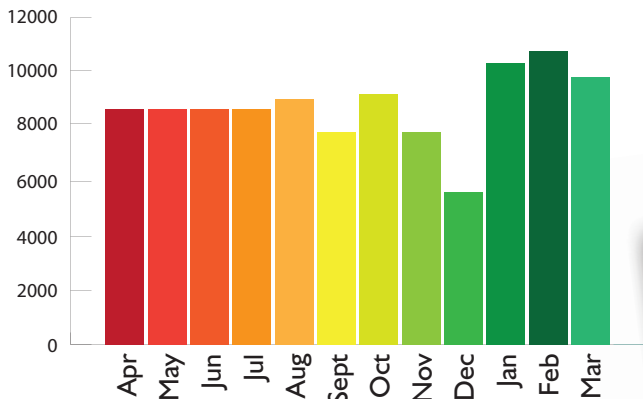
Settling in Visits

We try to visit all new tenants four to six weeks after they've moved in, to make sure they're settling in. Sometimes a problem isn't apparent during the excitement of moving into a new home, so we call and check that everything is going okay.

In 2012/13 we started 116 new tenancies (relets, exchanges and mortgage to rent) and carried out 82 settling in visits.

Website

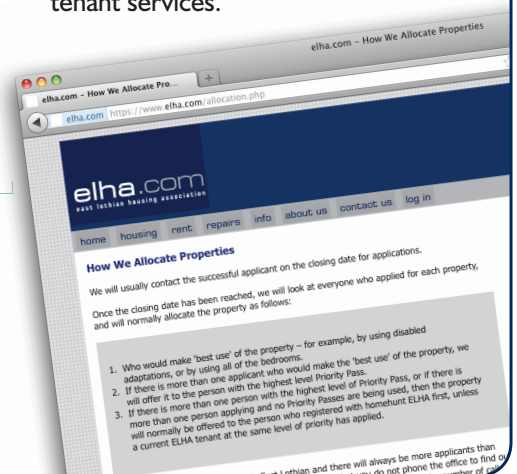
Last year we had 103,708 visits (56,221 unique and 47,487 return visits) to our website.



The most commonly visited pages (after the front page) were:

- Available properties
- Mutual Exchange service
- Contact us
- Shared Ownership information
- Vacancies at ELHA

At the end of the financial year, 22% of our tenants were registered for on-line tenant services.



Rent Arrears

While we receive some funding from the Scottish Government to help build new properties, everything else – running costs, repairs, loan repayments, etc comes from our rental income. We understand that sometimes tenants can find paying their rent hard, and will do everything we can to help a tenant who is having difficulty paying their rent. Only as a last resort will we take court action against the tenant and apply to have them evicted.

Last year we referred 12 arrears cases to court.

In 2012-13 we evicted five tenants for rent arrears.

At the end of the financial year, we were owed £173,373.91 in rent arrears (an increase of over £30,000 since last year). That's enough to pay for:

- 173 new front doors, or
- 50 new kitchens, or
- 86 new bathrooms, or
- 43 new central heating systems

So please – pay your rent on time. If we take you to court, you will have to pay court costs on top of your rent arrears, which can add up to hundreds of pounds. If you're having difficulty, even if you're not in arrears at the moment, ask your Housing Officer for help or fill in the Financial Inclusion Service self-referral form on elha.com.



Empty Homes

We do our best to make sure properties lie empty for as short a time as possible. As soon as a tenant notifies us in writing that they are moving out, we advertise the property so we can have a new tenant waiting to move in once the property is ready.

We encourage tenants who are moving out to leave the property in good order, and issue a paint pack to all new tenants so they can get good quality decorating supplies free of charge.

Our target for getting a property ready for a new tenant is 21 days – this gives us time to inspect the property, order repairs and get them done, safety check the gas and electric fittings, and have an Energy Performance Certificate produced (this is a legal requirement, and we cannot relet a property without one).

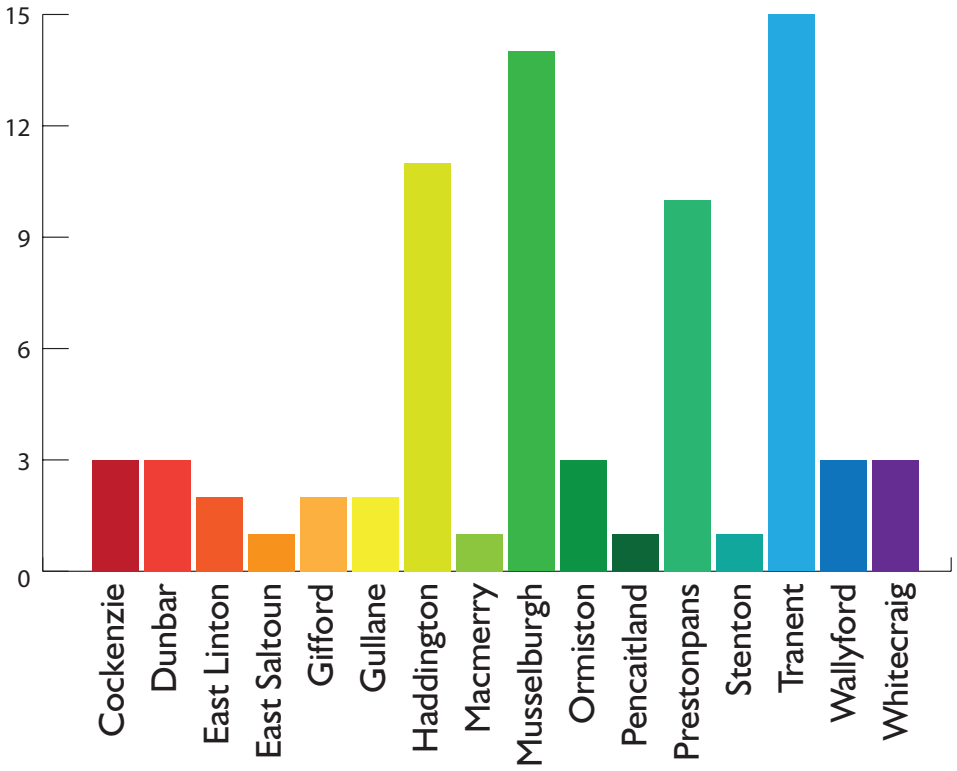
Our average relet time for 2012-13 was only 20 days, the same as last year. The rent loss from empty homes was £24,714.29, an increase of £6,240.06 from last year, due to an increase in the number of empty homes.

The top reasons for tenancies ending are:

1. Transfer to a more suitable property
2. Death of a tenant
3. Eviction for rent arrears

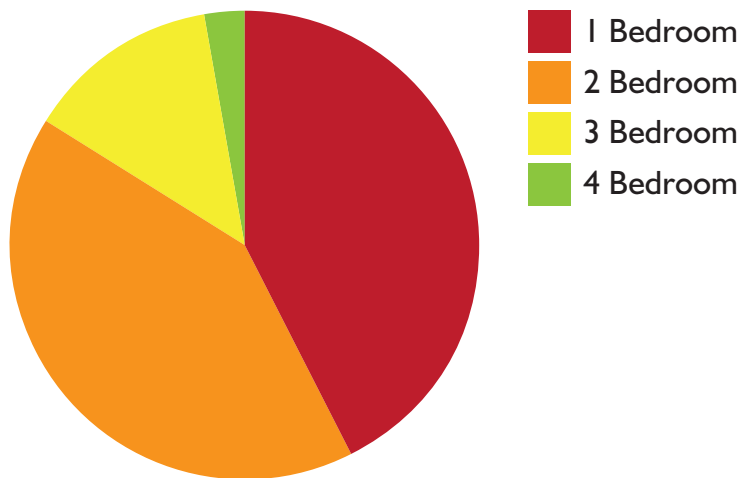
Empty Homes continued

Last year we had 75 relet properties, 17 more than the year before, in the following areas:



And in the following sizes

You can get more detailed information on our properties and the number of relets in each area on elha.com (look in the 'About Us' section of the website which has a map of our housing stock which includes information of the types of properties we have in that area, and last year's relet figures).



Antisocial Behaviour

On the whole, East Lothian is a very nice place to live, with a lower than average level of antisocial behaviour. In an ideal world, all of our tenants would get along. Unfortunately that isn't always the case, and when anti-social behaviour is reported, we take it very seriously. We work in partnership with East Lothian Council's Antisocial Behaviour Team and operate a joint Antisocial Behaviour policy.

The majority of our cases are resolved at an early stage by getting neighbours to talk to each other about their problems, either on their own, or through East Lothian Community Mediation Service. We only refer antisocial behaviour cases to court as a last resort.

Our Antisocial Behaviour Policy splits the complaints we receive into 3 categories:

- **Category A** – Incidents of a very serious antisocial nature, physical violence, criminal conviction, harassment including racial harassment, escalation or increase in frequency of reported disturbances or excessive noise. We aim to investigate and make our initial assessment of such complaints within 3 working days.
- **Category B** - Includes incidents which indicate reports of serious antisocial behaviour, such as persistent excessive noise, frequent disturbances, threats of violence, vandalism. We aim to investigate and make our initial assessment of such complaints within 5 working days.
- **Category C** - Incidents which breach a tenancy condition but which aren't quite so serious, e.g. occasional noise, not closing a secure stair door, dumping rubbish, noisy or uncontrolled pets, will fall into this category. We aim to investigate and make our initial assessment of such complaints within 10 working days.



**antisocial
behaviour**

Don't sit in silence.

During 2012-13 we dealt with the following complaints:

- Category A - 1
- Category B - 21
- Category C - 149

We aim to resolve neighbour disputes within our targets, whether this is by getting tenants to talk over their problems, referring tenants to mediation services, issuing an Anti Social Behaviour warning, or taking legal action. In reality, cases often drag on for much longer, particularly when there is persistent anti social behaviour. We responded to 87% of complaints made in 2012-13 within target.

Tenant Participation

Taking Part and Shaping Services

There are many ways to get involved in our work. We want to ensure that we are delivering high quality services and the only way we know if we are getting it right is if you get involved and you give us your views.

During the last year tenants have been involved in many ways:

Tenant Involvement Group (TIG)

The TIG covers any tenant who gets involved, even if it's just coming along to an estate inspection when your street is being checked, or testing out new survey forms. We are now expanding the original TIG into a scrutiny panel in order to better comply with the new Scottish Social Housing Charter.

If you would like join the TIG panel, or just to try it out by coming to a meeting, please contact our Customer Information Officer, Mary Hargreaves by clicking the big red button on the website, by telephone on 01620 825032 or by e-mail info@elha.com.

Information & Consultations

We reviewed and amended a range of information leaflets during the year, and produced the following publications:

- **4 Newsletters**
- **2 Information leaflets**
- **How We're Doing booklet**
- **Our Annual Report**

We had a big consultation year, as we ran our large scale Tenant Satisfaction survey (TSS) and a tenant census. These were undertaken by an independent company called Knowledge Partnership.

All our in-house consultations can be completed on-line at elha.com. We carried out the following last year:

- **Rent Increase**
- **Garden Care Service**
- **Stair Cleaning Contract**

Satisfaction Surveys were carried out for the following areas and results reported on to our Management Committee:

- **Day to Day Repair Service**
- **Allocations and Mutual Exchanges**
- **Financial Inclusion Service**

Working with Tenants / Tenant Groups

Staff worked and consulted with several registered tenant organisations and informal tenant groups over the course of the year.

Estate inspections were carried out from April to September, and many tenants attended these walks around their estate with their Housing Officers. Several estate improvements were identified during the 2012-13 inspection, which have since been carried out.

Accreditation / Memberships

We are Tenant Participation Advisory Service accredited for our work on Tenant Participation.



We have a range of information and advice leaflets which you can download at **elha.com**, pick up from our office, or request copies in a variety of alternative formats – just ask!



elha.com
east lothian housing association

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