

Annual report for tenants and leaseholders 2023/24



Welcome

I am your Cabinet Member for Better Homes, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness here in Lewisham. I took on the role last year and am working together with our new Mayor Brenda Dacres to make sure we can achieve real and lasting improvements for residents.

It is an incredibly challenging time for the housing sector in Lewisham and across the country, with huge challenges when it comes to ensuring everyone has a safe and secure home. Social housing is an integral part of making that a reality, I have never been more aware of our need to maintain our current council housing stock but invest in the new homes we so desperately need.

Since referring ourselves to the regulator of social housing late last year when Lewisham Homes came back under control of the council, we have been as open and honest with residents as possible about the challenges we face and our path to making our services better. This report is another step to show you the challenges, changes and where we still have a lot more work to do.

Resident voices are key to us getting our housing services right. I would like to thank the resident editorial board member and the Service and Performance Panel Chair for giving feedback on this report and making sure resident perspectives are taken in to account.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this report and your views on how we reach the goal of a safe and secure home for everyone a reality.



Cllr Will Cooper
Cabinet Member for Better Homes,
Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

Introduction

In October 2023, Lewisham Council took over responsibility for managing and maintaining more than 13,500 social rent homes across the borough, following the closure of Lewisham Homes. We also manage the relationship with leaseholders of over 5,000 homes in our blocks.

I joined shortly before the transfer as Executive Director for Housing to lead Lewisham Council's new Housing directorate.

We want to start this new era with openness and transparency so that our residents are aware of our challenges and what we are doing to overcome them.

The core of this annual report is our reporting against the government's new Tenant Satisfaction Measures. As you will see, we are currently underperforming in a number of key areas, meaning that you, our residents, are not getting the level of service you have a right to expect.

There are no easy fixes, especially in an era when the Council's finances are squeezed from all directions. However, I can assure you that we have an experienced leadership team and committed staff working to improving our performance with the full backing of the Council.



Gillian Douglas
Executive Director of Housing





Supporting our residents

We know that paying rent as a tenant or service charges as a leaseholder can be difficult for some of our residents. The cost of living crisis has left many struggling to manage competing demands on their finances.

We always seek to balance our responsibility to collect rent efficiently with dedicated support for those facing financial difficulty.

If you have suddenly lost income or things have just been getting slowly more difficult and you are struggling to pay, please reach out to us.

- Tenants: LH-welfarebenefits@lewisham.gov.uk
- Leaseholders: HOS@lewisham.gov.uk

Helping you access benefits

Our Welfare Benefits team's focus is on helping tenants to stay in their home and keep their tenancy.

During 2023/24 we helped residents by:

- Recovering £913,048 in backdated housing benefits and housing costs
- Securing an additional £95,000 in benefits, through council tax reduction and Universal Credit
- Providing essential support to residents in hardship using £50,000 in donated funds. This included purchasing essential household items, emergency food supplies, winter coats for children, and bedding
- Receiving 1,679 referrals from partners and internal/external sources

Our performance

This table is our report against the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures, including data from our housing management partners (two Tenant Management Organisations and the Brockley PFI.) It is the first year where all social housing landlords in England with more than 1,000 homes have reported on these measures. The Regulator will publish all the results in autumn 2024.

The **Red/Amber/Green rating** refers to our 2023/24 targets. Red means we have missed the target, Amber means we have missed it by a small margin, and Green that we have met or exceeded our target.

* The benchmark is provided by **Housemark** and helps us compare our results to other London local authorities. The figure is the average score, so you can see whether we are performing better or worse than equivalent organisations.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Scorecard

Indicator	Polarity	Our target (%)	2023/24 results (%)	Benchmark (%)*
Customer Relations (percentages rounded to whole numbers)				
% of Stage 1 complaints responded to on time	high is best	90	83	75
% of Stage 2 complaints responded to on time	high is best	90	80	69
Number of stage 1 complaints per 1,000 homes	n/a	n/a	100	76
Number of stage 2 complaints per 1,000 homes	n/a	n/a	25	7.4
Anti-social behaviour cases opened per 1,000 homes	n/a	n/a	13	30
Anti-social behaviour cases opened involving hate incidents per 1,000 homes	n/a	n/a	0.6	0.5
Compliance				
% of homes with all required gas safety checks carried out	high is best	100	99.7	99.8
% of homes with all required Fire Risk Assessments carried out	high is best	100	100	99.9
% of homes with all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections carried out	high is best	100	100	100
Water - % of homes with all required Legionella Risk Assessments carried out	high is best	100	99.2	99.2
% of homes with all required communal passenger lift safety inspections (LOLER) carried out	high is best	100	25.8	98



Indicator	Polarity	Our target (%)	2023/24 results (%)	Benchmark (%)*
Repairs (percentages rounded to whole numbers)				
% of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	low is best	10	24	10.8
% of non-emergency responsive repairs completed on time	high is best	85	66	78
% of emergency responsive repairs completed on time	high is best	90	61	91

Customer Satisfaction (percentages rounded to whole numbers)				
Tenant satisfaction with the overall service	high is best	65	55	59
Tenant satisfaction with landlord's overall repairs service	high is best	60	58	63
Tenant satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	high is best	55	49	61
Tenant satisfaction that their home is well maintained	high is best	60	55	61
Tenant satisfaction that their home is safe	high is best	65	63	67
Tenant satisfaction that their landlord listens to their views and acts upon them	high is best	60	46	51
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	high is best	60	67	66
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	high is best	65	60	69
Tenant satisfaction with landlord's approach to complaints handling	high is best	55	22	26
Tenant satisfaction that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	high is best	55	62	62
Tenant satisfaction that their landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood	high is best	60	61	62
Tenant satisfaction with landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour (ASB)	high is best	55	52	58

Improvement plan

We know our performance is poor in some areas. That's why we referred ourselves to the government's Regulator of Social Housing for a potential breach of its consumer standards in December 2023.

We specifically asked the Regulator to examine whether we are providing decent homes, running an efficient repairs service, and completing fire safety actions within acceptable timescales.

The Regulator reached its conclusions and [published a Regulatory Notice](#) in March 2024, where it detailed its findings, along with recommendations for which areas are most urgent to address. We are also cooperating with the [Housing Ombudsman's special investigation](#) due a high maladministration rate.

We have already made progress in some areas, though we still have a long way to go. Our improvement plans include these key focuses:

Repairs: In recent months we have reduced the backlog of repairs from more than 18,000 to fewer than 9,000. In the same period, we have improved how many routine and emergency repairs we are completing on time, from 57% and 33% in April to 67% and 58% in June. We will continue reducing the backlog to put us in a better position to plan

ahead and know what resources we need, so we can further improve our turn-around times.

Damp and mould: We are carrying out a condition survey of all of our homes. As of the end of July 2024, we had surveyed 7,500 properties, over 50% of the total. This is already enabling us to identify buildings prone to damp and mould, even where it hasn't been reported, and plan refurbishment. We have recruited additional specialist damp and mould surveyors to work towards a target of performing a mould wash within 24 hours of it being reported by a resident.

Customer service: We have reduced the call waiting time at our repairs booking contact centre to an average of 6 minutes in June 2024. We have improved our response times for repairs complaints, and we have begun a comprehensive training programme for staff who respond to complaints to make sure our residents always get fair, clear and polite responses.

Upgrading our systems: We are upgrading the central computer program and database our staff use to manage the Housing Service. This will help us to make sure we don't lose track of our residents' requests and we get ahead of problems before they cause an inconvenience.





Complaints

We welcome feedback and we encourage residents to make official complaints when there is a problem.

Your complaint will help us resolve your problem as well as showing us where our services need to improve.

During 2023/24 we promoted our complaints process to residents widely, in our monthly resident e-newsletter and on social media.

We aim to respond to Stage 1 complaints in 10 days and Stage 2 complaints in 20 days.

Although we tended to respond to complaints on time, too often residents weren't happy with how we handled complaints.

[Read more about our complaints performance and what we are doing to improve it.](#)

Indicator	Our target (%)	2023/24 results (%)
Complaints responded to on time (Stage 1 & 2)	90	80*

* *This figure differs from the one in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures table on p5 as it also includes complaints from leaseholders and other tenure types.*

Keeping your home safe

We regularly check all our buildings for fire safety by doing Fire Risk Assessments.

Our fire risk assessors check a wide range of issues and make recommendations for improvements. These can range from whether fire doors close properly or if there any obstructions in hallways, to whether the fire alarm system is working as it should.

As part of our self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing, we noted that we were not responding quickly enough to some of the most urgent recommendations.

The vast majority of delays are due to changes in regulations, particularly on fire doors. New testing

and certification rules mean that we have to replace thousands of doors which were compliant when we installed them. As these regulations affected the entire country, it has taken years for the industry to catch up and for suitable doors to be available on the market.

We have made a lot of progress since we self-referred, and we are steadily reducing the number of overdue actions. We are providing the Regulator with regular updates on this.

As well as fire safety, we have a rigorous programme of inspections for gas, asbestos, water (Legionella), electrical and lift safety:

Indicator	Our target (%)	2023/24 results (%)	Benchmark (%)*
% of homes with all required gas safety checks carried out	100	96.6	99.8
% of homes with all required Fire Risk Assessments carried out	100	100	99.9
% of homes with all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections carried out	100	100	100
% of homes with all required Legionella risk assessments carried out	100	99.1	99.2
% of domestic properties with EICR (electrical safety) certificates up to five years old	100	99.4	97.1
% of homes with all required communal passenger lift safety inspections (LOLER) carried out**	100	25.8	98

* Housemark data helps us compare our results to other London local authorities. The benchmark is the average, so you can see whether we are performing better or worse than equivalent organisations.

** We entered a new contract for inspections to our lifts in December 2023 which interrupted our LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations) certificate process. The figure for June 2024 was 80.5% and will continue to climb to reach our 100% compliance target for 2024/25. We ensured our robust monthly service and safety inspection regime was maintained throughout this period.



Building safety for tall buildings

We have a dedicated building safety team focusing on our 55 high-rise buildings. These are buildings of seven storeys or more, or taller than 18 metres. Our Building Safety Managers check high-rise buildings for fire and structural safety concerns at least once a month.

During 2023/24 we opened a consultation with residents of our high-rise buildings to develop a new [Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy](#). The strategy defines how we keep residents informed and how they can contact us to make sure they are safe and feel safe in their homes. The consultation included a survey both online and posted, drop-in sessions and focus groups.

Looking after your home

Repairs

Our repairs service has not been performing well, which means many residents will have faced delays and frustration when trying to get something fixed.

As part of our plans to improve the service we focused completing more repairs on time. Although our annual average remains well

below target, we were able to make significant performance improvements in the second half of the year, especially for emergency repairs.

We are continuing to drive the programme forward and expect to see improvements in non-emergency response times too.

Indicator	Our target (%)	2023/24 results (%)	Benchmark*
Non-emergency responsive repairs completed on time*	85	66	78
Emergency responsive repairs completed on time*	90	61	91
Tenant satisfaction with landlord's overall repairs service	60	58	63
Tenant satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	55	49	61
Tenant satisfaction that their home is well maintained	60	55	61

* Housemark data helps us compare our results to other London local authorities. The benchmark is the average, so you can see whether we are performing better or worse than equivalent organisations.

Repairs contact centre

We know that residents frequently faced long delays accessing our repairs call centre and improving this is a priority.



Average call waiting time

46 mins

The average waiting time for 2023/24 was 46 minutes, which means many residents will have waited for much longer than this at busy times.

In the first three months of 2024 that figure was steadily reducing, reaching an average of 27 minutes for March 2024.

That is still too high, but with new processes and staffing arrangements in place, we are aiming for an average of 6 minutes.



Major works programme

Many of our homes were built over 50 years ago and need a lot of investment at a time when all local councils are facing serious financial challenges.

Our programme of major works and improvements to your buildings commits to £321m of investment in the stock over five years (2023-27). Alongside this, we are making major investments to modernise our systems for managing and storing information.

Housing condition survey

We are investing £2.7m in a condition survey of our housing and buildings. The survey will help us to build a more accurate picture of their condition to plan our investment.

By the end of the 2023/24 financial year we had surveyed 2,000 homes, on schedule to complete around 13,000 by the end of 2024.

The purpose of the survey is to enable us to check if your home is decent and safe and to help us plan our maintenance programme.

In 2023/24 we installed:

325  Kitchens

355  Bathrooms

191  Roofs

833  Doors

1,382  Windows

96  Adaptations for disabled residents

449  Central heating boilers

8  Lifts replaced/
refurbished
(not including routine repairs)

Caretaking and grounds maintenance

Indicator	2023/24 results (%)	Benchmark (%)*
Tenant satisfaction that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	60	62

* Housemark data helps us compare our results to other London local authorities. The benchmark is the average, so you can see whether we are performing better or worse than equivalent organisations.

We look after **511,000 square metres of grass**, equivalent to around 72 football pitches, and 84,000 square metres of planted areas such as shrubs and hedges.

Our grounds maintenance programme focused on:

- Moving to non-glyphosate weed killing products
- Revitalising planted areas, including traditional planting such as roses
- ‘Planting for Pollution’ areas such as hedges in school sites to help with pollution
- Reducing grass cutting in favour of wildflower meadows for bees and other pollinators, and to cut back on carbon emissions from mowers

Community gardens

We support volunteer groups to run community gardens on estates we manage. We use social value funding to support with things like raised beds, soil and plants and will promote opportunities to get involved to residents. We are also enable staff to volunteer to help out to get projects started.

Caretaking

As well as keeping buildings clean and tidy, our caretakers make sure they are no fire safety hazards, such as blocked walkways.

Pest control treatments	79 blocks
MetroStor waste/recycling stores installed	25 units, bringing the total to 104 so far

We look after 
511,000m²
of grass





Listening to you

We provide lots of ways for our residents to get involved and let us know how to improve our services.

We are consulting on a new strategy for how we engage with residents, with results due to be shared at the end of 2024.

Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) are made up of residents who get together to represent the views and interests of everyone living in a particular area or estate. We hold quarterly meetings for Chairs of TRAs to come together to share their experiences and ask senior leaders questions.

If you would like to set up a TRA in your area, speak to the [Lewisham Tenants Fund](#).

The **Service and Performance Panel** is made up of tenants, leaseholders and senior Lewisham Council Housing staff. It gives resident members input on matters such as the performance of housing services and opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns.

The **Resident Scrutiny Panel** helps keep Lewisham Council Housing Services focused on delivering excellent services by providing an independent view of our processes and performance, highlighting what works well and what needs improvement.

The panel's review of repairs complaints led to an excellent report accompanied by recommendations made to improve the service, all of which were agreed by Lewisham Council Housing Services.

The **Leasehold forum** provides an opportunity for leaseholders to help us shape and improve our services.

The **Housing Management Board** is made up of the Chairs of the service and performance panel and resident scrutiny panel, alongside our Directors and the Executive Director. It is chaired by Lewisham Council's cabinet member for housing and homelessness, Cllr Will Cooper, who can make decisions and provide a link to the Council's [Housing Select Committee](#).

Contact CommunityRelations@lewisham.gov.uk to find out how you can get involved.

Social value

When we are choosing which company will do work for us, for instance building work, we ask them if they can do something extra for our communities.

This is known as a social value contribution.

Examples range from financial contributions to our Community Investment Fund which are distributed as grants to local community projects; to contributions in kind, such as a building contractor offering to refurbish a community centre.

Social value contributions generated from contracts in 2023/24*

£104k+

* this is a conservative estimate as many contributions do not have a direct monetary value

Community investment fund

Our annual community investment fund supported five projects with a total of £25,000, chosen by a panel of residents.

- **Therapy 4 Healing** (group and mental and physical health support)
- **60 up CIC** (helping older residents to stay active and engaged in their local community)
- **Home Is where the (he)art Is** (creative course on the theme of 'home')
- **BelEve UK** (mentoring for girls aged 12-15 from low-income families)
- **Friends of Dacres Wood Nature Reserve/ Secret Adventurers' Club** (forest school sessions held in Dacres Wood Nature Reserve for residents aged 8-12)

Top 3 contractors for social value contributions:

1. Masher Brothers (building repairs)
2. Travis Perkins Managed Services (repairs supplies)
3. United Living (major works)

Social value case studies

Helping Hands Early Years Sessions



Sponsor: Travis Perkins Managed Services
Delivery by: Helping Hand Early Years Consultancy

A series of 12 sessions designed to support families to enhance their child's development through play, and support the wellbeing of parents.

CIH Certificate in Housing Practice



Sponsor: Building Associates Limited
Delivery by: Chartered Institute of Housing

Two involved residents were given the opportunity to get a CIH Level 2 certificate on a course giving an introduction to some of the skills and knowledge necessary to enhance their personal involvement and understanding of housing.



Tackling tenancy fraud and illegal subletting

We have 11,000 households on our waiting list for social housing. It is very important that we make sure that only rightful tenants occupy our homes.

The Tenancy Audit team recovered 80 homes that were either sublet, abandoned or held in fraudulent tenancies. This helps rehouse those in greatest need and saves the Council money on temporary housing.

To tackle tenancy fraud, we rely on information from residents, staff and other sources. We value and welcome all referrals.

If you suspect someone is committing housing fraud, let us know. All reports will be kept confidential and you can remain anonymous.

Home ownership

Both current and past trends show leaseholder satisfaction generally is significantly below that of tenants. Our fourth quarter results show a 11 percentage point drop from that achieved in Q3, ending with an annual average of 33%. Benchmarking data from our research partner Acuity shows that our results are generally below the average compared with seven other social landlords.

We encourage leaseholders to engage with us through the Leaseholder Forum so that we can improve our services to you and answer your questions.

	Q1 (%)	Q2 (%)	Q3 (%)	Q4 (%)	2023 /24
Leaseholder satisfaction with the overall service	31%	34%	40%	29%	33%

Right to buy in 2023/24

Properties sold	45
Total discount provided to tenants buying their home	£5,173,380
Average discount	£114,964





Independent Living

Independent Living is a type of housing for people aged 60 and over, which helps older residents remain independent for as long as possible.

Residents have access to 24-hour emergency telecare, a laundry room, and on-site support staff during the day.

We manage 18 independent living schemes across the borough, with around 500 residents in total.

We rolled out a new door entry and 24-hour warden call system across all schemes during 2023/24. Residents can now see who is ringing their buzzer, and have greater peace of mind.

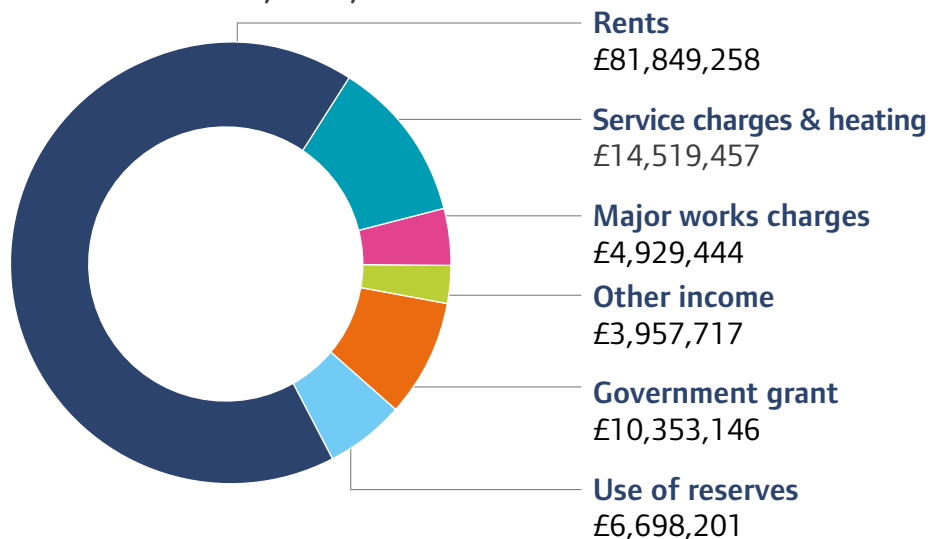
Following resident scrutiny panel recommendations, we merged the duties of Independent Living Officers and Housing Officers, so residents have a single contact for all enquiries.

Social inclusion is a priority, and we continue to hold free local and inter-scheme events for residents to meet and mingle, from coffee morning to parties with many activities, workshops and entertainment.

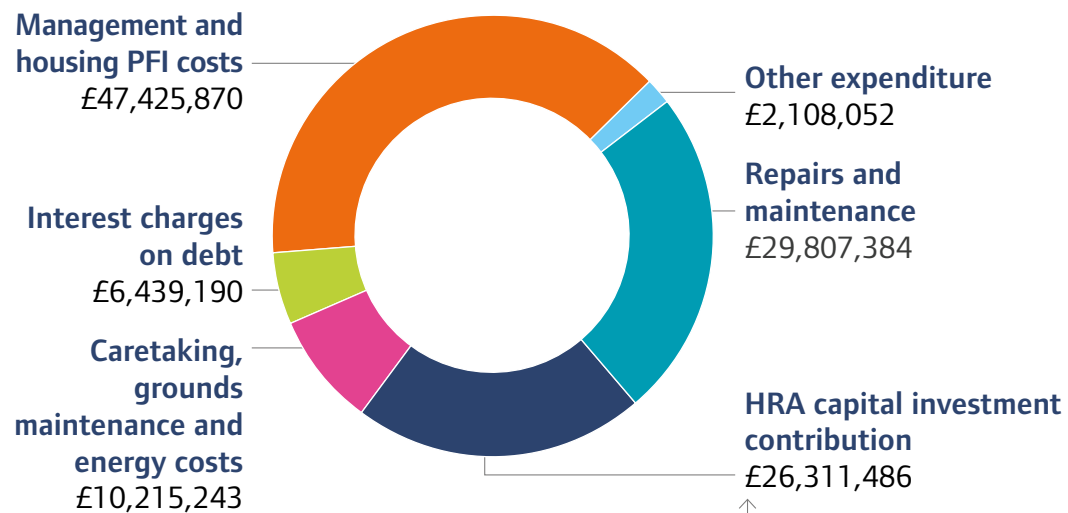
Our finances

Our income from rents and service charges goes into a Housing Revenue Account. This means it is ring-fenced and can only be spent on our Council housing and related services.

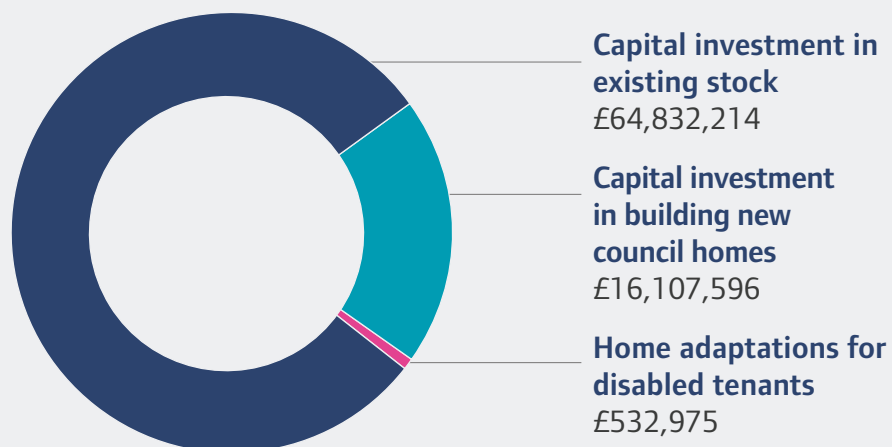
Income £122,307,225



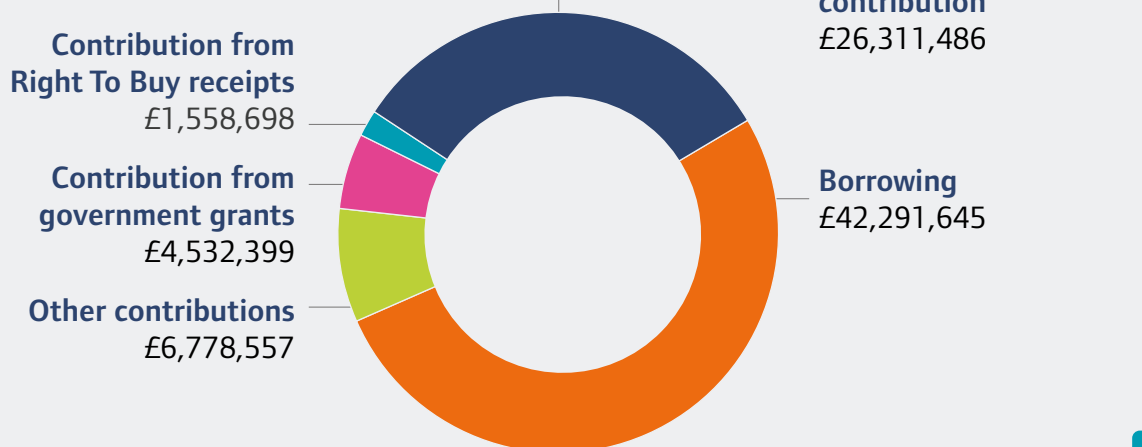
Expenditure £122,307,225



Capital investment



Funded by





www.lewisham.gov.uk/housing