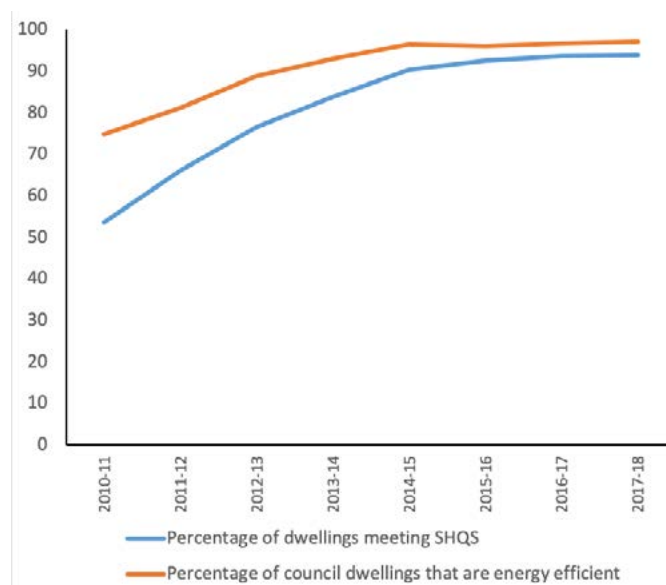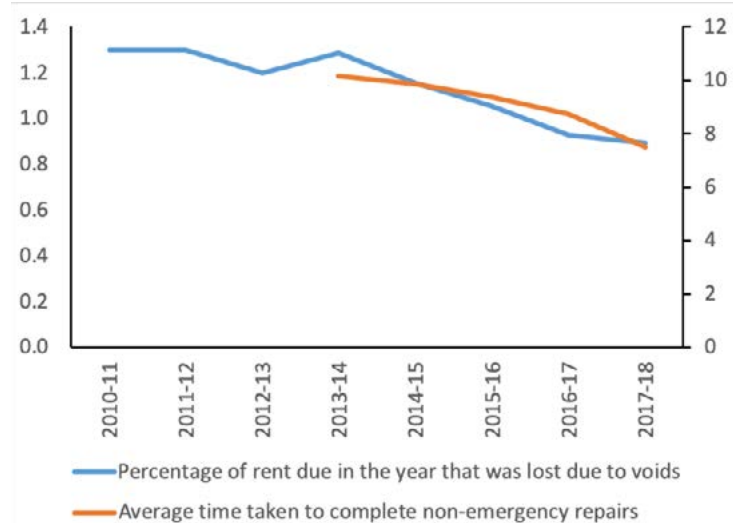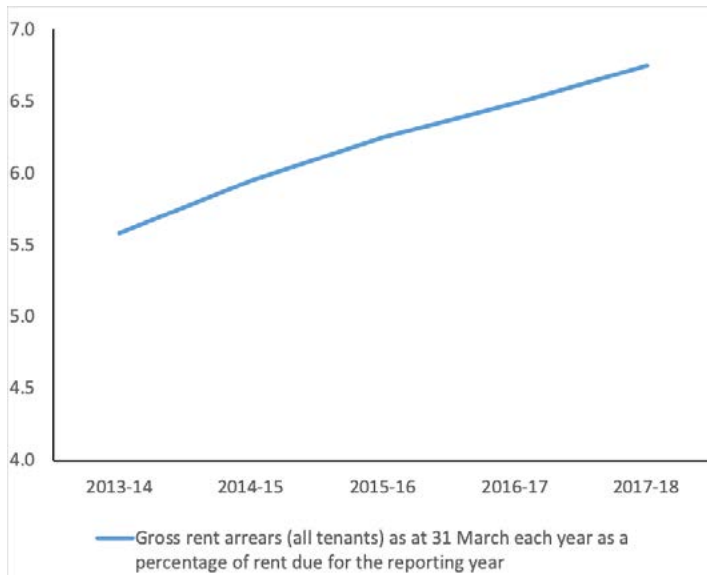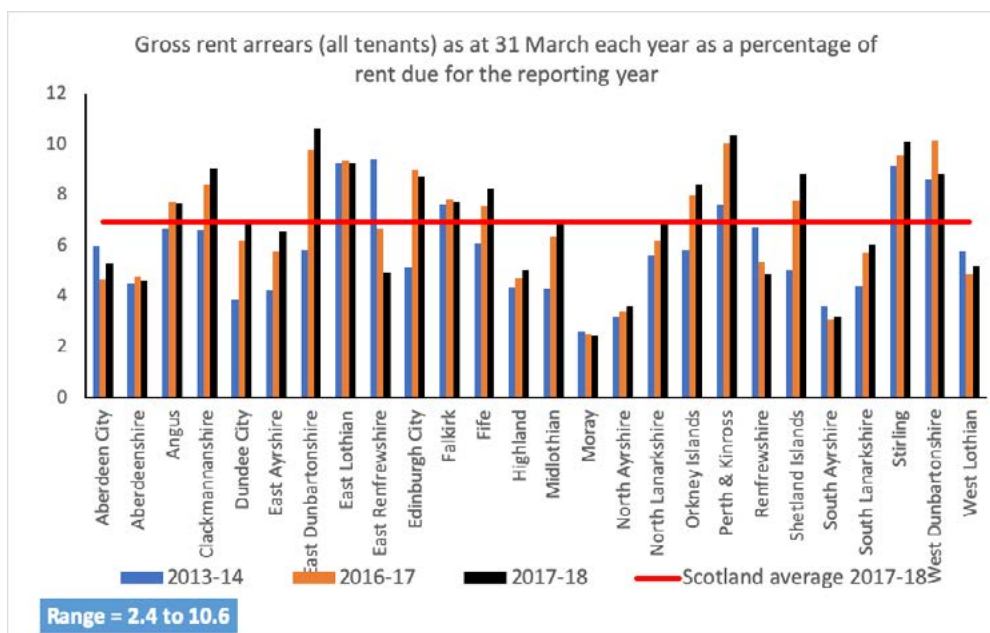# Housing Briefing 2019

The housing information within the benchmarking framework covers housing management, housing conditions and energy efficiency. Only those councils who have responsibility for the provision of Housing Services are included here.

Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year

Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids

Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs

Percentage of dwellings meeting SHQS

Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient

Rent arrears

The average Scottish tenants' arrears as a percentage of rent due has increased year on year from 5.6% in 2013/14 to 6.7% in 2017/18. This reflects an increase in gross rent arrears during this time of 24.7%, which is an increase of £15 million from £61.0 million in 2013/14 to £76.0 million in 2017/18.
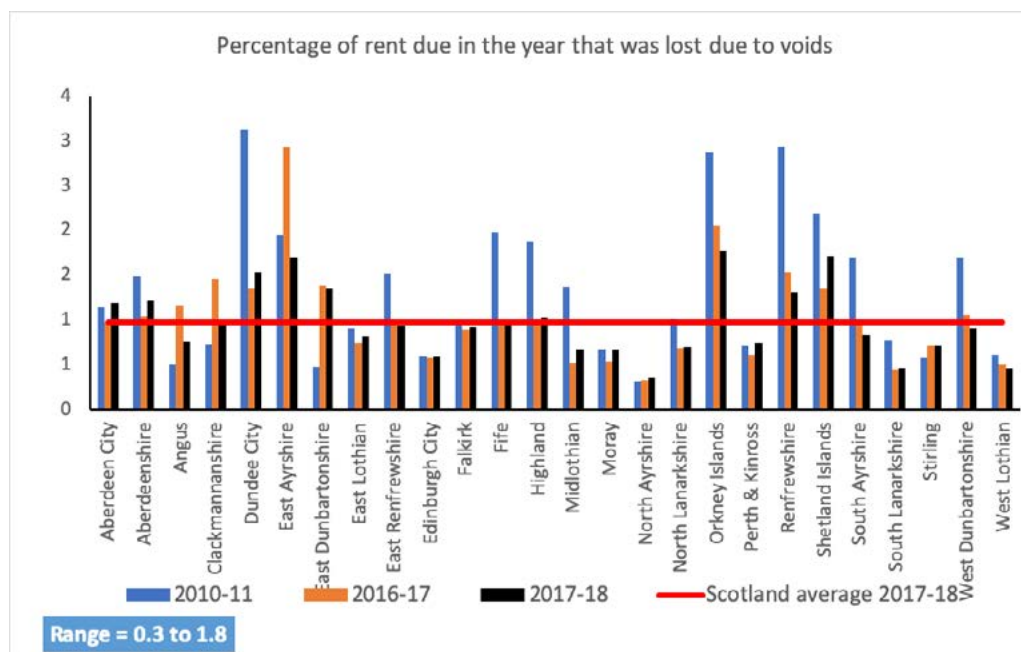
In 2017/18, the percentage of arrears range from 2.4% to 10.6% across councils which indicates a widening variation since 2013/14. Analysis indicates variation is not systematically related to levels of deprivation within a council, rurality or size of authority area.

Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year

Legend: 2013-14, 2016-17, 2017-18, Scotland average 2017-18

Range = 2.4 to 10.6

Source: Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Note: Missing values represent the six councils who do not provide housing services following transfer to Registered Social Landlords

Rent lost due to voids

The rent lost due to voids has reduced from 1.3% in 2010/11 to 0.9% in 2017/18. Figures vary across authorities, from 0.3% to 1.8%, however the level of variation has reduced since the base year. Rural and less densely populated authorities tend to report higher rates of rent loss than urban and semi-rural areas.

Percentage of rent due in the year that was lost due to voids

Legend: 2010-11, 2016-17, 2017-18, Scotland average 2017-18

Range = 0.3 to 1.8

Housing repairs

The average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs has reduced by 26.2% over the period, from 10.2 days in 2013/14 to 7.5 days in 2017/18.

There is significant variation across councils although this has narrowed slightly since the base year. In 2017/18, length of time ranged from 4.1 days to 15.4 days, with no systematic effects of rurality, deprivation or size of council.

Overall, these figures suggest the councils continue to manage their stock well in the face of mounting pressures.

Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs

Legend: 2013-14 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | Scotland average 2017-18
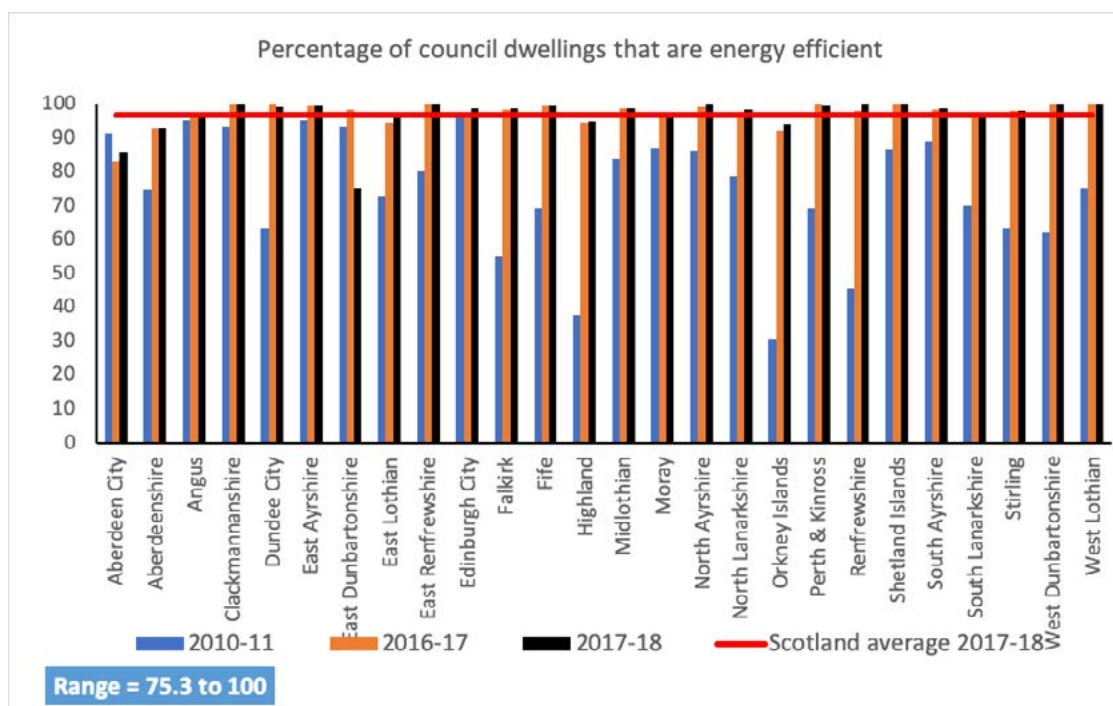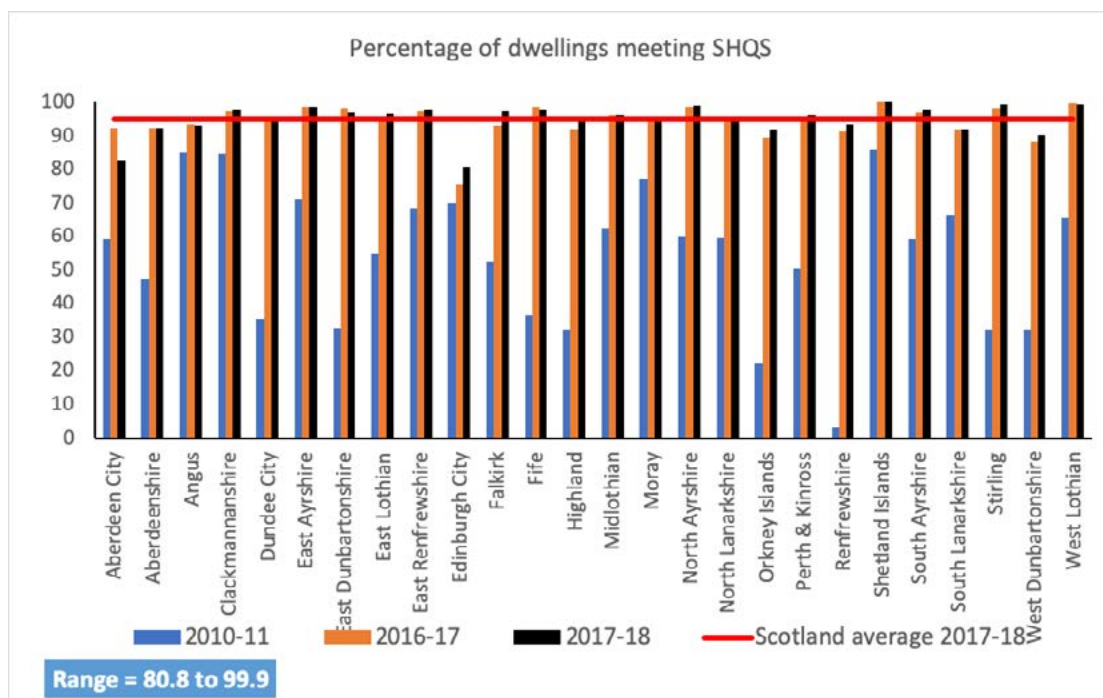
Range = 4.1 to 15.4
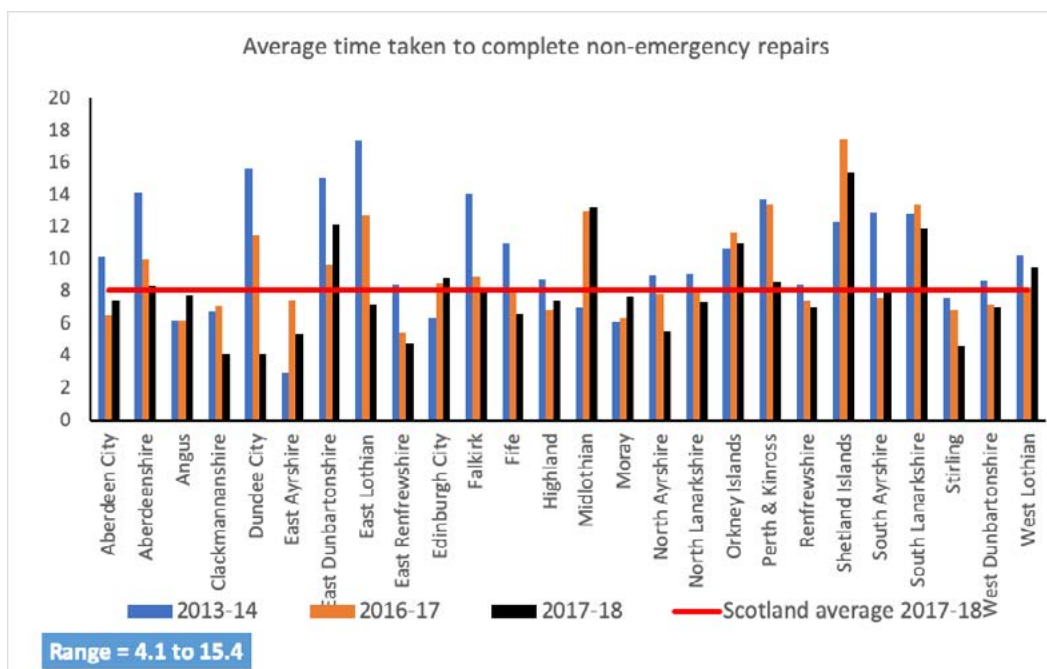
Housing quality

In terms of Housing Quality, there have been significant improvements over the past 8 years in terms of dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) and energy efficiency standards.

In 2017/18, 93.9% of council dwellings met the SHQS, an increase of 40 percentage points from 2010/11. The range across councils varies from 80.8% to 99.9%, although this range has narrowed significantly since 2010/11.

In 2017/18, 97.2% of council dwellings were energy efficient, an increase from 74.9% in 2010/11. Councils range from 75.3% to 100%.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Change 2016-17 to 2017-18	Change 2010-11 to 2017-18
% dwellings meeting SHQS	53.6	66.1	76.6	83.7	90.4	92.5	93.6	93.9	0.3%	40.3%
% dwellings that are energy efficient	74.9	81.2	88.8	93.0	96.6	96.2	96.6	97.2	0.6%	22.3%

Percentage of dwellings meeting SHQS

Legend: 2010-11 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | Scotland average 2017-18

Range = 80.8 to 99.9

Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient

Legend: 2010-11 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | Scotland average 2017-18

Range = 75.3 to 100

Work within family groups has identified the following features of local policy and procedure as important in further understanding the variation between authorities in Housing services performance:

- Current standard of housing stock; newer houses are likely to require fewer repairs
- Service structure within Councils
- Rurality of Councils
- Composition of population; some areas have larger number of young families
- Alignment between provision of LA housing and population growth
- Current level of digital provision within Councils; shift to self-service, improved recording methods, digital communication within departments
- Partnership and inter-departmental working

Learning from the June 2019 Benchmarking Event

The structure of Housing teams (specific specialised teams or a more generic model) was a key point of discussion during practice sharing sessions, with pros and cons of each approach being raised. Councils structure their Housing teams to reflect the geography, demographic composition and assets in their particular area.

Generic vs. Targeted housing team (Link to Service Redesign)

Each way of working has its advantages and limitations. Some Councils have switched to one approach, found it doesn't work for them and switched back. In general, a shift to generic means housing officers lose the relationship they have built up with familiar tenants, and specialist knowledge may be lost or under-utilised. Specialised, separate teams can lead to duplication, and potential issues with lack of communication between teams.

In **South Ayrshire**, the role of a Housing Officer is now more generic, but they have retained specific arrears and Universal Credit teams. **Edinburgh** have undergone a huge service transformation. There has been a shift from separate teams into more centralised model, with some roles becoming more generalised. **Clackmannanshire** currently utilise the generic staff team model. **East Renfrewshire** are discussing a potential shift to generic working, informed by the way housing has become tied in with Universal Credit. **Fife** employ a generic approach (with approximately 275 properties per officer). **West Lothian** are undergoing a service redesign to tackle insular services.

East Dunbartonshire moved from generic to more specialised teams following results from a rent census. There is a 'buddy' approach between estates and arrears; interlinked working and joint visits are currently going well. **Aberdeenshire** have shifted to specialised teams, in part due to the large geographical area of the Council. A one size fits all approach will not work due to geographical variety. In **Moray**, their housing officers are non-generic. Anti-social behaviour is now covered by the community safety team. The current focus within Moray Council is rent arrears and tenancy management. **Falkirk** are undergoing restructure and have shifted to specialist teams.

New Ways of Working

Fife utilise the Franklin Covey 4 disciplines of execution model; this means a weekly team meeting with common interests wherein staff commit to what they're going to do. This 'Make a commitment' approach helps to escalate key issues. Driver for this was tackling the fragmented approach to housing, and a wish to improve best practice. Initially costly to implement, but aspects of the approach continue to be used.

Clackmannanshire currently utilising a Visual Management Board (VMB) approach.

With increasing levels of homelessness in the area, **West Lothian** Council have started charging a flat fee for emergency accommodation (B&B/ Hotels); this small contribution towards the cost does not cover the full cost.

South Lanarkshire Carrying out early intervention approach; including settling in visits within 20 working days of the date tenancy starts, to check that tenants are settling into their new home. **South Ayrshire** also carry out similar settling in visits where a housing officer arranges a visit to discuss any issues tenants may experience while settling into their new home.

East Ayrshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan has been agreed and will now be submitted to the Scottish Government.

Other

Due to the closure of smaller town courts previously used by **East Dunbartonshire** and **East Lothian**, these Councils are now using City Sheriff courts. However, these courts tend to be in high demand so it can be difficult to see court proceedings through to completion.

In **Moray**, their rent arrears have decreased. A consultation on a 3-year rent increase was held, and tenants were in favour of it. However, in the third year Moray Council decided to do a rent freeze.

For further information about the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, please visit www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking