

# **National Oversight and Audit Commission**

## A Review of the Management and Maintenance of Local Authority Housing

NOAC Report No. 12 – May 2017

NOAC (the National Oversight and Audit Commission) was established in July 2014 under the 2014 Local Government Reform Act to provide independent oversight of the local government sector. The statutory functions assigned to NOAC include supporting the development and enhancement of best practice in the performance by local government bodies of their respective functions. For this purpose, NOAC undertook a thematic review of the performance by local authorities of the functions of managing and maintaining the social housing stock in their ownership and commissioned a customer survey of the experience of tenants of local authority housing. This report is based on the responses from local authorities to questionnaires issued by NOAC dealing with the management and maintenance functions and tenant responses to the customer satisfaction and experience survey conducted by Behaviour & Attitudes on NOAC's behalf.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

The stated objective of national housing policy is that every household should have access to secure, good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price in a sustainable community.<sup>1</sup>

Social housing is one of a number of means of provision for people who cannot afford their own home. The other main means are affordable housing and provision through the private rented sector. NOAC's report No. 10 *Rented Houses Inspections – A Review of Local Authority Performance of Private Rented Houses Regulations Functions* deals with local authority functions in relation to the private rented sector. While approved housing bodies have become increasingly involved in the provision of social housing, local authorities are the main social housing providers. Their stock is supplemented by rentals under the Rental Accommodation and Housing Assistance Payments Schemes and leasing under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme. This report, which deals only with the management and maintenance of local authority owned dwellings, reviews how local authorities are managing and maintaining their stock of dwellings and optimising the availability of that stock for letting purposes.

## 1.1 Background to the Report

NOAC (the National Oversight & Audit Commission) is a statutory body, established under Part 12A of the Local Government Act 2001, to oversee the local government sector.

As part of its performance scrutiny function, NOAC decided in 2015 to carry out a review of the local authority management and maintenance function.

The focus of this report is on the arrangements put in place by local authorities:

- To manage their stock of housing and their relationships with tenants and communities
- To maintain and enhance the fabric of the buildings and optimise their availability for letting purposes

The report also draws on a survey of tenants conducted on behalf of NOAC in 2015.

## 1.2 Review Objectives

The review examines the effectiveness of local authorities in managing and maintaining their housing stock, i.e. dwellings that the local authorities either built or purchased for the purpose of providing social housing. It also examines the effectiveness of local authority processes for dealing with repairs requests, planned maintenance, the preparation of vacated units for re-letting, maximising occupancy, combatting anti-social behaviour and managing estates that are predominantly owned by local authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/housing-policy>.

### **1.3 Review Methods**

There are two strands to the review. Initially, draft questionnaires were prepared by NOAC and circulated for views to a representative focus group of Grade 8 local authority officials working in the housing area, a Housing Director of Services and a Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) official. Following a meeting of the group in June 2015, the questionnaires were revised and formatted by the LGMA to enable electronic data collection and the questionnaires were then emailed in August 2015 to each local authority for completion by 21 November 2015. Responses from all authorities were received by end November 2015. As the questionnaires issued in 2015, local authorities were asked to provide a mixture of current data and full year data in respect of 2014.

In conjunction with this review, a research firm, Behaviour & Attitudes, conducted a customer satisfaction survey of tenants on behalf of NOAC.

All local authorities, with the exception of Galway City and Westmeath County Councils, supplied contact phone numbers of tenants who agreed to participate in a survey aimed at gathering data on their experience as local authority tenants and at measuring their satisfaction with the way in which their local authority manages and maintains the housing it provides to them. There were 756 participants drawn from local authority tenants who had recently interacted with their local authority on management and maintenance issues and 630 of the participants resided in local authority managed estates. 79% were tenants of the larger authorities and 77% were in their first home with their local authority. 87% were living in a house and 9% in an apartment or flat. 58% of the dwellings had 3 bedrooms, 26% had two bedrooms and 8% each had 1 or 4 bedrooms. 10% of the tenants had been living in their Council home for less than two years, 17% for two to five years, 26% for six to ten years, 24% for 11 to 20 years, 20% for more than 20 years and 2% for all of their life. 18% of the dwellings were less than 10 years old, 40% were 10-30 years old and 41% were more than 30 years old. 64% of the dwellings had energy efficiency improvement works carried out at some time and, in three quarters of these cases, the works were initiated by the Council. Only 28% of the dwellings had been the subject of a home condition survey.

The detailed findings are set out in NOAC Report No. 3 – B&A Local Authority Social Housing Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2015 which is available at <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Tenant-Survey-BA-for-NOAC.pdf>. Where findings relate to review topics, they are included in shaded blue boxes in the relevant sections of this report.

The Housing Agency was asked by NOAC to assist in the analysis and interpretation of the data. The data returned by the local authorities was checked and any queries followed-up. In February 2016 local authorities were also sent a copy of the key data they had previously returned to ensure they were satisfied with their completed responses.

The finalised data was then collated by the Housing Agency, analysed and a draft report prepared for consideration by NOAC.

### **1.4 Review Limitations**

The report is based mainly on numerical data returned by local authorities and as such is not an in-depth qualitative review of the management and maintenance function. However, open-ended questions were included with the questionnaires to try and capture a deeper understanding of the objectives, challenges and opportunities seen by local authorities in

managing and maintaining their social housing stock. Themes emerging from these questions have been summarised in the report.

There was some misinterpretation by local authorities of the meaning of some questions. This led to some anomalies in the data and delayed the completion of the report as further checks had to be carried out.

Not all local authorities were able to supply all the requested data.

## **1.5 Outline of the Report**

The report is set out in the five chapters that follow. Chapter 2 provides a profile of social housing by type of housing and the number of staff involved, together with costs of the management and maintenance function. Chapter 3 provides information on the management function of social housing. Chapter 4 contains information provided by local authorities on the maintenance function. Chapter 5 sets out the views of local authorities on challenges and potential improvements. Chapter 6 contains NOAC's conclusions and recommendations arising from this review. NOAC has already published the results of the tenant survey (Report No. 3). However, for completeness, relevant segments are set out in the chapters that follow.

References to the Department in this report are to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and references to authorities are to the local authorities.

## **1.6 Acknowledgements**

NOAC would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the focus group who provided their expertise in response to NOAC's requests and all the local authority tenants who kindly participated in the Local Authority Tenants Survey. NOAC would also like to thank all those housing officials in local authorities who completed the questionnaires and responded to follow-up questions. Finally, NOAC would like to thank the Housing Agency for their work in compiling the data and draft of the report.



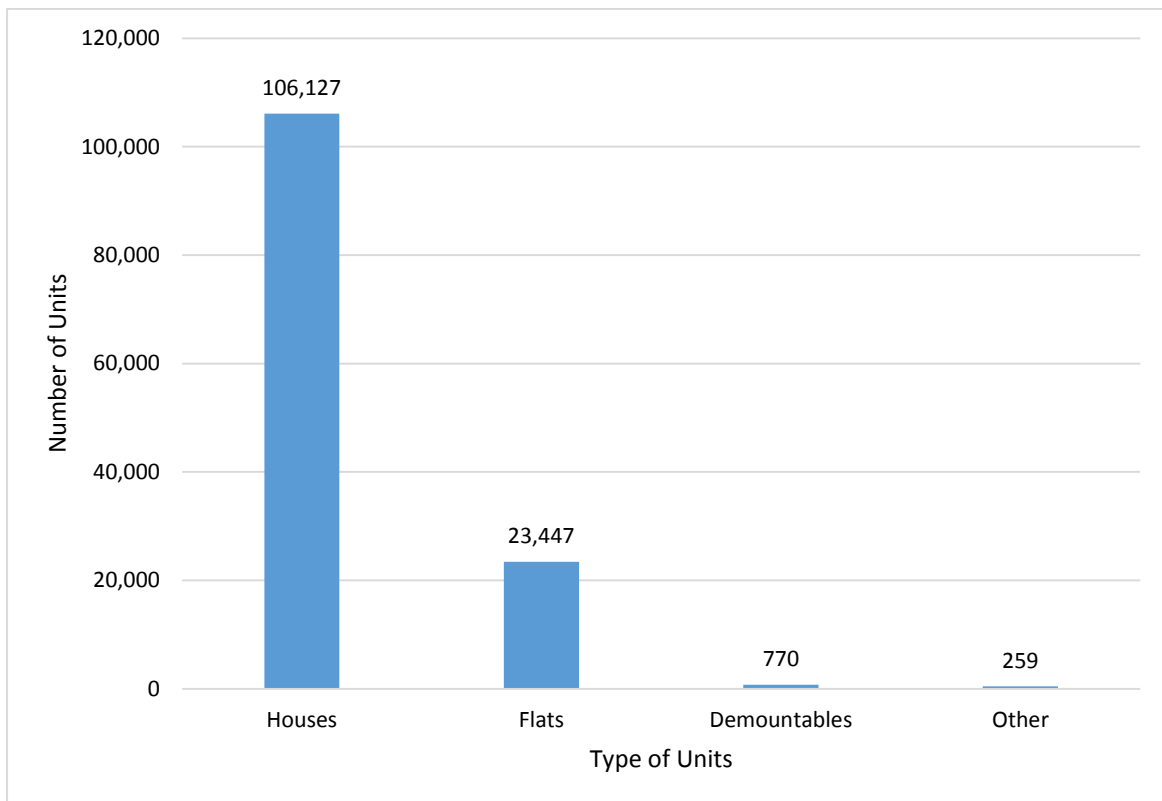
## Chapter 2 Overview of Local Authority Housing Administration

### 2.1 Local Authority Housing Profile

Social housing provision is delivered through the 31 local authorities who reported in 2015 that they were maintaining a housing stock of 130,603 dwellings and managing a total of 5,785 housing estates<sup>2</sup>.

The type of housing units owned by local authorities in 2015 is set out in Figure 2.1. The units comprise 106,127 houses, 23,447 flats, 770 demountable premises (non-fixed premises) and 259 other units.<sup>3</sup> 81% of dwellings were houses. Appendix A contains a breakdown of the type of dwellings provided in each local authority area.

Figure 2.1 Type of Housing Units

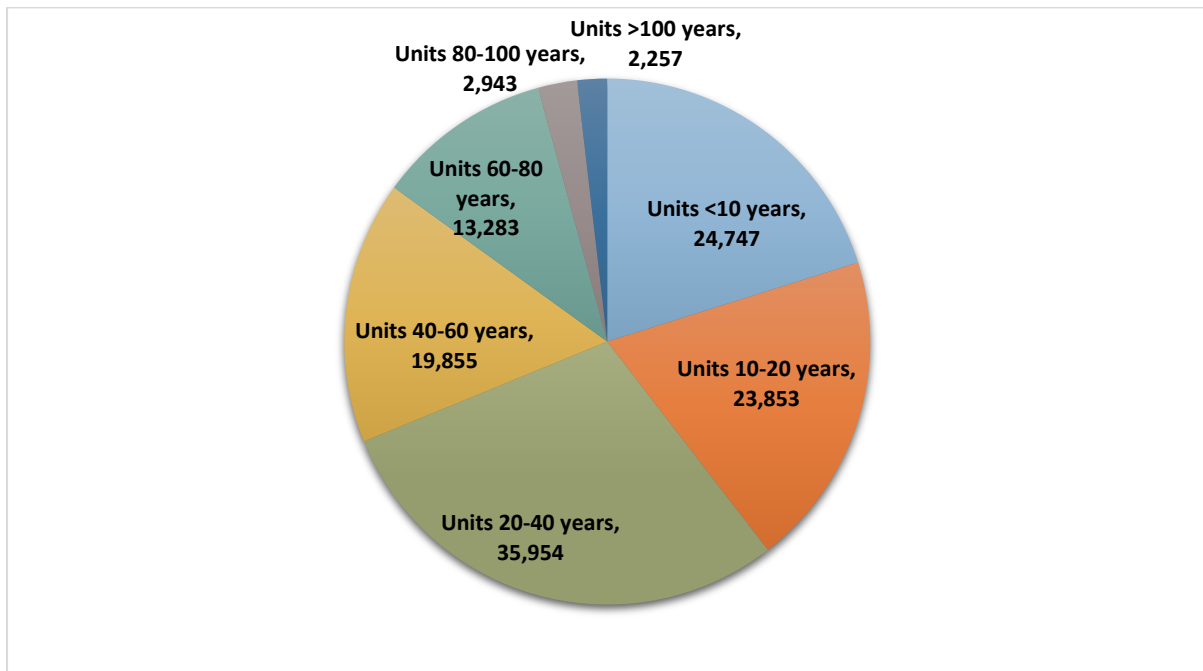


<sup>2</sup> In this context an estate is a housing estate consisting of more than one house, originally built by a local authority and currently rented to a local authority tenant or, more rarely, an estate built by a developer that a local authority purchased in its entirety. However, where less than 2 houses remain in the ownership of the local authority due to tenants purchasing their houses under successive Tenant Purchase Schemes, it ceases to be a local authority housing estate.

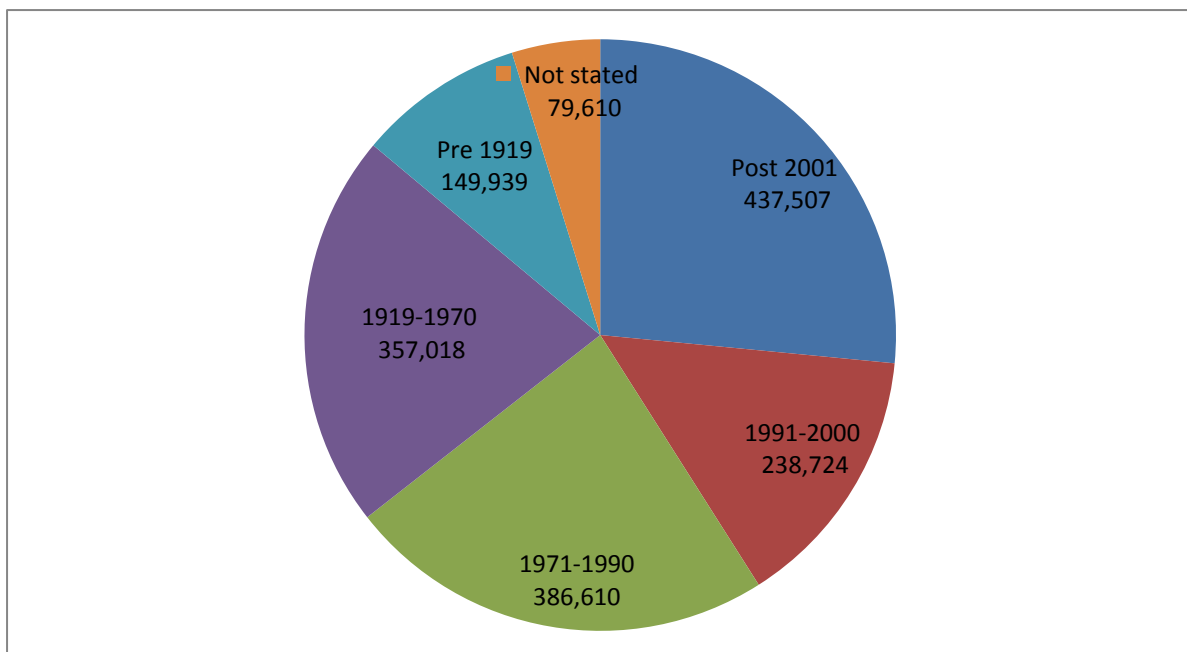
<sup>3</sup> Of the 259 other units, 121 were units in Wicklow whose recorded information was incomplete and 99 were mixed use properties in Kildare. The figures do not include halting bays or other traveller specific accommodation but a detailed count of sites by local authority area is available at: [http://www.environ.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/traveller\\_families\\_in\\_la\\_and\\_la\\_assisted\\_accommodation\\_and\\_on\\_unauthorised\\_halting\\_sites-2016-02-05\\_table\\_1.pdf](http://www.environ.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/traveller_families_in_la_and_la_assisted_accommodation_and_on_unauthorised_halting_sites-2016-02-05_table_1.pdf).

Figure 2.2 sets out the age profile of the overall housing stock<sup>4</sup>. Across all categories of housing, when the stock was analysed by age, local authorities reported that 40% of units were built less than 20 years ago and a further 30% of dwellings were aged between 20 and 40 years.

Figure 2.2 Age Profile of Housing Units



The age of the national housing stock (1,649,408 dwellings) per the 2011 Census was:



<sup>4</sup> Not all LAs were able to provide data on ages of all their dwellings, so this breakdown relates to 122,892 of the 130,603 units. (In particular, no figures were provided by Kildare County Council, Wicklow County Council figures exclude 2,275 units with no age data and none of Offaly County Council's units are broken down by age.)

The age profile of the stock differs somewhat depending on the type of units. Table 2.1 sets out the proportional breakdown for the 118,845 units for which complete information was provided by the local authorities. The age profile of the housing owned by each authority is set out in Appendix B.

*Table 2.1 Profile of Local Authority Housing Units by Type and Age*

Age of Dwelling	Type of Dwelling			Total
	Houses	Flats	Demountables	
Less than 10 years	17.2%	2.3%	0.2%	19.7%
10-20 years	18%	1.2%	0.2%	19.4%
20-40 years	25.4%	3.9%	0.1%	29.4%
40-60 years	9.5%	6.9%	0%	16.4%
60-80 years	8%	3.1%	0%	11.1%
80-100 years	2.1%	0.4%	0%	2.5%
More than 100 years	1.1%	0.4%	0%	1.5%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81.3%</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

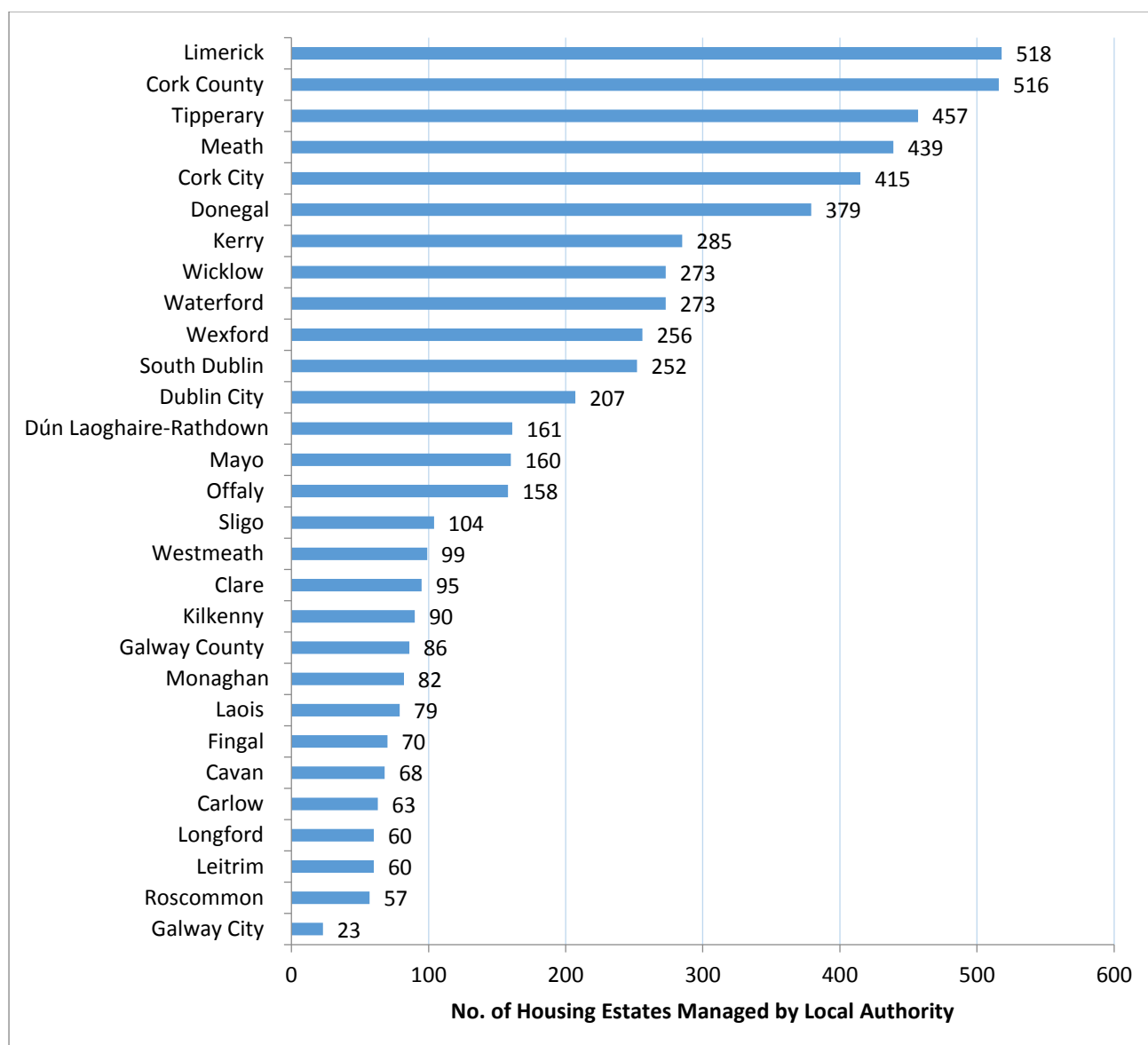
Local authorities reported that their social housing units contained 10,355 units, or almost 8% of all local authority housing, that were built specifically for older people.

Authorities reported managing a total of 5,785 housing estates and that 112,811 local authority housing units are located in estates<sup>5</sup>. These are estates that were originally built by the authority or purchased in their entirety from a developer.

Figure 2.3 shows the number of estates managed by each local authority. Limerick City and County Council manages the most estates (518) followed by Cork County Council which manages 516 housing estates. Galway City Council manages the fewest estates at 23.

<sup>5</sup> No figures were provided for Louth and Kildare.

Figure 2.3 Number of Housing Estates managed by each Local Authority<sup>6</sup>



With the passage of time, the houses in many local authority estates become privately owned by virtue of successive tenant purchase schemes. This report focuses only on the stock that remains in local authority ownership.

Local authorities were asked to provide the average number of dwellings in an estate in 2014. The lowest average was in Meath at 7 and the highest in Dublin City at 63 dwellings per estate. The local authority with the largest number of dwellings in an estate was South Dublin County Council with an estate of 476 dwelling units, followed by Dublin City Council with an estate of 369 units and then Fingal with an estate of 304 dwelling units. The largest estates in the other urban authorities are 227 dwellings in Waterford, 216 in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, 151 in Cork City, 128 in Galway City and 69 in Limerick. Westmeath County Council is the only other authority with an estate consisting of more than 200 houses (222).

<sup>6</sup> No figures provided by Louth and Kildare

From an accommodation perspective, the number of bedrooms can vary from dwellings that have no separate bedroom (bedsits)<sup>7</sup> to houses with four or more bedrooms. 55% of all housing stock consisted of housing units with three bedrooms, 26% had two bedrooms and over 10% had one bedroom. There are still some bedsit units in local authority ownership (2% of the stock) and these are primarily owned by Dublin City Council. Table 2.2 outlines the number of bedrooms associated with local authority housing units nationally<sup>8</sup>.

*Table 2.2 Number of Bedrooms in Local Authority Housing*

No. of Bedrooms	% of Units
No separate bedroom (i.e. bedsit)	2%
1 bedroom	11%
2 bedrooms	26%
3 bedrooms	55%
4 or more bedrooms <sup>9</sup>	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

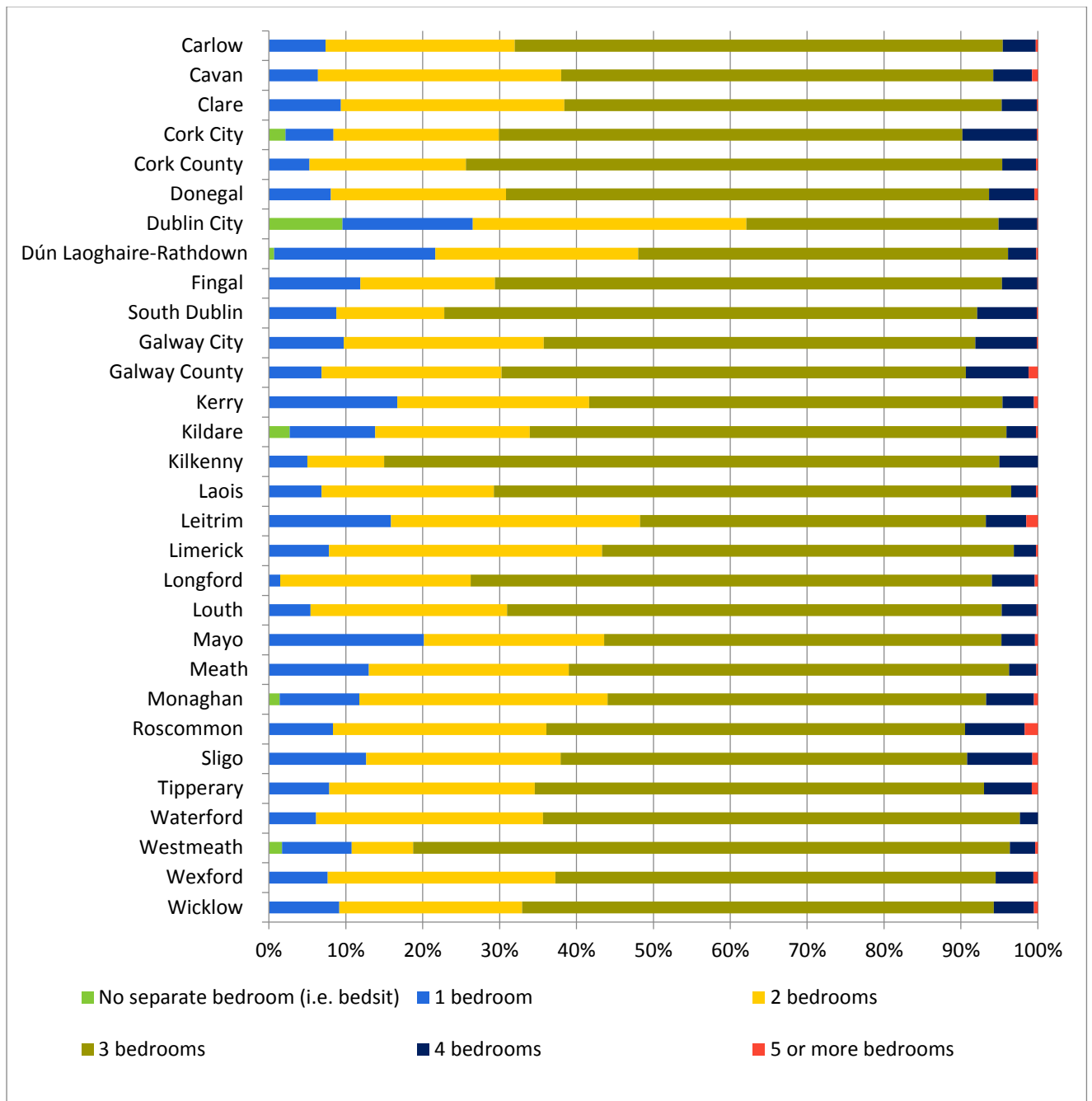
The pattern of accommodation across the country, categorised by the number of bedrooms as a percentage of the overall number of housing units in each local authority is set out in Figure 2.4.

<sup>7</sup> 2,433 of these units were held by Dublin City Council

<sup>8</sup> Offaly did not provide a breakdown by bedrooms, Wicklow does not know the number of bedrooms that are in 583 of their dwellings and there were small discrepancies in the figures for 5 other local authorities.

<sup>9</sup> 373 units had 5 or more bedrooms (0.3% of the total).

Figure 2.4 Percentage of Housing Units by No. of Bedrooms in each Local Authority



There was a total of 5,768 single rural dwellings in the local authority housing stock, 54% of which are located in just six County Councils (Donegal, Kerry, Galway, Wexford, Mayo and Westmeath).

The detail of housing estate and single rural dwelling numbers for each local authority is set out at Appendix C.

## 2.2 Local Authority Staff Numbers

1,754 whole-time equivalent staff (WTE) worked in the management and maintenance functions in the local authorities surveyed in 2014. This was made up of 1,015 WTE engaged in work relating to the management of local authority housing and 739 staff involved in the maintenance functions.<sup>10 11</sup> The number of dwellings per WTE working on the management function is set out in Figure 2.5 and ranged from 1,197 in Galway County Council to 66.2 in Dublin City Council with a median of 154.3 and an overall average of 128.8 dwellings per WTE. The number of dwellings managed per WTE was greater than 320 in the case of only seven local authorities.

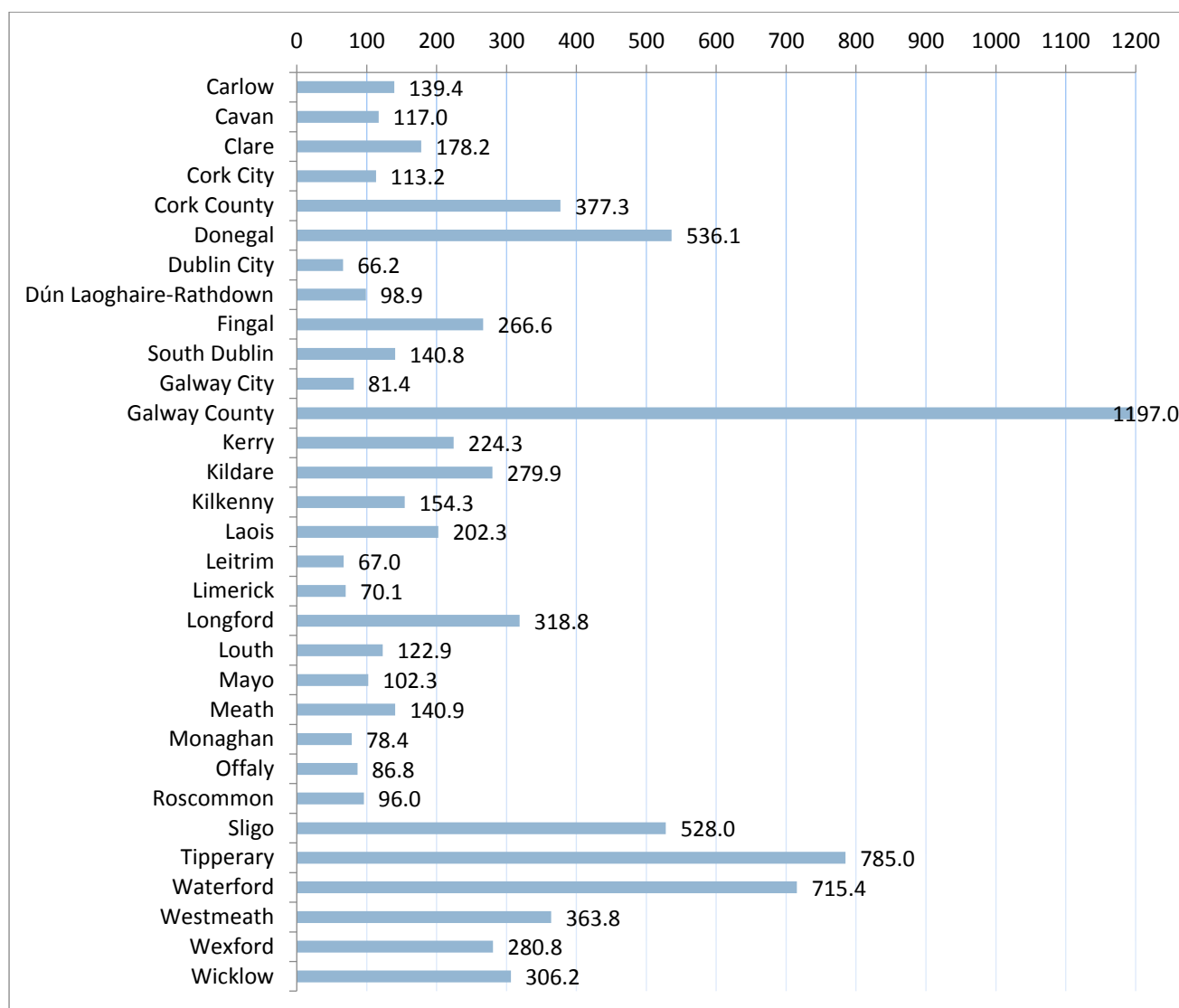
Appendix D contains details on numbers of staff working in management and maintenance functions per local authority.

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<sup>10</sup> The following definition was sent to all local authorities in April 2016 for clarification: *WTE (Whole time equivalent) for the management staff and maintenance staff figures for the Management & Maintenance Survey* is the total of staff time spent on the two functions whether in administration or in direct labour broken down between maintenance type work and management type work. While it will vary from authority to authority, management functions would include: organising new tenants for vacant units, dealing with queries on estate management and responding to complaints, rent collection tasks, development/dissemination of management policy, conducting meetings with tenants, organising meetings and venues, organising expenses payments associated with the management function, processing anti-social behaviour cases, processing management fee invoices for units in private apartment blocks, organising ground works on estates, directly carrying out ground works on estates (e.g. local authority staff cutting grass), paying local property tax, etc. Maintenance includes staff time spent actually carrying out maintenance tasks and staff time spent on the administration side dealing with maintenance queries, requests for repairs, organising the carrying out of repairs, tendering with contractors, scheduling repair works, communicating with tenants about planned maintenance, maintenance policy development, collecting maintenance service payments, etc. There will be WTEs in Housing Divisions in local authorities that do not contribute to any of the functions being looked at by these two studies, so the numbers will be lower than the total numbers employed in the housing area.

<sup>11</sup> Wicklow provided numbers of 15.22 staff in management and 0 in maintenance with the following explanation: *"In preparing its budgets (and subsequent costing/expenditure allocation) Wicklow County Council has to date not allocated a percentage of housing administrative staff to a housing maintenance cost centre. Bearing in mind the number of functions undertaken by housing (general) staff, attempting to estimate the relevant percentage/WTE equivalent time on maintenance could result in a meaningless number. This matter will be re-examined during the preparation of the 2017 accounts."*

Figure 2.5 Dwelling Units per Management WTE



## 2.3 Management & Maintenance Costs of Local Authority Housing

Local authorities were asked for their expenditure on managing their housing function in 2014. In the majority of cases, the response received was the total expenditure on all housing functions rather than the cost of managing their own housing stock. They were also asked their expenditure on maintaining their stock in 2014.

The audited annual financial statements of the 31 local authorities indicate that €298 million was spent in 2014 on functions related to the subject matter of this report. That sum was expended on the following:

- Maintenance and Improvement of Local Authority Housing €219 million
- Housing and Tenant Purchase Administration €35 million
- Housing Community Development Support €44 million

The detail for each local authority is set out at Appendix H.



Local authorities indicated that €98 million was paid to contractors in respect of maintenance work in 2014. The balance of maintenance costs are attributable to local authority direct costs. (More detail on maintenance expenditure is in Chapter 4.) Income that accrued to local authorities in respect of their housing stock (rents less local property tax) amounted to €337.7 million in 2014.

## 2.4 Accuracy of Information

NOAC was unable, in a substantial number of cases, to reconcile the information supplied by authorities in response to the questionnaire with corresponding information reported in their annual accounts and for the purposes of the compilation of performance indicators. Total expenditure in 2014 on the maintenance of local authority stock amounted to €164.78m according to the information provided by local authorities for NOAC's 2014 Performance Indicator Report, which represents a variation of -35% on the costs reported in response to the questionnaire (€253m).

Accordingly, it was not considered appropriate to use the aggregated questionnaire data for the purposes of this report and the aggregate management and maintenance expenditure in Appendix H has been drawn from the annual accounts. NOAC will highlight to the Audit Committees the need to review the process for validating information provided for future questionnaire based reviews.

### Summary

- Local authorities reported managing and maintaining a total stock of 130,603 dwellings in 2015.
- 81% of the housing stock was houses and 18% was flats. There were still a few remaining demountables in local authority ownership (0.6%).
- 39% of the total housing stock was built in the last 20 years.
- 8% of the housing stock was built specifically for older people.
- 55% of the housing stock was made up of three bed units and 26% was two bed units.
- There were still more than 2,800 bedsits in local authority ownership, mainly in Dublin City Council.
- Local authorities reported managing almost 5,800 housing estates across the country. Limerick City and County Council manages the most (518).
- Less than 4.5% of the housing stock was made up of single rural dwellings.
- There were 1,015 full-time staff working in local authorities in the management of local authority housing and 739 staff working on the maintenance of this housing.
- The number of dwellings per management WTE ranged from 66.2 in Dublin City to 1,197 in County Galway.

## Chapter 3 Management of Local Authority Housing

This chapter reviews how local authorities across the country are managing their housing stock (including performance in rent collection and minimising vacant stock) and, where such stock is in estates, how relationships with tenants and communities are being managed. Material from the Tenant Survey is included alongside the text, shaded in blue.

Tenant satisfaction with their neighbourhood is high (87% satisfied). Longer-term tenants and those not living in Council run estates displayed a higher level of satisfaction. Only 17% of those living in a Council managed estate have applied for a transfer or would like to live elsewhere.

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NOAC Tenant Survey

### 3.1 Objectives

Each local authority sets its own objectives for the management of its social housing. A number of common themes emerged from a review of those objectives:

- To provide and maintain houses to a good standard, within the budgets available and build good client relationships
- To respond to all repair requests within agreed standards and timeframes, depending on level of urgency (emergency, urgent and routine)
- To repair all void and vacant properties and tenant them promptly
- To deliver energy efficient stock (retrofitting, installing central heating systems, insulation, etc.).

### 3.2 Estate Management

In 2014 there were 5,785 housing estates managed by local authorities.<sup>12</sup> Limerick City and County Council manages 518 housing estates, which is the highest number of all the local authorities. The largest housing estate was made up of 476 houses and is managed by South Dublin County Council.

23 local authorities reported having an estate management policy.

### 3.3 Managing Relationships with Tenants and Communities

21 local authorities reported having arrangements to meet tenants on a planned regular basis. In general, for those who had

In general, satisfaction with how well the local authority looks after the estates it manages is relatively positive (53% good and 28% average). Overall, good ratings are relatively stable across larger and smaller local authority areas. However, those living in smaller areas are more likely to give a very good rating.

Half of the tenants reported that the Council's management of their housing had improved over the previous 5 years.

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NOAC Tenant Survey

<sup>12</sup> Kildare and Louth did not provide any figures on numbers of housing estates.

regular arrangements in place, the frequency of the meetings ranged from daily<sup>13</sup> to every two years. Such meetings took place in venues such as local authority or housing offices, community buildings or community centres in the housing estates.

The attendee from the local authority side was usually an Administrative Officer, Housing/Tenant/Community Liaison Officer or other member of Estate Management staff, ranging from Grade 5 to 7 level.

30 local authorities<sup>14</sup> reported having systems in place to enable tenants to raise concerns about how their estate was managed. Nearly all said that the tenant could contact the Tenant Liaison, Housing Officer or Community Liaison Officer. Some said tenants could write, phone, email or go to the public counter in the local authority to make an appointment to meet the Housing Officer. Seven local authorities mentioned resident association meetings or tenant meetings as a forum in which to raise concerns. Sligo County Council has developed an estate management database to collect, monitor and analyse complaints received.

Local authorities were asked whether they made information available to tenants on their performance in dealing with a range of estate management issues and dealing with the maintenance of different areas. As indicated in Table 3.1, the majority of local authorities are not providing this information to their tenants.

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<sup>13</sup> At tenant request.

<sup>14</sup> Kildare County Council responded that it has no system to enable tenants to raise concerns.

More estate management/ maintenance (e.g. grass, litter, etc.) and regular home improvement modernisation were the main spontaneous improvements requested by tenants.

Just one quarter of tenants living in a local authority managed estate recall receiving a copy of the estate management policy and just half of these state that they are in any way familiar with the document – mainly newer tenants. 3 in 4 of the tenants receiving the policy document believe that the Council complies with the policy.

Overall, 2 in 3 tenants living in a local authority managed estate would praise their housing and maintenance services to friends or family.

Incidence of local authority and tenant meetings is low with just 1 in 10 tenants reporting that their Council holds regular meetings. Only 2 in 5 tenants who are aware of these meetings state that they attend.

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NOAC Tenant Survey

Table 3.1 Availability of Local Authority Performance Information to Tenants

Type of performance information	No. LAs providing (total 31)	%
External infrastructure (access roads, footpaths, paving etc.)	10	32%
Core fabric (external walls, foundations & roofs)	10	32%
Passageways (entrance halls, landings, lifts, stairways and corridors)	9	29%
Service infrastructure (ducts, conduits, cisterns, sewers, drains, pipes and boilers in apartment blocks)	11	35%

The minority of local authorities that said they provide information mainly do so only when requested by tenants and when responding to individual issues raised. Clare and Monaghan County Councils mentioned tenants' handbooks that outlined the Council's estate maintenance responsibilities. Dublin City Council mentioned reporting back on such matters at tenant meetings, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown provide feedback through Community staff and tenants can meet with Waterford City and County Council's Housing Supervisor or Housing Engineer by appointment.

71% of tenants have read their Council's Tenants Handbook (to any degree)

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NOAC Tenant Survey

### 3.4 Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour

Local authorities stated that, when dealing with reported incidents of anti-social behaviour, there were procedures and policies in place to enable them to deal with anti-social behaviour in a consistent and fair manner.<sup>15</sup> Some mentioned that these procedures had been strengthened by, or had incorporated the additional powers provided under, Part 2 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. (That Act amended the statutory provisions first introduced in 1997 applying to anti-social behaviour in local authority housing and the revised provisions came into effect in April 2015.)

Typically, once a complaint is received, the complainant is asked to complete a complaints form or incident report form, which is then logged. This is then referred to a variety of job titled holders: Executive Housing Officer, Area Staff, Community Liaison Officer, the Housing Liaison Officer, Housing Enforcement Officer, Anti-Social Behaviour Officer or Tenant Liaison Officer.<sup>16</sup>

3 in 5 tenants living in local authority estates rate anti-social behaviour as being low. Lower levels of anti-social behaviour were reported in smaller local authorities and among newer tenants. One third of tenants also believe that the level of anti-social behaviour in their estate has decreased over the past 2 years.

The proportion of tenants who thought anti-social behaviour had increased over the previous 2 years was greater than the proportion who thought it had decreased in 8 local authorities.

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<sup>15</sup> Some local authorities said these procedures documents could be found on their website.

<sup>16</sup> In Limerick, two staff members are assigned as tenancy enforcement officers on a full-time basis and their supervisor spends up to 50% of his time dealing with anti-social behaviour issues.

Some local authorities said that all interactions are dealt with in confidence and that all complaints will be investigated as soon as possible. Depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint, there is an escalation process in place to deal with the behaviour and, if the behaviour is of a serious nature and does not cease, then excluding orders or repossession of properties could result. Garda reports or Garda involvement may be requested. A couple of local authorities mentioned that engagement with agencies such as the Housing Welfare Section, Child and Family Agency, Focus Ireland or the HSE may take place.

South Dublin County Council said that mediation between tenants is used as a tool to resolve certain issues and Wexford County Council said that the Housing Liaison Officer may intervene with opposing parties to resolve issues through negotiation.

A typical approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour is set out below. It relates to Cork City Council, which provided the following detailed description of the process that it applies to incidents of anti-social behaviour:

*All complaints are referred in the first instance to the relevant Executive Housing Officer (EHO). On receipt of a complaint, the EHO opens a file in the City Council's bespoke Tenancy Enforcement database entering the date and brief description of the complaint. The procedure specifies that the EHO should respond as soon as possible (depending on the nature of the complaint) but in any event not later than one week. The principal steps in the procedure are:*

- 1. Interview the complainant and note outcome and details for file.*
- 2. Interview the complainee and note outcome and details for file.*
- 3. Seek confirmation or otherwise from other agencies such as community Gardaí and neighbours in writing or take full memo at interviews.*
- 4. If allegations are upheld, inform complainee in writing that anti-social behaviour must cease immediately.*
- 5. After 7 days contact the complainant. If there is no cessation of the anti-social behaviour (ASB), send a First Warning letter to the complainee in accordance with the terms of the 2014 Housing Act.*
- 6. After a further 7 days contact the complainant. If there is no cessation of ASB, issue a Final Warning Letter in accordance with the terms of the 2014 Housing Act.*
- 7. If the tenant continues to engage in anti-social or nuisance behaviour, a statutory tenancy warning should issue. This should be signed by the appropriate housing officer and served personally on the tenant. If the tenant continues to engage in anti-social or nuisance behaviour, the matter should be referred to the Law Department for proceedings.*

1 in 5 tenants living in a local authority estate have complained about anti-social behaviour, a similar number have complained about maintenance issues, while 6% have complained about apartment block communal areas.

Amongst those who have made these various kinds of complaints, dissatisfaction with the local authority's handling of the complaint is relatively high; about one third are very dissatisfied, mainly due to a lack of feedback from the authority and not knowing how their complaint was being handled.

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*Note: The statutory warning has a life span of 12 months. If the tenant engages in anti-social or nuisance behaviour within 12 months of the issuance of the statutory warning, the matter can be referred to the Law Department for the issuance of proceedings without the need to recommence the procedure again.*

*Note: The tenant (who is complained against) has a right to seek a review of the decision to issue the statutory warning and/or its content.*

Excluding Orders are District Court orders directing a person residing in a local authority house to leave the house or, for the period during which the order is in force, prohibiting a person from entering or being in the vicinity of a specified local authority house or housing estate. They can be applied for by either a tenant of a local authority house or by a local authority against a person whom it believes to be engaging in anti-social behaviour.

In order for the local authority to make an application, it must have consulted the tenant complaining of the behaviour and believe that s/he is deterred or prevented by violence, threat or fear from pursuing such an application and consider that, in the interest of good estate management, it is appropriate, in all the circumstances, to apply for the Excluding Order.

Across the country, local authorities applied for 25 Excluding Orders in 2014, of which 13 were complied with.

Prior to 13 April 2015, a local authority seeking to regain possession of a dwelling for non-compliance with the terms of the tenancy agreement, issued a Notice to Quit in accordance with section 62 of the 1966 Housing Act<sup>17</sup>.

Across the country, local authorities issued 37 Notices to Quit in 2014, of which 20 were complied with.

### **3.5 Vacancies and Re-Letting**

In total there were 4,202 housing units vacant in Autumn 2015 (when the survey was completed). More than 13% had been vacant for more than three years.

Table 3.2 sets out the number of units per vacancy period and their percentage of the total vacant units in Autumn 2015.

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<sup>17</sup> This was amended under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 to an application to the District Court for a Possession Order preceded by notice in writing to the tenant of the intention to make the application, the date on which it would be made and the information that would be included in the application.



Table 3.2 Length of Vacancy of Housing Units

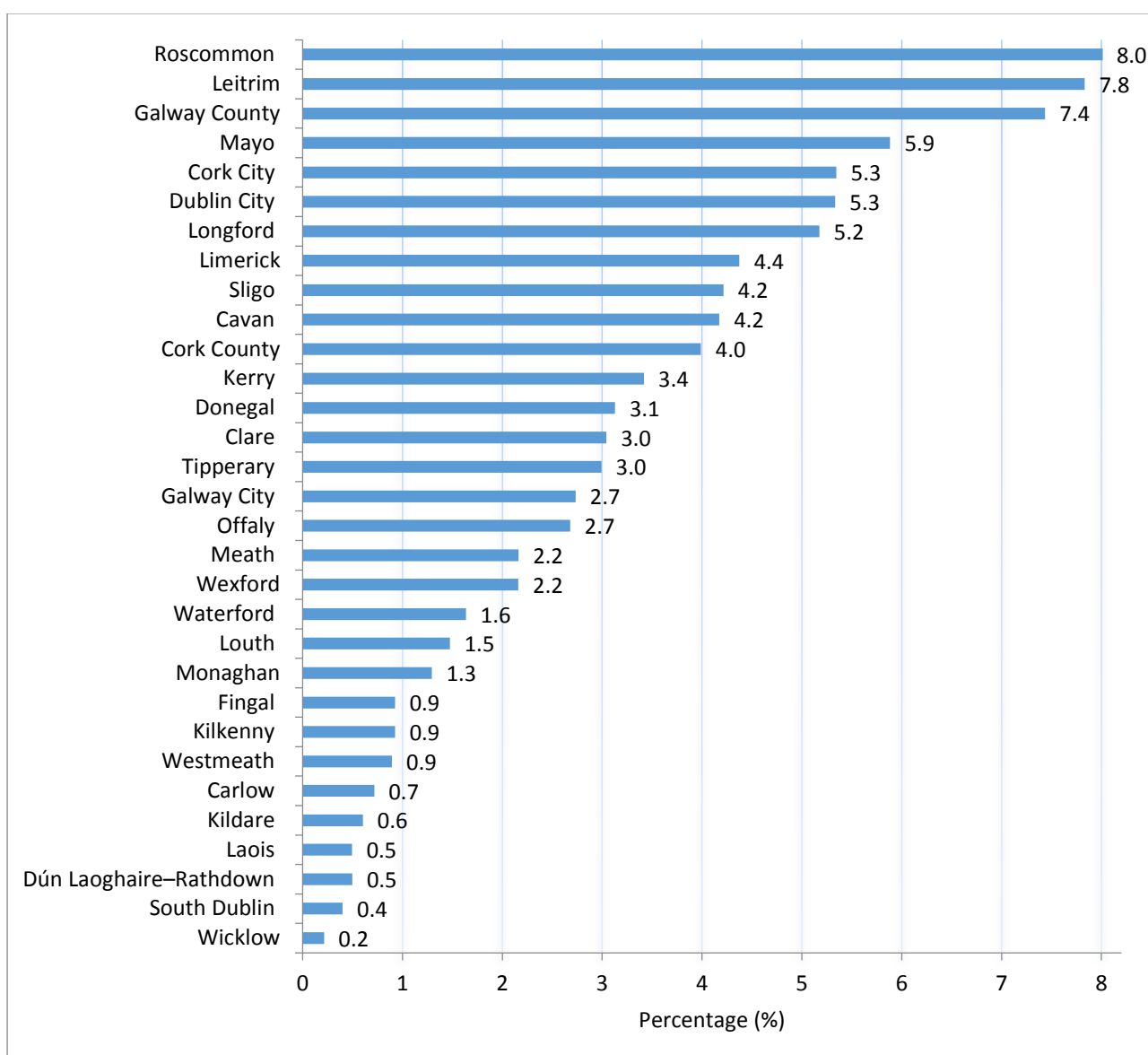
Vacancy Period	Number of Units	% of Vacant Units
Less than 2 weeks	149	3.5
2-5 weeks	241	5.7
6-8 weeks	300	7.1
9-13 weeks	288	6.9
14-26 weeks	469	11.2
27-39 weeks	285	6.8
40-52 weeks	220	5.2
53-78 weeks	239	5.7
79-104 weeks	162	3.9
2-3 years	211	5.0
More than 3 years	556	13.2
Other <sup>18</sup>	1082	25.7
<b>Total Vacancies</b>	<b>4,202</b>	<b>100%</b>

Appendix F sets out the position for each local authority categorised by duration of vacancy in the case of all units vacant at the time of completing the questionnaire. Figure 3.1 sets out the reported number of vacant units in Autumn 2015 as a percentage of the overall stock of social housing units for each local authority.

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<sup>18</sup> 'Other' is 89 properties for Galway County Council and 993 properties in Dublin City Council that are void pending demolition or refurbishment and duration of vacancy is not recorded for these.

Figure 3.1 Vacant Units as a Percentage of Overall Stock Levels – Autumn 2015



An intensive Voids programme introduced in 2014, which is co-funded by the Exchequer and the EU Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020, supported the return of just over 5,000 units to productive use in 2014 and 2015.

Local authorities were given the opportunity to comment on the vacancy data they provided. Several local authorities said they had a number of vacant dwellings in rural locations where there was no demand. Three local authorities had vacant traveller specific accommodation with no demand for it either. Several authorities mentioned that, as and when funding was allocated by the Department, long term voids were being brought up to a suitable standard for letting. Another reason given was that units, which were in need of major refurbishment works (including fire damaged properties), were vacant for longer periods. Dublin City Council had 993 units classified as void pending demolition/refurbishment. There was a small number of units that were the subject of legal proceedings to regain possession.

Overall, authorities reported that 1,340 units (32% of the 4,202 vacant units) were vacant because they have been included in a planned regeneration or remedial works scheme.



There were 683 (16% of the total) units not tenanted because the property was vacated by the tenant for the purpose of enabling refurbishment that required vacant possession. 92 (2%) of the vacant units were for sale at the time of the survey. While some types of refurbishment work will necessitate the temporary vacation of the dwelling, the setting aside of units by reason of planned developments that may be very far into the future, is not a good use of what is a scarce resource.

*Table 3.3 Reasons for Vacancy*

Vacancy Reason	No. of Units	%
How many of the total vacant units were not re-tenanted because the units are included in a planned regeneration or remedial works scheme?	1,340	32% (of total no. of vacant units)
How many of these units were included in a planned regeneration or remedial works scheme were vacant for more than 26 weeks?	1,311	98% (of total planned regeneration units)
How many of the total number of vacant units have been vacated by the tenant for the purpose of enabling works to be carried out that require vacant possession?	683 <sup>19</sup>	16% (of total no. of vacant units)
How many of the total number of vacant units are for sale?	92	2% (of total no. of vacant units)
How many of the total number of vacant units have been refused by a prospective tenant more than twice?	160	4% (of total no. of vacant units)

Local authorities' best estimate of the percentage of dwellings vacated by the tenants that were notified to the local authority in advance of vacation varied considerably. Estimates ranged from a low of 5% in Meath and Kildare to 99% in Longford. Local authorities were asked what their approach was when notified of a tenant's departure. Table 3.4 provides detail regarding what local authorities reported doing when a tenant notifies that they will be leaving.

*Table 3.4 Readyng Dwellings for the Next Tenant*

Question	No. of LAs (Yes)
Where a tenant notifies the LA of a date on which the dwelling will be vacated, is a pre-departure inspection carried out on the unit? - Y/N	26
If Yes, is the tenant notified of the requirement to carry out or pay for any works that are his/her responsibility under the tenancy agreement? - Y/N	26
Is a record created of what works will be required to the unit before it can be re-let? - Y/N	24
Where the works are not the responsibility of the tenant, are the works arranged in advance so as to be ready to commence in the immediate aftermath (i.e. within 3 days) of the dwelling being vacated? - Y/N	7

<sup>19</sup> 668 of these were in Dublin City, many of which are included in planned regeneration schemes.

Some 15% of tenants state that at least 10% of the properties in their estate have been vacant for more than one month – higher in smaller local authorities.

Of the surveyed tenants who had moved home previously, 83% had notified the local authority in advance and 69% of those said that the Council had inspected the dwelling prior to their departure. The incidence of pre-departure inspections was 71% in Council estates and 57% if otherwise.

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Local authorities were asked to provide the average number of weeks that units, which were re-let in 2014, were vacant prior to re-letting. The reported average number of weeks that units were vacant prior to re-letting ranged from seven weeks in Laois County Council to 83 weeks for units in Cork City Council.<sup>20</sup>

Authorities were asked to indicate for all units vacated in 2014 the percentage falling within the refurbishment category described in Table 3.5. The overall average for the 30 local authorities who responded<sup>21</sup> is shown in the Table. On average, 30.9% of the vacated units required major works to be carried out before being ready to be re-let. However, the proportion needing major works was less than half in the case of 18 of the 30 authorities and was as low as 0% in Dublin City and 5% in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

*Table 3.5 Extent of Refurbishment required in Vacated Units in 2014*

Nature of refurbishment	Percentage of units
Minor turnaround work only	32%
Energy efficiency works	37%
Major works	31%

### **3.6 Measures to Maximise Occupancy**

Local authorities were asked to outline any measures they employed to minimise the duration of vacancies/voids. The measures taken by local authorities were grouped into the following five categories:

- Contractor relationship
- New management systems and structures
- Identifying new tenants at an early stage
- Prioritising high demand housing
- Choice-based lettings

<sup>20</sup> The figures provided by 11 local authorities (Dublin and Galway Cities and Clare, Cork, Galway, Kerry, Laois, Monaghan, South Dublin, Waterford and Wicklow Counties) contradicted those provided to NOAC for the Performance Indicators Report 2014. That data gives a shortest average number of weeks vacant of 10 weeks for Laois with a national average of 31.8 weeks.

<sup>21</sup> No response provided by Louth County Council.

### ***Contractor Relationship***

14 local authorities reported that contracting has helped reduce the duration of vacancies. Having term maintenance frameworks in place with contractors had helped, and some local authorities reported that they had a panel of contractors available, which has minimised the delay in the tender award process. Another local authority said that standardising the tendering procedures had minimised delays.

### ***New Management Systems and Structures***

Local authorities all reported a very active management process for managing the duration of vacancies or voids. It was of note how many had recently put in place new systems or management structures to deal with this issue. Examples of some of these management structures are:

- Galway City Council conducts a critical path analysis that has streamlined and fast tracked change of tenancy works and Fingal County Council reported carrying out a business process improvement project.
- Cork City Council reported close liaison between Allocations and Area Management to line up new tenants and Cavan County Council has close liaison between Housing Construction and Housing Allocations.
- Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council holds weekly meetings with relevant staff to discuss vacant properties and Laois County Council holds fortnightly meetings of SEO, technical staff and allocations staff to ensure strong communication and business processes for surrenders, relets and allocations. Kerry County Council has a monthly review of vacant houses and analyses trends on voids.
- Monaghan County Council has a new staff structure since 2014 and Kerry County Council has restructured the Housing Section to focus on voids management.

### ***Identifying New Tenants at an Early Stage***

Seven local authorities (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Kerry, Limerick, Mayo, Monaghan, South Dublin and Tipperary) stated that they were proactive in identifying new tenants quickly and that this was a key method for avoiding long vacancy times. These local authorities tried to have the properties 'pre-allocated' as soon as possible, even prior to any works being undertaken. Limerick City and County Council said that having tenants ready to occupy the property helped reduce vandalism.

### ***High Demand Housing Prioritised***

Prioritising the refurbishment of housing in high demand areas was another method being used by local authorities to minimise vacancies. Dublin City Council, Clare, Donegal, Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo County Councils all said that this was an approach that they employed.

### ***Choice-Based Lettings***

Four local authorities said that the use of choice-based lettings (whereby waiting list applicants can express their interest in tenancing a property advertised by the local authority

and which is then allocated to the highest placed interested applicant) was a method they were employing to minimise vacancies. Louth County Council said that choice-based lettings were used for difficult to let properties. Dublin City Council, Sligo County Council and South Dublin County Council are also using choice-based lettings.

Some other measures that local authorities said were being used to minimise vacancies were: putting in place a specific voids team, streamlining the Garda checking process and maximising the funding available for work on voids.

The cost of readying vacant units for re-letting is outlined in Chapter 4.5.

### **3.7 Rental Income and Local Property Tax**

Tenants pay a differential rent related to the household income for their allocated dwelling. The average rent levied per local authority dwelling in 2014 was €224 per month. Total rent collected from tenants by local authorities in 2014 was €348,022,785. Accrued rent for the year was €351,208,633 and total arrears at the start of the year were nearly €65m. In 2014, local authorities wrote off almost €2.4m of rent owing. Overall, the rent collection yield in 2014 was 84% of the total amount due. The collection performance of each local authority is set out in Appendix E<sup>22</sup>. Across the country, historic arrears accounted for 18.5% of the rent charged for the year 2014. However, on a current collection basis, local authorities were collecting the equivalent of 99% of the 2014 rent charge with 13 authorities improving their performance by collecting cash in excess of the total rent levied for the year while the other 18 authorities collected an amount that was less than the 2014 rent charge.

In terms of the proportion of cumulative rent owed that was collected by end 2014, South Dublin is the lowest at 73% followed by Sligo at 77% and Dublin and Galway Cities and Waterford all at 78%. Laois and Monaghan County Councils are the highest at 95%, followed by Kerry and Westmeath at 94% and Roscommon at 93%.

#### ***Local Property Tax***

Local authorities pay local property tax in the same way as any other residential property owner, unless the properties are used to accommodate people with special housing needs (i.e. persons who by reason of old age, physical or mental disability or other cause require special accommodation and support to enable them to live in the community). Nationally, the amount reported by local authorities as being paid in 2014 was €10,303,958.

### **3.8 Rental Income relative to Maintenance Cost**

Nationally, the average maintenance and improvement expenditure per unit in 2014 was €1,679 and the average rent received per unit was €2,665 or 159% of the amount spent maintaining and improving the dwellings. For 12 local authorities rent received in 2014 was more than twice the expenditure on maintenance and improvement and in Westmeath's case, it was almost three times the expenditure. Dublin City and Leitrim most closely matched rental income to expenditure at 116% and 117% respectively. The data for each local authority is set out at Appendix J.

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<sup>22</sup> The data has been taken from the May 2016 report of the Local Government Audit Service based on the Audited Financial Statements of local authorities for 2014.

## Summary

- Only a third of local authorities make information available to tenants about their performance in dealing with estate management issues, and mainly only when requested.
- Local authorities applied for 25 Excluding Orders and issued 37 Notices to Quit in relation to their tenancies in 2014.
- There were over 4,200 housing units vacant in Autumn 2015 and more than 13% of these had been vacant for longer than three years.
- 32% of these vacant units were vacant because of planned regeneration or remedial works schemes.
- The average length of time units re-let in 2014 were vacant ranged from seven weeks to 83 weeks.
- Almost 31% of all vacant units needed major work to be carried out before they could be re-let again.
- Some measures being used to minimise vacancies by local authorities were: putting framework agreements in place with contractors, introducing new management systems to focus on vacancies, identifying new tenants at an early stage, prioritising refurbishment of houses in high demand areas and the introduction by a few local authorities of choice-based lettings.
- Local authorities received €348 million in rents from tenants in 2014 and the overall collection yield that year was 84% of the amount due.
- Nationally, average rent charged in 2014 was €224 per month.
- The average rent received per dwelling in 2014 was 159% of the average expenditure on maintaining and improving dwellings that year.

## Chapter 4 Maintenance of Local Authority Housing

This chapter examines the arrangements in place to maintain and repair local authority housing and ready units for re-letting. Material from the tenant survey (shaded in blue) is included alongside the text.

### 4.1 Establishing the Condition of Local Authority Housing Stock

In order to be in a position to make decisions around maintenance, a local authority needs to be aware of the condition of its housing stock. Authorities were asked their approach to gauging the condition of their stock.

Only 15 local authorities<sup>23</sup> have ever carried out condition surveys and, of these, five (Carlow, Monaghan, South Dublin, Waterford and Wexford) reported conducting such surveys at regular intervals. Of these five, none said they carried out a comprehensive survey of all stock at specified periods but rather Monaghan, Waterford and Wexford used a rolling survey basis over a 5-year cycle<sup>24</sup>.

Only 28% of residents reported having had a Home Condition Survey

Satisfaction with the structural condition of the property is high, with 4 in 5 satisfied and was 80-100% in 23 of the 29 local authorities covered by the tenant survey. Satisfaction with the structural condition is higher among those living in newer homes (<10 years), and those in smaller local authorities.

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The Clerk of Works was the main staff member mentioned by local authorities as carrying out surveys where done by local authority staff. Of the 15 authorities that conducted surveys, 11 use their own staff, Wexford uses a combination of their own staff plus BER assessors and estate agents, Louth's surveys have been out to tender since September 2015 and Westmeath and Wicklow did not provide the information. Appendix G outlines the position for all authorities giving the last survey year<sup>25</sup> in cases where a comprehensive survey has been carried out. It also indicates where surveys are done on a rolling basis and which staff are responsible for carrying out the surveys.

### 4.2 Maintenance Provision and Procurement

There has been a reduction in the number of local authority staff dedicated to the maintenance function in recent years. This has been accompanied by a move to contract maintenance.

Local authorities were asked who carried out maintenance work and Clare, Fingal and Westmeath County Councils responded that contractors carry out all maintenance work, while the other authorities all said that it was a mixture of local authority and contract staff. The stated number of trades/general operatives reporting to each supervisor or foreman ranged from one in Donegal and Meath County Councils to 22 staff in Limerick.

<sup>23</sup> Carlow, Clare, Donegal, Kildare, Kilkenny, Longford, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Roscommon, South Dublin, Westmeath, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.

<sup>24</sup> Information not provided by Carlow and South Dublin.

<sup>25</sup> Sligo County Council's response of 1900 has been disregarded.

Authorities reported using a variety of methods to procure contractors, including the use of local and national frameworks, term maintenance frameworks and contracts, panels, etc. The number of authorities using each type of arrangement is set out in Table 4.1.

*Table 4.1 Contractor Procurement Arrangements in Local Authorities*

Procurement Method <sup>26</sup>	No. of Authorities Using
Term Maintenance Frameworks	24
Framework Agreements - National	11
Framework Agreements - Local	17
Panels – National	12
Panels – Local	15
Short Form of Contract - National	8
Short Form of Contract - Local	18
Minor Works Contract - National	16
Minor Works Contract - Local	10

### 4.3 Approach to Maintenance

21 local authorities<sup>27</sup> stated that they had a published maintenance policy statement.

17 authorities reported using planned maintenance scheduling for some work. In the cases of those that provided details of the type of planned maintenance involved, the most common was boiler maintenance/heating upgrades (8) and window and door replacement (4).

### 4.4 Cost of Maintenance

Maintenance expenditure falls into three main categories – expenditure on planned maintenance, expenditure on response maintenance and the cost of specific planned

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<sup>26</sup> A framework agreement is defined in Directive 2004/18/EC as *an agreement between one or more contracting authorities and one or more economic operators, the purpose of which is to establish the terms governing contracts to be awarded during a given period, in particular with regard to price and, where appropriate, the quantity*. A panel is a list, advertised on an annual basis, of companies of established financial and technical capacity from which future tenders may be sought for on-going regular requirements. The Short Form of Contract is the appropriate choice for Employer-designed projects whose value is less than €500,000 (including VAT) and the project is straightforward – for example, replacing a pump, replacing a valve, replacing radiators, installing a boiler, replacing windows, repairing a roof, painting and decorating. A Minor Works Contract is the appropriate choice where the value of the employer-designed project (including VAT) is less than €5 million and the project is relatively straightforward and can be executed by a smaller contractor, without significant input from specialist subcontractors.

<sup>27</sup> Carlow, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Galway City, Kildare, Longford, Mayo, Meath, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford stated they do not.

improvement works such as refurbishment, insulation, windows upgrading and boiler replacement.

Local authorities were asked the total cost in 2014 of the maintenance function carried out by local authority staff (including labour, materials, equipment, administration and other overheads) per type of maintenance work and the total cost in 2014 of the maintenance work carried out by contractors. They were also asked the number of units per type of maintenance work maintained by local authority staff and maintained by contractor staff in 2014. Analysis of the information returned led to considerable doubts about its accuracy. Many authorities reported costs that exceeded the cost of maintenance and improvement reported in their annual accounts. Other obvious discrepancies were also noted, so, notwithstanding the subsequent confirmation of the questionnaire responses by Chief Executives, NOAC decided not to utilise these questionnaire responses for the purposes of this report.

Authorities reported that €98m had been paid to contractors in respect of maintenance in 2014. On the basis that this information is likely to be accurate, since it is based on procurement and defined jobs, the breakdown of the contracted expenditure for 2014 is set out in Table 4.2.

*Table 4.2 Cost of Contracted Maintenance 2014*

	No. of Units	Total Cost €	Average Cost per Unit €
Contractor Planned Maintenance	35,912	10,193,441	284
Contractor Response Maintenance	40,276	33,483,492	831
Contractor Planned Improvements (e.g. refurbishment works, insulation, upgrade of boilers etc.)	16,015	46,782,588	2,921
Other Contractor	168 <sup>28</sup>	7,613,493 <sup>29</sup>	45,318
<b>Total Contractor Maintenance</b>	<b>92,371</b>	<b>98,073,014</b>	<b>1,062</b>

The data by local authority is at Appendix I.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Galway City 21, Kilkenny 1, Leitrim 56, Wexford 40 and Wicklow 50 units.

<sup>29</sup> Overall figures provided by Louth and Tipperary on contractor expenditure are included in 'Other' because no breakdown by type was provided. No unit figures were provided for either of these two authorities or for Kildare, Limerick, Mayo and Offaly.

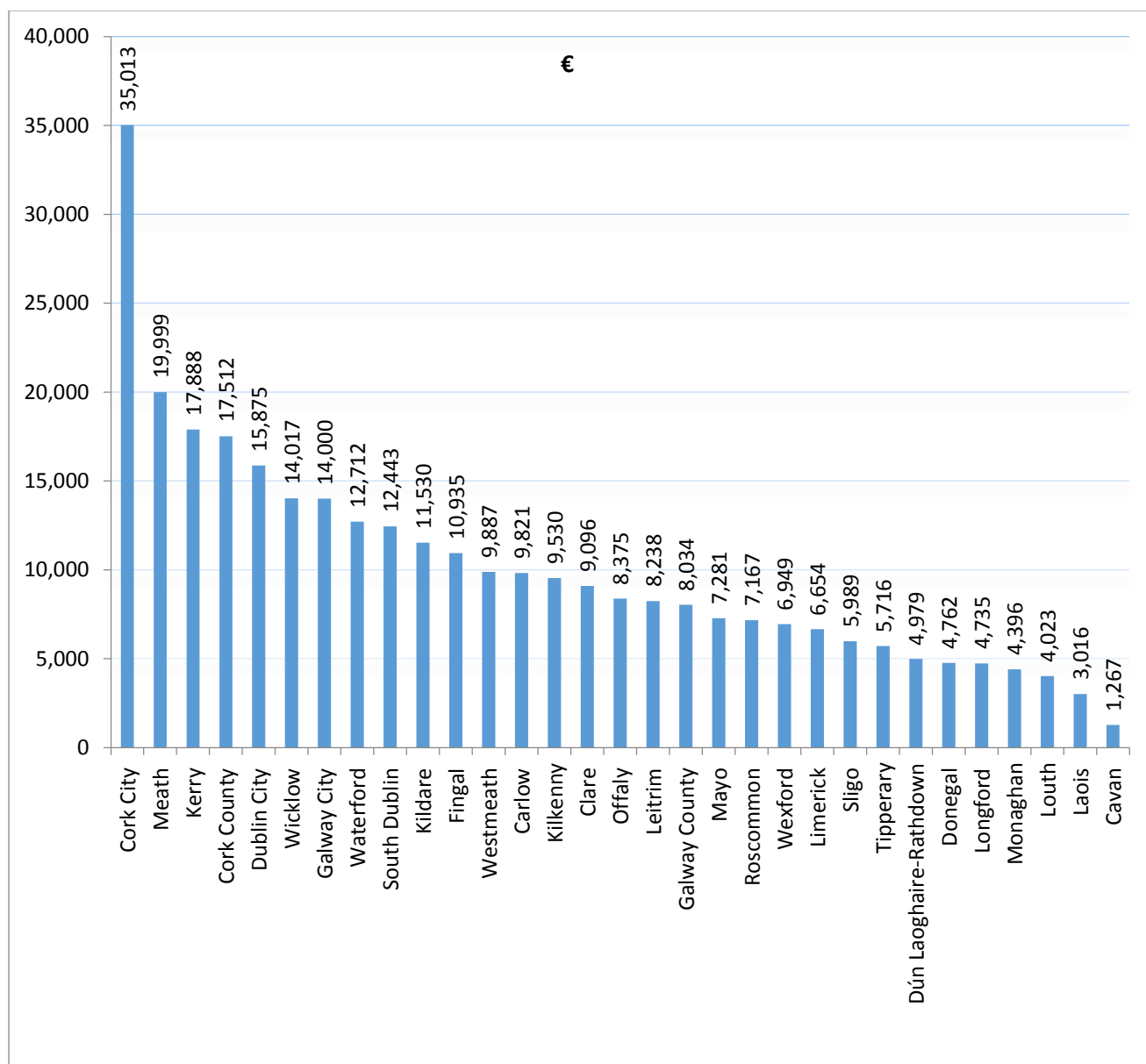
<sup>30</sup> Note: Local authorities were asked in separate questions to provide expenditure on maintenance services procured from contractors in 2014 and the breakdown of the cost of maintenance work carried out by contractors in 2014 into planned, response, improvements and other. The figures supplied differed in the case of 21 authorities and many of the discrepancies were substantial, so the data provided in response to the first of these questions has been largely disregarded.



## 4.5 Readyng Vacant Units for Re-Letting

For the 2014 Performance Indicators report, local authorities reported overall spending of €51,180,399 in preparing 4,437 vacant units for re-letting in 2014. Taking the amount spent and dividing it by the number of vacant units involved in each local authority gives a range of €1,267 per unit in Cavan to €35,013 per unit in Cork City.<sup>31</sup> Figure 4.1 provides the unit cost per local authority.

Figure 4.1 Re-letting Unit Cost by Local Authority in 2014



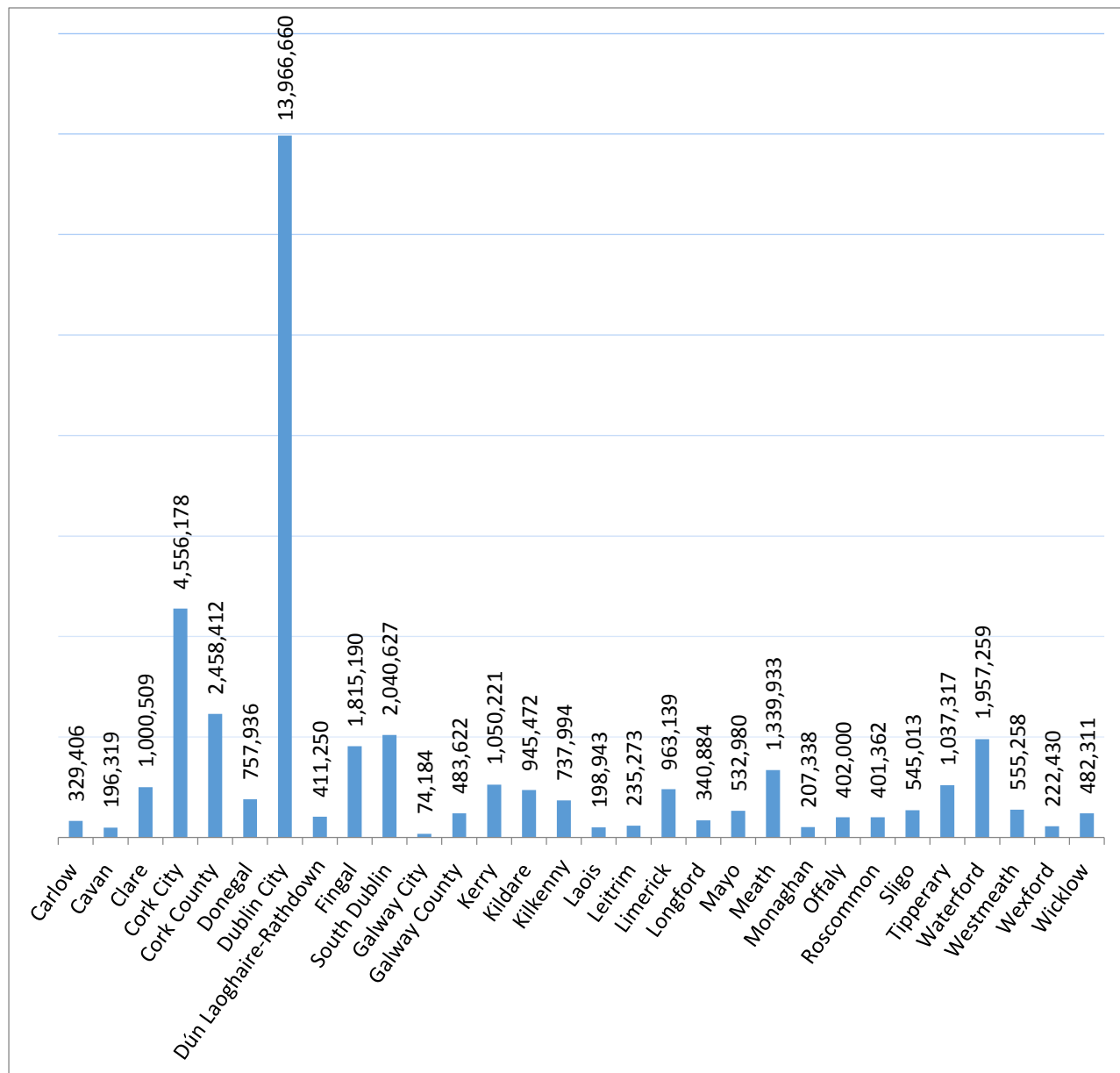
Based on questionnaire responses, across the country expenditure by local authorities on contractors, as a percentage of overall expenditure on vacant units, ranged from 10% in Galway City Council to a maximum of 100% in nine local authorities.<sup>32</sup> Figure 4.2 provides

<sup>31</sup> However, this figure is not a reflection necessarily of similar work being carried out.

<sup>32</sup> No percentage returned by Louth.

the reported percentages applied to the 2014 expenditure by local authority<sup>33</sup>. The amount spent by each local authority together with the number of units refurbished to facilitate re-letting and the percentage of these completed by contractors is set out at Appendix K.

Figure 4.2 Expenditure on Readyng Vacant Units Paid to Contractors



## 4.6 Central Government Funding

Local authorities reported claiming €55,873,874 from the Department in respect of improvement works carried out in 2014.<sup>34</sup> A further €26.3m was recouped under the Voids Programme. Nationally, grants were claimed for the types of work set out in Table 4.3.

<sup>33</sup> Louth did not return the contractor proportion of expenditure.

<sup>34</sup> Louth and Kildare returned no information on Departmental grants claimed.

Table 4.3 Grants towards Improvement Works 2014

Type of Work for which Grants were Claimed	Grants Claimed €	%
Remedial Works	15,004,237	18%
Energy Retrofitting	25,761,656	31%
Local Authority Extensions	3,220,442	4%
Regeneration	11,887,539	15%
Voids Programme	26,310,575	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,184,449</b>	<b>100%</b>

Appendix L contains the breakdown by local authority.

## 4.7 Local Government Funding

As well as rent payments being available to authorities to defray costs associated with managing and maintaining their housing stock, internal capital receipts (consisting of proceeds from sales under Tenant Purchase Schemes, Part V, Affordable Housing Clawback and Withering Levies) can be applied to improvement works to the stock in accordance with a Department approved programme of such works.

## 4.8 Repairs and Maintenance Stocks

Seven local authorities reported having a stock of materials for repairs and maintenance which had a total value of €626,262 at 31 December 2014. The total amount expended on such stock items in 2014 by the seven authorities was €2,992,547. All of those authorities reported maintaining stocks for common repair requests while two reported maintaining stocks for planned maintenance work.

## 4.9 Job Control

24 local authorities reported setting response times for specific jobs, of which 19 set response times for both their own staff and contractors. Clare, Fingal and Leitrim set response times for contractors but not for their own staff and Kildare and Sligo set response times for their own staff but not for contract staff.

Compliance with target times is monitored by local authorities by using a computerised system (iHouse), and most would have monitoring/supervision carried out by housing technical staff (Engineers/Area Maintenance Officers/Clerk of Works). Waterford City and County Council said it carries out follow-up calls to tenants and Monaghan County Council said it had a dedicated administrative staff member monitoring response times and inputting to iHouse. Cork City Council said that the contractors' own supervisors monitor compliance times and local authority foremen monitor its own staff. Fingal County Council holds monthly meetings with contractors. Donegal County Council said it did no monitoring of compliance with target times.

15 local authorities provided figures on their level of compliance with set targets and these ranged from 50% to 99%.

## 4.10 Repair Requests

During 2014, 178,000<sup>35</sup> requests for repairs were logged by local authorities.

There were almost 7,000 outstanding repair requests logged by 15 local authorities and waiting to be dealt with at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. The total estimated cost of these repairs was nearly €5m<sup>36</sup>. A further 7 authorities had nearly 2,800 outstanding repair requests logged at the time of completing the questionnaire, the estimated cost of which was €850k.<sup>37</sup> Appendix M contains the detail provided by the local authorities.

38% of tenants are not aware which repairs are the Council's responsibility.

Over half of tenants state that they always contact the Council when they need non-emergency repair work conducted. 1 in 7 have never needed to (mainly those living in new homes).

The average number of requests being made to the Council in the past 12 months is two per tenant, with the majority of requests (88%) being made over the phone.

Ease of contacting local authorities regarding repair is quite positive, as 7 in 10 tenants rate the process as easy – mainly driven by those living in smaller local authorities and in estates managed by the Council. Almost half, however, state that they always/sometimes have to make more than one contact to the Council per request, with the average number of contacts being two.

2 in 5 tenants believe that the Council always responds to non-emergency repair requests within the target time or in a reasonably quick timescale. However, while overall 15% of tenants find such responses to be rarely quick or within target, this rises to 21% in smaller local authorities.

3 in 5 tenants rate the quality of non-emergency repair work as good, while 1 in 4 rate the quality of the work as average.

However, the vast majority are not asked for feedback on the repair. In addition, less than one third stated that the repairs are always or sometimes inspected.

One third of tenants have organised repair work themselves over the past three years, mainly those not living in local authority managed estates.

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NOAC Tenant Survey

Authorities were requested to outline the systems that they use to record condition survey data, repair requests, planned maintenance, repair response times and maintenance expenditure. Two specific software systems, iHouse and Agresso, were the most widely used systems with 24 of the 31 authorities using iHouse for most of their housing functions,

<sup>35</sup> Cork City and Cork County Councils both returned a figure of 1 repair request each for the year.

<sup>36</sup> No cost figures were provided by 3 local authorities in relation to 1,049 of the outstanding requests.

<sup>37</sup> Authorities were asked to provide this data as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 or at the date of completing the questionnaire and no information was provided by the remaining 9 local authorities.

while 16 authorities use Agresso software for maintenance and other expenditure functions.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Non-Urgent Repair Requests***

Local authorities were asked what method is available to tenants to make non-urgent repair requests. Typically, tenants contact the housing department or customer care service, either by phone or email. A few local authorities operate a helpline that tenants use and some operate a dedicated repair request telephone line and email address. Two local authorities said tenants speak to the Rent Collectors and two others said requests can be made at tenant meetings or in letters from public representatives to the maintenance office.

Local authorities' procedures and policies for dealing with and prioritising non-urgent repairs varied. Most local authorities log the request when it is made, often on iHouse. The requests are normally assessed by housing maintenance staff and works will be carried out in some local authorities within a specified timeframe for non-urgent requests (ranging from 6 to 12 weeks); others carry out requests depending on funds available to the local authority; and one replied that it was using a mixture of need, cost and length of time that determined when, or if, the repair request would be carried out. Two local authorities said a request might be denied if the tenant was in breach of the tenancy agreement, including for non-payment of rent.

### ***Emergency Repair Requests***

Local authorities were also asked about the method available to tenants to request emergency repairs. Responses were similar to the non-urgent repair requests, except that most local authorities operate an out-of-hours or emergency phone line that tenants can call with emergency requests.

All emergency repair requests are dealt with as a matter of urgency by local authorities. Some local authorities have set times ranging from one to two hours (in case of dangerous faults such as gas leak, smoking fuse board or burst pipes) to inspection within 24 hours and repair completed within one to two days. Some local authorities set out response times in tenant handbooks.

Almost half of tenants have contacted their local authority regarding emergency repairs, with those living in older homes (30+ years old) and those paying maintenance fees being the most likely to have done so.

Leaks were the most common reason for needing emergency repair work (42%), followed by electrical/ dangerous wiring (26%).

2 in 5 emergency faults were fixed within 24 hours. In total almost half are fixed within 48 hours.

Over one third took longer than 72 hours.

Awareness of the Council setting targets on response times for dealing with various types of repair requests is low, with just 1 in 5 tenants being aware, mainly driven by newer tenants. Among those who are aware of their Council's target response time, almost 3 in 5 state that they know how the Council performs (this equates to just 1 in 5 of all tenants).

NOAC Tenant Survey

<sup>38</sup> Other authorities reported using a variety of other systems including Northgate OHMS, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, GeoPal, Excel spreadsheets and Integra.

Local authorities were asked if target response times could not be met, how the order in which repair requests were dealt with was determined. The majority of local authorities answered that this was determined by the level of urgency of the repair request and some use a categorisation system of “Emergency, Urgent, Routine and Cyclical” to determine the response order. Some local authorities said that the decision was made by local authority staff, often after inspection of the dwelling. One local authority said they had no set procedure and two said it was dependent on the length of time since the repair request was logged.

#### **4.11 Communication with Tenants**

16 authorities make information about target response times available to tenants.

When queried about the methods used to inform tenants about target response times, local authorities outlined a range of methods. Most made the information available in documents such as Tenant Handbooks, Housing Maintenance Policies or Estate Management Plans although a small number of local authorities supplied the information on their website or on request over the phone.

Four authorities (Clare, Waterford, Westmeath and Wicklow) stated that they make information about actual response times available to tenants generally.

Six authorities reported that they gauge the level of tenant satisfaction with how their repair requests were dealt with:

- Kilkenny and Longford County Councils use reactive methods, which were that the tenants contacted the local authority either to compliment the work that had been carried out or to complain.
- Dublin City Council operates a customer complaints procedure that includes investigation and appropriate intervention by the Customer Services Centre and the Corporate Department.
- Cork City Council operates a more proactive way of checking up on customer satisfaction in the case of central heating repairs, whereby 10% of tenants are called by the contract supervisor to establish if they are happy with the service provided.
- In Clare County Council the level of satisfaction is reviewed in the course of Clerk of Works inspections and also as part of the estate management role.
- Kerry County Council gather information through on-going contact with tenants, feedback from Councillors and through surveys carried out by Housing Liaison officers in certain estates.

## 4.12 Budgeting, Costing and Record Keeping

26 authorities reported using budget control systems.<sup>39</sup> Other methods of budget control included maintaining spreadsheets, monthly budgetary reviews and monthly or quarterly reports.

Four authorities (Clare, Cork County, Kildare and Westmeath) reported preparing cost estimates for all jobs, 26 do so for some jobs while Offaly does not do so at all. Where some or all jobs have been estimated, the final outturn is compared with the estimate in 24 of the 31 authorities. 21 of these authorities reported net deviations ranging from 0%<sup>40</sup> to 13% between estimates and cost.

With regard to repairs to individual properties, 19 authorities maintain a permanent record of all work carried out on housing units and the associated costs involved.

## 4.13 Contribution by Tenants

Just five authorities<sup>41</sup> reported operating an annual maintenance service charge agreement with tenants. Four of these provided the total annual amount from the yearly maintenance service charge agreements collected in 2014: Dublin City Council collected €2,251,080, Cork City Council collected €726,000, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council collected €624,531 and Fingal County Council collected €794,698. However, at least some tenants of a further seven authorities (Cork County, Donegal, Kilkenny, Offaly, Tipperary, Waterford and Wicklow) who participated in the tenant survey, confirmed that their local authority charged a maintenance fee. Nationally, the range of services covered is outlined in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Tenant Contributions

Service Provided by Local Authority	No. of LAs
Boiler Service and Maintenance	4 (Cork City, Dublin City, DLR and Fingal)
Refuse Collection	2 (Kerry and DLR)
Communal Heating Charge	1 (DLR)
Management and Control of certain dwellings	1 (Fingal)
Septic Tank maintenance	1 (Kerry)
Heating maintenance/Refuse Collection/Caretaker Service	1 (Kerry)

Eight authorities<sup>42</sup> reported carrying out repairs in 2014 that were rechargeable to tenants. The total charges in 2014 were €36,284.<sup>43</sup> €9,949 was repaid by tenants in 2014.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The main systems used were Agresso, Oracle, Integra Financial System, Buildsoft and iHouse, with Agresso being used by 15 local authorities. Kildare, Laois, Leitrim, Offaly and Tipperary County Councils responded that they do not use budget control systems.

<sup>40</sup> Cork and Galway Cities and Mayo, Monaghan and Westmeath Counties reported deviations of 0%.

<sup>41</sup> Dublin City, Fingal, Kerry, Cork City and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

<sup>42</sup> Cork City, Kerry, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Mayo, Sligo and South Dublin.

Conversely, two authorities reported authorising tenants to have repairs conducted themselves and reimbursing them.<sup>45</sup> Tenants were reimbursed for such services in 2014 with credits applied to their rent account.

#### 4.14 Inspection of Repairs and Maintenance Work

27 authorities reported that repairs and maintenance work is inspected. In general, works carried out by local authority staff are supervised by local authority technical staff, Clerk of Works or Housing Foremen.<sup>46</sup>

19 of these authorities reported that all types of works are inspected by the Clerk of Works or technical staff such as Executive Engineer, Senior Executive Engineer and Executive Technician, regardless of whether the work was carried out by local authority staff or by a contractor.

However, of the 494 tenants who participated in the survey who had repair work conducted within the previous 3 years, 59% said the repairs had never been inspected by or on behalf of the Council. On an individual local authority basis, at least 60% of the tenants described post repair work inspections as rarely or never taking place in 22 local authorities.

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NOAC Tenant Survey

#### 4.15 Energy Efficiency of Units

Local authorities were asked what percentage of units had been retrofitted with energy efficiency measures. Figures ranged from 5% in South Dublin County Council to 95% in Wexford County Council. 17 local authorities have retrofitted at least half of their dwellings.

None of the authorities has established energy ratings for all its social housing; however, all local authorities have completed this process for some properties. The proportion of units with energy ratings ranged from 10% of the stock in Kerry and Kildare to 95% in Wexford<sup>47</sup>. Where dwellings have been energy rated, the overall rating profile of those dwellings within the categories A to G is set out in Figure 4.3. In brackets next to each local authority name is the percentage of their housing units that has been energy rated. Local authorities that did not provide a breakdown by energy ratings are not included in the chart.<sup>48</sup>

At the time of completion of the questionnaire, 39,408 dwellings had been energy rated, representing 39% of the housing stock of the 25 local authorities who provided the requested data. Over 21,000 or 53% of these units have been rated in the A, B or C category, which equates to 21% of the total stock of these authorities.

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<sup>43</sup> Only Cork City, Kerry, Leitrim and South Dublin provided figures.

<sup>44</sup> Just Leitrim and South Dublin provided figures on how much was paid back by tenants in 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Cork City and Mayo.

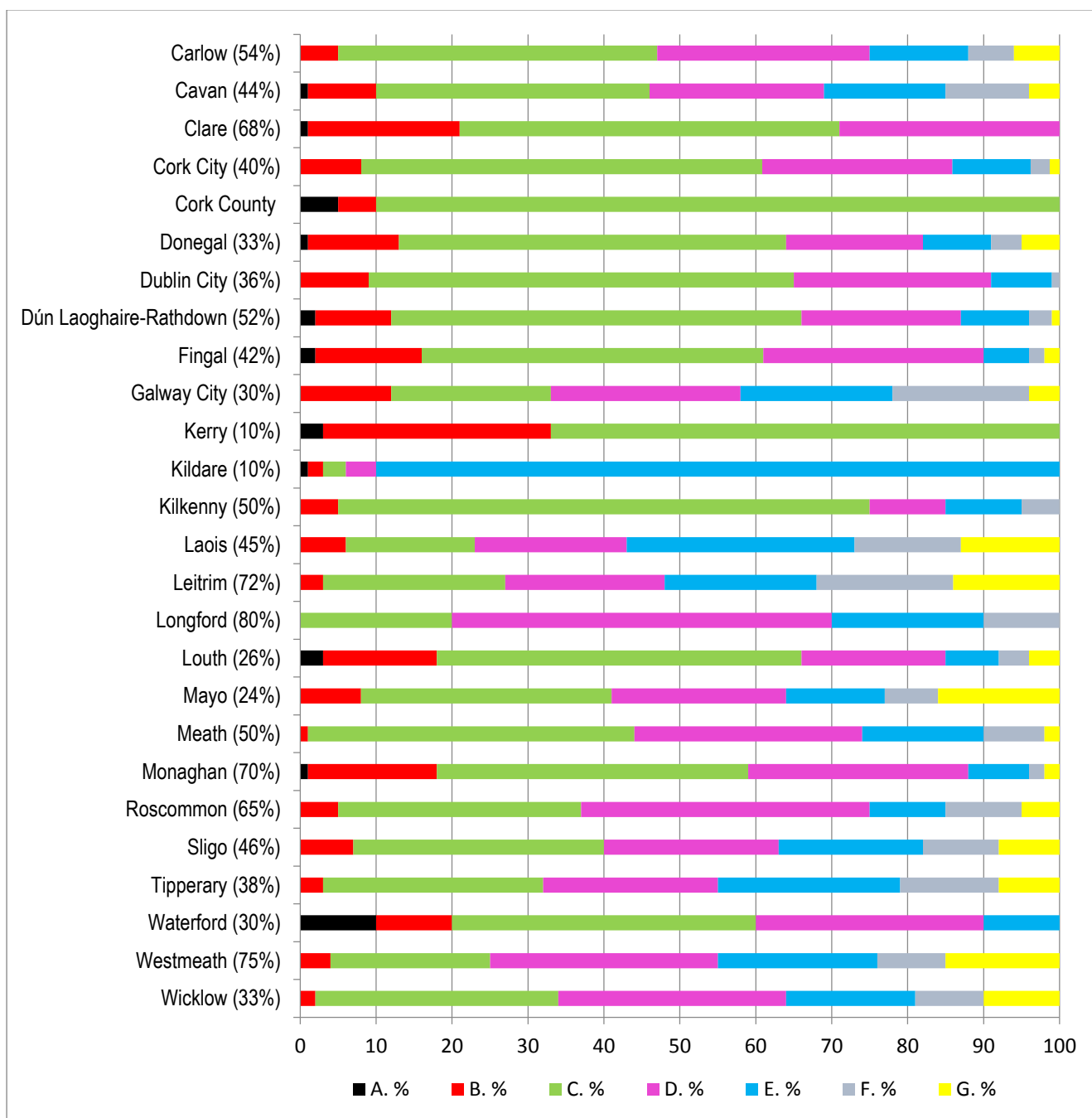
<sup>46</sup> Cork County, Louth and Tipperary indicated that repairs/maintenance work were not subject to inspection and Roscommon gave no reply to this question.

<sup>47</sup> Cork County did not provide the overall percentage of stock that has been energy rated and therefore no percentage is included in Figure 4.3.

<sup>48</sup> Galway County, Limerick, Offaly, South Dublin and Wexford.



Figure 4.3 Breakdown of Energy Rating for Dwellings Rated by Local Authority (%)



#### 4.16 Standards for Rented Houses

The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008 (as amended in 2009) were made under the 1992 Housing Act, as amended, which requires landlords to ensure that their rented houses comply with the requirements of the Regulations and empowers local authorities to authorise a person to enter, at all reasonable times, and inspect a rented house. It is a function of local authorities to enforce the provisions of these Regulations in relation to all rented accommodation, including the accommodation provided by local authorities themselves to their own tenants. The Regulations require that the dwelling be maintained in a proper state of structural repair and specify requirements in relation to

sanitary and heating facilities, ventilation, lighting, fire safety, refuse facilities and electrical and gas installations. Local authority dwellings are, however, exempt from the requirements relating to food preparation, storage and laundry.

Authorities were queried as to the measures they take when an inspection reveals that a property does not comply with the Regulations. Nearly all local authorities reported that the houses would be brought up to standard, albeit in several cases subject to the necessary funding being available. Westmeath and Wexford County Councils mentioned re-housing the tenants either temporarily or permanently if required. Kerry County Council advised that no action is taken where a tenanted house is found not to meet the standards.

## Summary

- Just five local authorities said that they carried out condition surveys of their housing stock at regular intervals, though another 10 authorities had carried out a condition survey in the past.
- The overall cost of maintenance and improvement reported by local authorities in their annual financial statements for 2014 was approximately €219 million.
- Reported expenditure on maintenance carried out by contractors was €98 million.
- Local authorities reported spending €51.2 million readying 4,437 vacant units for re-letting in 2014.
- Over €82 million was claimed in grants from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in 2014 for works carried out; 31% of this was for energy retrofitting.
- Over 178,000 repair requests were logged in 2014.
- The number of repair requests logged and waiting to be dealt with at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 was 6,989, with an estimated cost of nearly €5 million.
- Just five local authorities reported operating an annual maintenance service charge agreement with tenants. The total amount collected by local authorities ranged from €2,251,080 by Dublin City Council to €624,531 in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.
- 27 local authorities reported that completed repair work is inspected.
- 17 local authorities had retrofitted at least half their housing stock with energy efficiency measures.

## Chapter 5 Views of Local Authorities

As part of the NOAC review, local authorities were requested to set out measures that could lead to process improvements in the administration of their social housing. In response, individual authorities put forward a range of initiatives that could impact on overall efficiency and effectiveness. Accordingly, this chapter sets out the views of the local authorities on potential improvements, challenges and opportunities.

### 5.1 Potential Improvement Measures

Amongst the measures suggested by individual local authorities were

- Developing a strategic housing plan for the local authority area
- Setting objectives to develop sustainable neighbourhoods and building good community participation
- Setting target response times for repair requests
- Adopting new technologies, including introduction of new housing maintenance systems, such as GeoPal or OHMS to improve efficiencies
- Carrying out housing stock surveys or inspecting all their stock
- Enhancing the customer experience in dealings between the local authority and tenant.

Authorities also saw opportunities to combat anti-social behaviour by employing an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer and a Tenant Liaison Officer with the aim of preventing and responding to anti-social behaviour and encouraging the involvement of resident groups in the management of their estates.

### 5.2 Challenges and Opportunities

There appears to be scope to evaluate these and the responses to the challenges local authorities identified (as set out below) with a view to identifying innovative and effective approaches capable of wider application. Local authorities set out the key challenges and opportunities that they face in implementing their objectives, and the approaches that they have taken, or are taking, to address them.

The four key challenges identified were:

- Resourcing
- Financial constraints
- Housing stock management
- Tenant behaviour.

Far ahead of all other challenges for local authorities were issues to do with resourcing and financing levels; 19 local authorities mentioned these as challenges. Some acknowledged that the improved economic situation, increasing capital budgets and the lifting of staff embargoes were bringing about change and improvements. Meath County Council pointed

out that the increase in capital housing programmes presents a challenge to the ramp up of output in the context of the reduced staff levels.

### ***Resourcing***

The key resourcing challenges identified by local authorities were classified as follows:

- Staffing levels
- Availability of contractors
- Expertise levels
- Staff training and resourcing implications of health and safety requirements
- Capital housing programme increasing significantly but implementation constrained by existing staff levels
- One authority saw gaining union agreement to changes and to increasing efficiency as a challenge.

Amongst the responses identified or implemented to address these challenges were:

- Increase staffing levels
- Use of framework agreements for contracts and contracting out work in bundles so as to achieve better quality and cost savings through larger contracts
- Exploit the experience of current staff and their excellent relationship with communities
- Adopt technology such as GeoPal to improve efficiencies and upgrade the skill sets of staff
- Develop current staff and provide appropriate training
- Implement a plan with staff to improve service delivery at all stages, including the use of ICT.

Westmeath County Council highlighted the need to ensure that all staff are aware of the local authority's Customer Service Action Plan content and the response times for repair requests.

### ***Financial Constraints***

The main financial constraints identified by local authorities included:

- The likelihood that the national rents framework will mean reduced revenue, which will impact on funding of the maintenance programme
- Depletion of Internal Capital Receipts resources due to closure of the 1995 Tenant Purchase Scheme

- The constraint that arises from the Voids Programme threshold limits<sup>49</sup> within the allocation per dwelling, restrictions as to what voids funding can be spent on and the funding categorisation of voids
- Overconcentration of resources on response maintenance with spending on re-active maintenance works pre-dominating
- Land loans not being dealt with as a national issue and potential deployment of resources to cover loan servicing costs rather than maintenance
- Achieving economy in completion of contracted works.

Approaches to addressing these challenges identified or implemented included:

- Use of the Improvement Works Programme<sup>50</sup>
- Optimising the finance available from the Voids Programme, SEAI fascia and soffit replacement programme and energy efficiency works and RAS Reserve/Internal Capital Receipts funding
- Shifting the focus to the implementation of an effective voids management programme and a preventative management programme
- Contracting out work in bundles.

Three local authorities said that restrictions regarding the Voids Programme criteria had an impact on their ability to claim allocations. Wexford County Council suggested that a block grant of €30,000 would reduce the administrative burden for local authorities.

Some local authorities said that their finances were being taken up responding in a re-active manner to housing repair needs, as opposed to providing a more pro-active programme of maintenance works.

Many of the authorities stated that they were using the different funding programmes that are available.

### ***Housing Stock Management***

The principal challenges relating to the management of the housing stock identified by local authorities included:

- Dealing with an ageing housing stock
- Improving the energy efficiency of the stock
- Availability of funding to upgrade the stock

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<sup>49</sup> In the case of each property, the amount funded to local authorities depends on the works they undertake, which varies in every case, and is a maximum of €30,000 per social housing unit.

<sup>50</sup> Under this scheme, a local authority may improve or extend a privately owned house to eliminate defects or to provide additional accommodation where necessary to eliminate overcrowding and where the carrying out of the works result in the removal of the household from the housing waiting list.

- Not having up-to-date information on all the stock and not having the funding or resources to do a full inspection/survey of all stock
- Competing with higher quality private rented stock
- Stock in low demand areas leading to higher vacancy rates and low supply in high demand areas
- Keeping voids to a minimum and reducing vacancy time
- High level of casual vacancies
- Housing being returned in varying conditions which makes funding requirements difficult to predict
- The limited funding available for adaptations annually.

Galway City Council referred to the challenge of radon testing and remediating all stock to within the permitted reference level of 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>.

Approaches to addressing these challenges that were highlighted by local authorities included:

- Some local authorities have carried out full audits of their housing stock and Meath County Council said it was going to follow the example of some other local authorities and outsource this work
- Meath County Council is developing an Estate Management Policy and a Service Level Agreement
- Cork City Council has put in place frameworks for all the major works that need to be done
- Including lifetime adaptable homes in new building projects
- Having a planned preventative maintenance programme
- Improving response times and so limiting further damage to buildings by using a central repair line linked to area teams
- Ensuring that proper procurement measures are adhered to
- Having adequate frameworks in place at an early stage to facilitate work starting as soon as funding is confirmed
- Voids funding leading to more focus on improvement in turnover of properties.

The main challenge identified by five local authorities was the age of the social housing stock in their ownership.

Two local authorities said that applicants refusing the housing offered to them was a challenge and two local authorities mentioned that the private housing on offer was of a higher quality in their areas.

One local authority mentioned that a specific challenge was the resistance from surrounding landholders to the allocation of rural houses that were built on family landholdings and had

then been transferred to the local authority. This authority said that another challenge was instances where a tenant who had moved into long-term care did not want to relinquish the tenancy.

### ***Tenant Behaviour and Expectations***

The principal challenges relating to tenant behaviour and attitudes that were identified by local authorities included:

- Increased tenant expectations and demands in relation to the quality and location of their accommodation preferences
- Tenants refusing housing offered
- Achieving tenant responsibility and compliance with tenancy agreements
- Level of aggression of tenants to local authority staff
- Anti-social behaviour
- Changing demographic – impact of older people’s disability needs on budgets and housing stock
- Tenants with identified medical and community support service needs that are not available to the local authority.

Five local authorities referred to the challenges of dealing with tenants. Two authorities cited working with tenants to ensure that they were compliant with their tenancy agreements as a challenge. Two mentioned anti-social behaviour, one specifically mentioning aggression of tenants towards local authority staff and a couple spoke of dealing with the increased expectations of tenants.

The range of responses identified or implemented by local authorities included:

- Investigating changing work practices and outsourcing elements of management of blocks of units
- Introducing response-based solutions to customer complaints, subject to the nature of the complaint and available funding
- Wexford County Council developed a form to record the number of aggressive incidents under Health and Safety procedures
- In Sligo County Council an opportunity was seen for involving residents’ associations with interest in their areas and communities
- Donegal County Council is continuing to encourage tenants to participate in the running of their estates and Kerry County Council sees an opportunity to lead the building of sustainable communities through the strengthening of community linkages
- Kerry County Council referred to the opportunity to use customer surveys to measure customer satisfaction levels.

## Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

While each authority sets its own management and maintenance objectives, broadly common aims across authorities include:

- Providing and maintaining houses to a good standard, within available budgets
- Delivering energy efficient stock
- Refurbishing void and vacant properties and tenancing them promptly
- Responding to repair requests from tenants within set timeframes, standards and levels of urgency
- Building good relationships with their tenants.

The specific conclusions and recommendation from the review are outlined below.

### 6.1 Challenges and Improvement Opportunities

Local authorities identified the following challenges in managing their housing stock effectively:

- Maintaining an aging housing stock, 61% of which is over 20 years old
- Improving the energy efficiency of the stock
- Minimising vacant periods
- Resourcing the upgrade or adaptation of properties
- Lack of up-to-date information on the condition of the housing stock
- Competing with private rented stock where of a higher quality
- Location of stock in low demand areas leading to higher vacancy rates
- Variations in condition of property when returned to the local authority.

Many local authorities have identified approaches to refurbishment and allocation that have led to improvements. These included:

- Minimising delays in contract awards through framework agreements and pre-qualified panels of contractors
- Providing for better internal liaison between related functions within authorities, sometimes after process improvement initiatives
- Early identification of new tenants and pre-allocation of properties, which also reduces vandalism
- Prioritising refurbishment in high demand areas
- Introducing choice-based lettings.

***The potential of such initiatives to deliver improvement should be reviewed by local authorities generally to identify the extent to which they may be transferrable to their operations.***

### 6.2 Assigned Staff Resources

The reported variation in the number of local authority staff assigned to the management of their housing stock is very large, from 66 dwelling units per wholetime equivalent in Dublin City to 1,197 in Galway County. The proportion of total local authority staff assigned to the functions of managing and maintaining their own housing stock ranged from 2.26% in



Galway County to 18.78% in Galway City, with 22 authorities allocating between 3% and 10% of their staff to this work.

***These variations are so substantial that NOAC considers a more rigorous examination of the proportion of resources assigned to this work might be a suitable area for an efficiency and cost effectiveness review by the Local Government Audit Service.***

### **6.3 Maximising Occupancy**

There are two factors that impact on re-letting times – the extent and duration of any refurbishment work needed to the dwelling and, once ready for occupation, the time taken to allocate and commence a tenancy. It is very important that local authorities minimise their re-letting times, particularly in the context of the current shortage of housing for waiting list applicants. NOAC notes that a key action in the Government's *Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* is to achieve the refurbishment and re-letting of vacant social housing units with minimal delay in line with best asset management practices. This is stated to involve adopting a national re-letting performance standard across all local authorities, a preventative maintenance approach to housing stock management, greater focus on the roles and responsibilities of tenants and funding mechanisms structured to incentivise swift turnaround, consistent standards and pro-active approaches.

Table 3.2 shows that 2,250 local authority houses were vacant for more than a year at the time of the questionnaire responses. That figure includes 1,082 dwellings that are void pending demolition or refurbishment for which the duration of the vacancy was not recorded, but which are likely to have been empty for some time. The fact that so many of the vacancies are of such a long duration gives credence to a view that some dwellings are deliberately being left vacant for long periods so as to qualify for particular funding schemes rather than use up the authority's internal capital receipts to finance necessary refurbishment work. It is hard not to conclude that the existing funding schemes, such as the Voids Programme described in Chapter 3.5 and the regeneration/remedial works scheme, can end up having a perverse impact on available supply.

***Consistent with the policy objective espoused in Rebuilding Ireland, there is a need to review the basis of funding for the renovation of vacant properties so as to avoid any 'incentive' to delay the return of a dwelling to use. The creation of a specific reserve to fund improvements to vacant properties should be considered. The funds could be sourced from capital receipts and block grants from the State. It would be desirable to set the combined level of resource in advance of the financial year. In addition, a full cost benefit analysis should be carried out to underpin any decision by a local authority to set aside a unit for a planned development that may not take place for some time.***

In relation to the time it takes to allocate a dwelling and commence a tenancy, *Rebuilding Ireland* indicates an intention to implement across all local authorities, as soon as possible, a choice-based or equivalent letting system tailored to the specific circumstances of authorities. Four local authorities indicated in their questionnaire responses that the application of choice-based lettings was helping to minimise their vacancies.

***The extension of choice-based lettings to other local authorities could bring about a reduction in the average duration of vacancies. A benefit of that approach is that it would quickly become apparent if dwellings exist for which there is absolutely no demand and that could be disposed of to release resources for accommodation in areas of high demand.***

#### **6.4 Estate Management**

Over 91% of all local authority dwellings are located in estates managed by the authorities. While the overall level of tenant satisfaction with their neighbourhood is high, NOAC's tenant survey found that tenants not living in estates managed by the local authority displayed higher levels of satisfaction. A fifth of the tenants who participated in the survey have complained about anti-social behaviour in their estates and local authorities provided details to NOAC of their procedures and policies for dealing with such incidents. They reported applying for 25 Excluding Orders and issuing 37 Notices to Quit in 2014.

***The fact that almost half of the Excluding Orders were not complied with calls into question the effectiveness of this measure and Chief Executives should consider if there are alternative actions that could be taken to improve the situation of tenants suffering the consequences of anti-social behaviour.***

Proactive management opportunities identified by authorities in the area of estate management included:

- Involvement of residents' associations (Sligo)
- Encouraging tenant participation in running of estates (Donegal)
- Strengthening community linkages (Kerry).

Recommended measures based on the tenant survey findings include:

- Explore potential to conduct house condition surveys in more local authority areas, as this engages tenants
- Ensure the Estate Management Policy is sent to all tenants; this should be in an easily digestible format and remind tenants what non-emergency repairs are their own responsibility
- Promote tenant/Council meetings in all areas and educate tenants on the importance of attending these meetings
- Ensure tenants receive feedback when they make a complaint regarding anti-social behaviour, or an estate maintenance issue. The outcomes from the handling of the complaint should be communicated to all the tenants of the estate. [

***Local authorities need to consider what practical measures they can take, in conjunction with other agencies, to foster stronger communities by engaging with and bringing housing administration closer to and involving residents.***

#### **6.5 Customer Satisfaction**

The results of the customer experience and satisfaction survey of local authority tenants carried out for the purpose of this report showed quite good levels of satisfaction by local authority tenants with the quality and maintenance of their dwellings and the management of their estates. 81% of the surveyed tenants are satisfied with the structural condition of their

home. 48% believe that the Council's service has improved over the past 5 years. Overall, two thirds of tenants living in a local authority estate would praise their Council's housing and maintenance services. 64% of the tenants' homes had benefitted from energy efficiency improvement works and 28% were the subject of a Home Condition Survey. Of those tenants living in local authority estates, 85% consider their estate to be a pleasant place to live.

## **6.6 Procurement**

Even taking into account discrepancies in the figures, the data supplied by local authorities indicates that the unit cost of planned, response and improvement maintenance work is considerably lower when the work is carried out by contractors. In addition, 14 local authorities reported how contracting has helped reduce the duration of vacancies. This suggests that authorities should seek to maximise the work allocated to contractors where this is an option.

***However, there appears to be a need to review the variety of procurement approaches to identify which of them give the most cost-effective results, particularly as only 11 local authorities reported that they use the National Framework Agreements. NOAC recommends that all authorities use these Agreements. Contracting costs should act as a benchmark against which procurement decisions could be based.***

## **6.7 Planning and Scheduling of Work**

178,084 repair requests were logged by 29 local authorities in 2014 who record the bulk of these on computerised systems. Six local authorities gauge the satisfaction of tenants with the processing of certain repair requests to some extent. Dublin City Council has a complaints-based review and Cork City Council samples 10% of central heating repair work.

The NOAC survey of tenants who had sought repairs or maintenance found that most tenants were satisfied with how well the authorities maintain the structure of the properties. Three out of five rated it as satisfactory and one out of five as adequate.

While there has been a considerable outlay on improvement and planned maintenance, most local authorities do not carry out condition surveys of their housing stock, and even in the case of those that do, no authority carries out a comprehensive survey of all stock at set periods.

17 of the 31 authorities used planned maintenance scheduling for some work, including boiler maintenance and heating upgrades and replacement of doors and windows.

In response to the NOAC questionnaire, local authorities identified the following as initiatives that could help to improve effectiveness:

- Carrying out of housing stock surveys or inspecting all stock
- Adopting new technologies, including housing maintenance systems
- Having a planned preventative maintenance programme
- Setting response times for repair requests.

***Since the bulk of the housing stock is over 20 years old, better information based on condition surveys could help to inform maintenance planning and it would be***

***desirable for all authorities to move to planned maintenance scheduling in instances where the adoption of preventative maintenance cycles is feasible.***

An absence of advance notice of impending vacancies impacts on the local authority's ability to schedule maintenance tasks for maximum efficiency and to turnaround vacated dwellings in the shortest possible time. The questionnaire responses indicated that many tenants do not notify the local authority in advance of leaving their dwelling, with 10 authorities reporting an advance notification rate of 50% or less.

***Sharing of information between authorities in relation to the proposed allocation of a tenancy by one authority to an existing tenant of another authority would alleviate this difficulty where the vacating tenant is remaining within the local authority sector.***

## **6.8 Cost Control**

From the viewpoint of cost control, four local authorities reported preparing cost estimates for all jobs while 26 did so for some jobs. One authority did not do so at all. 24 authorities reported reviewing the outturn on costs against the related estimates and, in these cases, deviations of between 0% and 13% were reported.

***Greater financial control would be achieved if authorities had more resort to costing and approval of jobs, while analysis of variances would help to differentiate between increases due to price variation, changes to the scope of the works or claims, which, in turn, would provide feedback to inform better planning of works.***

## **6.9 Inspection of Work**

Most local authorities (27 out of 31) reported inspecting repair and maintenance work. However, this contrasts with the reported experience of tenants surveyed. Of those surveyed, 59% of tenants who had repair work completed within the previous five years said the repairs had not been inspected by or on behalf of the local authority. In 22 authorities, tenants said post repair inspections rarely or never took place.

***Post completion inspection is desirable in all cases to confirm the quality of the works and, to the extent that the work is contracted, to fully vouch the related payments. Tenants should be advised that the work will be inspected and their feedback on the repairs work should be harnessed.***

## **6.10 Rental Income**

Rents charged to tenants contribute towards the cost of management and maintenance and the average rent received per dwelling in 2014 was 159% of the average expenditure on maintaining and improving dwellings that year. Non-collection, however, reduces this contribution and €2.4 million was written off in 2014. Accumulated prior year arrears accounted for the equivalent of 18.4% of the 2014 rental charge across the country. However, the 2014 collection performance in 11 local authorities exceeded the 2014 charge, indicating an improvement in overall collection performance and a reduction in arrears in those authorities.

***NOAC has published a report on Rates Collection (NOAC Report No. 7 at <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Rates-Collection-Report.pdf>). As a range of debt collection initiatives were outlined by local authorities in that report, there would***

***be merit in authorities reviewing whether and to what extent they are also applicable to rent collection. A minority of local authorities charge a tenant contribution for services such as boiler maintenance and the introduction of a tenant contribution in respect of certain maintenance work might be appropriate for consideration by the other authorities.***

### **6.11 Condition Surveying and Retrofitting Programme**

It is unsatisfactory that only 15 local authorities have ever carried out a condition survey of their stock and only 5 of these authorities survey the stock at regular intervals. 17 local authorities have energy retrofitted at least half of their dwellings. In comparisons between authorities, the percentage of dwellings retrofitted ranged from 5% in South Dublin to 95% in Wexford. Central government funding for energy efficiency work in 2014 was €26 million.

Over 39,000 units, representing 39% of all dwellings in the 25 local authorities that provided this data, had been the subject of energy rating. 53% of all units rated to date had an energy efficiency rating of 'C' or greater. The Retrofitting Programme is helping the local authority sector to meet its part of the public sector energy efficiency target of a 33% reduction of 2009 energy usage levels by 2020.

***The energy rating exercise that is conducted as part of the Retrofitting Programme provides an opportunity to carry out a general condition survey at the same time and facilitate at least the partial population of a stock condition database, that can be subsequently developed.***

### **6.12 Shared Services**

Local authority housing stock is a significant resource, the management and maintenance of which requires a variety of skill sets.

***There may be merit, therefore, in the LGMA carrying out an examination of the efficiencies that could be gained from greater sharing of skills across the sector. The LGMA should also consider including in its shared services projects programme an examination of whether there is scope for a shared services approach to this function, particularly in the case of the four Dublin local authorities and those of the surrounding commuter belt – Kildare, Meath and Wicklow County Councils. The LGMA should, in addition, examine the efficiencies that could be gained from a centralised database, particularly for estate management issues.***

### **6.13 Information Management**

As occurred in the case of NOAC's review of the performance of local authority functions in relation to the private rented sector (Report No. 10), there was a disappointing lack of completeness and consistency in data provided in response to the questionnaires issued by NOAC for this study also. The questionnaire responses provided by Kildare and Louth County Councils were particularly poor and their inability to supply such basic information as the number of housing estates they manage was surprising. Several local authorities provided different information in response to the questionnaire when compared to data supplied by them for the purpose of performance indicators published by NOAC. This is commented on in the text at Chapter 2.4 regarding maintenance expenditure, in a reference note to Chapter 3.5 regarding vacancy periods prior to re-lettings and in Chapter 4.5 in relation to the cost of readying vacated units for re-letting.

Apart from rental income, management and maintenance expenditure and some re-letting data, the figures used in this report have been taken from replies to the questionnaires that were referred back to Chief Executives for subsequent confirmation. Rent collection data supplied by 24 local authorities in their questionnaire responses was inconsistent with the May 2016 report of the Local Government Audit Service based on the Audited Financial Statements of local authorities for 2014, so the LGAS data was substituted for the returned data in Chapter 3.7 and Appendix E. The aggregate management and maintenance expenditure in Chapter 2.3 and Appendix H is drawn from the Annual Financial Statements and the re-letting expenditure in Chapter 4.5 is taken from the 2014 Performance Indicators report.

***The lack of consistency in data that was noted again in the course of compiling this report has implications for the quality of internal information used by local authorities to manage this function. Local authorities need to review how information is collected, recorded and reported so as to ensure that there is complete and accurate capture, consistent compilation from period to period and alignment between reported financial and performance data. NOAC will raise with the Audit Committees the need for an improved process for validating information provided for future reviews.***

### General Conclusion

While acknowledging that local authorities face challenges in managing their housing stock due to its age and energy efficiency as well as the resource demands, this review suggests that there is scope to improve management by adopting better practice. The main opportunities can be summarised as follows:

- Minimising delays through pre-qualifying contractors and pre-allocating accommodation
- Fostering stronger communities through greater engagement and involving them in the management of their estates
- Improving information on the condition of the housing stock
- Greater use of costing prior to works and analysis of post contract variances
- Evaluating the scope to improve efficiency by varying the mix between in-house and contracted resources
- Optimising the use of preventative maintenance
- Inspection of all work completed
- Managing information more effectively
- Greater recourse to standardised processes and shared services
- Establishing targets, reviewing annually year on year performance and presenting outcomes to management teams, elected members and the Audit Committees.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Number and Type of Housing Unit

Local Authority	No. of dwellings	Houses	Flats	Demountables (e.g. prefabs)	Other	Please specify 'Other' in last column
Carlow	1533	1528	0	5	0	
Cavan	1989	1831	116	42	0	
Clare	2301	2158	143	0	0	
Cork City	8830	4922	3908	0	0	
Cork County	7169	6760	316	71	22	Family Centres, Social Properties managed by AHBs
Donegal	4825	4537	243	38	7	Caravans/Mobile Homes
Dublin City	25404	12178	13218	8	0	
Dún Laoghaire- Rathdown	4421	3252	1169	0	0	
Fingal	4532	4202	330	0	0	
South Dublin	9008	8031	970	0	7	2 depots 5 day houses (no bedrooms)
Galway City	2232	1732	500	0	0	
Galway County	2394	2297	40	55	2	Plus 2 community facility houses
Kerry	4038	3811	144	83	0	
Kildare	3639	3361	175	4	99	Mixed use properties
Kilkenny	2160	2032	108	20	0	
Laois	2023	1563	412	48	0	
Leitrim	932	895	18	19	0	
Limerick	5189	4724	383	82	0	
Longford	1913	1901	0	11	1	
Louth	3934	3858	76	0	0	
Mayo	2040	1808	167	65	0	
Meath	3100	3097	0	3	0	
Monaghan	1392	1312	48	32	0	
Offaly	1792	1751	0	41	0	
Roscommon	1323	1286	21	16	0	
Sligo	2112	1907	164	41	0	
Tipperary	4710	4621	42	47	0	
Waterford	5008	4918	83	7	0	
Westmeath	1788	1722	49	17	0	
Wexford	4212	3913	287	12	0	
Wicklow	4660	4219	317	3	121	Information unknown on iHouse for 121 units.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>130,603</b>	<b>106,127</b>	<b>23,447</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>259</b>	

## Appendix B: Local Authority Housing Units by Age, Type and Number

Local Authority	Unit Type	Units <10 years	Units 10-20 years	Units 20-40 years	Units 40-60 years	Units 60-80 years	Units 80-100 years	Units >100 years	Total
Carlow	Houses	447	454	313	127	127	60	0	1528
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cavan	Houses	396	843	474	49	31	23	15	1831
	Flats	23	80	13	0	0	0	0	116
	Demountable	7	33	2	0	0	0	0	42
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clare	Houses	614	468	722	287	41	27	0	2159
	Flats	34	0	108	0	0	0	0	142
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cork City*	Houses	544	781	245	1973	577	59	537	4716
	Flats	332	233	2450	640	78	1	34	3768
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cork County	Houses	1762	1630	2497	647	144	57	92	6829
	Flats	74	4	143	25	5	15	0	266
	Demountable	16	36	21	0	0	0	0	73
	Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Donegal	Houses	1326	1793	1114	270	24	5	0	4532
	Flats	195	49	0	0	0	0	0	244
	Demountable	17	9	10	2	0	0	0	38
	Other	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	11
Dublin City*	Houses	1683	210	544	2035	6300	1500	151	12423
	Flats	278	0	1404	7289	3422	450	129	12972
	Demountable	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	8
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	Houses	311	766	1180	447	287	83	168	3242
	Flats	352	57	231	48	208	1	282	1179
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fingal*	Houses	657	897	2263	325	26	14	0	4182
	Flats	226	50	24	30	0	0	0	330
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Dublin	Houses	1031	930	5717	354	2	4	0	8038
	Flats	515	374	16	65	0	0	0	970
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Galway City*	Houses	52	920	884	308	53	55	6	2278
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Local Authority	Unit Type	Units <10 years	Units 10-20 years	Units 20-40 years	Units 40-60 years	Units 60-80 years	Units 80-100 years	Units >100 years	Total
Galway County	Houses	657	729	785	92	30	2	4	2299
	Flats	38	2	0	0	0	0	0	40
	Demountable	30	12	11	2	0	0	0	55
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kerry*	Houses	818	1142	1138	346	289	68	10	3811
	Flats	100	14	14	2	0	0	0	130
	Demountable	4	0	66	0	0	0	0	70
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kildare	Houses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3639
Kilkenny	Houses	875	266	571	203	107	9	1	2032
	Flats	0	108	0	0	0	0	0	108
	Demountable	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	20
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laois	Houses	648	497	321	61	36	0	0	1563
	Flats	153	136	96	25	0	0	2	412
	Demountable	22	25	0	1	0	0	0	48
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leitrim	Houses	119	360	350	36	30	0	0	895
	Flats	14	0	4	0	0	0	0	18
	Demountable	2	9	8	0	0	0	0	19
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Limerick	Houses	1753	738	1529	795	346	4	24	5189
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Longford*	Houses	360	514	696	252	70	13	7	1912
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Louth*	Houses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	1173	769	916	401	109	26	510	3904
Mayo*	Houses	421	548	838	31	37	1	0	1876
	Flats	77	17	7	0	0	0	0	101
	Demountable	25	30	10	0	0	0	0	65
	Other	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
Meath	Houses	434	679	1674	248	48	4	10	3097
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Monaghan*	Houses	458	319	380	96	12	13	0	1278
	Flats	36	12	0	0	0	0	0	48
	Demountable	8	24	0	0	0	0	0	32
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Local Authority	Unit Type	Units <10 years	Units 10-20 years	Units 20-40 years	Units 40-60 years	Units 60-80 years	Units 80-100 years	Units >100 years	Total
Offaly#	Houses	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1751
	Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roscommon	Houses	497	410	373	6	0	0	0	1286
	Flats	0	21	0	0	0	0	0	21
	Demountable	2	7	7	0	0	0	0	16
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sligo	Houses	387	652	598	141	159	84	9	2030
	Flats	34	6	1	0	0	0	0	41
	Demountable	2	39	0	0	0	0	0	41
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tipperary	Houses	1211	1585	1206	401	146	59	13	4621
	Flats	0	38	4	0	0	0	0	42
	Demountable	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	47
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waterford	Houses	1157	1055	1347	585	316	236	222	4918
	Flats	60	23	0	0	0	0	0	83
	Demountable	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	7
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Westmeath	Houses	391	600	461	182	39	27	22	1722
	Flats	17	32	0	0	0	0	0	49
	Demountable	13	4	0	0	0	0	0	17
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wexford	Houses	877	1101	1169	607	109	42	8	3913
	Flats	101	65	65	51	3	1	1	287
	Demountable	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	12
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wicklow*	Houses	607	517	824	365	72	0	0	2385
	Flats	130	71	71	5	0	0	0	277
	Demountable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>24,673</b>	<b>23,811</b>	<b>35,941</b>	<b>19,855</b>	<b>13,283</b>	<b>2,943</b>	<b>2,257</b>	<b>128,194</b>

\* The dwellings for which age breakdowns were provided do not tally with the overall stock figure at Appendix A in the case of these 10 local authorities and the biggest element of the 2,409 difference is the 1,998 dwellings in Wicklow that are missing from this Table.

# Stock not surveyed as to age and these 1,792 units plus Kildare's 3,639 units account for the difference between the total of the age category totals and the overall total.

## Appendix C: Estates, Average Dwellings in Estates and No. in Rural Locations

Local Authority	No. of Estates	Average no. of dwellings per estate in 2014	No. of units are in single rural locations in 2014
Carlow	63	19	80
Cavan	68	32	173
Clare	95	21	56
Cork City	415	12	0
Cork County	516	11	295
Donegal	379	11	707
Dublin City	207	63	0
Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown	161	22	10
Fingal	70	45	115
South Dublin	252	36	0
Galway City	23	45	0
Galway County	86	18	600
Kerry	285	12	617
Kildare	0*	20	50
Kilkenny	90	22	128
Laois	79	45	96
Leitrim	60	13	163
Limerick	518	9	154
Longford	60	25	285
Louth**	0	0	0
Mayo	160	9	408
Meath	439	7	115
Monaghan	82	14	79
Offaly	158	12	65
Roscommon	57	16	154
Sligo	104	13	229
Tipperary	457	10	90
Waterford	273	18	120
Westmeath	99	15	360
Wexford	256	15	440
Wicklow	273	15	179
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,785</b>		<b>5,768</b>

\* Figure not provided by Kildare County Council

\*\* No figures provided by Louth County Council

## Appendix D: Staff Numbers - Management and Maintenance

Local Authority	WTE Staff 2014 - Management	WTE Staff 2014 - Maintenance	Total WTE Staff 2014
Carlow County Council	11	6.9	17.9
Cavan County Council	17	7	24
Clare County Council	13	10	23
Cork City Council	78	138	216
Cork County Council	19	48.5	67.5
Donegal County Council	9	17.8	26.8
Dublin City Council	384	33	417
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	45	42	87
Fingal County Council	17	17	34
South Dublin County Council	64	36	100
Galway City Council	28	49	77
Galway County Council	2	15	17
Kerry County Council	18	18	36
Kildare County Council	13	20	33
Kilkenny County Council	14	18.15	32.15
Laois County Council	10	10	20
Leitrim County Council	14	12.17	26.17
Limerick City & County Council	74	38	112
Longford County Council	6	9	15
Louth County Council	32	32	64
Mayo County Council	20	18	38
Meath County Council	22	10	32
Monaghan County Council	18	10	28
Offaly County Council	21	19.55	40.55
Roscommon County Council	14	14	28
Sligo County Council	4	8.9	12.9
Tipperary County Council	6	28	34
Waterford City & County Council	7	20	27
Westmeath County Council	5	8	13
Wexford County Council	15	24.5	39.5
Wicklow County Council	15.22	0	15.22
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,015.22</b>	<b>738.47</b>	<b>1,753.69</b>

### Notes on Staff Numbers from Local Authorities

South Dublin: Management figures include Maintenance Admin, Allocations, Estate Management, Allocation Support Unit, Rent Inspectors while Maintenance is staff Depot Based including 2 Clerks of Works who manage the 2 Housing Depots

Galway City: added more clerical staff into the works involved e.g. Rents team, admin work for Social Workers, Allocations, Clerk of Works

Meath: Relates to Housing Administration staff excluding Homeless Service/RAS/Private Adaptation Grants

Offaly: Not all staff are in housing dept. Some in housing support roles in municipal districts and finance departments contribute to the total.

Wexford: Wexford have only included the management team numbers and the outdoor and maintenance administration team under maintenance.

Wicklow: In preparing its budgets (and subsequent costing/expenditure allocation) Wicklow County Council has to date not allocated a % of housing administrative staff to a housing maintenance cost centre. Bearing in mind the number of functions undertaken by housing (general) staff, attempting to estimate the relevant %/WTE on maintenance could result in a meaningless number. This matter will be re-examined during the preparation of the 2017 accounts.

## Appendix E: Rental Income from Local Authority Housing 2014

Local Authority	Rental Income 2014 €	2014 Rental Income as % of Rent due in 2014	% of Total Collectible in 2014 (including arrears) Collected in 2014	Amount of Rent Due Written Off/Waived in 2014
Carlow	5,134,202	98	91	25,613
Cavan	4,694,732	99	83	98,879
Clare	5,989,228	101 <sup>51</sup>	86	38,072
Cork City	19,326,449	97	83	0
Cork County	16,214,496	99	91	377,446
Donegal	10,948,697	100	89	55,207
Dublin City	71,077,232	100	78	700,964
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	12,870,522	98	80	606,081
Fingal	17,900,684	101	91	0
South Dublin	21,430,247	97	73	0
Galway City	7,354,930	101	78	61,190
Galway County	6,511,035	99	88	3,115
Kerry	10,725,419	99	94	41,645
Kildare	9,471,409	103	87	25,293
Kilkenny	6,915,884	101	92	11,083
Laois	5,308,408	100	95	25,819
Leitrim	1,873,515	96	87	928
Limerick	13,747,486	97	87	1,382
Longford	4,929,761	100	86	2,674
Louth	9,312,774	97	82	20,359
Mayo	5,732,093	99	83	63,692
Meath	8,493,755	98	84	40,803
Monaghan	3,729,063	101	95	8,682
Offaly	4,933,842	101	86	5,957
Roscommon	3,968,719	101	93	6,642
Sligo	4,652,873	95	77	3,218
Tipperary	12,520,209	99	92	15,052
Waterford	11,378,362	96	78	56,788
Westmeath	5,543,287	99	94	42,662
Wexford	13,612,360	100	90	20,150
Wicklow	11,721,111	99	92	20,553
<b>Totals</b>	<b>348,022,784</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>2,383,876</b>

Note: The figures supplied by 24 local authorities differed from those published by the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) subsequent to the audit of the 2014 Annual Financial Statements so the figures used in this Report are the LGAS figures.

<sup>51</sup> The percentage relates to the amount collected in 2014 relative to the amount levied in respect of 2014 so previous years' rent arrears collected in 2014 can result in a percentage greater than 100.

## Appendix F: Number of Units by Length of Time Vacant

Local Authority	No. <2 weeks	No. 2-5 weeks	No. 6-8 weeks	No. 9-13 weeks	No. 14-26 weeks	No. 27-39 weeks	No. 40-52 weeks	No. 53-78 weeks	No. 79-104 weeks	No. 2-3 years	No. >3 years	Other*	Total
Carlow	1	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	11
Cavan	4	6	2	6	11	5	5	2	6	10	26	0	83
Clare	8	2	4	6	21	6	7	0	1	2	13	0	70
Cork City	9	15	29	17	33	46	26	54	51	43	149	0	472
Cork County	6	14	12	15	35	31	41	50	24	17	41	0	286
Donegal	10	6	13	18	21	14	5	16	3	16	29	0	151
Dublin City	15	22	44	59	100	46	24	18	15	8	11	993	1,355
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	2	7	6	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
Fingal	11	5	7	6	6	1	2	2	0	1	1	0	42
South Dublin	8	7	5	9	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	36
Galway City	1	3	3	5	15	9	3	6	2	3	11	0	61
Galway County	0	2	7	11	13	14	8	2	1	3	28	89	178
Kerry	15	9	7	9	25	19	19	13	12	10	0	0	138
Kildare	0	3	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
Kilkenny	2	7	7	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
Laois	7	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Leitrim	0	4	3	3	6	8	9	14	9	7	10	0	73
Limerick	4	11	6	4	15	8	7	8	6	25	133	0	227
Longford	4	8	4	11	11	9	1	4	3	4	40	0	99
Louth	5	4	10	9	17	4	6	0	0	0	3	0	58
Mayo	1	10	4	7	22	9	15	6	6	11	29	0	120
Meath	5	14	34	0	10	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	67
Monaghan	0	3	3	4	0	0	1	3	0	1	3	0	18
Offaly	3	12	4	2	5	9	6	2	2	1	2	0	48
Roscommon	4	5	6	4	13	14	8	17	12	14	9	0	106
Sligo	1	1	2	3	11	14	13	12	2	19	11	0	89
Tipperary	7	16	28	16	26	12	6	9	6	9	6	0	141
Waterford	4	15	15	30	12	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	82

<b>Local Authority Name</b>	<b>No. &lt;2 weeks</b>	<b>No. 2-5 weeks</b>	<b>No. 6-8 weeks</b>	<b>No. 9-13 weeks</b>	<b>No. 14-26 weeks</b>	<b>No. 27-39 weeks</b>	<b>No. 40-52 weeks</b>	<b>No. 53-78 weeks</b>	<b>No. 79-104 weeks</b>	<b>No. 2-3 years</b>	<b>No. &gt;3 years</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Westmeath	2	9	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>16</b>
Wexford	8	16	9	24	26	6	1	0	0	0	1	0	<b>91</b>
Wicklow	2	2	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>1082</b>	<b>4,202</b>

\* The 89 properties for Galway County Council and 993 properties for Dublin City Council are void pending demolition or refurbishment and duration of vacancy is not recorded for these.



## Appendix G: Housing Stock Surveys

Local Authority	Is condition of housing stock surveyed at regular intervals?	If Yes, is there a comprehensive survey of all stock at specified intervals?	or is it done on a rolling basis?	If rolling basis, what is the length of the cycle (in years)?	Year of Last Survey	Grade of LA Staff carrying out Surveys (if done by LA Staff)	If not LA Staff, state Contractor type
Carlow	Yes	No	No	-	-	Clerk of Works/Senior Executive Engineer as required	-
Cavan	No	No	No	-	-	-	-
Clare	No	-	-	-	2005	Clerk of Works supervised by Engineering Staff	-
Cork City	No	No	No	-	-	-	-
Cork County	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donegal County	No	-	No	Ongoing	2012	Clerk of Works/Executive Engineer	-
Dublin City	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fingal	No	No	Yes	7	-	Clerk of Works	-
South Dublin	Yes	No	No	-	-	Clerk of Works	-
Galway City	No	-	-	-	-	0	0
Galway County	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kerry	No	No	No	-	-	-	-
Kildare	No	No	No	n/a	n/a	Clerk of Works or Technician	-
Kilkenny	No	-	No	-	2000	LA Staff to carry out survey 2015/2016, Technical Staff Grade	-
Laois	no	-	No	-	-	-	-
Leitrim	No	No	No	-	2003	Executive Engineer	-
Limerick	No	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
Longford	No	-	No	-	2008	Clerk of Works and Technicians	-
Louth	No	No	No	-	2015	-	Out to tender since Sept 2015
Mayo	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Meath	No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Monaghan	Yes	No	Yes	5	2015	Technician/Assistant/Engineer/Clerk of Works	-

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Is condition of housing stock surveyed at regular intervals?</b>	<b>If Yes, is there a comprehensive survey of all stock at specified intervals?</b>	<b>or is it done on a rolling basis?</b>	<b>If rolling basis, what is the length of the cycle (in years)?</b>	<b>Year of Last Survey</b>	<b>Grade of LA Staff carrying out Surveys (if done by LA Staff)</b>	<b>If not LA Staff, state Contractor type</b>
Offaly	No	No	No	-	-	-	-
Roscommon	No	-	No	-	2004	Clerk of Woks/Engineers	
Sligo	No	-	No	n/a	1900	n/a	n/a
Tipperary	No	No	No	-	-	-	-
Waterford	Yes	No	Yes	5	-	Maintenance supervisors/ Technicians	-
Westmeath	No	No	No	-	2002	-	-
Wexford	Yes	No	Yes	5	2014	Clerk of Works, Executive Engineer Assistant Engineer	BER Assessors, Estate Agents
Wicklow	No	No	No	-	2011	-	-

## Appendix H: Maintenance Expenditure 2014 Annual Financial Statements

Local Authority	Maintenance/ Improvement of LA Housing	Rents & Tenant Purchase Administration	Housing Community Development Support
Carlow	1,871,674	243,807	191,704
Cavan	1,956,572	437,483	115,744
Clare	3,215,928	687,501	496,395
Cork City	15,698,077	791,837	5,736,337
Cork County	10,393,861	1,926,401	615,675
Donegal	4,712,742	1,123,488	209,448
Dublin City	61,049,759	9,420,198	20,920,137
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	8,721,468	1,486,540	648,431
Fingal	10,417,201	1,267,916	1,927,804
South Dublin	14,495,753	2,145,179	4,922,208
Galway City	6,072,238	743,922	436,897
Galway County	3,882,597	584,797	278,463
Kerry	5,786,624	1,167,443	329,591
Kildare	6,416,582	796,028	829,950
Kilkenny	3,204,627	519,998	271,235
Laois	2,879,441	509,962	116,871
Leitrim	1,597,148	180,988	144,402
Limerick	7,290,250	1,536,786	720,453
Longford	2,017,502	1,011,864	187,397
Louth	6,397,352	977,700	639,141
Mayo	2,779,851	491,349	251,477
Meath	5,395,796	899,579	198,123
Monaghan	2,061,910	381,337	234,432
Offaly	2,097,789	1,033,758	275,960
Roscommon	1,767,653	292,945	153,080
Sligo	2,741,868	458,391	289,423
Tipperary	6,156,146	1,249,019	679,909
Waterford	6,215,981	901,964	600,725
Westmeath	1,861,112	358,976	239,121
Wexford	5,164,152	756,462	593,549
Wicklow	5,020,922	861,397	390,473
<b>Totals</b>	<b>219,340,576</b>	<b>35,245,015</b>	<b>43,644,555</b>

## Appendix I: Contractor Maintenance Expenditure 2014

Local Authority	Contractor Maintenance Costs					Total no. of units maintained by Contractors			
	Contractor Planned Maintenance €	Contractor Response Maintenance €	Contractor Planned Improvements (e.g. refurbishment works, insulation, upgrade of windows/boilers etc.) €	Other contractor €	Total €	Planned Maintenance	Response Maintenance	Planned Improvements (e.g. refurbishment works, insulation, upgrade of windows/boilers, etc.) €	Other
Carlow	24,269	277,326	0	0	301,595	3	663	0	0
Cavan	87,000	587,323	1,036,666	-	1,710,989	62	704	534	
Clare	322,896	1,050,861	1,792,407	-	3,166,164	76	1278	666	
Cork City	720,000	4,054,600	7,662,522	-	12,437,122	7000	8830	1333	
Cork County	40,000	2,285,346	1,472,774	-	3,798,120	121	2202	362	
Donegal	-	628,157	1,936,597	-	2,564,754			680	
Dublin City	1,649,330	1,566,151	17,104,034	2,137,047	22,456,562	13803	7743	4053	
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	1,299,928	1,439,565	1,942,309	0	4,681,802	177	3700	1485	0
Fingal	482,269	3,405,493	2,283,862	0	6,171,624	668	4491	960	0
South Dublin	1,367,745	7,429,672	-	-	8,797,417	8847		198	
Galway City	73,945	73,945	497,500	414,050	1,059,440	523	659	319	21
Galway County	0	1,300,000	1,300,000	-	2,600,000	0	0	412	
Kerry	0	1,073,267	560,133	0	1,633,400	0	0	665	0
Kildare	795,000	0	0	0	795,000	0	0	0	0
Kilkenny	204,000	272,000	204,000	1	680,001	180	300	120	1
Laois	0	399,238	764,348	426811	1,590,397	0	681	514	0
Leitrim	30,128	160,009	296,728	498,833	985,698	28	383	141	56
Limerick	0	1,275,417	0	0	1,275,417	0	0	0	0
Longford	-	684635	864678	-	1,549,311	0	926	355	0
Louth *	-	-	-	914,000	914,000				
Mayo	0	0	774,869	0	774,869	0	0	0	0
Meath	599,881	833,183	907,472	-	2,340,536	2050	2755	515	
Monaghan	318,608	66,793	419,118	0	804,519	243	249	329	0
Offaly	0	451,323	0	0	451,323				
Ros common	8,218	221,794	828,744	0	1,058,756	3	86	513	0
Sligo	134,000	269,000	819,022	0	1,222,022	50	450	312	0
Tipperary *	0	0	0	503,373	503,373	0	0	0	0
Waterford	0	370,000	738,000	-	1,108,000	0	580		
Westmeath	-	570,703	-	-	570,703	513	1584	0	0
Wexford	1,811,077	1,969,940	1,306,902	542,672	5,630,591	437	2012	1264	40
Wicklow	225,147	768,751	1,269,905	2,176,706	4,440,509	1328		285	50
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10,193,441</b>	<b>33,483,492</b>	<b>46,782,588</b>	<b>7,613,493</b>	<b>98,073,014</b>	<b>35,912</b>	<b>40,276</b>	<b>16,015</b>	<b>168</b>

\* Total Contractor Maintenance expenditure figure supplied by Local Authority included as 'Other' because no breakdown figures by type were provided by Louth and Tipperary

Note: Local Authorities were asked in separate questions to provide expenditure on maintenance services procured from Contractors in 2014 and the breakdown of the cost of maintenance work carried out by Contractors in 2014 into planned, response, improvements and other. The figures differed in the case of 21 authorities and many of the discrepancies were substantial so the data supplied in response to the first of these questions has been largely disregarded.

## Appendix J: Rent Received relative to Maintenance and Improvement Expenditure 2014

Local Authority	Dwellings	Maintenance/Improvement of LA Housing	Maintenance Cost per Unit	Rent received 2014	Rent per Unit	Rent as % of Maintenance Cost
Carlow	1533	1,871,674	1,220.92	5,134,202	3,349	274%
Cavan	1989	1,956,572	983.70	4,694,732	2,360	240%
Clare	2301	3,215,928	1,397.62	5,989,228	2,603	186%
Cork City	8830	15,698,077	1,777.81	19,326,449	2,189	123%
Cork County	7169	10,393,861	1,449.83	16,214,496	2,262	156%
Donegal	4825	4,712,742	976.73	10,948,697	2,269	232%
Dublin City	25404	61,049,759	2,403.16	71,077,232	2,798	116%
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	4421	8,721,468	1,972.74	12,870,522	2,911	148%
Fingal	4532	10,417,201	2,298.59	17,900,684	3,950	172%
South Dublin	9008	14,495,753	1,609.21	21,430,247	2,379	148%
Galway City	2232	6,072,238	2,720.54	7,354,930	3,295	121%
Galway County	2394	3,882,597	1,621.80	6,511,035	2,720	168%
Kerry	4038	5,786,624	1,433.04	10,725,419	2,656	185%
Kildare	3639	6,416,582	1,763.28	9,471,409	2,603	148%
Kilkenny	2160	3,204,627	1,483.62	6,915,884	3,202	216%
Laois	2023	2,879,441	1,423.35	5,308,408	2,624	184%
Leitrim	932	1,597,148	1,713.68	1,873,515	2,010	117%
Limerick	5189	7,290,250	1,404.94	13,747,486	2,649	189%
Longford	1913	2,017,502	1,054.63	4,929,761	2,577	244%
Louth	3934	6,397,352	1,626.17	9,312,774	2,367	146%
Mayo	2040	2,779,851	1,362.67	5,732,093	2,810	206%
Meath	3100	5,395,796	1,740.58	8,493,755	2,740	157%
Monaghan	1392	2,061,910	1,481.26	3,729,063	2,679	181%
Offaly	1792	2,097,789	1,170.64	4,933,842	2,753	235%
Roscommon	1323	1,767,653	1,336.09	3,968,719	3,000	225%
Sligo	2112	2,741,868	1,298.23	4,652,873	2,203	170%
Tipperary	4710	6,156,146	1,307.04	12,520,209	2,658	203%
Waterford	5008	6,215,981	1,241.21	11,378,362	2,272	183%
Westmeath	1788	1,861,112	1,040.89	5,543,287	3,100	298%
Wexford	4212	5,164,152	1,226.06	13,612,360	3,232	264%
Wicklow	4660	5,020,922	1,077.45	11,721,111	2,515	233%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>130,603</b>	<b>219,340,576</b>	<b>1,679.45</b>	<b>348,022,784</b>	<b>2,665</b>	<b>159%</b>

### Appendix K: Amount spent readying Vacant Units, Number of Units Involved and % Work carried out by Contractors

Local Authority	No. of Units Involved	Amount Spent 2014 €	% Paid to Contractors	% Units worked on by Contractors
Carlow	43	422,315	78	59
Cavan	155	196,319	100	100
Clare	110	1,000,509	100	100
Cork City	169	5,917,114	77	47.9
Cork County	207	3,615,312	68	68
Donegal	173	823,843	92	95
Dublin City	1,023	16,240,302	86	62
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	118	587,501	70	70
Fingal	166	1,815,190	100	100
South Dublin	200	2,488,569	82	82
Galway City	75	741,838	10	10
Galway County	86	690,888	70	66
Kerry	103	1,842,493	57	60
Kildare	82	945,472	100	100
Kilkenny	88	838,630	88	80
Laois	97	292,563	68	65
Leitrim	51	420,130	56	51
Limerick	193	1,284,185	75	75
Longford	72	340,884	100	100
Louth	114	458,603	-	-
Mayo	122	888,300	60	60
Meath	67	1,339,933	100	100
Monaghan	53	232,964	89	11
Offaly	48	402,000	100	100
Roscommon	56	401,362	100	100
Sligo	91	545,013	100	100
Tipperary	263	1,503,358	69	26
Waterford	111	2,446,574	80	70
Westmeath	78	771,192	72	100
Wexford	130	383,500	58	30
Wicklow	93	1,303,543	37	20
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,437</b>	<b>51,180,399</b>		

## Appendix L: State Grants for Housing Work

Local Authority	Remedial Works €	Energy Retrofitting €	LA Extensions €	Regeneration €	Voids Prog. €	Total
Carlow	0	385,000	190,000	0	325,111	900,111
Cavan	0	850,818	87,588	0	349,137	1,287,543
Clare	443,136	498,635	192,671	0	995,829	2,130,271
Cork City	3,176,251	1,368,145	0	2,450,000	2,872,027	9,866,423
Cork County	717,774	1,028,877	79,222	0	1,539,364	3,365,237
Donegal	0	800,503	164,696	0	919,797	1,884,996
Dublin City	6,164,244	5,244,209	610,488	5,218,210	6,163,464	23,400,615
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	138,842	1,924,309	252,867	0	89,896	2,405,914
Fingal	0	1,897,600	0	0	1,938,780	3,836,380
South Dublin	627,611	30,712	0	0	627,408	1,285,731
Galway City	414,050	497,190	0	0	474,050	1,385,290
Galway County	0	402,000	0	0	958,263	1,360,263
Kerry	0	560,133	172,102	764,294	718,938	2,215,467
Kildare					503,463	503,463
Kilkenny	0	417,279	358,547	0	484,430	1,260,256
Laois	0	764,348	0	0	257,013	1,021,361
Leitrim	24,888	254,259	7,983	0	229,072	516,202
Limerick	0	1,411,944	0	2,000,000	915,969	4,327,913
Longford	0	282,907	40,239	0	313,250	636,396
Louth					113,620	113,620
Mayo	0	410,361	294,444	0	464,508	1,169,313
Meath	0	678,402	298,653	0	1,037,501	2,014,556
Monaghan	1,143,393	419,118	0	0	92,751	1,655,262
Offaly	0	237,467	0	0	514,000	751,467
Roscommon	0	472,438	214,267	0	224,028	910,733
Sligo County	157,550	315,500	49,965	1,455,035	311,648	2,289,698
Tipperary	0	1,033,000	0	0	935,801	1,968,801
Waterford	738,900	900,000	0	0	605,428	2,244,328
Westmeath	0	859,733	87,059	0	369,518	1,316,310
Wexford	607,394	956,730	119,651	0	316,307	2,000,082
Wicklow	650,204	860,039	0	0	650,204	2,160,447
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15,004,237</b>	<b>25,761,656</b>	<b>3,220,442</b>	<b>11,887,539</b>	<b>26,310,575</b>	<b>82,184,449</b>

Note: Louth and Kildare returned no information on Departmental grants claimed.

## Appendix M: Number of Repair Requests at 31/12/2014 and Estimated Cost

Local Authority	No. of Repair Requests	Estimated Cost of Repair Requests
Carlow		
Cavan		
Clare	210	137,130
Cork City		
Cork County *	740	224,220
Donegal	90	27,720
Dublin City		
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown		
Fingal	414	105,000
South Dublin	2,777	1,800,000
Galway City	69	250,000
Galway County	845	1,300,000
Kerry *	245	144,000
Kildare	999	1,000,000
Kilkenny		
Laois *	509	146,100
Leitrim	78	18,680
Limerick		
Longford	33	26,400
Louth	151	
Mayo	490	
Meath		
Monaghan *	37	17,000
Offaly	50	4,125
Roscommon	224	208,003
Sligo *	447	158,685
Tipperary	408	
Waterford *	20	2,100
Westmeath	151	52,850
Wexford *	790	158,000
Wicklow		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,777</b>	<b>5,780,013</b>

\* The information provided by these authorities relates to Autumn 2015.