

Local Housing Strategy 2011/12 – 2015/16

Background Paper 4

West Dunbartonshire Council

Private Sector House Condition Survey

1. Context

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 gives Councils greater responsibility towards the maintenance and repair of private sector housing and the Local Housing Strategy is concerned with housing across all tenures.

The Private Sector House Condition Survey is key to understanding this sector and in developing policy appropriate responses.

This paper presents the principal findings to emerge from a comprehensive sample survey of housing conditions in both the private and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) housing sectors in West Dunbartonshire in 2010. The study was conducted on behalf of West Dunbartonshire Council by David Adamson & Partners Ltd.

The physical house condition survey is in line with the framework of the Scottish Housing Quality Standards including statutory housing standards, dwelling repair, amenities and home energy efficiency. The social survey also includes information on the demographic, social and economic characteristics of households and their attitudes to housing and community issues.

The West Dunbartonshire area comprises approximately 28,400 dwellings in the private and RSL housing sector. The survey sample achieved a return of 1,046 dwellings equating to 3.6% of private and RSL stock.

2. Key Findings

The key findings may be summarized as follows:

- Across all the tenures covered by the survey, it is estimated that 25,033 dwellings (88.1%) fail the requirements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Within the standard, 437 dwellings are BTS representing 1.5% of total private and RSL sector housing stock.
- Housing conditions in West Dunbartonshire are generally in line with the Scottish average across all key condition indicators.
- Minimum costs to address visible/patch repairs and to meet the Tolerable Standard are estimated at £11.011M, costs to achieve SHQS compliance

- at £28.848M. The survey provides an objective basis for the targeting of these investment needs.
- Housing conditions vary across West Dunbartonshire both geographically and by housing tenure and age. Geographically, rates of BTS housing are higher in Clydebank Waterfront ward. Rates of disrepair are higher within Dumbarton, Lomond and Kilpatrick electoral wards.
 - Within the main tenure groups housing conditions are generally worse within the private-rented sector as are socio-economic conditions associated with younger single households.
 - Energy efficiency levels are in line with the Scottish average. Lowest levels of energy efficiency are associated with pre-war housing and detached houses. Levels of fuel poverty are lower than the Scottish average but remain significant at 15% of private and RSL sector households (4,005 households). Fuel poverty impacts more strongly on households living in the RSL sector and in housing constructed between 1945 and 1964. It also impacts more strongly on households in Lomond and Leven electoral wards.
 - Poor housing conditions are associated with households in social or economic disadvantage. Households particularly affected include the elderly, those on low incomes and those in receipt of means tested benefits. Elderly households comprise 37.7% of all households living in BTS housing, and 23.3% of all households living in BTS dwellings are in receipt of means-tested or disability related benefits.
 - A significant proportion of households receiving a means tested benefit and occupying a dwelling that exhibits extensive disrepair rent their accommodation from a private landlord (19.4%).

3. Policy Implications

The Private Sector House Condition Survey provides a wealth of information by age of construction and by electoral ward.

The survey provides a framework of information for the targeting of investment against the issues identified.

The report suggests that the Council should consider how it could work more closely with landlords and tenants to create policies to ensure their responsibilities under current legislation are understood and also where necessary action and enforcement is instigated. A number of different approaches may be required, particularly to target financially vulnerable households.

Within the owner occupied sector, 3,617 households (17.7%) perceive repair needs to their current accommodation. Where repair needs are perceived, key barriers to home improvement include access to savings, advice on financing

repairs, finding value for money contractors and obtaining estimates of the cost of works. The Council's Scheme of Assistance will have a crucial role in addressing these issues.

Significant proportions of owner occupied households living in unsatisfactory housing should be in a position to fund their own repair works. 41.8% of owner occupied households have no existing mortgage or financial commitments against their home. Equity levels among owner occupiers are also high - estimated at £1.550 billion across all owner occupied households. Only 8.9% of owner occupiers indicated a willingness to remortgage or use this available equity in home improvements.