

# ANNUAL REPORT FOR TENANTS



# 2021

## **Welcome to our Annual Report for tenants. It's been a very challenging 12 months, with Covid 19 affecting everyone in varying degrees - with the need for the council to prioritise services ensuring that those in need received support through either the council or one of its partners.**

Whilst working through the impact of the pandemic, as a service I'm proud of what we were able to do to meet the challenges faced, and not only deliver the most essential elements of our service, but also develop different ways to continue to deliver all elements of our service - in ways that kept you and our colleagues safe.

Members of our customer services team worked collectively with North Yorkshire County Council ensuring those deemed most at risk during the pandemic received the support they needed, be that food, medicines, or someone to talk to.

We will continue to work in more varied ways to maintain service delivery and build on what we have learnt over the last 18 months. Looking forward, we now know that local government reorganisation is coming to North Yorkshire, with central government advising the new council will be established on April 1, 2023. There will be much to do in order that services continued to be delivered in a way that meets your needs as well as the requirements of central government.

Our aim, throughout this report, is to provide you with honest information, allowing you to see how we have been performing across a range of housing services. It also gives details on actions we are taking to improve safety in our homes, support we are giving tenants, through adaptations and lifeline services, and how we are providing you with different ways to communicate and transact with us.

We have used information provided by you, when you have responded using the quick tick surveys relating to services you have received, together with internal statistical information to show you how we have managed our services.

To show comparison year on year we have used traffic lights:



**Green  
indicates  
we have  
exceeded  
our target**



**Amber  
indicates  
we have  
met our  
target**



**Red  
indicates  
we need  
to do  
better**

## Involving You :

Customer, services, choice and complaints, involvement and empowerment

### Tenant Involvement

Our Tenant Panel members, Eunice Robinson, Jeff Fullerton, Keith Horne, and Glory Battle were lucky enough to be able to participate in some training provided by an external provider in January 2020 prior to the impact of Covid 19 and subsequent national lock downs. The training was well received by our members with positive feedback.

As a result of the national lock down all face-to-face meetings ceased, with members being kept updated via phone calls and written updates. As a result of feedback received from Tenant Panel members saying the use of virtual meeting was not positive, this method of communication was not used. We continued to gather tenant feedback using our quick tick surveys both on-line and via postal surveys when able to do so, recognising the need to channel resources to deal with the immediate issue arising from the pandemic.

Contractor meetings for empty property management and planned improvements were delivered using virtual platforms and minutes were provided for our Tenant Panel Champions



Eunice Robinson



Jeff Fullerton



Glory Battle



Keith Horn

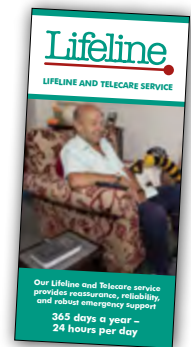


### What have we done in 2020/21?

- Training was rolled out to our Tenant Panel Members using an external specialist trainer
- We engaged with our Tenant panel members by telephone and written updates
- We have 858 tenants paying by Direct Debit, an increase of 5%.
- 7623 transactions were made using our online facility, an increase of 16%
- Browsealoud continues to be used to assist customers on-line, translating information into a variety of languages or used as an aid for those with hearing impairments. 12,487 customers used Browsealoud, representing a 46% increase on the previous year.
- Social media continues to be a tool used by the council to make information readily available and was an essential means for getting information out to the wider public during the lockdowns of 2020/21.
- Using a specialist package, we are now able to schedule messages at the best times for customers based on information from the previous 30 days posts and website activity
- Customer services dealt with 51,609 calls with 85% being dealt with at first point of contact
- 94% of customers who provided feedback following telephone enquiries advised us that they were satisfied with the service they received.
- Website payments increased by 27%. A total of 24,097 customers paid online in 20/21.
- Face to face transactions were down by 98% as our offices were closed during the national lockdowns, therefore by having alternative systems in place this helped provide mechanisms for customers to continue to transact with the council during the pandemic.
- We completed a complaint handling self-assessment and shared out findings with the Housing Ombudsman as well as posting on our website
- We continually monitor complaints received in order that we can address any issues of concern and improve our services
- We are continuing with our plan to improve facilities in our sheltered schemes with dedicated space for mobility scooters with safe charging systems.
- We received 11 formal complaints from tenants, eight were responded to within the timeframes with three exceeding the target time by between one and six days.



- Two formal complaints were referred to stage two of the corporate complaints policy and procedure.
- We reviewed our internal procedure for dealing with corporate complaints
- The on-line facility for council tax went live on 30 January 2020. Since go live, the council tax team has received 8,200 notifications from customers using the system.
- We have helped volunteers from communities across Richmondshire to set up Climate Action Partnership. The Partnership held its launch event in March 2021.
- A lifeline survey was undertaken with customers providing the council with their views on the service and where they felt improvements could be made. We are now working on an action plan to take the findings from this survey forward.
- We worked with tenants across our sheltered schemes in response to the pandemic to make our schemes Covid 19 safe, including the provision of hand-sanitising units, notices, and additional cleaning practices
- Additional well-being phone calls were made to vulnerable tenants across the district during the pandemic by our customer service team and wardens.
- During the pandemic we worked with North Yorkshire County Council to assist the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents who were shielding during the national lockdowns, making 3,548 outbound calls to residents to ensure they had support in place during the shielding periods. For those needing support, we put them in contact with their nearest community support organisation for assistance with shopping, collecting prescriptions, emotional support, including referrals to adult social care for those needing additional support.
- Support was given to North Yorkshire County Council in the test and trace process to ensure those who had been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, received their notification to self-isolate as quickly as possible.
- Language Line was used on one occasion to assist with a document translation.

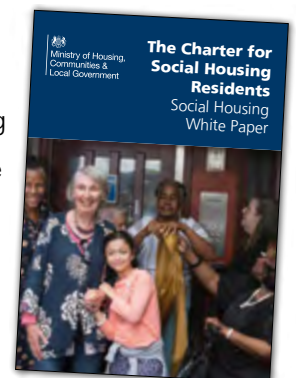


## What's next?

- We will continue to encourage tenant participation across the district and work with colleagues in other districts to share ideas to increase tenant participation
- We will work with our tenant panel to prepare for changes coming through the social housing white paper – 'A charter for social housing residents'
- We will continue our work to improve access for mobility scooters in sheltered housing
- We will continue to monitor the use of our website and on-line facilities so that we are able to make changes and additions to help our customers.
- We will work with our tenant panel to look at new ways of encouraging tenant involvement.



- Website improvements will continue with further work being undertaken to BrowseAloud making it even easier to view on the BrowseAloud Tool bar. These improvements will see BrowseAloud rebranded to ReachDeck.



## Did you know...

Lifeline is provided to **219** sheltered housing tenants plus **574** additional households

You can find out more about joining the climate change action partnership at:

**[www.richmondshireclimateaction.org](http://www.richmondshireclimateaction.org)**

**3,548** outbound calls were made by our customer services team to residents to ensure they had support in place during the shielding periods.

Every quarter, local government websites are assessed by Sitemorse and are rated on their quality, accessibility, functionality, and performance, with our web site being ranked second out of all local government websites in March 2021

We received **17 compliments** relating to services provided by Landlord Services



## Your Home:

### Accommodation and Repairs and Maintenance

For the early part of 2020/21 it was all hands to the deck to ensure we could deliver, with our partners, essential repairs. This meant that all non-essential work was put on hold, keeping contacts to a minimum whilst making sure we did everything we could to meet our statutory requirements, with things such as heating services. With the safe systems put into place and monitoring we were able to undertake the heating services work in a reasonable time frame, working with you and our heating contractor to ensure this essential work was undertaken in accordance with prevailing legislation.

As the year progressed and with safe working systems in place, we were able to gradually increase the repairs we undertook and start to undertake some improvement work.

### What have we done in 2020/21?

#### We have improved homes by:

- Installing 62 kitchens
- Installing 116 central heating boilers
- Installing 41 bathrooms
- Undertaking external painting to eight properties
- Issuing 96 Dulux paint packs to help tenants with the cost of decorating their new homes

#### We have improved our sheltered housing schemes by:

- Upgrading the warden call equipment at all our sheltered housing schemes through the installation of state-of-the-art digital equipment. (some pics of the work done across the sheltered schemes dotted about this section if possible)
- Installing hand sanitiser dispensers throughout sheltered housing buildings
- Replacing washing/drying facilities for communal laundry rooms
- Installing LED PIR controlled lighting in communal areas
- Installing a new lift, boiler, communal TV aerial, and car park resurfacing at Thornborough Hall Gardens
- Providing a new bin store and communal carpets at Oak Tree Court
- Providing new furniture at Quaker Close
- Decorating communal lounges at our schemes in Noels Court, Queens Court and Quaker Close



#### We have helped people live more independently in their homes by:

- Undertaking 75 adaptations
- Providing the lifeline service to 693 homes

### **We have responded to tenants' day to day issues by:**

- Completing 96% of reactive repair work at first visit
- Completing 100% of annual heating services to homes
- Completing 94% of priority one and two jobs within target times
- Undertaking 60% of repair inspections within 14 days of receipt of request
- Appointing a contractor to undertake repairs to our empty properties, releasing our own in-house repairs team to undertake general repairs
- Providing additional information regarding charges applied to sheltered housing on our website and within the tenant's newsletter to help improve tenant awareness regarding these charges.

### **We have improved the safety and wellbeing of our tenants by:**

- Continuing our annual Fire Safety Risk reviews to all communal areas in both our general needs flats and sheltered housing schemes
- Installing a new fire alarm system at Noels Court
- Continuing our program of internal decoration of communal areas in our general needs flats, using intumescent paint for added fire safety protection
- Undertaking Radon testing in council homes across the district
- Undertaking regular inspections to all communal areas to address areas of concern

### **We have increased the number of homes available to our customers by:**

- Working with our partners to develop 24 additional homes in our district



### **We have worked to improve access to housing by:**






- Assisting veterans, in accordance with the Armed Forces Covenant, to access appropriate housing, with 8% of applicants accommodated being ex-forces personnel.



## **What's next?**

- We will continue to implement the council's five year home improvement plan
- We will undertake work identified in homes as a result of the Radon testing
- We will appoint and monitor a new reactive repair contractor, to support our inhouse repair and maintenance team
- We will complete our work to install new mobility storage and charging areas in two of our sheltered schemes, providing 12 storage/charging bays across the two schemes
- We will undertake a Fire Safety programme, including the replacement of doors identified in one general housing scheme, together with associated fire safety work
- We will continue our work to tackle climate change through partnership work to identify properties to benefit from solar PV installation, reducing electricity costs for tenants with poor energy value ratings.
- We will continue our programme of communal painting and fire safety work to our general need flats

## How have we been doing?

Service	Performance 1/4/2020 - 31/3/2021	Targets 2020-2021	2021/22 Targets
Undertake repair inspection within 14 days of report	 <b>60%</b>	50%	50%
Inspect 30% of repairs undertaken by contractors	 <b>29%</b>	30%	30%
Complete repairs at first visit	 <b>96%</b>	85%	85%
Complete priority repairs in time frame	 <b>94%</b>	85%	85%
Undertake planned improvement work within 4 weeks of commencement	 <b>100%</b> 176 planned works completed within 4 weeks of commencement	100%	100%

## Did you know...

**98%** of customers who responded to surveys told us that they were pleased with the overall service received from our Heating Service team

**94%** of customers who responded to surveys told us that they were pleased with the quality of workmanship from our planned Improvement team

**100%** of customers who responded to surveys told us that they were pleased with the helpfulness of the Reactive Repair team

**95%** of customers who responded to surveys told us that they were pleased with the quality of their new home

**100%** of customers who responded to surveys told us that they felt safe and secure in their sheltered housing accommodation

**75%** of customers who responded to surveys told us that they were pleased with the time it took to complete a minor adaptation to their home

## Your Tenancy:

### Allocations, Mutual Exchanges, Tenancies

We continue to use our quick tick surveys to gauge how we are delivering services to you. We send out a percentage of quick ticks every time we deliver a service. If you receive one, please continue to help us see how you find the service we deliver to you by completing and returning the quick tick card. Remember you can also go on-line to complete a survey. As it's called quick ticks, these surveys take a few minutes to complete but can help us plan our services going forward.

### What have we done in 2020/21?

- We have housed 94 households in council accommodation
- We have allocated 8% of council accommodation to households leaving HM Forces
- We have prevented 63 households from becoming homeless
- We have provided 16 households facing homelessness with temporary accommodation
- Thirteen Single Homeless non-priority need placements were made using Government grant funding from a successful bid made by Housing Options. This money was used to adhere to the 'Everyone In' guidance issued by central government during the pandemic
- We have provided advice and assistance to 13 young homeless people to prevent homelessness occurring
- We provided nine bonds to assist people in securing accommodation and prevent homelessness.
- We have spent £57,046.30 assisting 104 council tenants through Discretionary Housing Payments
- We have worked in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council's Income Maximisation team, to help people affected by the pandemic to ensure they were getting the financial help they needed.
- We assisted working age council tenants who received council tax reduction through a Covid 19 Council Tax Hardship payment of up to £150
- We have developed safe ways of working to keep you and our team safe when undertaking visits to your homes, in the office and allocating new homes.
- We have extended nine Introductory Tenancies to provide additional time for the household to address issues of concern and avoid losing their home





### What's next?

- We will work with North Yorkshire Home Choice partners to address the withdrawal by City of York council from the scheme and the effects of local government reorganisation.
- We will continue to work with colleagues in the development of affordable housing to help identify areas of need across the district
- We will continue to work with colleagues in our revenues and benefits team to optimise income for those who qualify for assistance
- We will engage with partners in preparation for local government reorganisation
- We will continue to work with North Yorkshire County Council's Income Maximisation team to help those in need.





## How have we been doing?

Service	Performance 1/4/2020 - 31/3/2021	Targets 2020/21	2021/22 Targets
Helpfulness of staff who dealt with your tenancy	 <b>100%</b> of customers who responded told us they found the staff who dealt with their tenancy helpful	90% we are pleased that we were able to exceed the target set	90%
Standard of advice from the Housing Management Team	 <b>100%</b> of customers who responded told us that they were pleased with the standard of accommodation offered	90% we are pleased that we were able to exceed the target set	90%
Overall satisfaction with the service provided	 <b>100%</b> of customers who responded told us that they were pleased with the overall service received	90% we are pleased that we were able to meet the target set.	90%
Standard of accommodation offered	 <b>95%</b> of customers who responded told us that they were pleased with the standard of accommodation offered	90% we are pleased that we were able to meet the target set.	90%

### Did you know...

A total of **£1,978,603.99** in housing benefit was paid to assist council tenants with housing costs

**97%** of all rent due was collected in 2020/21

**26** Notice of Seeking possession were issued to tenants for non-payment of rent.

**858** tenants paid their rent using Direct Debit, representing **49%** of all paid accounts.

**Seven properties** were sold using the Right to Buy

**Nine Introductory tenants** had an extension applied to their tenancy

The average time to re-let a general needs home requiring minor work was **32 days**

## Your Neighbourhood and Community

This Annual Report highlights to you what the council has been doing in relation to what is known as a Customer Standard. The Neighbourhood and Community element of this standard shows how it's not just what the council does independently to achieve areas we can be proud to call home, but how the council works closely with a host of other agencies to provide services and standards for our communities.

Whilst, undoubtedly the pandemic brought with it huge concerns and sacrifices in various degrees for everyone, from losing the ability to simply go out as you would normally, to not being able to visit those we hold so dear and/or being taken ill or seeing someone you care for poorly, it has also shown how much we can do together to help one another, safely. As a council we had to move quickly to try and get things in place so that we could continue to deliver the essential things to our customers, and we also moved very quickly to identify where we could help in the wider community, assisting North Yorkshire County Council, and their teams of volunteers, with their work in helping those most vulnerable. By working together we were able to get through one of the worst of times.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to undertake the annual garden competition as a direct result of the Covid 19 pandemic. However, we will resume this event, in partnership with The Green Frog Garden Centre, in future years, to showcase some of the beautiful gardens across our district created by you.



## What have we done in 2020/21?

- Support has been provided to several schools including workshops on self-harm and exam stress, as well as regular free one to one counselling sessions.
- We have participated in Multi-Agency Problem Solving Groups with representatives from various partners including the Mental Health Team and the Early Help Team.
- We have continued to work with IDAS, making referrals as appropriate to the RESPECT service which offers support to families affected by domestic abuse, where a young person is showing signs of abusive behaviour.
- We supported partners to make referrals via MAPS for Anger Management and Mediation Services
- We were able to undertake one of our Estate Walkabouts prior to the pandemic, which involved members of the Tenancy Relations Team, Local Councillor's, with support from our Tenant Panel and residents. The Estate Walkabout consisted of 1,041 inspections with 72 re-visits identified as required.
- Due to the pandemic the council's free of charge 'Choose to Lose' scheme went virtual moving classes online, enabling members to join the programme from their own homes  
**[choosetolose@richmondshire.gov.uk](mailto:choosetolose@richmondshire.gov.uk)**
- 197 people registered on Choose to Lose
- Support has continued for young people through the links made with Darlington Mind
- We have continued to support the work of North Yorkshire Youth by raising awareness of issues affecting young people and ensuring we share diversionary and support activities.
- Fourteen new cases of anti-social behaviour were opened
- The team worked on 27 active cases of anti-social behaviour
- Thirty cases of anti-social behaviour were closed.
- We provided accommodation to two new refugee families with support provided from North Yorkshire County Council and the Refugee Council
  - A Public Spaces Protection Order was developed for land at the Falls in Richmond to address issues of concern



## Did you know...

**Ten** Notice of Seeking possessions were served in relation to anti-social behaviour

**100%** of anti-social behaviour cases received an initial response within priority time.

## What's next?

- We will resume our full estate walkabouts across the district.
- We will continue working in partnership with specialist agencies to help victims of Domestic Abuse
- We will continue to support and raise awareness of the various support groups and partner agencies using our communications plan and supporting multi-agency meetings.
- We will continue to work with partner agencies to address anti-social behaviour
- We will, in partnership with the MOD and North Yorkshire County Council, provide accommodation and support for refugee families from Afghanistan.
- We will complete our planned work to improve facilities for mobility scooter users in our sheltered housing schemes
- We will expand our options for Choose to Lose by re-introducing face to face classes.

## At a glance

Lifeline was provided to **693** homes

**96%** of jobs completed  
Right First Time

**£1.2 million**  
spent through the  
Major Improvement  
Programme

**13** young people were  
offered advice and  
assistance when facing  
homelessness

**10** Notice of Seeking  
Possession were  
served for Anti-Social  
Behaviour

**24** new homes  
provided across  
Richmondshire

**75** Adaptations  
carried out to  
people's homes

**24,097** online  
transactions  
were made

**12,487** customers used  
the Browsealoud facility

**100%** of  
Heating Services  
Completed

New bathrooms  
installed in **41**  
homes

**26** tenants served with a  
Notice of Seeking Possession  
for non-payment of rent

**96** Paint packs were  
issued to tenants

**63** households prevented  
from becoming homeless

External  
Rendering  
completed at **8**  
homes

New central heating  
boilers installed at  
**116** homes

New kitchens  
installed at  
**62** homes

**13** single non-  
priority homeless were  
accommodated in  
temporary accommodation  
during the pandemic

## At a glance continued

**979,120**

Website views

We collected **97%** of rent due

**51,609** calls dealt with by the customer services team

**14** New cases of Anti-Social Behaviour were opened

**7** households purchased their home using the Right to Buy

**8%\*** of applicants accommodated through the North Yorkshire Home choice were ex-forces personnel

**858** tenants pay their rent using Direct Debit

**7,623** payments made using the Automated Payment Line

**1,041** Estate Walkabout visits were made

**£57,046** was spent assisting tenants through Discretionary Hardship Payments

**104** tenants were assisted with Discretionary Housing Payments

**94** new tenants housed through North Yorkshire Home Choice

**197** customers registered on Choose to Lose

We received **11** formal complaints with **8** being responded to within corporate time frame

**17** complaints were received relating to services provided by Landlord Services

This information is available in alternative formats and languages



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