

Annual

Tenants Report

2022-23





Empowering People Inspiring Communities



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Message from the Chair, Simon Wilson

Welcome to EPIC Housing's Annual Tenants Report for 2022/23, an opportunity to share with you our activities and a summary of our service performance over the last year. Whilst I have only been Chair of EPIC Housing since April 2023, I have been impressed with the efforts of the EPIC team to deliver services and outcomes to you.

During the last year at EPIC Housing, we have seen many changes, with new appointments to the Board and to the team. The focus has been to continue to stabilise the business and regain a compliant rating with our regulator, which I am delighted to say was achieved in May 2023. Whilst much of this work went on in the background it is important that we can evidence we are a well-run business and have the resources and capacity to provide the best possible services to you.

As we work our way through the year ahead, I am positive and excited about the future of EPIC Housing and the role we play in ensuring that the services you receive from us underpin and support more than just having a safe, well-maintained and warm home, but also the opportunities for positive contributions within your community.

I look forward to meeting with many of you over the coming months.



"As we work our way through the year ahead, I am positive and excited about the future of EPIC Housing."

Welcome from the Chief Executive, Tracey Johnson

Hello and welcome to this year's Annual Tenants Report. My thanks to everyone in our EPIC Housing family – our tenants, staff, supporters, and Board – for everything that has been achieved over the past twelve months.

I hope you find the information in this report useful. Sharing with you, our tenants, how we have performed for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 provides you with the opportunity to hold us to account, challenge us and offer your suggestions as to how we can improve. You are the best judge of our services as you experience them every day.

It has been another challenging year with significant changes in the external environment. Housing continues to be in the spotlight and sadly not always for good reasons. Our vision is very clear at EPIC Housing and that is 'to be a good landlord' and looking at how we meet new regulations will be our focus over 2023/24. I genuinely believe that EPIC Housing has always had the needs of our tenants at its heart, but there is always more that can be done.

We continue to develop our approach to ensure that we are listening to the voices of our tenants, and we are working to improve communications and make sure that information is widely shared, and that everyone can keep up to date with the latest news.

I am always keen to hear from you and there are a variety of ways in which you contact us. Take a look at our website to find out more – epichousing.co.uk



“We continue to develop our approach to ensure that we are listening to the voices of our tenants.”



About Us

EPIC Housing (Empowering People Inspiring Communities Ltd.) is a not-for-profit registered provider of social housing with charitable status. We were formed in 1998 following a stock transfer from Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

We own just under 1,400 homes across North Staffordshire with properties in Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and the Staffordshire Moorlands. All our homes are charged at either social, affordable or intermediate rents and we work closely with local authorities and partners to ensure our homes help to meet the needs of local people.

Over a quarter of our properties are made up of family sized homes and we offer a mix of houses, flats and bungalows.

The split of all the properties we manage is as follows:

1 bedroom flat	1 bedroom house	1 bedroom bungalow
261	6	4
2 bedroom flat	2 bedroom house	2 bedroom bungalow
749	180	29
	3 bedroom house	3 bedroom bungalow
	172	1
	4 bedroom house	
	5	

For the remainder of this document EPIC Housing is referred to simply as EPIC.



Our Vision

To be a good landlord

Helping to develop vibrant communities in the areas of our homes.

Our Mission

Working to be a good landlord by:

Providing quality housing services.

Providing homes that are building-safety compliant.

Providing an effective responsive repair service.

Providing a service developed with, and influenced, by our tenants.

Responding to our tenants' needs and feedback.

Working in partnership with local landlords and community service providers.

"I really appreciated how friendly and sincere you were on our phone call. You made me feel very reassured in my own home to be able to report things if anything happens."

Tenant

Asset Management

Asset Management refers to how we look after your home, ensuring it meets its current and future needs.

The last year continued to be a challenge for EPIC, carrying out significant fire safety works to many of our blocks of flats, with works due to finish by the end of 2023.

Our primary focus in 2023/24 will continue to be on the health, safety and compliance of your home.

In 2022/23 we:

Carried out

1,391

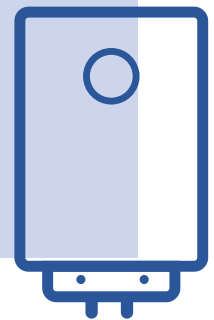
GAS SERVICES



Replaced

33

CENTRAL HEATING
BOILERS



Installed

38

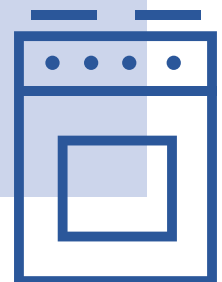
NEW BATHROOMS



Installed

31

NEW KITCHENS



Gas Safety

We are required by law to ensure that your gas appliances are serviced on an annual basis.

Our target is to ensure that we achieve 100% of our gas-servicing obligations and we rely on your support and co-operation to achieve this.

We recognise that on occasions, tenants fail to allow access for gas servicing. This poses a significant risk to the tenant and we work extremely hard at ensuring access is provided at all times.

For 2022/23
we achieved:



of our gas servicing
obligations

Electrical Safety

In line with our current electrical safety policy, all homes are required to have an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) at intervals of no more than five years by a qualified and competent person.

Our target is to ensure we achieve 100% completion.

Additional measures have been put in place to ensure continued access is gained, always working alongside the tenant.

In 2022/23 our actual
performance was:



completion of EICRs

"I just wanted to say thank you to you all and I mean that. I feel very safe knowing if I needed major repairs or anything I know it would be looked at."

Tenant

Repairs and Maintenance

Contractor Brenden Fern continue to provide repairs and maintenance services to all our tenants' homes. Tenants can contact them directly, including out of hours, to report and request repairs. We continue to focus on understanding our tenants' satisfaction with our repair service using monthly reports from Brenden Fern and by following up with the tenant.

In 2022/23 we:

Completed

3,701

**day-to-day
repairs.**



**Completed
repairs on**

140

**empty
properties.**



Carried out

36

**major works
orders**



(Major works are classed as any repairs over £1,000 that are significant replacements, such as a bathroom or kitchen.)

**We are committed to getting tenants feedback on
how we manage our repairs service.**

81%

**of customers are satisfied
with the repairs completed in
the last 12 months**



80%

**are satisfied with
the time taken to
complete the last
repair**

See page 15 for further information.



Allocations

EPIC understands the need to monitor performance in relation to the allocation of properties and continues to look at how we can improve on this.

During 2022/23 we received 539 applications for housing.

Turnover of Stock

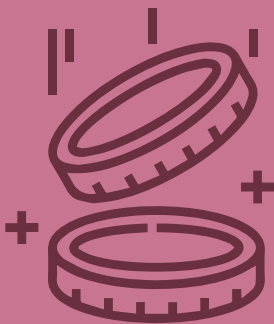
We allocated 140 new tenancies in 2022/23.

	Number of New Tenancies	Turnover
2019/20	147	12.19%
2020/21	121	9.73%
2021/22	85	6.03%
2022/23	140	9.95%

Rent

EPIC’s annual income from rent and service charges was approximately £5.65 million in 2022/23. The rent we collect ensures we can carry out repairs and deliver services, this is why we aim to keep rent arrears low.

The following summary shows our arrears, position compared with previous years.



	Arrears as of 31 March 2020	Arrears as of 31 March 2021	Arrears as of 31 March 2022	Arrears as of 31 March 2023
Current Tenant Arrears	1.52%	2.05%	2.54%	3.31% ¹
Former Tenant Arrears (increase)	0.47%	0.45%	0.61%	0.77% ²

(as a % of the year’s total rent to be collected)

1. This equates to £188,873.

2. This equates to an increase in former tenant arrears of £44,482.



Six tenants were evicted during the 2022/23 reporting year.

With the exception of our sole 3-bedroom bungalow, the rents we ask tenants to pay were below the Local Housing Allowance Rate for those in receipt of Housing Benefit.

The table below shows our average weekly rent (excluding any service charges) that tenants can expect to pay. EPIC’s rents compare favourably to the Local Housing Allowance Rate for those in receipt of Housing Benefit. This means that for most tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit, they do not need to find the funds to pay any shortfall between EPIC’s rents and the Local Housing Allowance Rate.

Property Type	2021/22	2022/23	Local Housing Allowance Rate 2022/23
1 bedroom flat	£61.92	£64.42	£86.30
2 bedroom flat	£68.67	£71.45	£97.81
1 bedroom house	£64.26	£83.05	£86.30
2 bedroom rouse	£89.96	£94.87	£97.81
3 bedroom house	£95.98	£100.53	£126.58
4 bedroom house	£106.31	£110.67	£171.45
1 bedroom bungalow	£76.00	£79.12	£86.30
2 bedroom bungalow	£90.31	£94.02	£97.81
3 bedroom bungalow	£139.31	£145.02	£126.58

“Every person I spoke to was polite, helpful, and patient. I can’t praise you enough.”

Tenant

STAR Survey

We have recently undertaken a Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) and the headline results are –

81%

Overall satisfaction



79%

Provided with a safe home



81%

Satisfied with the repairs completed in the last 12 months



80%

Satisfied with the time taken to complete the last repair



81%

Think we treat people fairly and with respect



The results from the STAR survey will not only provide the Regulator of Social Housing with an insight in to how we are doing but will also enable you to hold us to account. The measures are aimed at helping improve standards for people living in social housing, by making the performance of social landlords more visible.

Services Provided

Several properties pay additional service charges on top of their rent; these charges enable us to deliver services which include:

- Grounds maintenance/grass cutting.
- Lighting in communal areas.

Anti-social Behaviour and Tenancy Breaches

During 2022/23 we dealt with 258 tenancy breaches for issues such as untidy gardens, noise nuisance, intimidation and threatening behaviour. The majority of these were resolved either through agreement with all parties or through formal action. Three tenants were evicted due to tenancy breaches.



Access to Service and Customer Care

We are committed to offering our tenants a high standard of service. We will ensure that you can easily contact us in a variety of ways including telephone, email, website and in person.

During COVID-19, our reception in Bentilee closed. It was re-opened on 3 October 2022, Monday to Friday. Our phone lines remained open throughout this time, complementing other ways tenants could contact us, i.e. email and website. As part of our plans for 2023/24, we will be continuing to update our housing management systems and build on the ways in which you can contact us through a new tenant portal.

Our commitment to all tenants is that we will:

- Respond to enquiries made by our website within one working day.
- Respond to enquiries made via our social media channels within two working days.
- Respond to voicemail within three working days.
- Acknowledge written and emailed correspondence within five working days and aim to provide a full response in ten working days.
- Respect your individual needs and take them into consideration when responding to you.
- Where requested, visit you at home at a mutually convenient time.
- Contact you, explain and re-arrange if we can't make an appointment for whatever reason.
- Ensure that tenant information is easy to read and understand.

Complaints

We have updated our complaints policy and we are committed to providing a high-quality service for all our tenants, leaseholders, applicants, contractors, agents or anyone else who may use our services or is affected by our decisions.

We welcome tenant feedback and where this is received, we will deal with it in a fair and impartial way.

We received 11 complaints during 2022/23:

Apr – Jun 22	Jul – Sept 22	Oct – Dec 22	Jan – Mar 23
5	0	2	4

Complaints increased slightly from the previous year, with 82% of complaints being upheld. A key objective of the complaints process is for us to learn, change and improve services for you.

We aim to resolve all complaints promptly, politely and fairly in line with the appropriate standards set by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling code and the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing. We have carried out an annual self-assessment of our complaints process and are compliant in all the mandatory "must do" requirements.

We have a two-stage complaints process with clear timescales which we aim to adhere to. Information about how to make a complaint or give feedback can be found on our website – epichousing.co.uk/manage-my-home/feedback-form

Tenant Engagement

We believe that our tenants have a right to influence decisions that we make and the services that we offer.

In line with the regulatory framework, we have developed a set of standards for our tenants which set out what you can expect from us in relation to tenant engagement and involvement.

Examples of how we involve tenants include:

- Holding consultation events to seek feedback on specific issues that affect your home or our services.
- Ensuring you are involved and engaged in the development of our policies and services.
- Developing tenant forums to engage with you on specific areas which may help us develop and improve our performance.
- Supporting the formation of tenant groups should you wish to be involved.
- Continuing to produce a quarterly newsletter. Copies of these can be found in the 'News' section of our website – epichousing.co.uk/news.
- Involving tenants at an early stage of developing new initiatives. This could include agreeing criteria for evaluating success or satisfaction with the final product.
- Carrying out regular consultation with tenants on our performance and their experience of our services.

We will ensure that our methods of involving tenants are transparent and meet the provisions of our Resident Involvement and Engagement Policy. We will publish the results of engagement activities to demonstrate to you the benefits of becoming involved and to encourage you to get involved.

Ways to Stay Informed



epichousing.co.uk – our website contains all the information you need about our services and how to access them.



Email – we will send you an email about any issues that affect your tenancy in a timely manner. With any marketing emails, you will have the option to opt-out by emailing mailbox@epichousing.co.uk



EPIC News – our tenant newsletter will be published quarterly to keep tenants up to date and well informed about our services and performance.

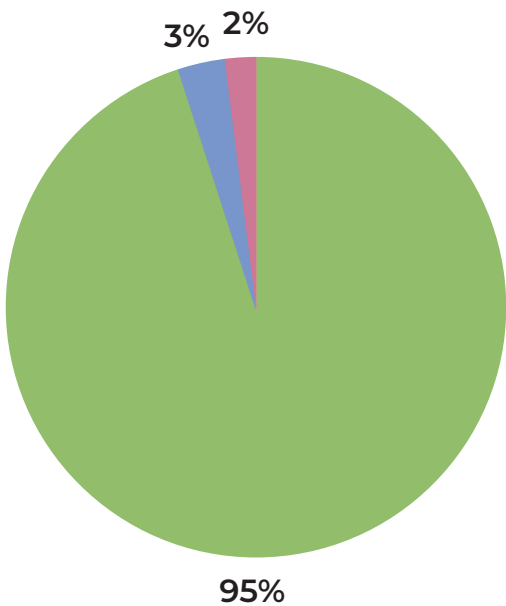


Social Media – follow us on Facebook to keep up to date with everything going on at EPIC and in the wider community - facebook.com/EPICHousingAssociation

Income and Expenditure

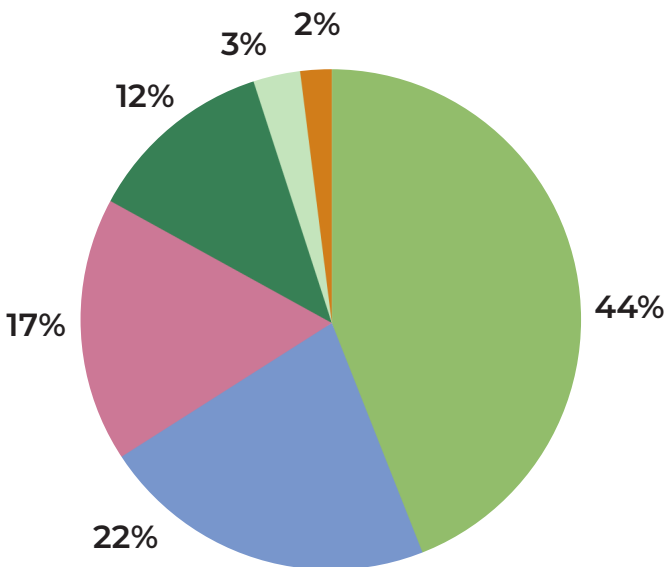
Where our income came from

Rent lettings	£5,534,988
Property Sales	£149,443
Service charges	£118,059



Where we spent money

Business running costs	£2,462,389
Repairs and maintenance	£1,234,573
Loan and interest payments	£966,935
Property improvements	£671,193
Services	£169,636
Property purchases	£76,305



Value for Money

Value for Money (VFM) is a term used to assess whether an organisation has obtained the maximum benefit from the goods and services it acquires and/or provides, with the resources it has available. It not only measures the cost of the goods and services, but it also takes account of the mix and quality, cost and timeliness to assess VFM.

Understanding the cost of our services, how they change over time, how we compare to others and our future cost estimates within our Financial Plan is crucial to managing our costs and delivery.

We will focus our activities on performance management, social value and procurement. These activities will be the driver to efficiency within our operation.

We will publish an annual Value for Money statement in our Annual Accounts to demonstrate how we are performing against VFM metrics and internal targets.



If you have any queries in respect of this report, please contact:

Cindy Gleghorn, Director of Housing Management

In writing:

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131-141 Ubberley Road
Bentilee
Stoke-on-Trent
ST2 0EF

By telephone: 01782 252575

Via email: mailbox@epichousing.co.uk

epichousing.co.uk