

Annual Report

for Tenants

2021/22



Welcome to the 2021/22 Housing Services Annual Report to tenants. Here we share information about our performance in the last financial year.

This annual report covers the period between April 2021 and March 2022. Another tough year for everyone with the implications of Covid-19 and a difficult economic climate continuing to impact on daily lives and upon our housing work. The Housing Services team have continued to work hard to ensure that tenants' homes were safe and comfortable places to live and providing additional support for vulnerable households.

The report includes information about how we invest in homes, repair and improve them and respond to the issues and complaints that you raise. It will tell you how the rent that we collect is used to maintain and raise the quality of council homes in the District.

We also hope you find this report informative and that it gives you a greater insight into the work that we do for the benefit of all our tenants and leaseholders.



Councillor Adrienne Fitzgerald

Housing, Heritage, & Leisure Portfolio Leader



Nirmal Samrai

Head of Housing and Partnerships



Priorities 2022-23



Quality Homes: We will continue to improve the quality of the Council's housing stock for the benefit of our tenants by ensuring that we continue to meet and exceed the Decent Homes standard. We are also exploring how we can move towards carbon neutrality through retrofitting the existing stock.



Support: We will make the best use of our stock, provide tenancy sustainment support, promote the provision of suitable accommodation, and provide information and advice to prevent and reduce homelessness.



New Homes: We will continue working towards delivering further new council homes over the coming years using the Housing Investment Fund. Two potential sites are being progressed for starts in the next couple of years. The two sites aim to provide housing to a standard to achieve carbon neutrality or maximise carbon reduction as far as is practically possible which will provide affordable warmth for tenants. It will also assist in achieving the Council's strategic aim of working toward achieving zero carbon Council homes.

Key facts

(as at 1 April 2022)



We provide 5,075 homes across the District



We lease 292 flats across the District on leasehold terms;



We have delivered 22 new homes in the previous year;



We sold 32 properties through Right To Buy in 2021/22, therefore a net loss of 10 properties overall;



93% of respondents to our monthly repairs satisfaction survey said that were satisfied with the repair services we provided.

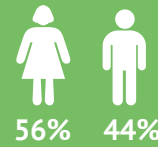
Understanding and responding to your needs

Tenant Profile
(from STAR survey 2021)

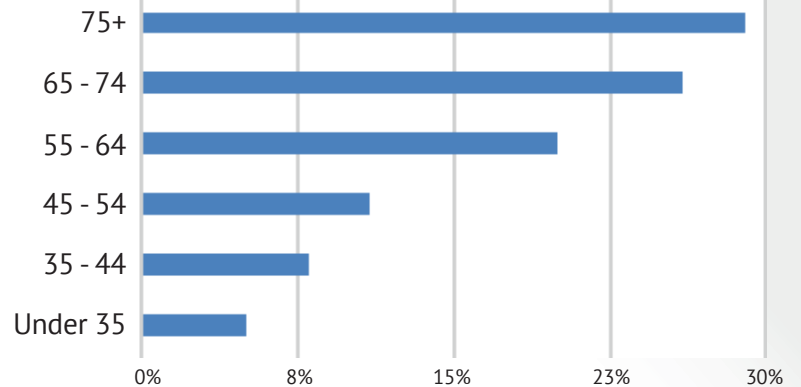
Tenants have on average held their tenancies for **13 years** (same as last year). According to our records the longest tenancy held is an incredible **68 years!**

Our Tenants

Gender



Age



The Council has **5075** properties for rent
As at 31/03/2022

2031 one bed properties;

1444 two bed properties

1483 three bed properties

60 four bed properties

1 five bed property

56 sheltered bedsits

Average time on housing register
16 Months
(increased since last year)

382 households requiring 1 bedroom accommodation

There were **1096** households on the Housing Register as at 31/03/2022

41 households require 4+ bedroom accommodation

444 require 2 bedroom accommodation

191 require 3 bedroom accommodation

We also manage **813** garages, of which **380** were occupied.
And we have **292** leasehold properties.

(as at 31/03/2022)

During 2021/22 we received **30,978** calls through the Contact Centre on Housing related matters and **488** visits to the Council offices, an increase on last year for both calls and visits understandable as the Covid pandemic decreased interactions and we now move towards more normal operations.



Complaints and Compliments

1 Stage 2 complaints;
13 Stage 1 complaints;
117 MP enquiries;
40 were recorded as informal (i.e. councillor complaint on behalf of tenant, anonymous or from another family member)



13 complaints reached Stage 1

4 - Allocations;
3 - Neighbourhoods;
2 Housing Repairs;
2 Housing Property Services;
1 Neighbourhoods and Allocations;
1 Housing Options

1 complaint was escalated to Stage 2

1 from Allocations / Neighbourhoods

Only 3 of the formal complaints were upheld (fully or partially)

This is a decrease on last year in stage 2 complaints (three down to one) but an increase in stage 1 (10 up to 13). There was a significant increase in MP (up 54%), and informal complaints (up 60%) on the previous year too.

What we learned from the complaints received and what we did:

A complaint was received on a recent letting where we did not leave the void (empty property) information pack at the property and delivered it late to the tenant. There was also an issue where there was a verbal miscommunication, where permission was thought to have been given to undertake work but had not. There was presence of asbestos and if the tenant had the void pack with the information would not have undertaken some work due to the verbal miscommunication which could potentially have disturbed asbestos and led to further issues.

What we did: We reviewed our sign up process and made sure that delivery of void pack prior to occupation always occurs now, as it is included in the sign up checklist. Officers were spoken to regarding communication with tenants and the clarity of instructions and permissions in relation to tenant alterations. All operatives and some Tenancy Services staff underwent refresher training in relation to asbestos management and procedures for housing.

A complaint regarding the wording of the repairs calling card was received.

What we did: We reviewed the language and wording within the calling card and changed it, we consulted with the complainant and took on board their comments. The new calling cards have since been rolled out.

A complaint was received when a tenant was given conflicting information from different departments regarding moving into an adapted property. The internal process did not fully comply with tenancy agreement on the gifting of items left by the previous occupant.

What we did: We reviewed the tenancy agreement and the process for adapted moves and made a change to the internal procedure to fully comply. We will now ensure all communication with tenants moving to adapted properties in future is conducted by one point of contact and they will cross check with other departments to give accurate information at all times.

Scheme changes improve access to Housing Ombudsman

Changes to the Housing Ombudsman Scheme took effect from 1 October, making it easier for residents to access the service if they remain unhappy with their landlord's final response on their complaint.

The revised scheme removes the 'democratic filter' following a change in the law. It means residents will no longer have to contact a designated person or wait eight weeks before referring their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, if they remain dissatisfied at the end of their landlord's complaint process.

Residents can still contact their MP, local councillor or tenant panel about a complaint, but the designated person role will not be part of the Ombudsman's formal process. Removing this barrier will ensure that social housing residents are not disadvantaged and have direct access to the Ombudsman, as well as helping to speed up the overall complaints process.

As a reminder, residents can also contact the Ombudsman if they are having problems accessing their landlord's complaints process or if they have complained to their landlord and it has not responded in line with its complaints policy. The Housing Ombudsman Service does not investigate complaints before residents have completed the complaints process, but the Ombudsman can take steps to encourage landlords and residents to work together to resolve a complaint.



For more information on the Housing Ombudsman Scheme:
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Scheme-September-2022.pdf

Information on our complaints policy and procedure can be found on our web pages at:
www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-complaints-and-compliments

As well as complaints, we also record compliments from tenants

Mrs H said:

“ I wanted to say how lovely and professional the men who came to repair the fence panels were the other day. ”

Via a councillor:

“ Thank you for assisting Mr P. Andy treated him and his friend who supports him with so much respect and supported him without stressing him out, understanding how nervous he was. Completed all the forms and made him feel like a real gentleman. ”

Via a support organisation:

“ I would like to thank Craig for his care to our client and for his due diligence in skillfully arranging for her issues to be dealt with swiftly and accordingly. Craig both saved costs for you and also helped our client at a point of distress and further has resolved the issues effecting her health effectively and in good time. ”

Mr C said:

“ From the moment that Darren arrived at our home he set to work with a will and never stopped until the work was completed. His work was excellent. He was polite and helpful, worked without fuss and made a stressful time easier for my wife and I. ”

Ms K said:

“ Jo worked extremely hard, on a daily basis and went above and beyond. She did not just find my family a new home in 6 days (miracle) she has given my family a new start at life when we have been dealt nothing but trauma. ”

Support for our customers

The Housing Services Team work hard to provide support for our customers, particularly the most vulnerable. We are proud to say that we were able to support all of our most vulnerable customers throughout the pandemic and ensured that no one lost their home due to financial issues caused by Coronavirus.

During 2021/22 as we slowly recovered from the Covid pandemic we were hit with a fuel crisis and towards the end of the year the first signs of a cost of living crisis were starting to show, with the price of energy becoming a particular worry for many.

We will provide as much support as we can to help our customers through this uncertain time. If there concerns about your tenancy or keeping up with payments our customer can contact us by:



Telephone **01543 462621**



Online www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing



Email moneymanagementteam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk
or EMTeam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk



Help with the cost of living crisis

The rising cost of living is affecting us all. We are supporting residents, as well as signposting to other agencies, which can offer help and advice.

For more information see our dedicated webpages at: www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/costofliving

There will also be information distributed on our social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube; and via the [Chase Matters magazine](#).

A special edition of Hometalk will be published in early 2023 to provide further information on the cost of living, the help available to tenants and leaseholders and tips on how they can make a few savings to ease rising costs.



Repairs and improving your home

Repairs during 2021/22



12,575 repair jobs were completed an increase on last year as we return to more normal operations after the covid pandemic.

9,766 repairs appointments were made

9,737 repairs appointment were kept

We completed all repair jobs in 14.81 calendar days on average unfortunately due to catching up on backlogs after the Covid pandemic this is an increase of 2 days on last year.

Whilst all non-emergency repairs were completed in an average of 14.13 working days unfortunately this is an increase of 1 day on last year.

99.97% of emergency repairs were completed within 24 hours unfortunately one job was missed.

During 2021/22 we continued our monthly repairs satisfaction surveys sent to a random selection of tenants who had required a repair job to be completed during the previous month. We have found that:



92% were satisfied with the quality of the work increase on last year.

89% were satisfied the repair was done right first time increase on last year.

91% were satisfied overall with the service they received increase on last year.

We know our performance in turning around void properties has worsened yet again. We've made changes and are implementing our Improvement Plan that includes a number of actions that we know will speed up the process for repairing and re-letting our properties, but these are taking time to bed in. Performance in 2022/23 is showing signs of improvement.

Average re-let time:
102.37 days
(88.34 days last year)

100% of our homes meet the decent homes standard (excluding where tenants have refused remedial work).

The increase in relet time meant the rent loss also increased significantly on last year, up from **£210k**.



We lost **£359k** in rent whilst properties were being repaired and let during the year.

Improving our homes



450 properties received electric upgrading works (wired in smoke detectors and provision of additional sockets)



155 properties benefitted from disabled facilities work (safe WC and showering, alterations to rooms; heating and power improvements; safety related works)



415 properties benefitted from a central heating upgrade



57 properties had bathroom upgrades

Disrepair Claims



There were **22** disrepair claims brought to the Council during 2021/22 and these do take up a lot of time and money. **12** of the **22** were resolved and **10** have rolled over into 2022/23. The **12** resolved cases cost the service almost **£35,000** and prevented **135** other repairs being undertaken and **9** new kitchens or bathrooms that could otherwise have been delivered to other tenants.

In these cases, for most tenants involved, the claim only slows the repairs process down. We believe that some of these solicitors and law firms are unscrupulous and do not have a tenant's best financial or health interests at heart and will often advise tenants to refuse access for repairs. In many cases, tenants may be liable to pay court costs even if on a no-win no fee basis.



If you have any outstanding repairs then in the first instance it is essential you call **01543 462621** to report these to the **Housing Maintenance service** who will raise the repair and get you booked in.

Repairs can be resolved much quicker this way and the cost of involving law firms means that the money you pay in rent is directly being paid to these firms for repairs that would have been completed if they were reported anyway. It also means other repairs and improvement work cannot be completed as the time and money is spent on dealing with disrepair claims.



If you are dissatisfied with any housing or repairs service you have received, or feel that you are entitled to compensation, there are a number of options available to you, both informal and formal. Our complaint procedure allows tenants to raise concerns and request that the service 'makes it right'. Tenants can log complaints by phone, in writing, by email or through the website at www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/council/about-council/customer-feedback-help-us-get-it-right



More information is available at: www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-complaints-and-compliments

Kitchen and Bathroom programme

Housing Maintenance have been looking to expand their service delivery to its customer base and have now secured an internal delivery programme with Housing Property Services.

This includes the delivery of a kitchen and bathroom programme which will assist Housing Maintenance in developing its skillset and showcasing to our council customers that we are there for more than just repairs.

Our intention is to build on the skills we have by creating apprenticeships and we have recently taken on our first plumbing apprentices for a number of years which will ensure our customers receive quality improvements in their homes.

Housing Maintenance are seeking to further develop their work by providing skilled trade operatives to undertake other home improvement works efficiently, and demonstrate real value for money to our customers and Council members.



Managing your tenancy

Your Rent

Following Government policy, we increased your rent by 4.1%. The policy for rent increases is based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%. The CPI at the time of rent setting was 3.1%, hence the total 4.1% increase.



Your average rent in 2021-22 was £74.56 per week.



We received approximately £19.34m in rent income during the year.

Unfortunately we have not been able to bring you all the financial information we would normally provide you. This is due to a significant delay in our Final Accounts being audited and signed off. We apologise for this and hope it does not detract from the good work the Housing Services team has done in 2021/22 detailed in this Annual Report.

Current tenants were in arrears to the amount of **£280,107** at the end of the financial year. Those tenants in arrears were behind with their payments by an average **£284**, just under 4 weeks rent, which is about the same as last year. And unfortunately some tenants are behind by a lot more.

We are pleased to say that no evictions were carried out as a result of rent arrears, due to the pro-active work of the Money Management Team and Tenancy Sustainment Team.



97% of tenants felt fairly or very satisfied with moving between Council properties. 3% responded 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' likely because they had not moved, 0% of tenants indicated they were dissatisfied.



We recovered 14 abandoned properties



49 ASB cases were investigated, of which 36 were successfully resolved, 13 were closed due to disengagement or withdrawal, a decrease from last year.



We let 328 properties in total during 2021/22:



192 lettings were made to new tenants to social housing



127 lettings were to existing social housing tenants



9 mutual exchanges were completed

Lettings 2021/22



96% of new tenancies lasted more than 1 year. (Fewer tenancies are still being ended than would normally be the case before the Covid pandemic).



195 tenants received a new tenancy visit and 74 tenants were assisted by the tenancy sustainment service.



97 introductory tenancies were sustained for 12 months.

Tenancy Sustainment

The Service takes a multi-agency approach by creating a sustainability plan to focus on tenants who are in financial hardship or at risk of losing their tenancy, with the aim to successfully keep them in their home.



During 2021-22 97 new tenants engaged with the tenancy sustainment service and maintained their tenancies past 12 months, a slight decrease on 20-21.



We worked with a further 74 tenants/ households with successful outcomes to sustain their tenancy and help them remain in their homes, which was a big increase on last year.



Resident Involvement

We believe resident involvement is about working with our tenants and residents to support and address those issues they feel are a priority in their local community. So, Housing Officers have been working with wider community partners to develop and deliver community engagement events across the District.



Tenants & Residents Associations are also active on the Springfields estate in Rugeley and Moss Road estate in Chadsmoor, Cannock; and there is also a Community Centre in Rugeley where multi-agencies attend and engage with residents.



During 2021/22 we have held 4 Community events across the District, in Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley, over 100 people attended. The outcomes shared with tenants and residents from these events were very successful.



Head of Housing and Partnerships, Nirmal Samrai, Rugeley Foodbank manager Dave Webb, Chris Fielding Rugeley Community Church, Andy Smith Cannock Chase Council and volunteers from the Rugeley Foodbank.

Building New Council Homes

During 2021/22 the development at Hawks Green was completed:



L-R: Councillor Adrienne Fitzgerald, Clive Jessup, Nirmal Samrai, Tim Clegg, Councillor Olivia Lyons

The scheme delivered **22** new Council homes: 8 x 1 bed flats; 6 x 1 bed houses; 6 x 2 bed houses; and 2 x 3 bed houses.

Plans are still being worked on for two further sites in the District that will deliver approximately 70 new dwellings for Council rent. In addition, these two schemes reflect the Council's commitment to the Climate Change agenda with the construction of sustainable, low energy properties.



We sold 32 properties via Right to Buy.

This meant the stock decreased by 10 properties overall in 2021/22.

Looking forward to 2022/23

We will roll out a new kitchen and bathroom replacements programme alongside external envelope and environmental improvements, to continue improving and maintaining the quality of our housing stock beyond the Decent Homes Standard.

Plans for the two further sites have been progressing and remain the priority to ensure new Council homes for rent are delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible, making the best use of the Housing Investment Fund. We have been working towards developing sustainable new homes on these two sites whilst striving to make the best use of resources; a stock condition survey will commence to inform a new zero carbon retrofit programme for our existing stock.

We will also continue to support independent living, and alongside our cyclical maintenance and improvement works we will continue to undertake minor and major adaptations to improve properties for people with mobility and other health issues, which make it difficult for them to access the facilities within their home.

Nirmal Samrai

Head of Housing and Partnerships

HRA Capital Programme 2022/23 Priorities

Replacement of Kitchens	£2,076,000
Replacement of Bathrooms	£1,595,000
External / Environmental Works	£1,454,000
Replacement of Central Heating	£922,000
Upgrading of Electrics	£894,000
Replacement of vehicles	£408,000
Disabled Facilities Work	£369,000
Communal Blocks Fire Risk Actions, Door Entry System	£342,000
Sheltered Schemes improvement works and lift replacements	£294,000
Resurfacing of Driveways	£200,000
Environmental Work	£60,000
Hillsprings Court Fire Alarm	£30,000
Other Costs and Contingencies	£146,000
Total	£8,790,000



Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23

£20.6m	£20.5m
HRA Income 2022/23	HRA Expenditure 2022/23

In 2022/23 your rent has been increased by 4.1% in accordance with Government's rent policy, so average rents in 2022/23 will be:

1 bed = £ 70.82
2 bed = £ 80.91
3 bed = £ 85.06
4 bed = £ 94.53



Keep in touch...

→  Search for 'Cannock Chase Life'

→  @CannockChaseDC

→  www.youtube.com/CannockChaseDC

Cannock Chase Council

Civic Centre, Beecroft Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 1BG

tel 01543 462621

email customerservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk