Houses to Mend

Repair, maintenance, and improvement of public sector housing in Scotland

Report prepared by

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Preface

Tenants in public sector housing—which accommodates 54 per cent of households in Scotland—are consumers in a very important sense. They are recipients of a public service which is not only one of the most complex and costly to manage—but one which deeply affects the quality of their lives. A house is more than just a dwelling-place—it is a home, a centre of family and social life. Yet the family in public sector housing is necessarily denied this sense of having a “home” if it is not to be given some latitude in moulding its accommodation according to personal needs and preferences.

The recent green paper Scottish Housing said as much when it noted: “There are signs that many tenants want more say in decisions about their living conditions (e.g. about how their houses are to be modernised or the external environment improved) and simply to be free to use and look after their homes with the minimum of restrictions”. As well as easing—in the long run—some of the pressures on centralised housing management, more choice and participation may also confer upon tenants that sense of self determination and self respect now taken for granted and enjoyed by most owner occupiers (and some members of the ever-growing numbers of housing associations).

It was with these developments in mind that the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection asked the National Consumer Council, along with its affiliated country councils, to investigate the scope for greater tenant involvement in the repair, maintenance and improvement of public sector housing. Because of the importance of public sector housing in Scotland the Scottish Consumer Council made a special study in this area. The thirty-nine recommendations now put forward for discussion cover a wide variety of proposals for potential improvement. Some of these only require changes in attitudes—costing nothing. Some of them we realise may not be instantly attainable in times of financial retrenchment. More choice and participation for tenants does not necessarily mean cheaper housing administration—at least in the short run. Tenants would need advice and support in doing for themselves what at present they must ask officials to do for them. Housing departments would still need to supervise carefully the maintenance of standards and it is quite possible—indeed it is to be hoped—that more involved, better informed tenants would look for higher standards.

The results of this survey do not lend themselves to “instant” solutions although we hope that some may commend themselves to early action. But our larger hope is that the report and its recommendations will provide the fuel for discussion between householders, councillors, housing and technical staff and government itself, whereby a new, lively sense of common effort and common interests may emerge.

Joan Macintosh
Chairman, Scottish Consumer Council,
September 1978.
1 Scope of the Investigation

1.1 Introduction

In 1977 the National Consumer Council was asked by the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection to investigate the scope for greater tenant involvement in the repair, maintenance and improvement of public housing, having regard to costs, particularly through the medium of tenants organisations as the representatives of the consumer interest.

In conjunction with the NCC, the Scottish Consumer Council commissioned a household survey conducted by a market research organisation to determine the extent to which tenants already carry out their own repairs and maintenance and to assess their satisfaction with services provided by the housing authority. This was followed up by case studies of five local housing authorities in whose areas the sampling of households had taken place. These authorities were chosen as representing a broad spectrum of areas but with a substantial public housing stock: rural (Tweeddale), mixed rural and urban (Angus), large urban authority under traditional Labour control (Dunfermline) and mixed political control (Renfrew), and an outlying city housing estate (Drumchapel). Tenants associations in these areas also completed a questionnaire prepared and administered by SCC. In addition, two housing co-operatives (the Summerston co-operative in Glasgow and the Lister co-operative in Edinburgh) were studied, along with the Scottish Special Housing Association. Use was also made of some independent investigations, notably the ASSIST project on house conditions in the Ferguslie Park area of Paisley. Press reports have been used to highlight certain problems.

This report will interest all people directly concerned with public housing, including housing officials, local councillors, members of parliament, civil servants, and—not least—tenants and their representatives. It is hoped that the recommendations put forward will lead to discussion and action. The reader is also directed to the appendices to the report dealing with: the allocation of responsibilities for repairs; tenants' handbooks; planned maintenance; and tenant participation procedures.

A separate report dealing with provisions in Great Britain as a whole is being published by the National Consumer Council.

1.2 Main issues

1.2.1 Legal rights and obligations There are three ways in which tenants and housing authorities may assert their legal rights or be compelled to carry out repairs: through common law, statute law, and the missives of let (or tenancy agreements). The common law, for example, gives tenants the right in certain circumstances to withhold rent, while it is possible to construe the 1897 Public Health Act provisions as covering house defects. The Housing Act of 1966 contains an "implied repairs provision" and the 1974 Act refers to the "minimum tolerable standard" which houses must attain if they are not to be closed or demolished. The formal tenancy agreements concluded between housing authorities and their tenants usually make some mention of the repairs either party is expected to carry out. Some of the difficulties of implementing these and other provisions are outlined in chapter two, which also contains the findings of a study of tenancy agreements issued by 46 housing authorities in Scotland. The way in which tenants interpret their responsibilities is also considered here.

1.2.2 Reporting and execution of repairs The day-to-day running of repairs services involves a good deal of co-operation between housing authorities and their tenants. Of interest is the level of tenant satisfaction with these services, particularly with regard to the time tenants must wait for repairs to be carried out, the timing of visits by workmen, and the quality of workmanship. Also of importance are the types of repairs they say need doing. The efficient running of the system depends on the careful preparation of repair orders and their referral to technical staff. How do housing authorities set about this task and what problems are likely to arise? Special consideration also needs to be given to the handling of "emergency" repairs, the level of pre- and post-job inspections carried out, backlogs of work, and the use of direct labour and private contractors (see chapter three).

1.2.3 Recurrent repair and maintenance problems With over a million houses under public control, what attempts have been made by housing authorities to monitor the condition of their stock? As well as summarising the research in this area, chapter three looks at two older housing estates in areas of social deprivation—in Ferguslie Park, Paisley, and Drumchapel, Glasgow—to examine the nature of repair problems there. Separate consideration is given to the issue of condensation and dampness.
What steps are being taken by authorities to tackle this problem and what criticisms may be made of these measures? There then follows a description of the “planned maintenance” scheme operated by the Scottish Special Housing Association.

(4) Improvements and modernisation Apart from the level and cost of improvement and modernisation work carried out, of interest is the way in which housing authorities involve or consult their tenants in particular schemes. Also of importance is the time tenants are likely to spend in temporary accommodation while work is being done. What kinds of improvement are carried out? How much is paid out to tenants by way of compensation to cover such costs as redecoration? What special problems can arise when new fittings are provided? In these respects, chapter five also makes use of a report of the local government ombudsman, which highlights some of the difficulties which can arise. This chapter also mentions the types of improvements tenants initiate themselves and any assistance they receive from the housing authority for doing so.

(5) Repair, maintenance, and improvement costs The costs of keeping houses in repair need to take account not only of the more direct costs of labour and materials but also those of management and administration and loan charges. How do these amounts compare with one another and what proportion of these costs is met from rates and exchequer subsidies? Is it possible to compare expenditure on repairs between different housing authorities? Chapter 6 looks at repairs and maintenance expenditure on a unit cost (per house) basis and attempts to provide a breakdown of costs according to the particular type of repair carried out. Brief consideration is given to the costs of carrying out specimen types of job, such as window repairs. Of particular interest are the kinds of material incentives tenants would like to see being offered for doing their own repairs. Survey data collected by the SCC shed some light on this matter.

(6) Tenant involvement and participation Ways in which tenants can take part in the running of development of services for repairing, maintaining and improving their homes may be considered from a number of perspectives. At one level, it might be seen through individual tenants taking more responsibility through do-it-yourself repairs or being allowed to select their own professional services. In another sense it might mean tenants having a greater say—collectively—in the running of existing services without necessarily wanting to assume full control. The role of tenants' associations is relevant in this respect. A third perspective is a fusion of the other two: tenants assume collective responsibility for repairs, taking over full control from housing management by forming their own housing co-operatives. Two case studies of housing co-operatives and the way in which they deal with repairs, maintenance, and improvements, are presented in chapter seven, which also deals with the other issues mentioned above. Tenants' views on the scope and attraction of their existing tenure as they relate to repairs are also described here. For a summary and evaluation of the main findings, the reader is referred to the concluding chapter, which also contains a list of recommendations.

1.3 Design of the investigation

(1) Household survey. A representative sample of 244 households was interviewed in May 1977 on a number of topics related to repairs and maintenance, supplemented by a “booster” sample of 114 tenants in public-sector housing to permit a more detailed analysis of results. The Scottish Consumer Council commissioned a market research organisation (British Market Research Bureau) to carry out the interviews and tabulate the results, which are presented in a report prepared by the BMRB. Public sector tenants who were interviewed were also issued with questionnaires to fill in themselves, 88 per cent of these being successfully completed and returned.

Households were randomly selected from 24 electoral wards dispersed about Scotland, account being taken of the type of area (“conurbation”, “other urban”, “rural”), the proportion of owner-occupied households (based on 1971 Census data), and the number of non-manual household heads (Registrar-General’s classification of occupations) for each ward. In the analysis of interview responses, a “weighting” procedure was used to make the sampling distribution of respondents according to age representative of the age distribution of the household population.

(2) Selection of housing authorities To supplement the findings of the household survey the Scottish Consumer Council spent two or three days interviewing housing and technical staff employed by five local authorities serving areas in which “booster” sampling had taken place. The district councils concerned were situated in areas with the following demographic and housing characteristics:
(i) demographic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Angus</th>
<th>Dunfermline</th>
<th>Glasgow</th>
<th>Renfrew</th>
<th>Tweeddale</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
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<tr>
<td>(a) Persons per hectare</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Persons per room</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<td>(c) Per cent public sector households</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>53.0</td>
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(ii) Public-sector housing stock

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<tr>
<td>(a) Total No.</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>22,572</td>
<td>174,500</td>
<td>39,700</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>1,032,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) pre-war dwellings</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>5,284</td>
<td>N.I.</td>
<td>13,289</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>N.I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) multi-storey dwellings</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>25,450</td>
<td>1,819</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>54,017</td>
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Sources: (i) (a)–(c) — *Regional Reports* (various), General Register Office, Edinburgh, 1977. (Based on 1971 Census returns)


(ii) (b) — unpublished returns from district councils.

Most authorities also had a number of "acquired" (i.e. pre-war tenemental) properties in their stock, along with "sheltered" accommodation for the disabled.

Commanding 15 area housing offices, Glasgow district council is one of the largest housing authorities in Great Britain. Investigations have been concentrated on one of these area offices—Drumchapel, serving a 9,079 house estate built on the western outskirts of the city soon after the war. Drumchapel ranks among Glasgow’s least popular estates, having a high tenancy turnover, letting difficulties, and recurrent vandalism. While Drumchapel is not necessarily representative of all housing estates in the city, it is by no means untypical either, certain other schemes experiencing similar problems.

In contrast, Tweeddale, with its stock of 1,894, is one of Scotland’s smallest housing authorities, serving a predominately rural area. With a management and technical staff of four, the housing department is in charge of a mixture of pre-war and early post-war “cottage” type housing, of which 324 are scattered throughout the 350-square mile “county” area. A considerable number of its tenants are elderly people.

Two authorities are medium sized. Angus serves mixed rural and urban populations, having taken over from seven former housing authorities in 1975. Most of its housing was built after the war, mainly semi-detached, terraced accommodation and low rise flats. Dunfermline, serving a traditional mining community and now trying to attract new industries to the area, is among the areas with the highest proportion of public housing. It contains a mixture of pre-war, early post-war and contemporary (post-1968) housing, with dwellings ranging from two and three-storey “cottage” dwellings and low-rise flats to several multi-storey blocks. Renfrew, with nearly 40,000 council houses, is Scotland’s third largest housing authority, having taken over from one large burgh (Paisley) and several other housing authorities since re-organisation. Here the technical services department and not the housing department is in full charge of repairs and maintenance; it also services a large number of other types of public property in the area. The area contains over 13,400 tenements, 11,000 “cottage” dwellings (terraced or semi-detached), 9,716 low-rise flats, and several multi-storey blocks.

In addition, an investigation has been made of the Scottish Special Housing Association, which with its 88,000 houses dispersed throughout Scotland, is the country’s second largest housing authority. Although formed in 1937 to serve housing needs in economically “distressed” areas, the association now provides a very diverse range of housing in all kinds of areas—from Glasgow’s deprived east end to the prosperous north east and extending into the highlands and islands. The SSHA is one of the few housing authorities in Great Britain to have a comprehensive scheme of “planned maintenance” and of interest are its attempts to involve tenants and form housing co-operatives. (see also appendices 3 and 4)

A further study has been made of two tenants’ co-operatives, with special reference to their handling of repairs: the Summerston co-operative, set up by Glasgow district council in 1977, comprised of
some 247 newly-built houses; and the Lister co-operative, in Edinburgh, comprised of nineteenth century tenement housing, which is having to be rehabilitated or modernised extensively.

(3) Tenants associations. A questionnaire was sent out to various tenants associations which had been successfully traced in each of the housing areas under special investigation, with the exception of Tweeddale, where no tenants associations attached to district council housing were in existence. Out of 30 questionnaires sent out, 17 tenants associations replied but only 12 of them returned the questionnaires in time for analysis, despite a follow-up reminder letter. Of the 12 analysed, six were from Glasgow, three from Renfrew, two from Angus, and one from Dunfermline. The tenants associations in Angus and Dunfermline are believed to be the only ones connected with public housing in the area. The limited representativeness of the returns means that the findings related to tenants associations need to be viewed cautiously. The Scottish Consumer Council is to initiate a fuller investigation of tenants associations later in 1978.
2 Legal Rights and Obligations

2.1 Common law provisions

One practical remedy for tenants needing repairs done is offered through the common law right to withhold rent where the landlord (including the local authority) has been in breach of his common law obligation to keep the accommodation in “wind and watertight” condition. This is a right to withhold rent, it should be noted, not a right never to pay it; and as a mark of good faith the aggrieved tenant should put the rent aside each week (e.g. in an interest earning savings account), informing the landlord or housing department of his action, paying up when the fault has been remedied. In Glasgow tenants have used this device (inappropriately styled a “rent strike”) to get dampness and related faults attended to.

The tenant can also have certain essential repairs done himself instead of waiting for the landlord or housing authority to act, by paying for the work out of withheld rent. But before doing so, he must be absolutely certain that the housing authority has been in breach of its obligations. Difficulties can arise where the authority argues successfully that the fault is due to the tenant’s own negligence. On an issue like dampness or condensation, for example, the judgement of the court can go for or against the tenant depending on whether the defect is due to faulty house design or whether it is due to a tenant’s failure to heat and ventilate a house adequately. In the latter case, the housing authority would be entitled to evict for continued non-payment of rent.

The tenant who withholds rent might be putting himself at risk where there is a clause in the tenancy agreement excluding his right to do so. In Glasgow Corporation v Seniuk, 1968, the Sheriff felt bound by a previous decision of the Court of Session to deprive a tenant of his common law right to withhold rent—whatever the reason—because of an exclusion clause in the tenancy agreement, which read: “The tenant agrees that no claim for damages or other claims whatsoever shall interfere with the payment of rent at the terms of payment before specified.” In practice, few—if any—local authorities now have exclusion clauses in their tenancy agreements, such an issue relating mainly to private landlords.

2.2 Legislative provisions

(1) 1897 Public Health (Scotland) Act Although this Act is over 80 years old, it gives the tenant whose house is in disrepair some form of redress. Section 146 allows 10 ratepayers to request (in writing) the local authority to remedy “nuisances” complained of, and, if it fails to do so, to apply to the sheriff by summary petition. The sheriff may issue a decree ordering the defaulters to remedy these nuisances. The Act includes in its definition of nuisances any danger or injury to health arising from the state of any construction, sanitary fitments, drainage, gutting, as well as from statutory overcrowding (section 18); and this provision has been understood to extend to such “nuisances” as dangerous wiring, dampness, and defective plasterwork. Although not framed with local authorities, landlords, or property defects specifically in mind, this legislation can nevertheless be used by tenants to get the landlord or local authority to attend to repairs. A notable instance of this occurred when tenants in the Bowhouse state, Alloa, got the town council to remedy 10 kinds of defect, pending a court hearing. Complaints included: broken soil pipes and paving; accumulation of rubbish; broken floorboards; waste discharge into unfenced areas where children were playing and washing was hanging; dampness in bedrooms which had become unfit to sleep in; fungus growth on walls; and broken metal railings and gulleys. A “volunteer” public health inspector remarked at the time (1874): “In several years’ experience in one of the grimmer parts of London, I have yet to encounter the disgraceful neglect and apparent dereliction of duty by a local authority that is evident in Bowhouse.”

It should be pointed out that the Act relates to the effect of the defect and not the defect itself. I could be argued, for example, that a broken gas cist is not a “nuisance” unless one can prove that opening a window with a broken cist causes injury or damage to health. One limitation of the Act is that it is only concerned with the “abatement” of statutory nuisances; any remedial work need only be of a patchwork nature, without reference to the durability or quality of the repair. A further difficulty is that the Act, which was introduced long before local authorities began building their own houses, discourages environmental health officials from initiating legal action where, in the case of council houses, it would mean a local authority taking proceedings against itself.
(2) **1966 Housing (Scotland) Act.** Section 8, (known as the "implied repairs provision") dealing with repair obligations in houses on short lease, requires the landlord, including a local authority, to:

1. keep in repair the structure and exterior of the house (including drains, gutters and pipes).
2. keep in repair and proper working order the installations in the house:
   (i) for the supply of water, gas, electricity, and for sanitation (including basins, sinks, baths, and sanitary conveniences), but not fittings and appliances for making use of the supply of water, gas or electricity.
   (ii) for space and water heating.

This section frees the landlord from any obligation to:

1. carry out any works or repairs for which the tenant is liable by virtue of his duty to use the premises in a proper manner.
2. to rebuild or reinstate the premises in the case of destruction or damage by fire, tempest or flood or other inevitable accident.
3. to keep in repair or maintain anything which the tenant is entitled to remove from the house.

A further subsection (8.3) stipulates that "regard should be had to the age, character and prospective life of the house and the locality of the house" in determining the standard of repairs provision. There are no known cases of tenants bringing any actions under section 8. One limitation of this provision is that it makes no reference to the quality of repairs to be carried out.

(3) **1974 Housing (Scotland) Act.** Framed mainly with older private or "acquired" properties in mind (e.g. in housing action areas), section 14 defines the "tolerable standard" which houses must attain if they are not to be closed or demolished, replacing the earlier "standard of fitness" criterion. But this section can equally apply to houses built by local authorities which have fallen into decay or serious disrepair. Criteria used in defining tolerable standard include the structural stability of the house and the provisions of certain basic amenities (e.g. inside WC, cooking facilities, hot and cold water, adequate drainage). Houses must also be "substantially free from rising or penetrating damp" to meet the tolerable standard. One commentator has argued that this criterion does not apply to dampness arising from remediable structural defects or from condensation arising from adverse weather conditions or improper use of ventilation facilities. But it has never been put to the test.

Structural defects have been interpreted to mean: badly cracked or bulging walls; walls with no damp proof course; roofs that sag due to decaying timberwork or leak due to disrepair of slates and plumbing; and floors which are decayed or very uneven. Minor defects (i.e. non structural) are not covered by section 14 (e.g. cracked walls or ceilings, broken bannisters, warped doors, rotting window frames). A major shortcoming of this act, as far as the council tenant is concerned, is that it provides him with no practical remedies, since the initiative for ensuring that housing reaches the "tolerable standard" must come from the local authority.

(4) **1973 Local Government (Scotland) Act.** Section 211 of the Act empowers the Secretary of State to enquire into any complaint that the local authority is failing to perform its duties under any enactment. If the local authority fails to carry out a ministerial order to perform, the Lord Advocate may ask the Court of Session to order such performance. Even if the Secretary of State decides to take no action, an aggrieved tenant could still petition the Court to compel statutory performance, under Section 91 of the Court of Session Act, 1868. A successful instance occurred in 1971, when Monifieth Town Council was forced to construct sewers after the court was petitioned by a householder. A complaint to the Secretary of State under section 211 of the 1973 Act does not pre-empt application under section 91 of the 1868 Act.

(5) **1975 Local Government (Scotland) Act.** The Commissioner for Local Administration in Scotland (or local government ombudsman), set up under this Act, has powers to investigate any complaints from any member of the public who claims to have sustained injustice as a result of local government maladministration. His investigations cover all aspects of local administration, including housing, which accounted for over a quarter of the 311 complaints received in 1976-77 (housing being by far the most common source of complaint). The complaint has to be made in writing within 12 months of the action complained of, although the Commissioner can waive this time limit if he thinks special circumstances warrant it. Before investigating, he must be satisfied that the local authority has
been notified of the complaint and has had reasonable time to reply. Most of the housing complaints in 1976-77 related to house allocations but the repair and maintenance of public housing was the second largest sub-category of referrals, with a further four complaints relating to modernisation and improvements. One investigation of the local ombudsman dealing with the provision of decoration allowances to council tenants—is described in chapter 5, section 4.

Two criticisms which can be made about the local ombudsman are:

1. All complaints must be directed through a member of the local council. While there are safeguards for ensuring that any complaints so directed reach the ombudsman, householders may be inhibited from approaching a representative from a local authority which is itself the subject of complaint. Over two thirds of the complaints received by the local ombudsman in 1976-77 came to him directly from members of the public, who had to be told to direct them through a local councillor. A House of Commons select committee recently announced that it is to investigate the possibility of citizens approaching the ombudsman directly.

2. The ombudsman has no power to bring legal action against a local authority. He may recommend but not enforce any remedial action. If he is not satisfied with the response he may issue a further report, but this carries no legal force. In the housing field no second reports were issued in 1976-77 in Scotland.

2.3 Rates valuation appeals

A tenant who cannot get repairs done might be entitled to a reduction in the rateable value of his house if he can prove that there has been a “material change of circumstances” since the house was last valued (and that this has got worse over time and affected the “gross annual value.”) In making his assessment, the rates assessor takes into account such factors as construction materials used, subsidence, and house layout, along with any recurrent outside disturbances. The state of repair does not normally affect valuation, but as a result of a successful rates appeal in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, a number of tenants with damp houses recently secured reductions in rate valuations of five to seven-and-a-half per cent. Shelter has recently published Housing Action Notes (No. 4) advising tenants when and how to appeal against rates valuations.

2.4 Legal representation

One problem which arises when tenants initiate legal action is that they are normally accorded legal recognition as individuals and not as a group. A tenants' association, being a voluntary, non-commercial body, does not have a separate legal personality enabling it to sue or be sued in its own name. However, a tenants' association may be represented in court by its office bearers (or, if appropriate, certain nominated members) or by specially authorised mandatories; but the formal concurrence of a majority of its members must have been obtained before any action is raised. Individual council tenants are understandably reluctant to face their “landlord” in court, particularly where the latter as a corporate body has access to legal and professional expertise normally denied to and too expensive for the ordinary tenant. One possible solution to this problem would be for groups of tenants to form a “company limited by guarantee” under the 1948 Companies Act (as amended). As a non-profit making registered company, a tenants' association could enjoy corporate status and use subscriptions from its members to pay for legal representation on its behalf. To form such a company, at least seven individuals must sign “a constitution” of the company (known as the Memorandum and Articles of Association) setting out the objectives and structure of the company; this must then be registered with the Registrar of Companies in Edinburgh. Costs that would be entailed include a £50 registration fee, legal fees for the preparation of a constitution, auditing fees, and book-keeping, stationery, and printing expenses. Such costs could of course be minimised where tenants obtain the free or concessionary services of a "sympathetic" lawyer and accountant; and where membership is large, individual subscriptions could probably be kept at a moderate level to meet costs.

2.5 Tenancy agreements

Local authorities issue to their tenants “missives of let”, or tenancy agreements, in which there is usually some mention of the respective obligations of the housing authority and the tenant regarding the repair and maintenance of the property. However, as a recent SCC publication Tenancy Agreements in Scotland has revealed, local authorities vary enormously in making explicit the respective obligations of "landlord" and tenant. An SCC survey of 46 Scottish local authorities in 1976 found that the
council’s obligations to repair and maintain their houses were stated in only general terms in 32 cases, in more specific terms in seven cases, and not at all in the remaining seven cases. Even where local authorities were specific, there was little agreement between them in the type of repairs they or tenants should undertake. The findings of the survey are described in detail below. It should be emphasised that their findings relate to conditions in 1976 only. The Scottish Consumer Council is currently following up this investigation to find out whether any local authorities have revised their tenancy agreements as a result of the survey. The results of the follow-up will be published later on in the year.

(1) Obligations of Local Authorities

(i) General obligations. Where local authorities mention their repair obligations in general terms (32 authorities), these obligations are expressed as follows. (Some authorities mention more than one of these statements):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authorities agreeing to:</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carry out any repairs considered necessary.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain the structure and exterior of the house.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep the house wind and water-tight.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out repairs in accordance with its statutory obligations.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep water, gas, electrical and sanitary installations in proper working order.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep space heating and water heating installations in proper working order.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out repairs due to fair wear and tear.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair storm or flood damage.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Specific obligations. The seven local authorities making specific mention of their repair obligations in the tenancy agreement make reference to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific obligations</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burst pipes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paintwork (external)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical wiring/sockets</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draught proofing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window sashes/hinges</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tap washers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply pipes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes poles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Obligations of Tenants

(i) General obligations Disproportionately more agreements refer to the obligations of tenants—either in general or specific terms—than of the local authorities in the repair and maintenance of houses. The obligations of tenants are expressed in the following general terms (again, some authorities mention more than one of the statements below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obligations</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make good all damage due to improper use or negligence</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume responsibility for the prevention of damage through fire, burst pipes, or failure to clean chimneys, vents, and flues properly</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make good any defacement of the fittings in the house</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repay the cost of any repairs carried out by the council which are due to the fault or negligence of the tenant</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be responsible for the prevention of breakage or damage</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report any repairs that need to be done, any fault in the water supply, or the presence of any vermin</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(ii) **Specific obligations.** Only 12 authorities out of 46 describe in any detail the tenancy agreement items of repair and maintenance for which tenants are responsible. Where they do so, mention is made of the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanitaryware:</th>
<th>Electrical and gas:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bath</td>
<td>Electrical fittings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basins</td>
<td>Light bulbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinks</td>
<td>Fuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipes</td>
<td>Plug tops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tap washers</td>
<td>Fire elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC handles/chains</td>
<td>Power points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC hinges</td>
<td>Switches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC pan</td>
<td>Ceiling pendants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC cistern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC seats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doors and Windows:</th>
<th>Wood, metal, or plasterwork:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>Damage due to dry or wet rot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>Woodworm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass in doors</td>
<td>Sink tops/draining boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window frames/fittings</td>
<td>Shelves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door fittings</td>
<td>Coat hooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locks</td>
<td>Plaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Washing/drying equipment:</th>
<th>Fire appliances:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wash boilers</td>
<td>Grates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulleys</td>
<td>Fire fronts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulley ropes</td>
<td>Fire bricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes poles</td>
<td>Hearth tiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotary hoists</td>
<td>Ashpans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of authorities do, however, publish separate lists of repairs for which tenants are responsible but which are not explicitly written into the tenancy agreement.

### 2.6 Tenants’ perspectives

The SCC household survey suggests that not all tenants are accurately informed of their repair and maintenance obligations. Asked to specify what types of repair work the council is responsible for, as many as one quarter of tenants reply “everything”. (The Scottish tenant is less likely than the English tenant to mention responsibility for repairs and maintenance outside the house—possibly due to the higher incidence of tenemental accommodation in Scotland.) Tenants view their own repair obligations in the following terms (expressed as percentage mentions):  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal decoration</th>
<th>53%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows/panes/catches</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallpapering</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical repairs/sockets/fuses</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All internal repairs</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireplaces</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor repairs</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sink/fittings</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbing/immersion heater</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Number of respondents) (217)
Twelve tenants’ associations in four of the housing areas investigated (Angus, Dunfermline, Glasgow, Renfrew) completed a questionnaire in which (among other things) they were asked to tick off repair items which they considered were: (a) the legal responsibility of the tenant; (b) the legal responsibility of the council. The results are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repair item</th>
<th>Legal responsibility of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallpapering</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastering</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbing</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glazing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condensation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dampness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draught proofing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventilation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireplace</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiators/heaters</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water heaters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water tank</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooker</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom fitments</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Units</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC Bowl</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC Seat</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power sockets/switches</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiring</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Bulbs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heater elements</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulley ropes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sash cords</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegs/hooks</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catches</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locks (interior)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keys</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelves</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worktops</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofing</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gutters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimney repairs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden/green</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piping</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walls</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodwork</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paving</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before discussing the results, it should be said at the outset that the replies given by tenants associations may not be necessarily representative of all of their members, or indeed of all council tenants, particularly as only 12 out of the 23 associations written to completed the questionnaire in time for analysis (despite a follow-up reminder letter). Also, some associations gave incomplete or inconsistent replies, which accounts for the row entries in the two columns not always adding up to 12. For items such as fencing, which were not provided in every area, responses were necessarily lower.
The table clearly indicates that tenants associations regard most repairs as the council's responsibility, even for such minor items as broken sash cords and door locks. The exception is condensation, where seven tenants associations believe that tenants are expected to deal with this problem, though only two associations think that tenants are expected to deal with dampness. Painting and wallpapering are the only major items which tenants regard as their legal responsibility, but other responses indicate that tenants are far from agreed as to whether they or the council are responsible for such items as glazing, draught proofing, the replacement of heater elements, pegs, catches, and hooks and the upkeep of worktops, gardens, and fencing.

2.7 Recent developments

Some authorities have already spelled out in more precise terms the respective repair and maintenance obligations of the council and its tenants. Clackmannan and Dunfermline district councils, for example, have issued handbooks to their tenants informing them which repairs the council will undertake and which ones tenants are expected to deal with themselves. In a manual not yet made generally available to tenants, Renfrew district council not only describes repairs which the council or tenants are expected to carry out but indicates what sorts of repairs the authority will carry out at the tenant's own expense (e.g. fitting of chimney terminals where gas or electric fires have been installed by tenants). The Scottish Local Authorities Special Housing group (SLASH) has drawn up its own recommendations on the allocation of responsibilities for repairs (see appendix 1). The recent green paper Scottish Housing has come out in support of tenancy agreements which establish the rights and obligations of both the local authority and tenant, with as few restrictive obligations as possible. Discussions are to open between the Scottish Development Department and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the development of a model tenancy agreement.

REFERENCES

4 Shelter (Scotland): Housing Action Notes No. 1, 1976.
5 Shelter: Scottish Housing, June 1975.
6 Reported in Shelter: Scottish Housing, May 1975.
8 Cochrane, op. cit., p. 29.
9 SCOLAG, Bulletin No. 1.
12 The data described in this section is drawn from unpublished tables connected with the SCC investigation on tenancy agreements.
3 Reporting and Execution of Repairs

3.1 Tenant report system

Housing authorities by and large rely on tenants to report any repairs that need to be done to their property, and most of them employ special counter staff to deal with reports from tenants and prepare orders for technical and works staff. In some authorities, area sub-offices have also been set up to handle reports and they usually serve as rent collection points at the same time. In areas of scattered or rural housing such as Tweeddale rent collectors may note any requests for repairs to be done in the course of their house visits. Most area housing offices are conveniently located in shopping centres, but in the larger urban areas tenants may have to journey by public transport to reach the housing office. According to the SCC household survey, 52 per cent of Scottish Tenants report repairs through a personal visit to the housing office—compared with only 23 per cent of tenants in England and Wales, where the telephone is used more frequently to report faults¹.

Two thirds of tenants in Scotland say they are generally satisfied with the way the housing authority repairs and maintains its property but with 25 per cent saying they are dissatisfied and seven per cent very dissatisfied. Almost four fifths of tenants are satisfied with the method of reporting to the council, but about a third of tenants are dissatisfied with the time taken for the council to reply, the timing of visits by workmen, the time taken for work to be done, or the quality of workmanship. Single tenants who are often elderly tenants appear to be slightly more satisfied with the services than married tenants. Wives tend to be marginally less satisfied with services than their husbands. For 10 per cent of reports, tenants claim that they have to take time off work to let workmen in; it is usually the wife who has to stay at home, although in only four per cent of cases does this involve loss of earnings.

Where repairs are mentioned, 37 per cent of tenants claim that the housing department responded by sending round workmen immediately while an inspector was sent round in another 31 per cent of cases. Ten per cent of tenants say they received no reply on last reporting a fault—compared with 19 per cent of tenants in England and Wales. Scottish tenants are more likely than tenants in England and Wales to say that workmen arrived unexpectedly (65 and 42 per cent respectively). On the whole, however, Scottish housing authorities seem to be more responsive to reports from tenants than authorities in England and Wales. Tenants in Scotland mention that work began on 42 per cent of tasks within three days of reporting them, compared with 31 per cent in England and Wales. Although repair tasks, once commenced, take an average of 1.2 weeks to complete in Scotland (compared with half a week in England and Wales), Scottish tenants appear to be more satisfied than English and Welsh tenants with the time taken to carry work out. It may be that repairs reported in Scotland also tend to be of less trivial a nature, resulting in a longer time to complete the job.

Seven out of 10 Scottish council tenants say they have had at least one repair carried out in the last 12 months. Of those council tenants mentioning any repairs in this period, 2.9 repair tasks are carried out on average, compared with 3.7 carried out in the homes of owner-occupiers and 2.3 in the homes of private tenants. Just under a third of council tenants say that no repairs were carried out in their homes over the last 12 months, compared with 2.7 per cent of owner-occupiers and 60 per cent of private tenants. Elderly council tenants mention a lower average number (2.2) of repairs being carried out while tenants with dependents mention most repair tasks of all (3.3).

Repairs to windows, gutters, and roofing are among the repair tasks tenants most frequently mention as having been carried out. As the table below indicates, council tenants are more likely than owner-occupiers or private tenants to mention window repairs but less likely to mention external decoration than owner-occupiers.
Repair and Maintenance work carried out by council in the last 12 months:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Council/SSHA</th>
<th>Owner-Occupier</th>
<th>Privately rented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gutters and downpipes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External decoration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside doors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooring</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drains</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damp patches treated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back court</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walls or ceilings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(percentage mentions by respondents)

When tenants are asked to describe the last type of repair reported to the housing department, a similar pattern emerges, except that plumbing is now the most frequently mentioned item (30 per cent of mentions), followed by window and door repairs (10 per cent each), electrical and heating work (7 per cent).

Internal decoration and window repairs are the most frequently mentioned tasks which tenants say need doing over the next six months. Eight per cent of all householders (seven per cent of all council tenants) say dampness needs to be attended to. Detailed results are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repairs and improvements needed (%) mentions</th>
<th>Owner-Occupier</th>
<th>Council Tenant</th>
<th>Private Tenant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal decoration</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window repairs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External decoration</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damp patches treated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical rewiring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof repairs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Number of respondents)</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(134)</td>
<td>(49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Council tenants are slightly more likely to mention a greater number of repairs needed (1.0) than owner-occupiers (0.9) or private tenants (0.7). Only a third of council tenants who say they need repairs doing in the next six months expect all of these repairs to be carried out, compared with 77 per cent of owner-occupiers and 16 per cent of private tenants. Of those 91 council tenants who did not think the repairs would be carried out, 18 per cent think the reason is that the council “has no money” and as many as 47 per cent say the council “won’t or can’t”.

Little is in fact known about the selection and timing of repairs sought by tenants. It is possible that not all faults go reported, or that some faults are not reported until they have reached serious and possibly more costly proportions. It is also interesting that at least one authority refers to reports coming from its tenants as “complaints”, perhaps a tacit acknowledgement that remedial action ought to have been taken earlier on. The ASSIST team from the department of architecture and building science at Strathclyde University has criticised the tenant report system as practised in most areas for discouraging housing authorities from gearing repairs and maintenance expenditure and staffing to what tenants need. Where resources are already limited, according to ASSIST, tenants may be discouraged from reporting all but the most serious faults, on the assumption—perhaps derived from past experience—that these repairs are unlikely to be attended to. A catch-22 situation thus arises where future expenditure and manpower levels are based on the number of defects reported by tenants in previous years, which is itself related to levels of expenditure and staffing at the time.

### 3.2 Preparation of repair orders

Counter staff must rely on a tenant’s description of a defect to refer the order to the appropriate tradesman or contractor or to determine whether or not it is an emergency. In most cases counter staff
use rules of thumb for extracting information from tenants, but some tenants provide more detail than others and counter staff vary in the amount of probing they do. Details can be checked or revised through pre-job inspections, but where these are not undertaken, workmen turn up having to rely on the accuracy of a tenant’s description unless counter staff have already been well briefed and trained beforehand. One area housing office (Drumchapel) provides repairs staff with written specifications to assist them in the completion of order forms, including a checklist of repairs for matching against the appropriate trades, the clerk having ascertained in the first place that the repair is the responsibility of the council. Here they are also advised to determine whether the tenant is liable to pay for the cost of repairs (e.g. as a result of “negligence” or “willful damage”) and to find out from the tenant the exact location and possible cause of the defect. One source of difficulty is getting the tenant to provide suitable access times and arrangements: some authorities content themselves with asking tenants to suggest when they will be at home or where a key can be collected, while others wish to know the days and times the tenant will be in and out of the house over a whole week. But not all tenants can give such information for more than a few days in advance. The combined effect of inaccurate job descriptions and access arrangements may be that the wrong men turn up for the wrong job at the wrong time.

3.3 Acknowledgements

Only one of the five authorities investigated (Glasgow) issues tenants reporting a fault with a formal acknowledgement slip or “receipt”. This slip, containing the job order number, is in fact a copy of the order form sent out to the technical services department by housing repairs staff. In other authorities no official “receipt” is issued, one argument being that many reports come in by telephone and that some jobs will have already been completed by the time tenants receive acknowledgements. Renfrew estimates that it would cost £50,000 each year to issue receipts to tenants. But even where a “receipt” system is in operation as in Glasgow, difficulties may arise where a tenant reports the same fault more than once without informing repairs staff of the fact. This is likely to arise where a tenant has been kept waiting a long time for a repair to be attended to and either loses or fails to present his original receipt to repairs staff, who need to trace the job order number to check on the progress of a report. The original order will have already worked its way into the system, and without some form of retrieval it means that the same order will be processed more than once. This not only creates extra paperwork but may also mean that workmen are sent out on a job they have already completed. In practice, works staff try to keep informal checks on such duplication of effort, involving extra clerical work on their part.

3.4 Processing of orders

Once the repairs clerk has prepared the initial report from the tenant, staff may pass on the information either to a housing or to a technical inspector, who will decide whether it is worth a house visit and when. Repairs staff will usually enter information (e.g. date and nature of the report) on an individual tenant’s “house file”, providing a historical profile of the property and referred to for follow-up and updating purposes. Whether or not a pre-job inspection has been carried out, a housing or technical official will prepare several copies of a “repair line” order, which may reach as many as five different destinations (e.g. trade foreman, tradesmen, works controller, finance department, works study unit).

The system in operation at Dunfermline, for example—probably typical for large authorities—is shown in the diagram below. In smaller authorities, repairs staff will usually go directly to the clerk of works or foreman concerned.

None of the processing systems studied appears to suffer from very serious technical or administrative difficulties (other than complaints by works staff about the amount of “paperwork” involved and the problem of repeat orders mentioned above). But from the tenant’s perspective, once a repair order is out of the hands of the housing department, having been referred to the technical services department, it could mean that both the tenant and counter staff have little knowledge of the progress of the repair order. This is particularly so where housing and technical services departments work “back to back” from one another, often housed in separate offices on different sites with separate workshops. An exception is Renfrew district council, where the housing department does not deal with repairs at all (except between relets) and tenant’s reports are handled exclusively by technical services staff.
3.5 Emergencies

All authorities investigated provide some form of emergency service, whether through a few “standby” contractors and public utility bodies (Tweeddale) or through a specialised 24-hour service covering most major trades (Glasgow). But they differ in the extent to which they make these services known to tenants: emergency telephone numbers may or may not be printed on the rent book; the type of services covered may or may not be specified; arrangements during and outwith normal hours may or may not be distinguished. None of the authorities maintain a formal list of repairs qualifying for emergency treatment—although there seems to be consensus on what these are. One argument against having a classified list of emergency repairs is that it might remove from housing and inspection staff a wide area of discretion in taking individual circumstances into account. As one inspector has pointed out, a badly flushing toilet could be an emergency for a tenant who is sick and a jammed window sash an emergency for a tenant with breathing difficulties. On the other hand, knowing which repairs merit emergency treatment might discourage frivolous emergency call-outs or the alleged practice of reporting a fault as an “emergency” to secure immediate attention. Renfrew district council has set up an experimental counter at its main office to cope exclusively with emergency reports from tenants during normal working hours, thus obviating the frustration of tenants queuing up behind tenants with minor problems.
Most authorities have special procedures for processing emergency orders (e.g. use of pink slips instead of the normal white ones), and in Dunfermline all repair orders are coded numerically depending on whether they need to be completed within 48 hours or up to 30 days. The volume of emergency call-outs can be considerable: 95 a week in Dunfermline on average (34 outwith normal hours) and as many as 114 a week outwith normal hours in Renfrew district during a cold spell. As well as plumbing repairs (which account for most of the emergency work), broken windows, electrical faults, being locked out at night, and gas leaks among the most common types of emergency call. In such cases a standby inspector will usually first assess the amount of damage and assume responsibility for any follow up of temporary repairs; but it is also possible that any follow up arrangements are left to the individual tenant.

There is not always a clear division of responsibility between housing authorities as to who will undertake emergency repairs. Some authorities will handle all emergencies (e.g. Glasgow) but may direct certain types of repair (e.g. glazing) to private contractors. In some instances tenants may be given the number of a resident standby tradesman or clerk of works to telephone themselves (Angus) or be directed to the water, gas or electricity board.

3.6 Inspections

These may be divided into pre and post-job inspections and should be further distinguished from routine house inspections preceding or following regular maintenance or modernisation programmes. Three of the five local authorities investigated claim to follow up to 80 per cent of reports from tenants with a pre-job inspection, but in one of these authorities, inspection is delegated to housing and not to technical staff. Post-job inspection is far less common but all authorities report carrying out some “random” inspections of work done, particularly if the contractor is new or the job is complicated. In the Ferguslie Park scheme in Renfrew, a member of the technical staff has recently been appointed specifically to carry out post-job inspections.

Many inspectors report difficulties in the planning and the timing of their house visits, especially in areas with many scattered dwellings or where tenants are out most of the day. Some authorities will allow tenants to leave keys with repairs staff. Each inspector might be expected to cover an area containing anything between one and two thousand houses. Renfrew, for example, employs 39 property inspectors, in charge of about a thousand houses each. In the larger authorities inspectors may visit as many as 30 houses a day (although in some cases, tenants may not be in). Difficulties arise where inspectors have to interrupt their normal programme of visits to attend to emergencies, often resulting in a “wasted day” for tenants expecting a visit. One authority gets round this problem by employing a roving inspector to deal only with emergency work.

3.7 Execution of repairs

Once the decision has been made to proceed with a repair, depending on its own form of organisation, a local authority must decide how soon, where, and by whom a repair needs to be done. Authorities claim to complete most repairs within two or three weeks of receiving a report from a tenant. None of the authorities investigated have so far followed Greater London Council’s example of publishing standard target times for the completion of repairs or the example of the London Borough of Brent in allowing tenants to engage a private contractor of their own choice and at the council’s expense for work not done after a certain time. While not wholly conversant with the schemes in either the GLC or Brent, technical staff in some authorities argue that any undertaking to carry out repairs within certain target times might not only raise false expectations among tenants but could become very difficult to implement should work be suddenly disrupted by supply problems, labour disputes, large-scale emergencies, or even changes in the weather. Introducing target times or allowing tenants to have work done privately might be doubly difficult in authorities which are already heavily dependent on private contractors.

In planning job priorities, technical and works staff take into account not only the length of time a job has been kept waiting but the availability of manpower and materials and the distance workmen must travel as they move from job to job. Although repairs staff may be notified of any special personal circumstances affecting tenants needing work done (e.g. chronically sick tenant with a leaking roof, defective window catch in flat containing young children), no formal record is kept of these circumstances in the handling of repair orders. Reliance is placed on house visitors, inspection staff or social workers—as well as individual tenants—in bringing them to the attention of repairs staff; but it is by no means clear how effective such arrangements are. Nor is it always easy to determine precisely what kinds of circumstances justify giving one tenant priority over another.
The estimated volume of repair orders dealt with by four authorities is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Repairs completed in a year</th>
<th>Housing stock</th>
<th>Average no. of repairs per house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>25,600</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunfermline</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>22,572</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drumchapel</td>
<td>44,400</td>
<td>9,079</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>39,700</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.8 Backlogs

Three of the authorities above keep a weekly (Drumchapel, Renfrew) or monthly (Dunfermline) record of completed and outstanding repairs, but as the examples below indicate, it is not always possible to tell how long jobs have been kept waiting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dunfermline (November 1977)</th>
<th>Jobs received</th>
<th>Jobs completed</th>
<th>Jobs outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>1452</td>
<td>1266</td>
<td>1063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiner</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slater</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renfrew (Week ending 27 Jan. 1978)</th>
<th>Jobs received</th>
<th>Jobs completed</th>
<th>Jobs outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trowel trades</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glazier</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both tables indicate that the largest backlogs are in plumbing, with joinery as a close runner up. Neither authority is able to give precise estimates of how long it would take to clear up these backlogs, but Dunfermline estimates that non-emergency repairs take on average four to five weeks to complete, while Renfrew claims to maintain a steady backlog of up to three weeks' work. More revealing is the table below for Drumchapel, which indicates that in the week ending December 9th nearly half the joinery work and over a third of the plumbing jobs had been kept waiting for four or more weeks. Overall a fifth of all jobs had been outstanding for a month or more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drumchapel (week ending 9 December 1977)</th>
<th>Outstanding jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joinery</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbing</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staining</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason for these backlogs stems from a number of factors:

(1) Manpower shortages and problems. Dunfermline, for example, reports a shortage of plumbers, with fewer newly-trained tradesmen entering the labour market. In Renfrew, where several different bonus schemes are in operation, workmen refuse to work in areas other than their own (i.e. the former local authorities).
(2) **Seasonal fluctuations in workload.** Plumbing and building workloads vary according to weather conditions.

(3) **Special or unforeseen maintenance problems.** Joiners in Drumchapel have been under heavy pressure replacing badly weathered or rotten timber window frames, a product of early post-war construction. Recurrent vandalism here also diverts resources from ordinary repairs and maintenance.

(4) **Shortage of supplies.** Although all workshop stores run a system of stock control, in busy works depots like Drumchapel quota restrictions are imposed to ensure an even supply of parts and materials over all depots in the city. The problem is aggravated where manufacturers’ parts have become obsolescent due to design modifications (e.g. valves in water cisterns) or where the supply of components of different standard sizes is geared to a production cycle, perhaps entailing several months’ wait (e.g. metal window frames).

(5) **Access problems.** In as many as one in 10 house visits in some estates workmen may have difficulty of access, either because the tenant has not made proper arrangements or because workmen have had to alter their timetable of visits (e.g. due to emergency call-outs, sudden illness, etc.) In certain cases tenants may be isolated from relatives or reliable neighbours with whom to leave a key.

(6) **Continuity of workload.** Some authorities (e.g. Renfrew) may feel obliged to maintain a steady build-up of jobs to ensure continuity of workload and optimum use of manpower.

### 3.9 Use of direct labour and private contractors

All authorities investigated maintain a direct labour force but its strength and composition vary considerably between them, as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tradesmen</th>
<th>Drumchapel (9,079)+</th>
<th>Renfrew (39,700)</th>
<th>Dunfermline (22,572)</th>
<th>Angus (14,500)</th>
<th>Tweeddale (1,587)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiner</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builder</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slater/Scaffolder</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glazier</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General labour</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>92*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes 44 builders’ labourers
+ houses in adjoining estates not included here.

The size of the direct labour force bears only a tenuous link with the number of houses in a local authority’s area. Dunfermline, for example, has one and a half times as many houses as Angus but fifteen times as many men in the direct labour force. Various factors account for the size of the direct labour force: the use made of private contractors; the type of work carried out by direct labour; the policies of the former local authorities making up the new district councils; and possibly the political composition of the councils concerned. It may also be that in areas with widely dispersed housing, such as Angus, it is more economic to make use of private firms scattered about towns and villages than to rely on a centralised direct labour force. The services provided by private contractors to the various housing authorities are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing authority/area</th>
<th>Services provided by private contractors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>All types of repair and maintenance work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunfermline</td>
<td>Complicated electrical repairs and heating engineering (Glazing done by regional council work-force.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drumchapel</td>
<td>Glazing, lift maintenance, gas fitting (gas board).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew</td>
<td>All tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweeddale</td>
<td>All tasks except electrical work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to repair and maintenance work, all authorities rely on private contractors to some extent to carry out improvements and modernisation. In Dunfermline, the direct labour force secures improvement and modernisation work on a contractual basis through competitive tendering with private contractors on the open market. All of the authorities make some use of private contractors for the manning of their emergency services.

Where private contractors and direct labour provide the same services (as in Renfrew) the decision to refer a repair to one party rather than another is governed by the following considerations:

1. Manpower supply. In Renfrew, some area works depots have less direct labour than others, the proportion varying from 40 to 60 per cent.

2. Jobbing rates. Renfrew keeps a list of hourly rates charged by individual contractors, broken down by trade and the costs of engaging a foreman, tradesman, apprentice or labourer. It also keeps a check on the charges for overheads and materials.

3. Type of job. Certain tasks may be cheaper to carry out by direct labour (e.g. replacing a tap washer) whereas others may be more cheaply performed by private contractors (e.g. repairing a sink unit).

4. Trade cycle fluctuations. The total market demand for particular trades will encourage private contractors to charge higher or lower prices at some times and not others. The current building recession is making a lot of private contract work cheaper than direct labour except for the most routine jobs.

5. Seasonal factors. Weather conditions and seasonal commitments will also affect the availability of certain contractors.

6. Backlogs. Where there is an exceptional build-up of jobs, private contractors are likely to be engaged alongside direct labour.

It is not possible to discuss here the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two systems and at no point in the investigations did technical staff suggest that either direct labour or private contractors provided the speedier or more efficient service. It is possible that having direct labour at hand gives local authorities more control over the timing and quality of jobs and enables them to deal more readily with enquiries and complaints from tenants. But as one works official in an area served almost entirely by direct labour has suggested, greater use of private contractors could give the direct labour force more time to attend to much needed planned and preventive maintenance.

REFERENCES


4 Recurrent Repair and Maintenance Problems

4.1 Housing conditions

Despite the mounting costs of repairs and maintenance in recent years, relatively little is known about the age and condition of the public housing stock over Scotland as a whole. While local authorities are required to prepare returns on the size of their “sub-tolerable” housing stock—there were 74,000 sub-tolerable houses in Strathclyde in 1976—such figures mainly relate to private or acquired properties and no published breakdowns exist of the number of council houses in sub-tolerable condition, small as these may be in many areas. Such a requirement does not extend to housing which though defective does not fall below the statutory tolerable standard. The fact that “several hundreds” of public sector houses have had to be demolished in recent years, according to the recent green paper on Scottish housing\(^5\), suggests that the number of council houses below par probably runs into several hundreds more.

Nevertheless there have been a number of bold attempts in recent years to assess the quality of the housing stock in particular areas. In their sample survey of houses in the Clydeside conurbation, Cullingworth and Watson, for example, found in 1970 that over half of the public housing built between the wars and a third built since 1945 contained one or more serious defects (i.e. inadequate heating, ventilation, cooking and washing facilities, dampness, structural defects)\(^3\). The investigators also observed that over half of all council houses had one or more external defects, with six per cent having five or more such defects (e.g. damaged gutters, defective timber frames). A government sponsored sample survey in the Dundee sub-region in 1974 found that while the vast majority of council houses built between the wars suffered from no defects, 10.4 per cent needed minor repairs, with 1.8 per cent requiring major repairs\(^3\). A Housing Environmental Defects index, constructed by the Scottish Development Department was used to assess house conditions there. In an effort to revitalise the 500-house Bowhouse estate in Alloa, built in the 1930s to rehouse slum dwellers, a 1974 feasibility study commissioned by the town council concluded that 100 (largely empty) houses in the area would need to be demolished and recommended that £680,000 should be spent on house and environmental improvements\(^4\). The house condition survey there found that 82 per cent of gardens were badly maintained; almost 75 per cent of the back courts were strewn with debris of all sorts (bricks, glass, old prams, etc.), the local authority moving in once a year to clear up the rubbish. In 30 per cent of entrances, pathways were severely cracked or roughened and 14 per cent of fencing was missing. Dampness and fungus growth was also evident under the floors of ground level houses, one house having rotting timber joists, with rat infestation in other cases; and in one instance, a house with 12 inches of water underneath was inhabited by frogs.

The Scottish Development Department has issued a housing handbook to local authorities for monitoring their own stock\(^5\) and it is understood that one or two district councils (e.g. Argyll and Bute, Cunninghame) have already been carrying out house condition surveys of their own. The Scottish Development Department is currently undertaking a house condition survey in the Harleses Hill area of Hamilton, but this investigation relates to houses built since 1970. So far no condition surveys have been conducted on houses built in the early post war years.

4.2 Problem estates

Many housing authorities can point to particular housing estates or schemes where houses are difficult to let, where tenancy turnover is high, where vandalism is recurrent, or where the property is in a poor state of repair. Often these factors are inter-related, hence the generic title problem estate. Of the housing authorities investigated, Glasgow with its Drumchapel estate and Renfrew with its Ferguslie Park scheme experience the greatest difficulties. Drumchapel estate, built in the early post-war years on the western fringes of the city, contains a large number of unemployed or low income householders and is high on various other census indices of multiple deprivation. It is among Glasgow’s least popular housing schemes and contains a high incidence of vandalism. The 9,075 house estate, comprised mainly of three and four storey blocks, is served by an area housing office in the central shopping precinct there. Renfrew’s Ferguslie Park scheme, Paisley, was built largely during the inter-war years mainly to house tenants from slum-clearance areas, although a smaller number of houses here have been built since the last war. Although it represents only seven per cent (2,950 houses) of the district council’s total housing stock, it accounts for a considerable proportion of repair problems, along with other housing difficulties. Most of the information on housing conditions in Ferguslie Park comes from an investigation carried out in 1976 by a team (ASSIST) from the department of architecture and building science at Strathclyde University as part of a government-financed community development project\(^6\).
In Drumchapel estate, where the area housing office processes at least 50,000 repair orders each year, at least one serious incident of vandalism—that is, involving more than £300 worth of damage and repair—occurred every other week during 1976-77. For Glasgow as a whole, vandalism is the second largest item of expenditure on repairs after routine maintenance, accounting for £3% million in 1976-77 out of a total repair bill of £17 million. House rehabilitation—mainly affecting houses left empty and then vandalised—contributed over £1½ million to this sum. Window repairs cost another £1 million, with £612,000 being spent on the protection of empty houses and £242,000 on graffiti removal. Separate figures are not available for Drumchapel, whose area housing office is not involved in the processing and monitoring of repair costs.

Vandalism is most recurrent in houses vacated between relets or during modernisation work and may vary from random and wanton damage (e.g. to doors, windows) to systematic plundering of copper, lead and other marketable materials. In Drumchapel at least 70 houses—excluding houses being modernised—are estimated to be vacant for two to three months at a time and considerably more are vacant for shorter periods. The problem is exacerbated where tenants are in rent arrears and do a “moonlight flit”, leaving the council uninformed of houses in their area lying empty. Many houses also change hands frequently. A similar problem is reported in Ferguslie Park where at the time of the ASSIST investigation, 12 per cent of the area stock (2,950) were lying empty, as against an average vacancy rate of four per cent for the whole of Scotland. Renfrew spent £7000 in 1976-77 on “vandal proofing” its stock between re-lets.

Below are given specimen costs arising directly as a result of 34 incidents of vandalism recorded by the area housing office in Drumchapel between May 1976 and June 1977:

- Complete redecoration (5 apt house) £500
- Replacement of sink unit £75
- Plaster repairs £50
- Replacement of fireplace £70
- Removal of rubbish and debris £20
- Boarding up windows and padlocking door £50
- Checking electrical wiring £20
- Replacement of internal door £20
- Replacement of front door £60

In 12 incidents, the total repair costs exceeded £500 for each house and in one house—which was only just saved from demolition—they reached £860. Most authorities react by boarding up a house—costing about £100 a time—with corrugated sheets and wooden frames where it has been vandalised or is at risk. In Renfrew, steel panelling has been introduced to “barricade” houses. In some cases the practice is to board up ground floor apartments only in order to minimise property “blight” and discourage tenants in adjoining houses from moving away. Sometimes vandalism may be so serious that the local authority will consider demolition. In 1976 Renfrew demolished 139 houses in Ferguslie Park that were beyond repair. Glasgow has started to demolish nine of the worst closes in Easterhouse, built from 1952-65, and 203 four and five-storey blocks, built between 1961-67 on the Murrayfield estate, Blackburn, West Lothian, are due to go.

The ASSIST team, in the course of its investigations in Ferguslie Park, has argued that vandalism has become a blanket term and an excuse for withholding the full services of repairs and maintenance. In an unpublished paper, it claims that the physical deterioration of the estate cannot be attributed solely to vandalism or the behaviour of tenants. The backlog of repairs and maintenance defects has resulted from a combination of abuse and neglect. Much of the abuse takes place in empty houses and is carried out by professional thieves who may well reside outwith Ferguslie Park. Only after a given building or close has become predominately vacant does it in effect become an “adventure playground” for young people in the area. Over and above these factors, however, there are numerous defects which are brought about by “sustained under-maintenance”. It seems inconceivable, for example, that the high incidence of roof and chimney defects in 1930-38 housing stem from anti-social behaviour. The paper concludes: “It is a matter for speculation whether the backlog has resulted from a general shortage of funds for repairs and maintenance or from a series of conscious decisions against investing available funds in Ferguslie Park. Whatever the motive, it is nevertheless clear that officials with current responsibilities for carrying out repairs and maintenance within the scheme have inherited an unfortunate situation which has built up through many years of neglect.”

In a published interim report, ASSIST found from its internal condition survey of 200 houses in Ferguslie Park (representing 6.7 per cent of houses in the scheme) that 88 per cent of houses suffered
from one or more "serious defects." These defects were defined to include: dampness, faulty electric sockets or switches; broken or leaking kitchen sinks; cracked, loose, or inoperative WCs, broken or leaking gutters and rainpipes; leaking roofs; blocked wastepipes and drains; adjacent property in a dilapidated state; balcony unsafe. Ninety-one three-storey tenements, built between 1937 and 1945, were in the worst state of repair; only 10 per cent had no serious defects at all and 53 per cent had three or more serious defects. On average over the whole estate there were two serious defects per house. One tenth of all houses surveyed had five or more serious defects. The following examples highlight defects uncovered by the ASSIST team, who maintain—in the face of official denials—that all of the houses described were fully occupied at the time of investigation.

HOUSE A: Balcony unsafe, moves when you press against it. Loose WC pan. Stairway window broken despite continual reporting by tenants. Reinforcement showing due to spalling of concrete.


HOUSE C: Overheating plug/socket in living room. Faulty and loose light switch in hall; light switch missing from bedroom. Dampness in hallway and living room.

HOUSE D: None of the electric sockets in the house working; TV worked from an electric light. Waste from WC leaks (temporary repair with plastic bags). Wash hand basin hanging from off the wall.

HOUSE E: Dampness in bedroom, windows stuck fast. Overflow to sink blocked and sink badly chipped. Windows stuck fast. Poor workmanship to door frame.

According to ASSIST: “Many tenants have to wait excessively long periods to get anything done that isn’t a serious hazard... and building inspectors are now only being directed to follow up ‘less serious’ complaints reported over 6 months ago.” The report notes: “The overall impression from street meetings was of a complete breakdown of trust between the tenant and the district council. The residents felt there was little chance of success in pressing the council for repairs and had gradually given up reporting all but the most serious problems.”

The ASSIST study was widely reported in the press, with such headlines as “Biggest Vandal of Them All is Council” and “Dossier of Shame.” But in an interview on Radio Clyde in May 1977 district council’s deputy convener of housing defended local policy by claiming that thousands of pounds had already been poured into the Ferguslie Park area—to no effect. He stated: “Tenants have various services down there all in order to help them—community development projects, social service centres, leisure centres, community huts, football pitches... and the conditions are becoming worse instead of better. This is due to the people themselves and until you can change the people, the conditions will persist.”

Renfrew calculates that a quarter of its expenditure on repairs in Paisley goes on the pre-war Ferguslie Park scheme, which represents only seven per cent of its total stock. In 1976-77 an average of £51 was spent on the repair and maintenance of houses in Paisley, but this amount came to £105 for houses in Ferguslie Park—and if the “bad” areas of Ferguslie Park were singled out, the figure reached a figure of £254, including rehabilitation or demolition costs. The Scottish average if £77 per house (see chapter 6). Over £2 million is being spent on the rehabilitation of 245 houses in the area and £200,000 is being devoted to the upgrading of vacant properties. A “special allocation” of £70,000 is being spent on fencing and external decoration. A technical inspector has been appointed to deal specifically with post-job inspections in Ferguslie Park.

### 4.3 Condensation and Dampness

Each authority investigated mentions that some of its houses are affected by condensation. There is some dispute as to what is meant by condensation and how it differs from dampness. Housing and technical service staff say condensation refers to water vapourisation occasioned in inadequate heating and ventilation and that dampness refers to water penetration through the structure (walls, ceilings, floors) of the house. Condensation and dampness each require their own special form of treatment. However, critics allege (see below) that condensation is a euphemism for dampness, where it arises from faulty house design, and that it cannot be cured by any amount of heating and ventilation. Each of the various authorities is tackling condensation in the following ways:
Angus: Roof insulation of all 2-apt. houses, under a job creation programme. Work on the remaining 3–5 apt. houses expected to be completed by 1978. Several “pilot” schemes of insulation are being monitored prior to larger schemes of cavity wall infill.

Dunfermline: Cavity insulation being introduced in houses with serious problems, but most treatment involves the use of fungicides.

Drumchapel: Anti-Fungicidal treatment. Air vents built in some houses.

Renfrew: No general form of treatment. Each house inspected where a tenant complains and the appropriate treatment or advice is given (e.g. fungicidal treatment, use of plaster-board). Loft insulation in some houses.

Tweeddale: Same cavity and roof insulation (mixed results), foam-backed plasterboard (good results), and air extractors.

SSHA: Aluminium-backed plasterboard and foam cavity infill. Installation of “background heating” in some homes.

Each authority has issued or made available to tenants leaflets prepared by the Scottish Development Departments offering advice on heating and ventilating the home to prevent or minimise condensation. Glasgow also issues a leaflet of its own. Housing officials report varying degrees of success with the various methods they have tried and all conclude that in the last analysis effective prevention and cure rests with the tenant heating and ventilating his home adequately.

The changeover to electric and gas fires in houses built for coal fires is seen as the main source of difficulty, along with the tendency for many homes to be left empty and unheated during the day while householders are at work, followed by rapid vapourisation in the evening and early morning. In some areas tenants are reported reluctant to ventilate their homes by leaving windows open lest they invite thieves and other unwelcome intruders. It is acknowledged that the high costs of fuel have discouraged tenants from maintaining a steady heat in their homes all day long. (According to the SSEB figures, off-peak electricity charges rose by 119 per cent between 1973 and 1976.) It is also the case that the cheapest fuel appliances create most condensation: according to a Scottish Development Department study, flueless gas and oil heaters produce the equivalent of six pints of water per therm of gas or eight pints of water per gallon of oil. This study also points out that a person asleep at night exhales about a pint of vapour, perhaps giving occasion to the celebrated statement of one Glasgow district council official that the cause of dampness in a bedroom reported to have had wallpaper peeling off was “heavy breathing.”

Various reports suggest that dampness is also a widespread problem, although it is not clear how much of this is due to condensation as well. A confidential report prepared by the National Building Agency in 1976 and leaked to the press indicated that 238 out of 759 houses in low rise blocks, built in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, only a few years previously, suffered from dampness which would cost £500,000 to put right. In 93 cases the dampness was severe, putting some rooms including bedrooms out of use. The NBA report found that in a majority of cases dampness was due to a combination of heating and ventilation factors and structural or design defects. Complaints about dampness also led to a rates valuation appeal by Gorbals tenants, supported by their local MP (Frank McElhone), resulting in a gross valuation reduction of five to seven-and-a-half per cent for houses seriously affected. Work has since commenced on an experimental study in which the effectiveness of anti-dampness treatment in occupied houses is being matched against the condition of untreated houses. Tenants in the worst-hit houses have been rehoused. The district council is also offering cash compensation to tenants badly affected. In a fact-finding visit to houses in the area, preceding the NBA report, Hugh Brown, MP, is reported to have stated: “I think these houses are in a shocking state. They really are deplorable and it is just not fair to expect people to put up with conditions like this indefinitely.”

Other press reports have indicated that the problem is by no means confined to Glasgow. Dampness has been reported in such areas as Cumbernauld (850 houses with leaking roofs, costing £800,000 to repair), Lanarkshire (where dampness had rotted front doors, soaked carpets, moulded furniture and cost tenants £100 a year each in redecoration costs) and Greenock were 57 out of 111 SSHA houses were said to be affected.

The Scottish Development Department paper cited above has argued that in any scheme of 50 or more houses, if 10 per cent or less suffer from condensation the fault is usually attributable to occupant living habits, but where the percentage increases to 20 per cent or more, the fault usually lies with
one of a combination of other factors—heating, ventilation, construction and planning. But in a recent parliamentary debate, Dennis Canavan, MP (West Stirling) alleged that many authorities were using condensation as a euphemism for dampness and some even blamed the tenants. He found it "intolerable" that tenants had to live in houses with black fungus on the walls. In some cases, standards of design and architecture were poor, and he called for a national research study. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP (North Angus and Mearns) said that in one area black mould was visible in council houses built only two years previously and that tenants there had been advised to install extractor fans at their own expense. Robert Hughes, MP (North Aberdeen) criticised local authorities for suggesting that tenants should leave their heating on and windows open all day to combat condensation. (At the end of the debate, an amendment to the Housing (Finance Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, making it a duty of the Secretary of State to consider dampness problems in the determination of housing support grants to local authorities, was narrowly defeated by 6 votes.)

Criticism of local authority handling of dampness and condensation has also come from professional quarters. The President of the Royal Sanitary Association of Scotland, Mr William Webster, is reported to have said in Ayr in October, 1977: "Responsible authorities in the post war era have trifled with the problem of condensation in dwellings and ignored first principles of structural knowledge learned the hard way by past generations. It is not good enough to blame the condition on occupiers and advise remedies which are totally inadequate. This complaisant attitude should end and housing authorities must accept the major responsibility for a wasteful, costly and preventable nuisance and with the least possible delay about it." He went on to say: "The basic problem over the last decade or so has been that technological progress in the building industry has failed to adopt modern materials and methods to meet well established traditional knowledge essential for the healthy house. Doubtless cost has been the over-riding factor in the deterioration of housing quality standards and so too has been the inevitable decline of building craftsmanship occasioned by the demand for speedy construction."

4.4 Planned maintenance

Of the million or more houses in the public sector, more than half of them were built between 1945 and 1965, with a further 100,000 built between the wars. These houses were constructed when materials were often in short supply and when building standards were different from what they are now. Given an average "life expectancy" of 60 years, many of these early post-war and inter-war houses will now be in their middle age. The question arises whether the houses should be demolished (or extensively rehabilitated) at the end of their normal life expectancy or whether they should be given a longer lease of life through continual preventive maintenance and improvement work. The disadvantage of the tenant report system, as was suggested in chapter three, is that many defects may go ignored or undetected, resulting in more costly and complicated repairs later on. A system of planned or routine maintenance, it is argued, is necessary if public housing is to enjoy more than the bare minimum of life.

All five authorities in the SCC investigation undertake some form of regular maintenance (i.e. any work not arising directly from reports or complaints by tenants). But they differ in the scope of maintenance carried out, as shown below:

**Angus:** Repainting of houses on five-year cycle, with an annual target of 3,000 houses per year (work currently 500 houses behind target owing to a surplus of unpainted houses inherited by the council after local government reorganisation). Replacement of windows and post-war houses with defective metal frames.

**Dunfermline:** A 5-year cycle, at the rate of 4,750 houses a year, involving pre-work inspection of external timber, door locks, and window catches, culminating in a pre-paint inspection, followed by a repainting programme.

**Drumchapel:** Maintenance, which falls outwith the responsibility of the area housing office, is focussed on a five year external painterwork cycle, involving a target of about 1,500 houses each year. Some attention has been given to fencing and worn sink units, as well as to gardens (tidying up, cutting grass), but these services have since suffered from budgetary cutbacks. In addition, timber window frames in houses are being inspected and replaced. Maintenance of gutters, chimneyheads, roughcast, paths, etc. is carried out in exceptional circumstances.

**Renfrew:** This authority, which inherited the policies of the five former councils, aims to repaint 8,000 houses a year on a five-year cycle (currently, painting programmes have been reduced to a seven-year cycle). One of the former authorities is said to have
painted only 110 or more houses a year, working out at a 46-year cycle! Other
maintenance carried out consists of pre-paint inspection of woodwork, renewal of
fencing and paths, retiling and refelting of roofs, installing safety catches on the
windows of high flats and upgrading TV aerials to receive UHF. The authority is
working towards a more comprehensive system of planned maintenance involving
pre-painterwork inspections.

Tweeddale: Joinery inspection and external painting on a five-year cycle, involving 325 houses
a year.

Two features stand out here. First, for all authorities concerned, maintenance is seen largely in terms
of an external painting programme based on a five-year cycle or more. Secondly little or no consider-
ation seems to be given to the routine maintenance of the interiors of the houses and it is not clear how
comprehensive are the maintenance inspections for external or structural defects. It is worth comparing
these programmes with that of the Scottish Special Housing Association, which has operated a scheme
of "planned maintenance" since 1971. This falls under the supervision of 120 building inspectors and
clers of works, each responsible for 750 houses approximately. At the beginning of each year in the
eive-year cycle, the inspector receives five lists of houses to be visited involving one of five operational
sequences:

Year 1: Supervision of workmanship of the maintenance painterwork contract, inspection of
plumbing and sanitary fittings.

Year 2: Post-painterwork inspection (12 months after completion), inspection of lifts, ventilators,
fires, laundry equipment, water system, radio, television and telephone services.

Year 3: Maintenance painterwork guarantee inspection, inspection of gas, electric and heating
services.

Year 4: Inspection for defects on windows and sills, doors, ironmongery, glazing, rainwater and soil
pipes, balustrades, roof coverings, chimneys, flues, gutters, sealants and flushings, external
walls, staircases and foundations.

Year 5: Pre-paint inspection, including a list of minor repairs for glazing, and removal of defective
putty. Inspection of boundary and retaining walls.

The SSHA claims that each of its 88,000 houses, served by 32 area offices and works depots, receives
an inspection every year for one of the above five sets of operations. Inspectors complete a 70-item
checklist, forwarding copies in batches every two weeks to the maintenance officer and architect for
the area. None of the authorities visited operates a scheme approaching the SSHA one, and the largest
local authority (Glasgow) admits that it does not currently operate a planned maintenance scheme at
all. The main benefits of planned maintenance would seem to be:

1 Greater economy. Day-to-day repairs, where a tenant report system is mainly in operation, might
not be reported until the fault has reached serious possibly more costly proportions.

2 Budgetary control. Maintenance and material needs can be assessed in advance.

3 Saving of time and travel. Non-productive time and effort wasted under a tenant "breakdown" system of reporting can be minimised under a carefully planned system of house inspection.

4 Better utilisation of direct labour force. Where operations are routine, direct labour can be used to better effect (with perhaps greater productivity and larger bonuses) than under an ad hoc report system.

5 Research and development. The regular inspection of materials draws attention to any inherent or impending defects which might go unnoticed by the untutored eye; perhaps permitting a "pre-emptive strike" on the fault before it works its way into expensive new building and modernisation programmes.

6 Regular contact with tenants. Yearly house inspectors might remind tenants that the housing
authority cares about its stock, and they would provide tenants with an opportunity to discuss or seek advice about repairs, maintenance, and improvements.

Some housing officials have made the point that planned or preventive maintenance is only possible
where the houses are already of a good minimum standard, born out of years of patient care by house-
proud tenants and supported by higher rent levels. Housing in some problem estates is as much as 40
or 50 years old, requiring extensive capital works and subject to poor standards of care by tenants. A planned maintenance system is also dependent on the availability of direct labour, which local authorities might find difficult to attract during say a "building boom" in the private sector. Smaller housing authorities indicate that the introduction of planned maintenance in their area would involve a disproportionate increase in staffing and costs. Planned maintenance would need to take account of these factors before being introduced. It might be said, in answer to one of these points, that it may be the very absence of planned maintenance that contributes to the deterioration of the housing stock in the first place and where local authorities have exercised low standards of care, it should perhaps not be so surprising if tenants choose to follow their example.

REFERENCES

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8 ASSIST: Unpublished data.
12 Unpublished figures, supplied by Renfrew district council.
13 Evening Times, February 1976, quoting SSEB figures.
14 Scottish Development Department: Condensation: diagnosis, treatment and remedial measures to existing houses, House Construction Research Unit, 1977.
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5 Improvements and Modernisation

5.1 General Background

Over one half of the existing stock of public housing in Scotland—amounting to a million houses—was built in the inter-war and early post war years, 2,500 houses having been built before 1945 and a further 400,000 by 1951. In 1944, the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee had recommended that government assistance should be given towards the improvement and modernisation of housing, and the 1984 Housing (Scotland) Act provided, for the first time, assistance towards the improvement of subsidised housing. The main impetus, however, came from the Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act of 1968 and the Housing (Scotland) Act of 1969 stepping up the exchequer contributions, which were further raised under the 1971 Housing (Scotland) Act to three quarters of annual loan costs, with an upper limit of £2,500 per house. The effect was an eightfold increase in the number of houses improved between 1968 and 1973—from 9,880 to 66,130. By June 1977 some quarter of a million houses in the public sector—about 2.5 per cent of all public housing—had undergone some form of improvement or modernisation. Total annual expenditure on improvement work rose from £1 million in 1968 to £63 million in 1973. But with impending local government reorganisation, the need to keep rents down, and the subsequent reduction in the level of government subsidy, there has since been a sharp drop in the number of houses improved—from a peak figure of 66,000 houses in 1973 to 27,000 in 1976. The 1976 white paper announced expenditure reductions from £77 million in 1976-77 to £60.8 million in 1978-79 on improvements to public housing. (Improvement costs are described in more detail in section 5 of chapter 6.) At the same time, however, there has been more emphasis on comprehensive schemes of improvement compared with earlier programmes which were often exclusively focussed on electrical rewiring. In a survey conducted in 1974 the Scottish Local Authorities Special Housing Group (SLASH) found that some 80 per cent of houses built between 1919 and 1946 still awaiting comprehensive internal improvement and only 10 per cent had received environmental improvements. In a report published in 1976, Shelter claimed that Scotland contained 154,000 pre-war council houses which had still not been improved and estimated that at current expenditure levels, it would take councils another 17 years to deal with their pre-war stock.

The need to improve or modernise housing stock is not confined to pre-war housing. The Scottish Housing Advisory Committee, in a 1970 report, was highly critical of post-war schemes, particularly tenemental ones, which as well as having poor community amenities and inadequate play and parking facilities, also contained many houses with poor thermal and sound insulation and inadequate storage. The committee argued: 'If no action is taken to rescue deteriorating schemes many of them will become unacceptable to the discriminating majority of tenants; houses in some schemes will either stand empty or be reserved, as many schemes now are, for the poorest tenants'. It warned that a "substantial number of local authority housing schemes in Scotland have been, or are being, reduced to a condition which is not far removed from the slums which they were designed to replace.

Obtaining a national picture of actual improvement and modernisation work being carried out has proved to be difficult. Although local authorities keep returns of improvement work done, they are not collated for Scotland as a whole and seldom give a trade-by-trade or job-by-job breakdown of works carried out. SLASH, in its survey of 1919-46 houses, found that improvements consisted mainly of electrical rewiring, followed by renewal of sanitary fittings, but with a lower incidence of insulation upgrading and exterior and environmental improvements. A circular put out by the Scottish Development Department in 1974 advises local authorities on what types of improvement work qualify for exchequer subsidy: they include damp coursing, treatment of subsidence (but not mining subsidence), replacement of kitchen, bathroom and toilet fittings, installation of immersion heater, and, in certain cases, the provision of central heating. Electrical rewiring and replumbing do not in themselves qualify for a grant, being regarded as part of "normal maintenance" except where they are needed to make other standard improvements fully effective. Special government grants have recently been made available for providing houses with proper heat insulation in an attempt to conserve energy, although it is too early to assess the amount of take-up.

A high proportion of houses built before the war and a considerable number built soon afterwards are known to have piping and water tanks made of lead. In a sample survey the Department of the Environment estimates that at least a third of households in Scotland—compared with eight per cent in England and Wales—contain lead concentrations in water (over 0.5 mg/l) above the recommended minimum laid down by the World Health Organisation. To date, however, there is no special assistance for houses with lead piping and tanks (except where pipes are replaced in connection with modernisation work). (The Water (Scotland) Act 1946 makes it a duty of the water authorities in
Scotland—the regional and island councils—to supply “wholesome water” to their area, and the 1974 Housing Act stipulates that a house must have an “adequate supply of piped and wholesome water” if it is to meet the tolerable standard).

The Scottish Development Department is currently preparing a computer file on improvement work being carried out by local authorities, taking into account the size of structure of dwellings, the estimated future life of their improved stock, improvement costs, type of occupants (elderly, disabled, single, family, etc.). The SDD has also piloted a questionnaire to assess tenant “reaction” to improvement schemes to provide the basis of a large scale survey now planned. Tenants are asked how they first heard about the improvements scheme, where they lived while work was being carried out, whether they attended any meetings, received any personal visits, or read any leaflets connected with the scheme, and whether they had any choice (and what kind of choices) over the types of improvement carried out. A 28-item section seeks to assess tenant satisfaction with and elicit their criticism of specific amenities provided under the scheme, e.g. new kitchen sinks, power points, insulation, fitted cupboards, redecoration, window replacement, general repairs. Other sections deal with the time work was expected to take and actually took, improvements still needed, and any personal inconvenience and expenses caused.

There have been one or two bold attempts to consult or involve tenants in improvement and modernisation work. In Glasgow’s multi-million-pound East End project, area planning workshops have been set up by the district council in conjunction with the Scottish Special Housing Association and Scottish Development Department to consult tenants about proposals to rehabilitate acquired properties and landscape the area. In the Strone-Maukenhill and Gibbhall areas of Inverclyde, which are dominated by inter-war tenemental housing, tenants can make known their views on development and improvement plans through an area-wide tenant consultative committee, on which regional and district councillors also sit. In several areas, show houses or caravans have been set up where tenants can inspect modernisation proposals and study and discuss with officials the various options available. As described in section 2, one or two authorities (e.g. Angus, Dunfermline) have produced modernisation handbooks and self-completion questionnaires for their tenants, and public meetings initiated by the council have become standard practice in many areas before work begins.

There is of course the danger that these exercises in consultation and participation might be used as public relations exercises, designed, as one author has put it, to “manipulate tenants in the interests of housing management so that nobody takes them seriously”\(^\text{12}\). There may also be a limit to the amount of extra time housing staff may be prepared to put in—attendance at evening meetings, contact with tenants’ associations—particularly if they are getting no extra pay or time off for their efforts. Both the Scottish Local Authorities Special Housing Group and the Scottish Special Housing Association, as well as the Scottish Development Department have formulated guidelines for consulting and involving tenants\(^\text{13}\). The SDD document, which is focussed on deprived urban areas recommends the establishment of neighbourhood planning workshops and information centres pending renewal work, along with community newspapers, small group discussions between tenants and local authority officials, residents’ consultative committees, household surveys (including self-survey exercises by tenants) and monitoring exercises to keep tenants informed of progress.

5.2 Local improvement and modernisation schemes

All five authorities investigated are carrying out some improvement work. The following items of work are mentioned. Rewiring, replumbing, new kitchen and bathroom fixtures, internal and external decoration, new heating appliances, and certain essential repairs (e.g. window replacement, roof repairs). One authority (Renfrew) provides roof insulation and another (Dunfermline) mentions carrying out environmental improvements (clearing street debris and landscaping). In all cases work is concentrated on pre-war housing, with between £3,200 and £3,700 being spent per house on average, but with amounts rising to £7,000 per house in exceptional circumstances. It is difficult to assess how many houses are being modernised at any one time but authorities are able to give the following targets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>No. of houses currently being improved (per year)</th>
<th>Completion date</th>
<th>Total pre-1939 stock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunfermline</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>5,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drumchapel</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew</td>
<td>865*</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>13,289</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tweeddale</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A further 1,000 houses being rewired.
All of the authorities engage private contractors for their modernisation projects. In Dunfermline, the direct labour force competes for modernisation contracts on the open market (in 1976-77, six out of nine tenders submitted in this way were lost to private contractors). The time spent on improving each house varies between authorities: from five to six weeks in Dunfermline, six to eight weeks in Renfrew and Glasgow, and between four weeks and three months in Angus. In many cases tenants are “decanted” to temporary accommodation, usually in blocks of households at a time, though it is normally the practice to decant only where full-scale modernisation is carried out and not for more specialised programmes such as rewiring. Tenants who are elderly or infirm are often decanted as a matter of course and some authorities give tenants the option to staying in decant accommodation permanently. Dunfermline runs a fleet of 20 mobile caravans, which are renewed frequently, to house “decant” families, with the special advantage that tenants need not move far away from their homes. Removal costs in all modernisation programmes are met by the council.

Some three to four weeks before work is due to begin tenants normally receive a visit from a housing or modernisation officer informing them of work to be done and any preparatory arrangements. This is closely followed up by a technical inspection and in some cases (e.g. Renfrew) by a public meeting initiated by the council, at which officials from other departments (e.g. social work) are present. In Angus, tenants are invited to complete a questionnaire issued by the district council before modernisation work is carried out in their area. This asks tenants to:

1. specify the number, age group and sex of all occupants in the household.
2. indicate the type of heating they have at present and the sort they would prefer (solid fuel, gas, electrical). Tenants are informed in the questionnaire about which rooms radiators will be installed in.
3. indicate whether they are presently using an electric or gas cooker and whether they wish to switch over fuels.
4. mention any special domestic appliances which need to be included in the new kitchen layout.
5. mention any repairs which need doing while modernisation is in progress.
6. indicate whether there is a wheelchair user or severely disabled person in the household requiring special adaptations. Tenants are also invited to mention any relevant problems of elderly or infirm members of the household.
7. specify any dates they expect to be away on holiday.
8. note down any special fittings they have purchased (e.g. bathroom wall heater, special light fitting) and which they wish to retain after modernisation.

Dunfermline issues tenants with a modernisation handbook, containing not only a detailed description of work to be carried out but advice on:

1. which improvements done by tenants themselves will be retained after modernisation (e.g. “If you have recently installed a sink unit, this could be retained but it must be realised that this may not match the colour of the units being fitted by the council.”).
2. the choice of central heating, along with advice on whether or not to retain fire surrounds.
3. the preparation, storage or protection of some 25 household items, with details about house contents to remain or to be removed during improvement work. (e.g. “cookers, washing machines and refrigerators should be left in the house to enable them to be fitted as best as possible under working surfaces”.)
4. the choice of wallpaper (woodchip or patterned), with guidance on purchase prices.

Authorities vary in the amount and type of compensation they give to tenants whose homes have been improved or modernised. In Glasgow all such tenants are entitled to a redecoration allowance: £20 for a living room, £24 for a kitchen or bathroom, and £10 for a bedroom (it is understood that these allowances have not been reviewed for some years). Angus operates a similar scheme, albeit based on apartment size (up to a maximum of £95 for 5+ apartment houses). The district council was recently the subject of an investigation by the local government ombudsman concerning the payment of these allowances (see the next section). Renfrew operates a more complicated scheme, taking into account such items as the costs of relaying carpets or repairing incidental damage, as summarised in the table below:
Compensation allowances payable to tenants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew 1978-79</td>
<td>(3 apt)</td>
<td>(7 apt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidental damage</td>
<td>£7</td>
<td>£7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation of central heating</td>
<td>£8</td>
<td>£23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewiring</td>
<td>£19</td>
<td>£44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernisation of bathroom or kitchen</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernisation of bathroom and kitchen</td>
<td>£31</td>
<td>£31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaying of fitted carpets</td>
<td>£8 (per room)</td>
<td>£32 (per room)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaying of hall and stair carpets</td>
<td>£10 (per room)</td>
<td>£10 (per room)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redecoration</td>
<td>£10*</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* based on an allowance of £2 per roll.

5.3 Problems and difficulties

One observer has described improvement and modernisation operations as more disruptive than the evacuation of citizens during the war. Some schemes obviously proceed more smoothly than others and local authorities have learned from past mistakes. But there is some evidence, gleaned from reports in the press, of failure to adequately consult or inform tenants before or during improvement work. For example, one tenants association in the Parnies area of Glasgow was reported to have received 300 complaints from householders who claimed that modernisation work was six months behind schedule and that gardens had been left “heaped with rubble” when workers had moved out. The council had since set up a liaison committee representing tenants and the council and proposed to landscape the area.

Some of the problems that can confront an improvement scheme are highlighted in a 1976 report of the Commissioner for Local Administration in Scotland—or Ombudsman—in response to complaints from some tenants in Arbroath about lack of consultation, particularly over the administration of new redecoration allowances. Following earlier complaints from tenants that the £30 standard decoration allowance fixed by the former town council was inadequate at 1976 prices, Angus district council accepted a new sliding scale of allowances, but decided that these rates would only apply to houses not yet modernised—even though the increased rents incurred would apply to all houses modernised since reorganisation. Criticising the council’s decision, the Ombudsman said:

“Local authorities are not bound to pay redecoration allowances, but if they decide to do so, they should, in my opinion, secure comparability of treatment of tenants where comparable circumstances obtain. By the adoption of a new and substantially more generous scale of allowances, the District Council obviously recognised that larger houses needed bigger allowances and in particular that £30 was an inadequate contribution towards the redecoration of a 5 apartment house. I consider that these factors were just as relevant in the case of complainants’ houses modernised in the spring and summer of 1976 as they are of houses modernised in November 1976. The fact that rent increases of £25 per annum for a 5 apartment house linked to the modernisation programmes will not affect the complainants until 1st April, 1978 will assist them to some extent but will not, in my view, compensate them sufficiently for the difference between £30 and £95, which is the new redecoration allowance for a 5 apartment house. In my opinion, the District Council have discriminated unfairly against the complainants in the matter of redecoration allowance. I consider that this amounts to maladministration and caused injustice to the complainants.”

Subsequent to the investigation and as a result of a previous policy decision by the council standardising rents, houses modernised under the £30 redecoration allowances will not be affected by increased rents. This has since been made known to the ombudsman (following publication of his report), who has now accepted that an injustice has been remedied.

The Ombudsman rejected other complaints from decanted tenants that work had taken longer than had been expected. Technical staff had claimed that tenants in large houses had been told to “wait a little longer” than the normal 12 weeks for modernisation, amounting to a 15 week wait before these tenants could move back to their homes. The Ombudsman accepted the council’s view that this waiting period was necessary to make efficient use of labour manpower. Tenants had also complained to the Ombudsman about unwanted electric storage heaters and badly designed kitchen units being installed in their homes, but the council had since agreed to take possession of the unwanted heaters and to consult tenants in the design of kitchen space. One difficulty is that the local Ombudsman is not empowered to handle complaints arising from the policies and practices of the former local authorities.
5.4 Tenants' own improvements

Conscious of the need to observe minimum safety, storage and design regulations, local authorities normally insist that tenants seek official permission to carry out improvements in their homes. The letting regulations of most local authorities require outgoing tenants who have carried out any unauthorised alterations to restore a house to its original condition. Even relatively minor changes can sometimes carry dire consequences. A Dunfermline tenant who painted his tiled fireplace red and then moved house was recently ordered by the sheriff court to pay £102 (plus £25 legal expenses) to restore the house to a lettable condition. The district council, which took exception to the tenant’s choice of colour scheme, argued that the paint could not be effectively removed by workmen and that it was necessary to replace the fireplace altogether. In Drumchapel, outgoing tenants have been known to “trade in” glass panelled doors of their own in exchange for ill-fitting doors from neighbours in attempts to restore the house to its original condition.

By and large, all five authorities investigated allow tenants to carry out their own improvements but they recognise that not all tenants seek permission to do so. Only 17 per cent of tenants in the SCC household survey mention seeking permission to carry out improvements at any time, and of those never doing so, 48 per cent explain that “there is no need to”. Tenants associations in the areas investigated report a wide range of improvements tenants had initiated themselves: removal of picture rails, installation of immersion heaters and showers, boxing in of bathroom fittings, removal of kitchen pantries, and of adding power points. Over one third of applications for alterations and improvements are for replacing old fireplaces, according to the household survey. Most authorities mention giving tenants permission to install their own kitchen and bathroom fittings, fire surrounds, and, in some cases, central heating and double glazing. Usually permission is given on the understanding that this work will be done professionally. Housing officials express serious reservations about allowing tenants to carry out do-it-yourself improvements and alterations. In Drumchapel, for example, they cite instances of tenants installing fire surrounds which effectively block off power points or covering electrical wiring (e.g. for wall lights) with plaster below the minimum safety thickness.

None of the authorities studied provide any cash assistance to tenants initiating home improvements, although one former town council (Kirkcaldy) is reported as offering cash assistance to tenants requiring new sink units and gas or electric fires. Many authorities offer assistance in kind, however. Renfrew and Angus will install free of charge certain fittings chosen and purchased by tenants (e.g. stainless steel sink units), but on condition that the council assumes subsequent “ownership” of them. Renfrew will also provide free installation of non-standard or “de luxe” fixtures (e.g. double-drainer sink tops) in homes being modernised, provided that the tenant agrees to pay the difference over the normal price. But tenants in Renfrew are expected to install such items as immersion heaters at their own expense (with the council providing future maintenance).

REFERENCES

1 Scottish Office: Scottish Abstract of Statistics, No. 7 1977, table 50. For simplicity, figures have been rounded.
3 Scottish Office, op. cit, table 53 (a).
4 Shelter: Scottish Housing: the unkindest cut of all, 1977.
6 Shelter, op. cit, p. 17.
8 ibid, pp. 18, 52.
9 SLASH, op. cit. Figure 2.
10 SDD circular 28, 1974.
12 Collin Ward, speaking at a Housing Centre conference, Peterborough, 1974, and quoted in SLASH, op. cit.


15 *Evening Times* 8 June, 1977.


17 ibid


6 Repair, Maintenance and Improvement Costs

6.1 General expenditure

After education, housing is the chief item of local government expenditure and absorbs almost two-thirds of district council spending. Out of an estimated £682 million to be spent on housing in 1977-78, £280 million will go on new house building and improvements while another £288 million will meet loan charges; £68 million will go directly on the repair and maintenance of council housing, compared with less than £20 million only five years ago.

Figures prepared by the Scottish branch of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) shows that an average £77 will be spent by district councils on repairs per house in 1977-78 (compared with £24 in 1970-71). A further £31 will go on management expenses, while the remainder—£326—will meet loan costs: £444 in all. About £208 of this amount will be financed from rents, £62 from rates, and £169 from government subsidies. These averages conceal area differences, examples of which are given below:

Expenditure (£) per house: 1977-78 estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Repairs and Maintenance</th>
<th>Management and admin.</th>
<th>Exchequer subsidies</th>
<th>Total Expenditure*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>42.98</td>
<td>24.73</td>
<td>230.44</td>
<td>466.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunfermline</td>
<td>87.31</td>
<td>25.59</td>
<td>151.64</td>
<td>433.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>103.62</td>
<td>28.86</td>
<td>159.43</td>
<td>460.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew</td>
<td>76.69</td>
<td>41.24</td>
<td>123.42</td>
<td>384.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweeddale</td>
<td>60.88</td>
<td>63.08</td>
<td>83.39</td>
<td>207.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSHA</td>
<td>79.62</td>
<td>36.45</td>
<td>276.24</td>
<td>504.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>77.16</td>
<td>31.79</td>
<td>169.33</td>
<td>444.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* including loan payments.

Differences in expenditure between authorities should not necessarily be taken to mean that some authorities are more diligent than others in attending to repairs. The rate of expenditure in each authority is undoubtedly affected by the overall age and type of its housing stock (see section 1.3 (2) for a general description of housing in each area). These figures also gloss over differences in expenditure on different types of scheme within the same authority, say between pre-war and post-war estates. Renfrew, for example, is spending as much as £254 per house on some of its pre-war properties in the Ferguslie Park scheme. One striking feature in the table above is the high level of expenditure on repairs per house in Glasgow compared with the rest of Scotland. This could no doubt be accounted for by the heavier volume of repair work in Glasgow, but it may be the case that cost levels for given jobs there are also higher. Tweeddale, the smallest of the authorities, incurs higher management costs per house than the rest of Scotland. The average amount of exchequer subsidy varies from area to area, contributing to 50 per cent of costs in Angus, for example, but only 28 per cent of costs in Tweeddale.

Under the Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act, recently passed by parliament, a single annual “housing support grant” will replace the multiplicity of government subsidies payable into the housing revenue accounts of local authorities, who would thereby have more freedom to determine their own priorities of housing need. According to a government circular the present system of subsidies produces “irrational results without regard to an authority’s overall needs and resources” and provides markedly different levels of financial support for different housing activities. The present system of housing finance has also been criticised by the Scottish Local Authorities Special Housing Group (SLASH) who in a recent newsletter point out that whereas improvements to housing are controlled by central government, maintenance expenditure is largely dependent on local rents and rates. “When economies are needed, maintenance is often the first area to feel the pinch and unfortunately the effects of such neglect do not become obvious until many years afterwards.”

6.2 Specific costs

Although some £77 per house is currently spent by local authorities on repairs and maintenance there is as yet no nationally agreed system of breaking down this expenditure into its various components: according to the trade skills employed, to whether the work is preventive or remedial in nature, or even according to the age and construction of the house. No two authorities agree in the way they itemise expenditure and some keep more detailed records than others. In Glasgow no breakdowns of expenditure into its 15 housing areas are available at all, so that it is not possible to compare the amount spent
on repairs in say a difficult housing estate like Drumchapel (9,079 houses) with other schemes in the city. Nonetheless all but one of the authorities investigated are able to provide some data (albeit incomplete) on what they spend on various types of repair and maintenance works as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure in</th>
<th>Dunfermline</th>
<th>Glasgow</th>
<th>Renfrew</th>
<th>Tweeddale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>% (£ per house)</td>
<td>% (£ per house)</td>
<td>% (£ per house)</td>
<td>% (£ per house)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbing</td>
<td>10.8 (6.5)</td>
<td>20 •</td>
<td>10.4 (7.1)</td>
<td>15.4 (9.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joinery</td>
<td>12.6 (7.6)</td>
<td>6.3 (6.2)²</td>
<td>9.1 (6.2)</td>
<td>21.8 (13.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>8.6 (5.2)¹</td>
<td>11.8 (11.6)</td>
<td>11.0 (7.6)</td>
<td>21.3 (13.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td>3.6 (2.2)</td>
<td>3.6 (0.7)³</td>
<td>3.7 (2.6)</td>
<td>6.1 (3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterwork</td>
<td>2.9 (1.8)</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>9.1 (5.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofwork</td>
<td>0.8 (0.5)</td>
<td>4.2 (4.2)</td>
<td>7.7 (5.3)</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glazing</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>6.1 (6.0)</td>
<td>2.8 (2.0)</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>60.7 (36.5)</td>
<td>68.9 (69.3)⁴</td>
<td>55.3 (38.0)</td>
<td>26.4 (16.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total (£)        | 362,147 (60.2) | 17,110,949 (98.0) | 2,740,237 (68.0) | 98,870 (62.5) |

* indicates no information. Figures in table are all derived.
1 includes expenditure on preparatory work.
2 external joinery only.
3 electrical installations only.
4 includes £4,179,000 on "general maintenance".

Plumbing, joinery and painting account for the largest items of expenditure, and in terms of percentage and average expenditure, authorities seem to spend about the same aggregate amount on these major items. (Though it is perhaps worth noting that Tweeddale, the smallest of the authorities by far, spends proportionately more than the others on plumbing, joinery and painting.) In Glasgow, the repair of broken windows is also a sizeable expense. The Scottish Local Authorities Special Housing Group (SLASH), which has undertaken its own study of repair costs in several Scottish local authorities and several new towns, calculates that repairs to the main structure of houses account for 25 per cent of expenditure on average, while external decoration and joinery absorb 15 to 17 per cent. Plumbing, however, can range between two and 25 per cent of costs and joinery between eight and 17 per cent.

Unfortunately local authority area and trade breakdowns provide little or no information to how much is spent on older, pre-war houses as against, say, newer post-war ones. Tenants and local councillors have no means of making a detailed and informed assessment of a local authority's expenditure on repairs, other than the CIPFA figures cited above. SLASH is itself critical of local authority costing practices, as its 1976 newsletter makes clear: "In some authorities a breakdown of repair costs is not even available to the staff directly engaged in maintenance work. Budgeting is often only a crude form of cost control aimed at bringing financial expenditure within the original estimate, the actual standards of maintenance achieved proving a poor second in the financial stakes. Feedback is by word of mouth and rarely goes beyond the maintenance department. Hardly ever does it reach the architects who are often in the same building, the two groups usually only meeting, if at all, at handing over ceremonies when situation is a fait accompli and maintenance takes over its burden."

6.3 Jobbing costs

Since no two jobs are exactly alike—in terms of the amount and type of material used and of such "hidden" costs as travel—and because labour charges may vary over different authorities, obtaining an accurate picture of what it costs to attend to even the simplest of repair items is by no means straightforward. In one authority, for example, repairing a window can cost anything between £3 and £27 and attending to a leaking pipe between £2.50 and £15. Since none of these costs are normally borne by tenants there is no question of local authorities "charging" them a lot or a little. But where the authority stipulates that the tenant is responsible for attending to a fault, particularly where the defect is caused by negligence or "unfair" wear and tear, the tenant will be expected to bear part or all of the cost. In the following table, examples are given of what different authorities charge their tenants for selected repair items (that is, where the tenant is at fault):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repair item</th>
<th>Angus</th>
<th>Dunfermline</th>
<th>Glasgow</th>
<th>Renfrew</th>
<th>Tweeddale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitting a new lock</td>
<td>£7-£15</td>
<td>£6</td>
<td>£8</td>
<td>£8</td>
<td>£4-£6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairing a window</td>
<td>£5-£10</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
<td>£5</td>
<td>£3</td>
<td>£6-£7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing a blocked toilet</td>
<td>£5</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
<td>No charge</td>
<td>£3.50-£5</td>
<td>£12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workmen in the direct labour force and employed by private contractors are paid at nationally-agreed hourly rates, but these rates do not give a real indication of labour costs, which are affected by the particular type of bonus scheme operating in the area. These rates also take no account of indirect costs, such as overheads, management costs, and employers’ insurance contributions. Taking all these factors into account, technical staff in Renfrew—which has several bonus schemes in operation (inherited from previous authorities)—estimates that it costs about £10 to send a workman out to a job for the first hour and £4 for each hour thereafter.

6.4 Improvements and modernisation

As the previous chapter has already indicated, local authority expenditure on improving the housing stock has risen dramatically over the past decade from £1 million in 1968 to £63 million by 1973, when improvement programmes reached their peak level. Currently housing authorities are spending anything between £57,000 (on modernising 32 pre-war houses in Tweeddale) to £31 million in Glasgow. The average cost of fully modernising a house in the public sector amounts to £6,500 at 1978 prices. Local authorities do not publish detailed figures on how much is spent on particular items of improvement or modernisation. It is not normally possible to find out, for example, how much an authority spends on bathroom or kitchen fittings, although many authorities can provide separate figures for re-wiring. Other expenditure likely to be incurred during a modernisation programme includes the cost of decanting tenants to temporary accommodation and the payment of compensation allowances to cover such items as redecoration and incidental damage. A modernisation scheme involving, say, 300 houses can involve more than £14,000 in redecoration allowances and £12,000 in removal costs.

The ASSIST team at Strathclyde University has made a detailed assessment of modernisation costs, with respect to housing in Ferguslie Park, Paisley. A “basic renewal” bringing houses up to tolerable standard and giving them a 5–10 year working life is estimated to cost an average of £2,000 per house for the late inter-war houses in the scheme (an aggregate cost of £3.6 million). Providing certain “basic” extras—replacement of bathroom fixtures and provision of a new larder, larger windows, tiling, and external wall insulation in the kitchen—would raise this cost to £2,201 per house. Carrying out full modernisation—giving the house a further 30-year lease of life and providing complete kitchen renewal, replumbing, full internal and external decoration, along with door and window replacements, loft and wall insulation, and gas central heating—would be expected to cost £6,600 per house. Re novo modernising other houses in Ferguslie Park would not be quite so expensive: 315 houses built between 1956-60, for example—mainly 3 and 4 storey tenements—would cost between £800 to £950 to bring up to basic standard and £2,202 to modernise. The most recently built houses in the area—1966 onwards—would in contrast involve only about £100 to £200 in basic renewals and £220 to £300 in modernisation (November 1976 prices). Use is being made of these costings by the district council.

6.5 Expenditure by tenants

Two thirds of council tenants in the SCC household survey claim to have spent some of their own money on the repair, maintenance and improvement of their home over the previous 12 months. On average they reckon to have spent £73 on repairs and decoration in this period, though it is not clear how much of this amount relates to repairs which would normally be attended to and paid for by the local authority. A quarter of council tenants say they have spent nothing at all over this period. Decorating a living room, tenants estimate, had cost £35. One in four council tenants would like to see a direct cash refund offered to those doing their own repairs, and tenants also express interest in a number of other incentives that might be offered, as shown in the table below (which also contains a comparison with tenants in England and Wales).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentives that should be offered:</th>
<th>Scotland (% support)</th>
<th>England/Wales (% support)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct refund for purchase of repair items</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent-free weeks</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refund for decorating materials</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed rent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refund for labour costs (other than by tenant)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation for time spent on repairs by tenant</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent refund</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vouchers exchangeable in shops for materials</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(number of respondents)</td>
<td>(217)</td>
<td>(898)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 12 tenants' associations completing the SCC's questionnaire also express some interest in the provision of incentives. Five are in favour of rent reductions or allowances, four support either the idea of rent free weeks or the opportunity for house purchase, three would like to see cash refunds for purchases offered, and one thinks free materials should be provided. One association also suggests that easier house transfers should be made available to tenants doing a lot of their own repairs. Three tenants associations are not in favour of incentives being offered at all, reasoning that repairs and maintenance are the council's responsibility or that an incentive scheme would be complicated to administer. There is also no guarantee that offering tenants cash incentives will improve the quality of or the speed with which repairs carried out, and some form of detailed inspection would presumably be required to ensure that the repairs are done.

At the same time, it must be recognised that the tenant who has spent a lot of money on repairing and maintaining his home enjoys hardly any greater advantages than the tenant who has given little attention to his house at all. It is conceivable that any short term management and administrative costs entailed in mounting some kind of incentive scheme would be offset by savings in labour costs as well as encouraging tenants to attend to repairs that might otherwise go neglected. The council's labour force might also be freed from having to attend to a large number of minor repairs and thus be able to deal more speedily with difficult or complicated ones elsewhere, as well as undertake more routine maintenance.

REFERENCES

5. SLASH: Newsletter, op. cit.
7 Tenant Involvement and Participation

7.1 Why involvement? Why participation?

"Man no longer houses himself: he is housed". So a Dutch architect has written. This statement probably best summarises the position of council tenants, who neither own the houses they occupy nor have any say in their design or location. It might be argued that tenant involvement in the repair and maintenance of public housing would be expected to be minimal, particularly where most of the responsibility is vested in centralised housing management and technical services staff, as in all larger schemes. But three considerations suggest that this is far from being the case. Firstly, the SCC survey of households shown that one in two tenants claim to do certain repair and maintenance tasks themselves, with as many as a quarter of them mentioning joinery and over a fifth of them plastering. (These findings are discussed in more detail in the next section). A second consideration is the growth in the number of tenants associations, formed to protect and further tenants' interests in their dealings with housing management; in the SCC survey, 13 per cent of tenants in Scotland—as against 5 per cent for England and Wales—claim to be members of such organisations. A third consideration is the interest among tenants in freedom to choose their own tenure and determine their own household living conditions. Over 50 per cent of council tenants in the SCC survey aspire towards owner occupation. The recent green paper on Scottish housing has stated:

"There are many signs that tenants want more say in decisions about their living conditions (e.g. about how their houses are to be modernised or the internal environment improved) and simply to be free and look after their houses with the minimum of restrictions. A positive response to these pressures, allowing more tenant participation, calls for highly skilled and sensitive management".

7.2 Do-it-yourself repairs

Exactly half of the council tenants in the SCC survey report carrying out do-it-yourself repairs. While interior decorating accounts for the bulk of these activities, joinery and electrical work is mentioned by up to a quarter of tenants doing their own repairs. Scottish tenants appear to do more of their own repairs and decoration than council tenants in England and Wales, as shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repairs tenants mention doing themselves</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>England/Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interior painting</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallpapering</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry/joinery</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical repairs</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any plastering</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior decoration</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any small job/odd job</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacing windows</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ten per cent of council tenants also expect to do their own plumbing, four per cent their own glazing and four per cent their own bricklaying. Altogether, they undertake an average of 2.5 tasks over a 12 month period (compared with 3.5 tasks by owner occupiers and 1.6 by private tenants). Small but significant proportions of tenants claim to have received "training" in various trade skills: wallpapering (14 per cent), painting and carpentry (each 10 per cent), plastering (7 per cent), plumbing and electrical repairs (4 per cent), and bricklaying (2 per cent).

The twelve tenant associations completing the SCC questionnaire are also able to identify items of repair and improvement their members have undertaken themselves. The results are shown below (the number of tenants associations giving an affirmative reply is shown in parentheses).
Do-it-yourself repairs reported by members of tenants' associations
(based on the replies of 12 tenants' associations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>locks</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>electrical sockets</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>plasterwork</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>door keys</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>electrical wiring</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>tiles</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catches</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>light connections</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>joinery</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bolts</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>fitting heater elements</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>draught proofing</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sash cords</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>pegs or hooks</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>window panes</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pulley ropes</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>W.C. seats</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>insulation</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sink plugs</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>W.C. chains</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>curtain rails</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tap washers</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asked to state why tenants undertake their own repairs, six tenants associations reply that many tenants find the work quicker to do themselves than to call in the council, three mention the presence of skilled tradesmen living in council houses, and two suggest some interest on the part of individual tenants in do-it-yourself activities. The remaining tenants associations are not able to give any specific reasons.

Allowing tenants to carry out more of their own repairs can give rise to a number of difficulties, however:

1. Not all tenants are technically competent to carry out any but the most minor repairs themselves. They may use materials that are unsafe, inefficient or which fail to meet building or design specifications.

2. Any savings in local authority labour costs might be offset by an increase in the cost of supervision and monitoring of repair works.

3. For certain types of repair, tenants might be putting their own health and safety at risk. (e.g. do-it-yourself glazing in multi-storey flats)

4. Some form of "incentive scheme" (e.g. cash refunds for purchases, opportunity for house purchase) may need to be provided before tenants will consider doing more repairs themselves (see section 6.5).

5. Do-it-yourself activities may conflict or interfere with any "planned maintenance" provisions for housing in the area.

6. A number of tenants, on grounds of ill-health or handicap, will be unable to do any of their own repairs at all.

7. Do-it-yourself tenancies could threaten jobs and might meet stiff union opposition, particularly in areas which already have high unemployment.

8. Tenants may well object that do-it-yourself repairs deflect attention away from the improvement of existing services, in effect providing a cover-up for laggard authorities.

Certain of these difficulties might be overcome through the provision of proper advice services for tenants contemplating doing their own repairs. Increased supervision costs might lead to long-run savings that might not accrue if the repairs were otherwise left unattended to. Local authorities should reach explicit agreements with their tenants about what sort of repairs they (the tenants) might reasonably be expected to carry out themselves. Protective clauses could be built into the agreements of tenants unable to carry out any repairs at all. Local authorities could satisfy themselves that do-it-yourself repairs will not undermine jobs before going ahead with any such scheme, possibly redeploying their labour capacity in areas where it is more urgently needed. Allowing tenants to do certain of their own repairs may mean that local authorities are freer to concentrate on or develop services in need of improvement (e.g. more complicated repairs which tenants cannot tackle themselves). Giving tenants more initiative and self-determination might also raise their own standards and expectations and enhance the life and quality of the property.

7.3 Role of tenants organisations

Over a third of Scottish Council tenants in the SCC household survey report awareness of the presence of a tenants association in their neighbourhood (compared with a quarter in England and Wales). Thirteen per cent claim to be members of an association, compared with only five per cent for England
and Wales. Almost half of the tenants interviewed think that there is a “useful role” for a tenants' association in raising problems of repair and maintenance with the housing department, and half of those belonging to a tenants' association say that their organisation is already “actively” doing so.

The twelve tenants associations mention some—and sometimes several—repair and maintenance problems about which their members frequently complain. They range from “everything” (in one case) to repairs connected with stairways, closes and back courts, gutters, lifts, piping, woodworking and windows. Dampness and condensation are a common source of complaint in five associations and rotted window frames in another two associations. Members of one association have complained about sockets coming off the walls, loose slates on the roof, and poor plumbing. However, only a minority of tenants associations appear to be dissatisfied with procedures for the handling and reporting of repairs. The four dissatisfied associations complain about procedures being “too slow”, no receipts being issued, lack of civility from counter staff, or poor attention from workshops.

All but one are satisfied with the access arrangements for workmen and two advise tenants to leave keys with neighbours (the one dissatisfied association complains about tenants having to take time off work to let workmen in). Two associations think that the arrangements for handling emergencies are inadequate, one commenting that once the plumber servicing the area has been called out, it is impossible to get plumbers from other areas to deal with other calls. Eight tenants associations think that the quality of workmanship by the council is “poor”, with only two saying it is “good”. One association points out, however, that while council workmen may be slow in getting work done, they do a better job than private contractors.

Ten of the associations are able to identify repairs—including unfinished jobs—that are the result of “most delay” after faults have been reported: “all repairs” (two mentions), drainage (two mentions), with single mentions of joinery, mending flat roofs and pavements, clearing gutters, plumbing, glazing, and clearing up back greens. They are also able to point to repairs and maintenance which have been “neglected” by the council: renewal of window frames (four mentions), dampness (four), replacement of badly fitting doors (two), draught proofing (two), and mending gutters, skylights and porches (one mention each). None of them are able to specify any “planned maintenance” carried out by the council, other than external painting (four mentions). Five associations say that tenants have been issued with leaflets on condensation and two others state that leaflets dealing with fire prevention, flooding, household pests and fungi have been received.

Of special interest is the extent to which tenants associations support the idea of greater tenant participation and involvement in the repair, maintenance and improvement of council housing. Some important results emerge. Seven tenants associations estimate that individual tenants would “definitely not” be interested in taking over responsibility for repairs carried out by the council; two “have doubts” or are “unsure” about this idea; only the remaining three say that they “would be interested”. Related to this issue is the degree of interest shown by tenants associations in assuming collective responsibility for certain types of repair and maintenance done by the council. Four say they “would be interested” but the remainder (5) either have “reservations” about this idea or are “not interested”. Those who do claim interest say they would consider taking over responsibility for the general run of repairs and maintenance, with one association envisaging responsibility only for minor items such as broken windows. At the same time, however, all twelve tenants associations claim to be “very interested” in becoming more involved with the council in the planning and execution of repair, maintenance or improvement work. This suggests that tenants are more interested in seeing existing services improved and having more say in how they are run than taking over the housing department’s functions.

7.4 Attitudes to tenure

Over half of all households (54 per cent) in Scotland depend on public provision for their accommodation. Only a third of Scottish householders live in owner-occupied accommodation, as against 53 per cent for Britain as a whole. Over half of the public sector households live in flats and nine per cent are in “overcrowded” (1.5 or more persons a room) accommodation. A tradition of lower council house rents, plus lower average incomes, than in England and Wales would seem to largely account for this Scottish preference for public housing. The contraction of privately rented housing has further increased this dependence on the public sector.

However, there are signs that interest in owner-occupation is on the increase. In 1976, for the first time since the war, more new houses were started in the private sector than in the public sector, and between 1966 and 1976, private house completions in Scotland rose from four to 10 per cent of private house completions in Great Britain as a whole. Moreover there is some evidence of con-
considerable dissatisfaction among council tenants with their tenure: 50 per cent of council tenants in the 
SCC household survey would like to become owner-occupiers, although only four per cent of them 
expect to do so 12. "Freedom to do what you like" is cited by 34 per cent of council tenants as the 
main advantage of owner occupation, followed by its "investment/asset" value (24 per cent) and 
freedom in "choosing your own house/area" or "pride/responsibility of ownership" (14 per cent). At 
the same time 37 per cent of council tenants see the "cost of repairs and maintenance" as the main 
disadvantage of owner-occupation, along with "responsibility for repairs" (16 per cent) 13. Indeed, for 
a third of them, the main attraction of council tenure is that repairs are carried out and paid for by the 
council. Council tenants are divided, however, over whether renting from the council involves too many 
rules and regulations.

7.5 Housing management

The way public housing is managed has come under considerable criticism in recent years. One observation 
has been that a centralised system of housing management is in a poor position to assess the 
needs of individual tenants, particularly in larger cities and estates. A report by the Scottish Housing 
Advisory Committee has also drawn attention to the lack of qualified management staff. In 1975 it 
found that only 135 out of 3,960 housing staff held any professional or technical qualifications—with 
28 out of 63 housing authorities being without any qualified staff at all 15. It has called for, among 
other things, a housing management training programme that covers the understanding of public atti-
dudes, the need to communicate sympathetically and a recognition of the desire on the part of tenants 
for "more independence, choice, and control of their housing and environment". Remarking on the 
number of new houses which had fallen into disrepair or disuse and become unacceptable to tenants, 
the report also pointed to the need to provide housing staff with a greater technical understanding of 
house construction. Under the new Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, a housing training council will 
be set up for the first time in Scotland, probably in the Autumn of 1978.

In five housing authorities investigated it is evident that while all of the officials have considerable 
contact with tenants and sympathy with their problems and needs, none of them are equipped to tackle 
the numerous social and welfare problems that lie beneath the surface and which might partly account 
for not all houses being in good repair in certain areas. Tenants associations are also viewed with mixed 
feelings, particularly where the organisers are suspected of being "politically" motivated. One complaint 
voiced by some housing officials is the tendency among tenants organisations to use up meetings with 
council staff to air individual grievances rather than to discuss more general points of policy. Nonethe-
less there is some evidence, of consciousness among housing management staff of the need to consult 
tenants before going ahead with schemes. For example, in Drumchapel and elsewhere in Glasgow the 
district council has been actively involved in the setting up of "residents" associations", which are 
represented on various working parties, dealing with (among other things) repairs and environmental 
improvements. Officials in each of the authorities investigated mention spending some of their time 
attending meetings in the evenings. But few authorities appeared to have acted on SDD circular 14, 
1977, in developing tenant participation procedures in their area. Notable exceptions are the Scottish 
Special Housing Association (whose ideas are presented in appendix four of this report) and Glasgow 
district council, which is the first local authority to set up a housing co-operative (at Summerston) for 
its tenants. At Inverclyde, experiments in tenant participation are also taking place, with the setting 
up of a joint tenant-management consultative committee to deal with improvements in the area. Else-
where questions of cost and demands on staff time have inhibited the development of tenant partici-
pation procedures, particularly in some of the smaller housing authorities.

7.6 Housing co-operatives

Since the 1966 Housing (Scotland) Act giving local authorities powers to promote and assist housing 
associations there has been much interest in the development of "intermediate" forms of tenure 
within the public housing sector. Special impetus has come from Section 5 of the 1975 housing Rents 
and Subsidies (Scotland) Act which empowers local authorities to transfer their functions and stock to 
government subsidised housing societies—or co-operatives—approved by the Secretary of State. 
Circular 14 issued by the Scottish Development Department in 1977 asks local authorities to consider 
steps for increasing tenant participation in housing management, including formation of housing co-
operatives, under which tenants take over all or most functions of the housing authority but do not 
own or lease the property 16. To obtain government approval and subsidy, the co-operative must draw 
up a constitution explaining the size and type of property concerned, the purpose of the co-operative, 
the way tenants are to be selected, and any objections from existing tenants and proposals for dealing 
with them. The circular argues that tenant co-operatives are more likely to take root in areas where 
there is already a tradition of tenant interest in housing issues; although it warns that co-operatives 
could become "over-stretched" where the property is in too serious a state of disrepair. It argues against
the immediate establishment of co-operatives in “deprived areas”, where more rather than less management by housing authorities is probably required. In these areas, the circular points out, “the tasks are likely to be beyond the tenants themselves and they will almost certainly not be capable to taking on the responsibility of a co-operative at an early stage in the improvement process, although consultation with them will be important”. The formation of co-operatives with “limited responsibilities” in areas with some but not too many housing problems is considered to be worth exploration, however.

A main concern of housing co-operatives relates to the handling of repairs, maintenance and improvements. To discover how this task is dealt with by tenants, the Scottish Consumer Council conducted its own investigation of the Summerston co-operative in Glasgow and the Lister co-operative in Edinburgh. The Summerston co-operative, hailed as a “revolutionary project” in community housing prior to its launching by Glasgow district council in 1977, is the first and only council house scheme in Scotland to be managed by its tenants. Comprised of 21 low-rise blocks and 21 terraced houses and accommodating 250 households, the Summerston scheme is run by a 15 member management committee of elected tenants which meets fortnightly, assisted by a full-time administrator. It is currently the subject of a specific monitoring study by the Scottish development department, which has issued its first interim report. The Lister co-operative, formed a year earlier, developed after tenants in a 160-year-old tenement had successfully resisted attempts by Edinburgh University to demolish the block and make way for a new medical school. The co-operative is now carrying out extensive rehabilitation of the block—amounting to an average of £7,000 a flat—with three quarters of the costs being met from the Housing Corporation. The block now accommodates 90 households—representing a broad spectrum of social backgrounds and age groups. It is managed by a full-time administrator. Repairs are currently dealt with by the Edinvar Housing Association on an agency basis.

In the Summerston co-operative, which is still in the process of developing procedures for the handling of repairs, tenants normally report any repairs needed to the administrator at this office attached to the scheme. Out-of-hours emergencies are reported by tenants to their “ward” representative on the management committee who has access to a list of emergency telephone numbers, including the 24 hours service run by Glasgow district council. The co-operative uses private contractors to carry out repairs; these are selected through competitive tendering. The Council’s direct labour force has not so far been used (although this is still under consideration), the reasons for not doing so being largely connected with the wider choice and greater control afforded through hiring private contractors. No recurrent repair problems have so far emerged apart from some minor condensation. Tenants are currently expected to monitor their own repair needs but the co-operative hope to implement a planned maintenance scheme based on the one developed by the Scottish Special Housing Association (see section 4.4). It is envisaged that a part-time clerk of works will be employed to carry out house inspections. The co-operative also hopes to introduce an evening surgery to deal with problems and complaints.

Since a great deal of the work carried out to date has been paid for under the 12 month “guarantee” of the building contractors, repair and maintenance costs to the co-operative have so far been low. An annual block grant of £120 per house (received annually) is provided to cover repair, maintenance and management costs. The tenancy agreement, endorsed by members of the co-operative, makes the individual tenant responsible for internal repairs and maintenance (other than repairs caused by “fair” wear-and-tear) while making the co-operative explicitly responsible for all external and structural work. Tenants are expected to redecorate at least once every seven years. No work or other material assistance is given to tenants doing their own repairs, although this is under consideration. Tenants are allowed to install their own internal fittings provided no structural alterations are entailed. They are expected to seek permission to carry out major alterations.

In the Lister co-operative, methods of handling repairs are quite different. All repairs are currently reported by tenants to a second tier housing association (Edinvar) serving several other housing schemes in the city. Run by a secretariat, the Edinvar Association is responsible for taking orders and selecting the contractor. It also maintains individual house files on Lister properties, and arranges for pre- and post-work inspections of major repairs (e.g. roofing). The Lister co-operative envisages taking over this responsibility itself in the near future, however. Members of the management committee already handle out-of-hours emergency reports from tenants. Most repairs are completed within one week of their being reported, according to Edinvar staff, and “very few” complaints from tenants about delays arise.

Since much of the work being carried out is modernisation and rehabilitation, routine repair and maintenance costs have been relatively low—£1,000 in 1976-77, plus £3,400 in management costs. In the calculation of the capital grant, £110 per house is allowed for repairs and maintenance and £60 for
management costs. By the end of 1977, 20 out of 107 flats had been fully rehabilitated and modernised—at an average cost of £7,000 each—and the programme is expected to be complete by 1980-81. Tenants have been decanted in six households at a time into modernised accommodation—usually for a six month period. Work has involved elimination of dry rot, rewiring, restoring foundations and stonework, damp-proofing, timber replacement, room conversions, and internal decoration. A local firm of architects regularly attends evening meetings with tenants to discuss modernisation plans and report on progress.

Although a formal tenancy agreement had not been drawn up at the time of investigation, tenants are expected to be responsible for all internal repairs and maintenance, but due to the sub-standard conditions of much of unmodernised property, this requirement is difficult to put into effect. Small refunds for purchases are offered to tenants for certain minor repairs not requiring professional services, e.g. replacement light sockets. Tenants are free to carry out any of their own improvements provided permission is sought.

Because of the recent formation of the two co-operatives it is not possible to offer definitive appraisal of their success in coping with repairs and maintenance. The age of the housing stock in the two schemes—in one case, very new, in the other, very old—also precludes consideration of how co-operatives might fare in the inter-war or early post-war council estates. However, their histories to date do provide an indication of some of the likely strengths and weaknesses of housing co-operatives as an agency for handling repairs and maintenance tasks. These may be dealt with under the following headings:

(1) **Selection of tenants.** In the Summerston scheme, the co-operative has only limited control over the selection of its tenants. At present, the co-operative is allowed to "nominate" 25 per cent of its tenants without seeking the approval of the district council but it must go to the council's waiting list in the selection of the other 75 per cent. One outcome has been that an estimated one in three tenants in the scheme still bring with them some of the traditional attitudes towards housing management, despite a degree of screening-out of applicants through interviews by members of the co-operative. Selection also favours the "better" kind of tenant on the district council's scale of personal suitability. Many applicants have come from clearance areas in the inner city and some evidence suggests that a number of applicants have been interested in the co-operative solely as a means of obtaining a new house. Since the housing is classified as "high amenity" rent levels are high—up to £45 a month (inclusive of rates) for a three-bedroom flat—and this may discourage applicants from low income groups or with large families from applying.

In the Lister co-operative, on the other hand, most tenants there have always formed part of a well-established community, many households have lived in the block for a long time, are well acquainted with one another and drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds—young married families with children, elderly and single householders and manual and non-manual workers. Faced as they were with demolition of their homes, residents there have had a vested interest in coming together and making the co-operative work. Co-operative activity has also yielded beneficial and tangible results in the form of full-scale house modernisation and rehabilitation. Interim results of a private survey among residents in the block point to widespread acceptance of the aims and purpose of the co-operative.

(2) **Level of participation.** In both the Summerston and Lister co-operatives heavy demands are made on the time of members of the management committee, who not only have to attend several meetings a month but have evenings taken up with visits to and from other members. Initially the Summerston co-operative experienced some difficulties in recruiting members to serve on the management committee, which was for a time largely comprised of members of the original steering committee appointed to set up the co-operative. But with more houses becoming occupied, this problem has disappeared. There have been several successful ventures in tenant co-operation at Summerston: organising security for empty houses, removing graffiti, forming panels to interview prospective tenants, and running social events and children's outings. The management committee of the Lister co-operative appears to have attracted serving members from a wide variety of agegroups and social ranks. Commitment there is high and is likely to remain so while modernisation work is in progress, entailing as it does regular consultation between tenants and the architects.

(3) **Reporting and execution of repairs.** Close contact between members, the management committee and administrative staff indicate that in both schemes repairs are handled efficiently and sympathetically. Policies and procedures are implemented only after open debate among all members, complaints and grievances can be dealt with informally and quickly. Both "management" and tenants share the same housing and the same problems. According to a private survey carried out among the first 27 tenants moving into the scheme, 26 of these tenants thought that tenant management was more effective than
district council management, mainly because management was easy to contact and because tenants could control their own budget for repairs. In the Lister co-operative, having the administrative resources and expertise of the Edinvar Housing Association provides members with a valuable back-up service in dealing with repairs, with a team of architects on hand to advise on improvement and modernisation problems. In their selection and use of professional services tenants in both co-operatives have demonstrated they are no less capable than local authority housing management in ensuring that repairs are dealt with efficiently and such a high standard. Both co-operatives also recognise the importance of planned maintenance of their property.

(4) **Legal obligations.** While neither of the co-operatives have fully worked out what items of repair should be the individual tenant’s responsibility, both accept the need for some division of responsibility between “landlord” and tenant. Tenants are still expected to entrust all major internal and all external repairs to the co-operative and to seek permission before carrying out any of their own improvements. Tenants are under no pressure to engage in do-it-yourself repairs, although they are not discouraged from doing so either.

(5) **Costs.** It is not possible to say at this stage whether repairs and maintenance services are cheaper to run through tenants co-operatives than under district council management. The Scottish Development Department has surmised, in its interim report: “It seems unlikely that the Summerston co-operative can be costing less than new rented housing, given the needs for extra staff and the demands the co-operative has made on the time of senior management in Glasgow district council. No precise figures are currently available. But in the longer term there may be savings in terms of repairs and related expenditure.”

(6) **Community facilities.** While not directly connected with repairs and maintenance, the provision of community amenities on an estate may affect the degree of commitment among tenants to co-operative housing. Where these are lacking, face-to-face contact between tenants will be minimal and could engender those feelings of alienation and social isolation said to typify some inter-war and early post-war schemes. While Summerston has so far escaped the ravages of vandalism and difficult-to-let housing, it lacks many of the basic amenities other communities take for granted: shops, public meeting halls, clubs, health centre, police station, rent office, etc. These may only be reached by a long walk or bus journey to neighbouring Maryhill. Only the local primary school, used for nursery classes, baby clinics, social and sporting functions, currently provide a community focus. Plans to build a hypermarket in the area may improve the situation and the co-operative is looking for funds to build a meeting hall. The Lister co-operative is far more advantaged in this respect: it lies in the central area of the city, is well catered for by shops and public services and has its own large meeting premises. The provision of such facilities may well be important factors in determining the success of tenants’ cooperatives.

REFERENCES

1  N. J. Habraken.
3  Ibid, p. 31.
6  BMRB, op. cit. p. 62.
7  Ibid.
9  Ibid, pp. 60-61.
10 Scottish Housing, op. cit. p. 10.
11 Ibid, p. 15.
12 BMRB: p. 33, 51.
16 Scottish Development Department: *Circular 14, 1977, Tenant Participation and Housing Co-operatives*.
8 Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Terms of the remit

In 1977 the National Consumer Council, along with the Scottish and Welsh Consumer Councils, was asked by the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection to: “Consider and report, whilst having regard to the effects on cost, on the desirability and scope for the greater involvement of tenants in the repair, maintenance and improvement of council housing, particularly through tenants’ associations as representatives of the consumer interest.”

In this connection, the Scottish Consumer Council has reported on the involvement of individual tenants and tenants associations through two questionnaire surveys and has conducted a series of case studies in five housing authorities, two housing co-operatives, and the Scottish Special Housing Association. Use has also been made of various independent investigations.

The concept of tenant participation in the repair, maintenance and improvement of public-sector housing may be interpreted in at least two ways. The “weak” interpretation is that tenants should have a greater say in the running and planning of existing services—ensuring they work more efficiently and are sensitive to their needs—but that they should not be expected to assume more legal liability or control than they hold at present. The “strong” interpretation is that tenants—either as individuals or collectively as tenants’ associations—should take over some of the housing authority’s functions through more do-it-yourself repair work, engaging their own workmen, or even forming their own co-operative or other self-help groups.

These two interpretations do not necessarily conflict with one another, and participation in the first sense could well be a preliminary to any activity in the second sense. This investigation has accordingly interpreted the concept of tenant participation in the broadest possible sense without in any way being committed to any one form of participation rather than another.

There follows a summary and discussion of the main findings followed by a set of recommendations related to each of the chapters in the report. It should be recognised that some housing authorities have already or are about to implement some of the recommendations, which are not meant to imply that all housing departments are unresponsive to tenants’ needs. Any initiatives by housing authorities are referred to in the sections that follow and are dealt with more fully in the relevant chapters. It is also recognised that not all of the recommendations can be implemented now or in the foreseeable future and many involve long-term considerations of cost and administration. However, a number of them can be effected fairly speedily and they are summarised at the end.

8.2 Legal Rights and Obligations

Legally most of the responsibility for ensuring that public sector houses are kept in good repair, well maintained, and improved rests with each housing authority. Both common and statute law provide some support to tenants wanting repairs and improvements done. But there is no legal provision for ensuring that any repairs carried out are of a good quality or that they are carried out within a certain time. Both the environmental health inspectors and the local government ombudsman are seriously constrained in what they can do to bring about redress of tenants’ grievances. Invoking the public Health Act or appealing against the rateable value of the house provide some form of leverage but they involve time consuming, cumbersome, and sometimes expensive court proceedings. The respective duties of the housing authority and the tenant to keep the property in good repair are often laid down in the missives of let issued to tenants, but they are seldom presented in specific enough terms to adequately inform the tenant of his rights and obligations.

Recommendation 1

Tenants should be told in clear and simple language their legal rights and obligations regarding the repair and maintenance of public housing. This should not only include reference to common law rights, the public health legislation and the relevant housing acts, but also to any extra-legal provisions for redress of grievances (e.g. local ombudsman). Such information could be inserted in a handbook issued to all tenants or appended to the tenancy agreement.

Recommendation 2

Public health and housing legislation should be consolidated and tightened up so as to ensure that repairs are long lasting and reach a high standard and are not merely of a patchwork nature.
Recommendation 3

An investigation into the role of environmental health inspectors should be set up, with particular reference to their status as local authority employees. Consideration should be given to freeing environmental health inspectors from local authority control and appointing them through central government, with independent powers to investigate any complaints, including those brought against a local authority. In this respect, they would enjoy a rank and independence equivalent to that of rating assessors, procurators fiscal, and school inspectors.

Recommendation 4

A speedy, inexpensive and conciliatory arbitration scheme should be developed outside the courts for handling disputes between tenants and the housing authority. Such a scheme, if implemented, should not at the same time deprive tenants of any of their existing opportunities to take local authority to court.

Recommendation 5

There should be a review of the role of the local government ombudsman, with reference to his accessibility and the enforcement of his recommendations.

Recommendation 6

Where recurrent defects (e.g. dampness) have not been attended to or remedied within an agreed time, tenants should consider appealing against the rateable values of their houses and be provided with detailed guidance and information for doing so.

Recommendation 7

Tenants' associations should be encouraged to register as non-profit making companies where they seek corporate status and legal recognition in court.

Recommendation 8

In consultation with tenants and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, housing authorities should undertake a full revision of their tenancy agreements. The agreement should list in detail the respective repair and maintenance obligations of the housing authority and the tenant. These obligations should preferably be as uniform as possible across the country.

Recommendation 9

As a next step from the previous recommendation, housing authorities should experiment with special tenancy agreements for tenants willing to take on more responsibility for repairs and maintenance, subject to certain safeguards (see recommendation 36). Special Agreements should be introduced for tenants unable to take on any responsibility for repairs and maintenance at all.

8.3 Reporting and execution of repairs

Nearly all housing authorities rely on tenants to report defects and a medium to large-sized authority (20-40,000 houses or more) can expect to process between 50,000 and 120,000 or more repair orders each year, averaging out at over three repairs per house. Some two thirds of council tenants are generally satisfied with the services provided and for a third of them the chief attraction of their tenure is that repairs are carried out and paid for by the council. At the same time, however, 17 per cent of council tenants say that one of the main disadvantages of their tenure is that "repairs are not done". Only 34 per cent of council tenants needing repairs done expect them to be carried out within six months and almost half of them not expecting repairs to be done say the council "won't" or "can't".

Tenants sometimes experience difficulty in following up the progress of repair orders once a report has been made and few authorities issue tenants with a formal acknowledgement slip or "receipt". While many authorities keep files on the houses of each tenant, tenants' social and personal circumstances are not taken systematically into account when organising job priorities. Tenants do not always receive clear guidance on reporting emergencies. Gaining access to houses while tenants are out is a problem in some areas and a third of tenants complain about workmen not turning up on time. Many tenants associations and a third of council tenants are dissatisfied with the quality of workmanship, and very little post-job inspection is carried out, although Scottish tenants appear to be a great deal more satisfied than tenants in England and Wales with the time taken to carry out work. Nearly all authorities report considerable backlogs of work—up to eight or more weeks in some instances. None of the authorities commit themselves to published target dates for the completion of work.
At least two housing authorities—Clackmannan and Dunfermline—have prepared handbooks for their tenants, which include details on the reporting of repairs and emergencies as well as general advice and information on house maintenance and safety. Renfrew has a special counter for tenants wanting to report emergencies. Glasgow issues to tenants copies of repair orders sent out to technical staff.

Recommendation 10

Housing authorities should issue to their tenants a handbook, advising them when and how to report a fault, how to deal with emergencies, together with other supplementary information on house repair and maintenance and related matters. A model guideline is presented in appendix two.

Recommendation 11

Housing department counter staff should receive special training and be thoroughly briefed for their dealings with tenants, particularly tenants who are disadvantaged in some way as a result of age, illness or physical handicap, etc. They should also possess some technical knowledge of the work to be done. In the busier offices, this will involve some increase in junior housing staff, who should be encouraged to regard their work as responsible and worthwhile.

Recommendation 12

Tenants should receive a formal acknowledgement slip for repairs which cannot be completed within 48 hours. It should mention the date when the fault was first reported, the nature of the fault and the work needed to be done, any access arrangements, and the job order number. It should, where possible, include an estimate of the cost of any repairs the tenant is likely to have to pay for out of his or her own pocket.

Recommendation 13

Where they do not already do so, housing departments should keep files on each of the houses in their stock, regarding any repairs, improvements or alterations carried out to the property. The file should include any dates on which faults have been reported and where necessary how long jobs have been kept waiting and any reasons for hold-ups. It should also include a note of any special circumstances affecting the tenant, with his or her consent, to be referred to in the allocation of job priorities. Tenants should be given reasonable access to their housefiles.

Recommendation 14

Housing authorities should step up their rate of pre- and post-job inspections to ensure that repairs carried out reach a satisfactory standard. In the larger authorities, emergencies should be handled only by certain members of the inspection staff, leaving other inspectors free to proceed with less urgent visits without interruption.

Recommendation 15

Where circumstances warrant, housing authorities should experiment with target times within which they will undertake to carry out repairs. These target times should be made known to tenants and be based on mutually acceptable time limits for various types of repair.

Recommendation 16

Where tenants have been kept waiting an unreasonably long time for repairs to be carried out by council workmen, they should be allowed to engage professional services of their own choice. It might be necessary for authorities to draw up lists of approved contractors for this purpose, perhaps indicating the sorts of repairs tenants can arrange to be done privately.

Recommendation 17

Where serious backlogs occur, housing authorities should set up special task forces equipped with mobile workshops to tour estates. They should also prepare regular returns on backlogs of work, showing how long jobs have been kept waiting, for circulation among housing committee members and tenants' representatives.

Recommendation 18

Housing departments should decentralise their operations, particularly where they have to deal with estates needing a lot of repairs. They should liaise closely with technical services departments, monitoring the progress of repair orders and keeping themselves fully informed of the reasons for any delays in getting work completed.
8.4 Recurrent repair and maintenance problems

Most of the information about the condition of public sector housing is limited to a few scattered surveys, although one or two authorities are now beginning to carry out surveys of their own. One recent study of predominantly inter-war housing in the Ferguslie Park area of Paisley found that 88 per cent of houses there contained one or more serious internal defects. But virtually nothing is known about the conditions of houses in early post-war estates which are afflicted with problems of vandalism and letting difficulties. In Glasgow vandalism to council houses produced a repair bill of £33% million in 1976-77 and in the Drumchapel estate one incident of vandalism involving more than £300 worth of damage was reported every other week in this period.

Condensation is reported as a problem in nearly every housing authority, but there is some dispute as to its causes and critics regard it as a euphemism for dampness, which is said to be serious and widespread in some areas. Although housing authorities are tackling the problem in various ways, tenants are expected to heat and ventilate their homes adequately to render treatment effective. Glasgow is now having to offer cash compensation to tenants badly affected by dampness.

The Scottish Special Housing Association appears to be the only housing authority with a comprehensive scheme of "planned maintenance", although all of the other authorities repaint their houses every five or more years and carry out checks on such items as window frames and fencing. It might be argued that carrying out regular house inspections could have an inhibiting effect on the tenant who wishes to initiate more of his own repairs and improvements, and could be an unwelcome reminder that his house is not his own. While there may be some justice in this argument, it might equally be said that the tenant whose home is not adequately maintained would welcome some kind of visit from council staff, reminding the tenant that the council cares about his home and material comfort. This could be particularly true of elderly or infirm tenants.

Recommendation 19

Housing authorities should undertake regular surveys of the condition of their housing stock, particularly in areas where a lot of repairs are carried out. The Scottish Development Department should monitor the conditions of houses of different ages and structure.

Recommendation 20

Special resources—in terms of money and manpower—should be pumped into housing schemes in serious disrepair to bring about a wholesale upgrading of stock beyond a "patchwork" nature. Where houses have to be vandal-proofed between relets, the most efficient materials should be used for this purpose, and such houses should be rendered habitable as soon as possible to prevent property "blight". Tenants should be fully involved in schemes to rehabilitate estates which are falling into physical decay. There should also be a coming together—through meetings and discussions—between departments and social and community work staff—to deal with the problem.

Recommendation 21

The government should mount a full-scale attack on condensation and dampness, which have plagued many houses for years. The Scottish Development Department should set up a national enquiry on the problem including an examination of building and design standards and the testing of materials as they relate to condensation and dampness.

Recommendation 22

Consideration should be given to paying cash assistance to tenants whose homes have been seriously affected by dampness or condensation through no fault of their own. While the details of such a scheme would need to be carefully worked out—e.g. how much should be paid out, by whom, what it should cover—tenants should not be expected to go on paying large heating bills merely to deal with condensation. Tenants should be given estimates of what they might have to spend to heat their home adequately.

Recommendation 23

Housing authorities should develop comprehensive schemes of planned maintenance for their area, working in close consultation with tenants. Such schemes could possibly be based on the SSHFA scheme but modified according to any special circumstances affecting particular estates (e.g. estates in serious disrepair). Any maintenance provisions should be written into the tenancy agreement. Regular progress reports of maintenance carried out should be issued to housing committee members and tenants representatives.
8.5 Improvements and modernisation

Since the 1960s housing authorities have been spending considerable sums and efforts on improving and modernising their stock. Tenants are usually consulted before modernisation work is about to begin—usually about the type of fuel or heating they would prefer. Consultation may be in the form of home visits by housing and technical staff and through public meetings, and Angus District Council issues a self-completion questionnaire to tenants. However consultation appears to take place only after the major policy decisions have already been made. In areas such as Inverclyde consultative machinery has been set up to give tenants some say in the nature and scope of an environmental improvement scheme there. Dunfermline issues to tenants a modernisation handbook offering preparatory advice and guidance on the choice of heating appliances, etc.

Most improvement and modernisation work includes the provision of such amenities as new kitchen and bathroom units and central heating, along with rewiring and replumbing. Some cavity and loft insulation is also carried out, but no soundproofing appears to be done. Work is largely restricted to pre-war housing, thus excluding most early post-war property which may also be in need of improvement. Improvement provisions do not extend to the replacement of lead water tanks and plumbing except as part of other essential improvements.

While modernisation takes place, tenants are often “decanted” to temporary accommodation—sometimes for up to two or three months or more at a time. Many housing authorities offer tenants cash compensation to cover redecoration or refurbishing costs, but the provisions and amounts vary considerably between them. Dunfermline “decants” tenants to mobile caravans so that they can remain nearby their home while work takes place. Tenants report carrying out a large number of improvements of their own—either on a do-it-yourself basis or through private tradesmen.

Recommendation 24

Local authorities should fully involve their tenants in improvement and modernisation schemes. This might include the setting up of ad hoc tenant-management consultative committees in the larger schemes. Housing authorities should issue questionnaires and set up show houses, mobile caravans and workshops to assess tenants' needs and preferences.

Recommendation 25

Government assistance towards improvement and modernisation work by housing authorities should be extended to early post-war housing, which also shows signs of having fallen behind contemporary standards. Assistance should also cover soundproofing and the cost of replacing lead water tanks and piping.

Recommendation 26

Where tenants have to be “decanted” to temporary accommodation, this should be done as humanely as possible, having regard to the age, health and social circumstances of individual tenants. Tenants should be offered temporary accommodation within easy reach of their homes and the use of difficult-to-let or sub-standard temporary accommodation should at all costs be avoided. Where there is a shortage of suitable “decant” accommodation, housing authorities should experiment with mobile housing.

Recommendation 27

Tenants should be offered—in the course of a modernisation scheme—a degree of choice within the range of standard amenities provided (e.g. choice of solid fuel, gas or electric fires), paying out of their own pocket if necessary for any approved “extras” (e.g. dimmer switches).

Recommendation 28

Information sheets or bulletins should be issued to all tenants whose homes are about to be improved or modernised. They should not only contain information about the types of work carried out but offer detailed guidance on the choice of any options provided (with comparative running costs for such items as heaters and cookers).

Recommendation 29

Adequate compensation and disturbance allowances should be payable to tenants affected by improvement and modernisation schemes. They should take into account the size of the accommodation, the costs of redecorating or refurbishing or repairing any incidental damage. Disturbances allowances should be related to the time it has taken to carry work out, including any delays, plus any additional expenses incurred as a result of living in temporary accommodation.
Recommendation 30

Housing authorities and tenants should reach explicit agreements about what kind of home improvements tenants should or should not be permitted to initiate themselves. It should be made clear which types of improvement require written permission and which may be carried out without permission. Advice facilities should be provided for tenants wishing to undertake their own improvements.

Recommendation 31

Tenants should enjoy the same opportunities as owner-occupiers to apply for standard and discretionary improvement grants where the housing authority is not itself able to undertake improvement work.

8.6 Repair, maintenance and improvement costs

Some £77 per house was spent on repairs and maintenance by local authorities in 1977-78 (compared with £24 in 1971), representing about 17 per cent of total unit costs (loan charges absorbing most of this amount). But in areas such as Glasgow, expenditure on repairs may be as high as £103 per house, and in some older estates with a lot of repair problems, costs may reach—in some instances—£250 a house. Tenants also report spending an average of £73 a year out of their own pocket on repairs and maintenance (including redecoration). Apart from these general figures, little is known about how much local authorities spend on specific types of repair or housing scheme. Plumbing, joinery, painting and glazing are the largest items of expenditure. All authorities are spending considerable sums on improving or modernising their stock, the average cost of fully-modernising a house amounting to over £6,500. One quarter of public sector tenants think cash compensation should be provided for repairs they carry out at their own expense.

Recommendation 32

Local authorities should prepare detailed and comparable returns on their repair, maintenance, improvement and modernisation expenditure, under a nationally agreed formula. Tenants and councillors, as well as official bodies, should have some reliable means of assessing how much housing authorities spend on particular items of repair, improvement, etc. The Scottish Development Department should undertake regular monitoring of expenditure in this field. Special regard should be given to expenditure on houses of a particular age or type or in estates with a lot of repair problems.

Recommendation 33

As a matter of urgency, expenditure on repairs, maintenance, and improvements should be increased, particularly in areas where there is a mounting backlog of work needing to be done. This expenditure should be based on the condition of the housing stock (as revealed through surveys and inspections).

Recommendation 34

Under central direction housing authorities should experiment with different improvement cost options—comparing the costs of "basic renewal" of the property (replumbing, rewiring, etc.) with the costs of comprehensive modernisation (new fittings, soundproofing, central heating, insulation, etc.) and assessing the expected future life of the property resulting thereby. These costs should also be compared with the costs of building new houses.

Recommendation 35

Housing authorities should give consideration to providing material or cash incentive to tenants undertaking certain types of their own repairs, perhaps in the form of a cash refund for materials purchased. Under central guidance, housing authorities should experiment with different types of incentive schemes, having regard to any long-term cost benefits.

8.7 Tenant involvement and participation

Half of all council tenants carry out some of their own repairs and maintenance (including redecoration), with one quarter carrying out their own joinery and electrical repairs. While their reasons for doing so are by no means clear, some tenants' associations have suggested it may be because individual tenants are not satisfied with the service provided by the council. However, the idea that tenants do a number of their own repairs (along with improvements) out of interest cannot be discounted. A number also claim to have received training in some of the skills employed.

It is possible that a policy to encourage tenants to initiate more of their own repairs—either on a do-it-yourself basis or by employing tradesmen privately—may conflict or interfere with any planned maintenance provisions. Maintenance staff might find their workload complicated by tenants who have
carried out repairs and improvements which have not conformed to standard specifications. This difficulty might be overcome by planned maintenance staff anticipating repairs and improvements that tenants want to initiate and being on hand to offer advice and guidance. The provision of advice services for tenants contemplating doing their own repairs would also be desirable.

Some 13 per cent of Scottish tenants belong to a tenants’ association—a higher proportion than the five per cent in England and Wales. Tenants’ associations appear reluctant to see tenants taking over more responsibility for repairs and maintenance, with some arguing that this is clearly the council’s responsibility. However, all tenants’ associations surveyed agreed that they would like to see tenants having more of a say in the planning and running of council housing services.

Certain authorities are already attempting to involve tenants in the planning and running of services. The Scottish Special Housing Association is actively engaged in the setting up of tenants’ associations in schemes where tenants are unrepresented and has drawn up its own scheme of tenant consultation. Glasgow District Council provides tenants with purpose-built meeting halls and has helped to set up residents’ associations in such schemes as Druchapel. Housing officials in other areas report attending a number of evening meetings with tenants. However, there still appears to be much suspicion and mutual distrust on both sides which needs to be overcome. Dealing with this problem should not be impossible, because both tenants’ associations and housing authorities share a common interest in a well-maintained housing stock.

Glasgow District Council has been instrumental in the setting up of the first tenant housing cooperative in Britain comprised of newly built housing on its Summerston estate. Tenants both there and at the Lister co-operative are showing themselves capable of taking over some of the management functions normally provided by the district council.

**Recommendation 36**

**Tenants should not be discouraged from carrying out certain of their own do-it-yourself repairs.** Careful account should be taken of any health, safety, or construction factors in deciding which repairs tenants may do themselves. Such provision should be supported by the setting up of housing advice facilities and special clauses in the tenancy agreement for tenants wanting to do some of their own repairs. At the same time, the housing authority should safeguard the interests of tenants not able to carry out any repairs at all.

**Recommendation 37**

**Tenants’ associations should be granted full participation in the running and development of repairs and maintenance services.** Housing authorities should consider appointing full-time liaison officers to promote the interests of tenants and develop new schemes of tenant participation. General-purpose tenant-management consultative committees should be set up in each housing authority.

**Recommendation 38**

**Housing authorities should take every advantage of the proposed Housing Training Council to ensure that their management and junior staff are fully trained and qualified.** At the same time, tenants should modify their own attitudes towards housing and technical staff and develop greater understanding of some of the problems and difficulties they have to deal with. Mutual understanding should be fostered through group discussion, information materials, and advice facilities.

**Recommendation 39**

**Where there is proven interest and support, tenants should be given every encouragement and opportunity to form their own housing co-operatives and assume direct control of repair and maintenance services.** It is important, however, that any such ventures take into careful account the age, size quality of the housing stock, socio-economic background of tenants likely to be attracted into the scheme, and the community facilities in the area. Co-operatives should be given a measure of control over the selection of their tenants.

### 8.8 Action points

The Scottish Consumer Council urges housing authorities to implement the following ten ‘action points’ with the greatest speed. They are all immediate, relatively inexpensive measures which could improve relations between tenants and housing management and provide a basis for longer-term changes. Housing authorities are urged to:
1 Revise their tenancy agreements, setting out—in the most explicit terms—the rights and obligations of the council and their tenants.
(see recommendations 8 and 30 and appendix 1)

2 Issue handbooks offering tenants advice and information on the repair, maintenance, and improvement of their homes.
(see recommendations 1 and 10 and appendix 2)

3 Provide receipts for tenants reporting faults which cannot be attended to within 48 hours. Each tenant should also have a house file recording details of repairs carried out.
(see recommendations 12 and 13)

4 Allow tenants to have work done privately where they have been kept waiting beyond an agreed time.
(see recommendation 16)

5 Step up their rate of pre- and post-job inspections and appoint specialist counter and inspection staff to deal with emergencies.
(see recommendation 14)

6 Give tenants more choice or say over the ways in which their homes are to be improved or modernised.
(see recommendations 24, 27, and 28)

7 Purchase mobile accommodation for tenants who cannot otherwise be “decanted” while their homes are being modernised.
(see recommendation 28)

8 Develop participation procedures for involving their tenants and call special meetings in estates with a lot of repair problems.
(see recommendations 20 and 27 and appendix 4)

9 Set up advice and information facilities for tenants carrying out their own repairs and improvements.
(see recommendations 30 and 36)

10 Ensure that unqualified housing staff—both senior and junior—make full use of training opportunities.
(see recommendations 11 and 38)
Appendices

Appendix 1: allocation of responsibility for repairs

(a) Recommendations of the Scottish Local Authorities Special Housing Group
(Source: Housing Management Committee Report No. 2, 1977)

Tenants should be responsible for:

Security  — keys
Water services  — internal pipes freezing
Sanitary installation  — w.c. seat and cover
  — sink, bath and basin plugs and chains
  — choked internal pipes and traps
  — wringer fixtures, tub covers and similar items where supplied
    by the Housing Authority
Electrical installation  — plug tops
  — fuses
  — all fittings and appliances self provided by the tenant
Gas installation  — all fittings and appliances self provided by the tenant
Solid fuel fires  — frets
  — fireplace fittings
  — hearth tiles and surrounds
  — sweeping flues
Miscellaneous internal fittings  — internal doors, hinges, locks and latches
  — internal glazing
  — blind rollers
  — curtain rails
  — clothes airer
  — hat and coat rails and hooks
  — shelving
  — coal cellar boards
  — all internal decoration

The housing authority should be responsible for:

Window and water tightness  — structure
  — roof
  — windows and glazing
  — external doors and glazing
Security  — window catches and safety devices
  — external door locks
  — letter plates
Water services  — pipes, taps and fittings
  — rewashering of taps
Sanitary installations  — sink
  — basin
  — w.c. pan and cistern
  — bath or shower
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Equipment Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>Electrical installation</td>
<td>- wiring</td>
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<td>- switches, lighting and power points</td>
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<td>- appliances provided by the Housing Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gas installation</td>
<td>- piping and outlets</td>
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<td>- appliances provided by the Housing Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solid fuel fires</td>
<td>- fire bricks and fire backs</td>
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<td>Electric or gas space heating</td>
<td>- all equipment</td>
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<td>- kitchen fitments and worktops</td>
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<td>- clothes poles</td>
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<td>- boundary and divisional fencing</td>
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<td>- drainage</td>
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<td>- doors</td>
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<td>- gutters and downpipes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Repairs required by reason of **damage, misuse or neglect on the part of the tenant** are NOT the responsibility of the Housing Authority.

(b) **Renfrew district council**

(Source: manual of guidance, 1978)

Repairs for which the authority will be responsible:

**Electrical/Gas**
- Repair of electrical switches and socket outlets.
- Repair of lampholders (not fittings).
- Replacement of gas and electric fire elements to units belonging to the Authority.
- Maintenance **only** of cookers for senior citizens.

**Plumberwork**
- Repair or replacement of chain pulls for w.c. cisterns.
- Washers for taps.
- Choked tubs/sinks, wash-basins and baths.
- Renewal of w.c. seats.

**Joinerwork**
- Replacement of external door handles.
- Replacement of window sashes, lifts and snibs.
- Renewal of shelving.
- Renewal of timber drip-boards.
- Renewal of woodwork at sinks.

**Glazing**
- Replacement of all external damaged or broken glass.
- (Rechargeable where damage attributed to negligence of tenant).

**Fireplaces**
- Where the removal of obsolete gas/electric/solid fuel bedroom fireplaces is requested, this will be carried out by the Authority. Where practicable and necessary, an additional power point will be installed by the Authority.
Fencing
Renewal and repair of garden division fencing.
The policy of supplying a maximum of 12 fencing stobs will be continued on request.

T.V. Aerials
Communal aerials only.

Painterwork
All external decoration work.

Repairs for which the tenant will be responsible:

Electrical/Gas
Maintenance of electric or gas cookers.
Maintenance of electric or gas washboilers.
Repair of electric or gas cookers.
Repair of electric or gas washboilers.
Repair of electrical fuses.
N.B. Provision and replacement of cookers and washboilers is the responsibility of the tenant.

Joinerwork
Replacement of internal locks, keys and handles.
Replacement of hat and coat hooks.
Renewal of blind rollers and mountings.
Renewal of coal cellar boards.
Renewal of pulley cords.

Plumberwork
Replacement of plugs for tub/sinks, wash-hand basins and baths.

Central Heating
Central heating systems installed by tenants (excluding Solid Fuel Central Heating Systems installed under the schemes operated by the former Johnstone and Barrhead Town Councils).
All electrical repair work will be carried out by the Authority and recharged to tenant.

Fireplaces
Replacement of damaged hearth and fireplace surrounds.

Painterwork
All internal decoration.

T.V. Aerials
All T.V. aerials erected by tenant.

Repairs, etc., which the authority will carry out but the cost of labour and materials will be chargeable to the tenants:
Fitting of chimney terminals where gas or electric fires have been installed by tenant.
Fixtures and fittings removed by tenant and not replaced by tenant on termination of tenancy.
Damage attributable to tenant’s negligence or vandalism.
Damage to electrical installation by tenant caused by the addition of power points or other apparatus.

Improvements which tenants will be allowed to carry out at their own expense. Written approval of the district council will be required before the work can proceed:

Immersion heater. Installation at tenant’s expense. Future maintenance will be carried out by the authority.
Sanitary ware. Renewal and/or replacement of sanitary ware.

(Where it is the intention of the district council to install new sanitary ware within the foreseeable future, the tenant will be allowed to install an approved fitting(s) and the district council will bear the cost of the installation).

Window astragals. Renewal of wooden window astragals and re-glazing.

Fireplaces—livingroom. Where a tenant wishes to install new fittings and there is no intention of the authority replacing the existing fittings, the tenant can install the approved fittings at his own expense. If the authority proposes to replace the fittings in the reasonably near future, the approved fittings can be supplied by the tenant and installed by the authority at their cost.
Appendix 2: synopsis of model tenants’ handbook

In recommending housing authorities to issue handbooks to their tenants, the Scottish Consumer Council suggests inclusion of the following items in the section of the handbook dealing with repairs and maintenance. Other sections (not described here) would be expected to cover such topics as housing allocations and transfers, rent and rate rebates, homelessness, advisory services, etc.

1 **Emergencies**

1.1 Names and addresses of housing and/or technical staff to contact, in and out of normal hours, together with other useful emergency contacts.

1.2 Types of repair which as a rule will receive attention
   (a) immediately,   (b) within 24 hours,   (c) within 48 hours,   (d) beyond 48 hours.

2 **Repairs and maintenance**

2.1 Repairs and maintenance tasks which are the legal responsibility of
   (a) the tenant
   (b) the housing authority

2.2 Repairs and maintenance tasks (other than emergencies) which will normally be attended to within:
   e.g. (a) one day   (b) 2-3 days   (c) one week   (d) two weeks   (e) 3 or more weeks

2.3 Advice and guidance on what to do when:
   (a) reporting a fault (e.g. "specify exact location of fault and possible cause").
   (b) arranging access for workmen.
   (c) the repair has not been carried out after a certain time (apropos 2.2).

2.4 Procedures for seeking redress of grievances (e.g. faults unattended to long after they have been reported, dampness). This should include an outline of the main provisions of the 1897 Public Health Act and other relevant legislation, giving tenants access to the courts, as well as the role and functions of the local government Ombudsman. It might also include information about any extra legal procedures for handling disputes established by the housing authority.

2.5 Names and addresses of members of the council and housing committee and any tenants’ associations in the area. (These would need to be revised regularly and would therefore be published on a detachable insert).

3 **Helpful hints on house maintenance**

Under various trade headings (e.g. painting, joinery), guidance would be given to tenants tackling certain repairs and maintenance tasks themselves (e.g. clearing choked sinks, mending fuses, installing locks or catches, redecoration). It could include advice on purchasing (e.g. choice of types of wallpaper, paint, door handles, etc.).

4 **Special maintenance problems**

Problems such as condensation, dampness, heat and noise insulation, and draughtproofing should each be dealt with honestly and sympathetically, indicating what reasonable and inexpensive preventive measures tenants might take and what remedial action and/or legal redress should be sought if necessary. Tenants should be given a full appreciation of any design defects which give rise to these problems.

5 **Preventive care and maintenance**

While tenants should not be expected to detect faults observable only to the trained eye, their attention could be brought to the "symptoms" of any underlying or impending damage, which should then be referred to the housing authority (e.g. woodworm, dry rot, vermin infestation). This might be supplemented by various aspects of home health, safety and security (e.g. loose wiring, missing window catches).

6 Home improvements

Tenants should be advised about any home improvements they may:

(a) undertake themselves, without seeking council permission or the services of a qualified tradesman.
(b) undertake only with council permission and preferably with the services of a qualified tradesman.
(c) not undertake at all.

Information on any material or cash assistance towards home improvements should be specified here (e.g. free installation of sink units purchased by tenants). It should also include helpful shopping hints (e.g. buying decorating materials, heating apparatus).

7 Modernisation

Tenants should be informed of any general provisions and arrangements for modernising homes, though clearly more specific details will be issued to tenants in different schemes. Tenants should be advised of any compensation and disturbance allowances payable (and how to claim them) and any preparatory work to be done (e.g. pending decant).

The initiative of Dunfermline district council in issuing maintenance and modernisation handbooks to its tenants is commended.
Appendix 3: planned maintenance checklist
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Scottish Special Housing Association)

1 Maintenance painterwork contract.

1.1 Supervise the painting of fabric.

Check the following:

1.2 Quality of preparatory works.

1.3 Quality of materials (in pots, in sealed tins. For thinning and approved brands.

1.4 The removal of defective putty.

1.5 Freedom from moisture. Not to exceed 18 per cent in timbers.

1.6 Skill of application.

1.7 Site organisation.

1.8 Complete progress and inspection returns, forward to head office.

1.9 Certify interim payments, forward to head office.

2 Maintenance painterwork
12 month's inspection.

2.1 Inspect for general quality and premature failure.

2.2 Uniformity of finish.

2.3 Uniformity of colour.

2.4 Freedom from blemishes: e.g. runs, sags, wrinkles, dust, bare patches, cracks, fat edges.

2.5 Freedom from thickness.

2.6 Freedom from 'ladders' and brush marks.

2.7 General cleanliness.

2.8 No disfigurement of neighbouring surfaces.

2.9 Certify final payment of accounts, forward to head office.

3 Maintenance painterwork
guarantee inspection.

3.1 Inspect for general durability and premature failure.

3.2 For colour fade.

3.3 For gloss fade and sleepiness.

3.4 For surface 'grinning' and opacity.

3.5 For surfacing breakdown of paint film, e.g. peeling and flaking.

3.6 Shelling of gloss finish on window sashes and frames.

3.7 Blistering, blooming and chalkling of surfaces.

4 Fabric inspection.

Inspect for defects:

4.1 Windows and sills.

4.2 Door units and ironmongery.

4.3 Glazing.

4.4 Fascia boards.

4.5 Rones and rainwater pipes.

4.6 Soil and vent pipes.

4.7 Ventilators.

4.8 Balustrading.

4.9 Special features.
5 Pre-maintenance painterwork inspection report.

Prepare list of minor repairs:

5.1 Glazing.
5.2 Removal of defective putty.
5.3 Present treatment.
5.4 Extent of burning off.
5.5 General condition.

6 Plumbing and sanitary fittings

Inspect general condition:

6.1 Bath, washhand basin, sink.
6.2 Water closet, w.c. cistern.
6.3 Waste pipes, traps, taps.
6.4 C/W storage tanks, cisterns.
6.5 H/W storage tanks, cisterns.
6.6 Roof space (inspect insulation, chimney stacks and fire walls), roof timbers.
6.7 Domestic boiler and fireplaces.
6.8 Valves and fittings.

7 Mechanical and special services.

Yearly inspection contract.

7.1 Lifts.
7.2 Ventilation systems.
7.3 Fire equipment.
7.4 Laundry equipment.
7.5 Water services (dry and wet rising).
7.6 TV and radio services.
7.7 Telephone services.

8 Electric, gas and heating services.

Visual inspections:

8.1 Electric wiring—check for safety insulation at meters. Gas cookers, lighting flexes.
8.2 Electric heaters—check flexes, and gas cooker.
8.3 Gas supply. Inspect
   Intake
   Meters
   Ventilation.
8.4 Gas appliances. Check supply and gas cooker.

9 Main structure.

Inspect for defects:

9.1 Roof Coverings.
9.2 Rooflights.
9.3 Chimneys and flues.
9.4 Gutters.
9.5 Sealants and flashings.
9.6 External walls.
9.7 Balconies.
9.8 Staircases.
9.9 Foundations.

Mark X flats

9.10 Yearly Inspection
Check joints between prefabricas slabs. Forward inspection report of structural engineering section.
10 External works.

Inspect for defects:

10.1 Boundary and retaining walls.
10.2 Pavings.
10.3 Fencing, gates, clothes poles.
10.4 Drains and manholes.
10.5 Car park, notice boards.
10.6 Playgrounds and equipment.
10.7 Garages, sheds, workshops.
10.8 Landscaped areas.
Appendix 4: tenant participation procedures

A resume of an unpublished management review by the Scottish Special Housing Association.

1 General Principles of Participation
1 Contact to be made with tenants prior to proposals being drawn up.
2 As much information as possible should be given to tenants to enable them to make informed decisions.
3 Every effort should be made to establish individual choice and variation to satisfy everyone’s requirements.
4 Continuing contact should be made with tenants both during and after the implementation of proposals.
5 Flexibility of approach should underly all contact with tenants. The approach most likely to secure maximum involvement must be carefully selected to suit the local community.

2 Methods of Participation
1 Public meetings, working parties, interviews, surgeries, street meetings in school halls, show houses, planning workshops, private houses, etc.
2 Meetings to involve varying degrees of devolved control: ranging from conventional “platform” meetings run by senior housing officials to more decentralised, informal or individual meetings.
3 Use of various media of communication: drawings, models, photographs, films, newsletters, etc.

3 Modernisation
1 Tenant opinion on priority and choices to be sought by approaches to the tenants’ association or related body and to individual tenants by housing staff, building inspector and area architect. Technical matters to be explained in lay terms. Households would be sampled randomly, stratified by house type and area.
2 Preparation of exhibition materials based on tenant preferences or alternatives, displayed in an exhibition caravan, empty house, or site office. Tenants would be informed of dates and times at which the architect would be in attendance. Tenants would indicate their preferences on a questionnaire after viewing exhibition material.
3 Proposals based on tenant reactions and preferences to be submitted by the architect, and once approved they would be explained to tenants at a public meeting by SSHA representatives.
4 Final proposals to be put out to contract.
5 Individual house visits by housing and technical staff, with good visual material (booklet or leaflet) to ascertain tenants’ preferences.
6 During contract period, site offices should be regularly manned by housing and technical staff to deal with tenants’ problems and difficulties. (This would be additional to the attendance of the clerk of works).

4 Environmental Improvements
Similar procedures to those under modernisation.

5 Tenants’ Associations
1 Introductory establishment meetings of tenants arranged to follow as closely as possible the last tenants moving into a scheme.
2 For all large schemes, say 50 houses or more, introductory meetings to be chaired by a member of the SSHA Management Council, accompanied by fully-briefed officials attached to the project.
3 For smaller schemes, introductory meetings should involve more informal contact between tenants and architect, landscape architect, and housing management.
4 For ongoing schemes, housing staff should maintain day-to-day contact with members of tenant committees.

5 The housing area office should aim to be represented at meetings of tenants’ associations whenever possible, with a senior member of staff present at AGMs.

6 Initiation of "educational seminars" on a regional basis for tenants’ associations to foster "community leadership".

7 The establishment of elected groups of tenants to work with the area office to identify local issues.

8 Regular annual meetings between representatives of tenants’ associations and the chairman of the SSHA.

6 Tenant Co-operatives

1 Initial exploratory discussions between area office staff (with head office assistance if necessary) and tenants where a co-operative is contemplated.

2 Where real interest is shown, a public meeting should be chaired by an SSHA Council member or senior official.

3 Successive meetings to establish the co-operative by officials from the relevant departments: housing, finance, law, etc.

4 Regular committee meetings of the co-operative should be attended by an area housing official.

5 Should the co-operative be accepted by a significant number of groups, future consideration should be given to the development of a secondary association of co-operatives on a regional or national basis.