

# **Property managers in Scotland - a market study**

Annexe H - Evidence from the Scottish House  
Condition Survey

February 2009

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# CONTENTS

<i>Chapter/Annexe</i>	<i>Page</i>
1 Introduction: Contents of this annexe	4
2 Summary of main findings	5
3 Methodology	8
4 Results: Scottish House Condition Survey Results	9
A Scottish House Condition Survey: Questionnaire	24

# **1 INTRODUCTION: CONTENTS OF THIS ANNEXE**

- 1.1 This annexe presents various forms of evidence relevant to the study drawn from the Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) for the year 2005/06.
- 1.2 The primary purpose of the SHCS is to build a picture of the condition of Scotland's occupied housing stock which covers all types of dwellings across the entire country. To build this picture it employs a methodology combining both an interview with occupants and a physical inspection of dwellings.
- 1.3 The occupant interviews include a number of questions that are concerned with property that has common elements, and asks about residents' experience of arranging maintenance and repair of properties with common elements. It is these questions that have relevance to the OFT study. The questions are attached at the end of this annexe.
- 1.4 Given the objectives of the SHCS stated above, the results and evidence here addresses only a limited range of issues. However, they act to some degree as a cross check on our other research findings and therefore reinforce the overall strength of the study conclusions.
- 1.5 The analysis and results presented here were produced at the request of the OFT by David McLaren of the SHCS Team, Communities Analytical Services, Housing and Regeneration Directorate, Scottish Government to whom we extend our thanks for their assistance.

## 2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

### Summary of main findings

- 2.1 The SHCS provide an estimate of 86,000 households as the number of owner occupied households that have common elements and that employ commercial property managing agents (or factors) to maintain and repair the common elements of their property.
- 2.2 This estimate provides an independent cross check on the companion piece of consumer research reported in *OFT 1046b: Survey of consumer experiences of property management* and proves to be in close agreement. This latter research arrives at an estimate of 87,000 owner occupied properties using commercial property managers.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 The corresponding number of private sector households that make their own arrangements for repairs and maintenance is estimated at 181,000.
- 2.4 Some 39,000 households that were not securing repairs and maintenance through factors, housing associations or landlords agreed that they would consider paying a property manager/ factor to maintain and repair the common parts of the building.
- 2.5 Despite having common interest, only 17 per cent of private sector households reported meeting on a regular basis to discuss things like repairs and maintenance.
- 2.6 Despite this lack of regular meetings, a substantial majority of households, in both private and social provision judged that it was very

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this is not the total size of the market for privately owned dwellings that are looked after by commercial property managers. As discussed further in *OFT 1046b: Survey of consumer experiences of property management* surveys directed at occupants encounter residents who rent from private landlords and consider the landlord responsible for looking after common parts of the building. This, however, does not preclude the landlord from making use of a commercial property managing agent to carry out repairs and maintenance, either alone or in cooperation with other owners.

easy or fairly easy to get common repairs done in their block. Of those that gave an opinion, however, some 14 per cent judged it to be quite difficult and a further 10 per cent very difficult.

- 2.7 For households in the private sector roughly eight per cent were aware of an occasion when one or more fellow residents had failed to pay their share of repairs.
- 2.8 The courses of action followed in these circumstances were variable. Most commonly (47 per cent) the repairs were undertaken anyway, but in a proportion of cases (12 per cent) the result was a failure to do the necessary repairs.
- 2.9 When the repair is so important that the structure and fabric of the building could or is suffering serious deterioration a statutory notice from the council may be issued requiring the work to be carried out. This is a valuable 'last resort' to help maintain the quality of the housing stock and was found in three per cent of cases.
- 2.10 In some 26 per cent of cases either the owners and residents or the property manager took legal action against the individual failing to pay their share.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.11 For households with private sector tenure only around 15 per cent of households were paying into a maintenance fund for repair of common parts.
- 2.12 In a majority of cases for private tenure households, repairs and maintenance are a reactive process done in emergencies, rather than as a routine.

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<sup>2</sup> The categories in the analysis are not mutually exclusive and such legal actions do not automatically imply anything about the actual completion or non completion of the repair.

## Agreement with other research

2.13 In broad terms these results are in good agreement with other research findings, especially the consumer research reported in *OFT 1046b: Survey of consumer experiences of property management*. Among the key issues where a similar overall picture emerges to other research and therefore strengthens the overall conclusions we noted the following:

- agreement on the size of sector – especially in terms of the number of owner occupiers using commercial property managers
- private tenure households that self-manage are a larger group than those using property managers
- the presence of a proportion of owner occupiers that would consider using private sector property managers, even though they do not do so at present
- the relatively low frequency with which owner occupiers meet to discuss maintenance and repair issues with the other owners of the shared property
- the experience of the owners of the shared property that repairs and maintenance can be achieved in most cases without undue difficulty
- a proportion of cases where some of the owners in the block or development do not pay their share of repair costs, and the consequent difficulties
- the comparative scarcity of maintenance funds
- the types of different services being routinely provided showing strong similarities to those identified in other research
- forward planning (in the form of surveys to identify problems) seems infrequent.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The results presented in this annexe are drawn from the 2005/6 SHCS. Overall tables relating to all housing in Scotland are taken from *Scottish House Condition Survey: Key Findings for 2005/6*: ISBN 978 0 7559 6901 2 (web only publication), produced by SHCS Team, Housing and Regeneration Directorate, Communities Analytical Services, Scottish Government. All tables relate to households and dwellings in Scotland.
- 3.2 The tables present findings for a base population of households and dwellings with shared or common parts, based on SHCS questions reference R24 to R34 which examine repair and maintenance for households and dwellings with common parts. Thanks are due to the staff located in the SHCS Communities Analytical Services section for preparing and supplying these tables.
- 3.3 As these results are drawn from a sample survey, some estimates are based on cells with limited numbers of observations. The SHCS has offered the following advice about the treatment of some results. Estimates that are derived using between 30 and 100 cases are less reliable and are indicated in the tables by using a blue typeface. Estimates that are derived using fewer than 30 cases should be treated with considerable caution and these are shown in red typeface.

## **4 RESULTS: SCOTTISH HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY RESULTS**

- 4.1 In the tables below all results concern a basic population of households that live in dwellings with shared or common parts. These are mostly flats, often four-in-a-block or tenements, but including other designs in a group labelled 'other flats'.
- 4.2 In tables 4.1 to 4.10 results are divided by type of tenure, showing privately owned property and social housing separately. These form the column headings for these tables, with the row headings reflecting the various responses available to the questions.
- 4.3 Table 4.1 addresses the key question about who looks after the repair and maintenance of property with common parts. Since the questions are directed as occupants it identifies responsibility rather than the property manager used to deliver the final services.
- 4.4 The results taken from table 4.1 below do not provide a direct estimate of the total number of households that live in dwellings that have common elements and that employ private sector property managers (or factors) to maintain and repair the common elements of their property.
- 4.5 However, the results do identify the number of owner occupiers that use private sector property managers to repair and maintain the shared parts of the property. Referring to the second row of results in table 4.1 this is estimated as around 86,000 households.
- 4.6 From the entry in the fourth row it can be concluded that a further 54,000 privately rented households report leaving this in the hands of the landlord, but no exact information is available on the proportion of landlords that in turn, make use of private sector property managers, to deliver the actual services. The table also includes a substantial number of answers such as 'other', 'don't know' and 'no-one' which make interpretation rather difficult, and might conceal some further use of property managers.
- 4.7 The table also reveals that a substantial proportion of owner occupiers, make their own arrangements for the maintenance and repair of the

common parts of the property, an estimated 181,000 out of 416,000 or 44 per cent.

- 4.8 Around 76,000 households or 18 per cent of the private sector tenure use services provided by the social housing sector. In the main these are likely to be dwellings that were once part of social housing provision but acquired by owner occupiers under right to buy arrangements.
- 4.9 These findings are generally consistent with the consumer research undertaken into this topic (*OFT 1046b*), where it was similarly observed that the largest single group comprised the 49 per cent that look after their own arrangements, followed by owner occupiers that employ commercial property managers representing 29 per cent of the population, with the remaining 22 per cent that have services provided by a housing association or similar social housing provider.

**Table 4.1: Who repairs and looks after the common parts of the block, like any common stairs, or the roof?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

	Households (thousands)		
	Tenure		Total
<u>Repairs by:</u>	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Owners/residents	181	27	208
Owners/residents pay factor/property company	86	5	91
Council/housing association	76	259	335
Landlord	53	74	127
Owner pays cleaner/someone	1	2	3
Other	8	2	10
No-one	18	9	27
Don't know	20	9	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>784</b>

Categories for repairs are not mutually exclusive

- 4.10 It is of relevance to the study to observe that, in addition to those households already using a private sector property manager, an additional 39,000 households would consider paying a property

manager/ factor to maintain and repair the common parts of the building. See table 4.2 below.

- 4.11 Such a decision requires the agreement of other households within the deeds of condition so may not be automatically available. However, this group forms a sizeable pool of households that, potentially, these householders might be persuaded to switch to the use of a property manager rather than looking after their own arrangements or, when circumstances allow, rather than using a provider from the social housing sector.
- 4.12 Households renting within the social sector contributed very little to this total. Such households would not normally be required to contribute to repair and maintenance, or at least not additionally to their regular rental payments.

**Table 4.2: Would you consider paying a factor/property management agent to maintain and repair the common parts of the building?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: Not securing repairs and maintenance through factors, housing associations or landlords.

Consider paying to Maintain/repair common parts	Households (thousands)		
	Tenure		Total
	Private Sector	Social Sector	
Yes	39	1	39
No	152	39	191
Don't know	15	-	16
Total	206	40	246

- 4.13 Despite having common interests in the property, table 4.3 below reveals that only 17 per cent of private sector households reported meeting on a regular basis to discuss things like repairs and maintenance. The ability of residents and owner occupiers to make collective decisions is an important feature of this market, and while there is nothing to prevent them meeting on an irregular basis or as and

when need arises, the absence of regular contacts may make the organisation of such meetings harder.

**Table 4.3: Do the people who live in this block regularly meet to discuss things like repairs and maintenance?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Households (thousands)			
<u>Block residents meet to discuss repairs</u>	Tenure		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Yes	72	38	110
No	329	314	643
Don't know	16	15	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>784</b>

4.14 A substantial majority of households, in both private and social provision judged that it was very easy or fairly easy to get common repairs done in their block. Of those that gave an opinion, however, some 14 per cent judged it to be quite difficult and a further 10 per cent very difficult.

**Table 4.4: How easy or difficult is it to get common repairs done in this block**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Households (thousands)			
<u>Common repairs done with ease/difficulty</u>	Tenure		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Very easy	108	101	208
Fairly easy	130	136	265
Quite difficult	44	38	81
Very difficult	32	38	70
Don't know	103	56	159
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>784</b>

4.15 For households in the private sector roughly eight per cent were aware of an occasion when one or more of the other owners of the shared property had failed to pay their share of repairs.

**Table 4.5: Are you aware of any occasions when people have failed to pay their share of repairs**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All with shared payments,

Households (thousands)			
<u>Failed to pay share of repairs</u>	<u>Tenure</u>		
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes	34	4	38
No	374	355	729
<b>Total</b>	407	359	767

4.16 The courses of action followed in these circumstances were variable. In a proportion of cases (12 per cent) the result was a failure to do the necessary repairs, though more commonly (47 per cent) the repairs were undertaken anyway. Instances where a statutory notice from the council was obtained though infrequent (three per cent) are important. This eventuality can be triggered when the repair is of a nature that, in its absence, the structure and fabric of the building could be compromised, so forms valuable last resort.

4.17 In some 26 per cent of cases either the owners and residents or the property manager took legal action against the individual failing to pay their share. The categories here are not mutually exclusive and such legal actions do not automatically imply anything about the actual completion or non completion of the repair.

## Table 4.6: What did you do in that situation?

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: Where failed to pay in Table 4.5

<u>What to do when failed to pay share</u>	Households (thousands)		
	Tenure		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Couldn't do repairs	4	2	6
Did repairs anyway	16	-	16
Owners residents took legal action	5	-	5
Obtained statutory notice from the council	1	1	2
Factor took legal action	9	1	10
<u>Total</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>38</u>

Categories are not mutually exclusive

4.18 The presence of a maintenance fund or account to which households pay is an important feature of property with shared or common parts. It spreads the cost of repairs over a longer time period, and may provide an immediate source of funds for property managing agents to complete some repairs up to agreed limits without obtaining specific agreement among residents. These results suggest that for households with private sector tenure around 15 per cent of households were paying into such a fund.

**Table 4.7: Is there a maintenance fund or account that everyone pays into on a regular basis to cover repairs and maintenance of the common parts?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Households (thousands)			
<u>Maintenance fund/account</u>	<u>Tenure</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Yes	62	7	69
No	324	335	660
Don't know	30	25	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>784</b>

**Table 4.8: Still thinking of the common parts - are they regularly inspected and maintained or are works done only when there is an emergency**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Households (thousands)			
<u>Common parts: are they regularly inspected and maintained?</u>	<u>Tenure</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Regularly maintained	143	143	285
Work done only in emergency	206	152	358
Don't know	67	73	140
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>784</b>

4.19 Excluding 'don't know' answers, regular inspection and maintenance of property occurs in 41 per cent of cases, compared with 59 per cent where work is only done in an emergency.

**Table 4.9: Which of these things, if any, does the factor / council / Housing Association do to maintain the common parts of the building?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

<u>Activities</u>	Households thousands)		
	Tenure		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Upkeep Shared grounds	149	237	386
Maintaining / cleaning Shared stair	93	152	245
Window cleaning	24	36	60
Repairs to roof	151	263	413
Clean gutters	127	221	348
Repairs to outside walls/windows	122	241	363
Repairs to door entry system	104	192	296
Surveys to identify problems	50	73	123
Don't know	30	21	51
None of these	175	20	195
<b>Total</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>783</b>

4.20 This list of services provided by the property manager/factor shows strong similarities to those identified in other research. Repairs and upkeep of grounds, roofs and guttering are fairly prominent. Forward planning in the form of surveys to identify problems seems are infrequent.

**Table 4.10: Does your household pay a regular service charge for this in addition to the mortgage/rent?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: Asked if 'don't know' or 'none of these' for previous question.

<u>Pay service charge for</u>	Households (thousands)		
	Tenure		Total
	<u>Private Sector</u>	<u>Social Sector</u>	
Shared ground/stairs	96	27	123
Window cleaning	62	13	75
Repairs to roof	11	2	13
Cleaning gutters	2	-	2
Repairs outside walls/windows	43	4	47
Repairs door entry	54	7	61
Surveys to identify problems	54	6	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>361</b>

4.21 This question appears to address services not being provided routinely by factors and examines the presence of paying regular service charges in addition to rent or mortgage repayments. Its importance or relevant to the OFT study is not clear and we make no further comment on the results in this table.

4.22 Tables 4.11 to 4.20 below present results in relation to the same set of questions but broken down on the basis of the physical construction of the dwelling. Due to the weighting methods employed by the SHCS, and as these tables refer to dwellings rather than households, totals for these results differ slightly to the above.

4.23 Property management companies show a stronger presence among tenements than four-in-a-block or other types of flats and throughout this set of tables there are several other instances where responses seemed to be influenced by this issue.

- 4.24 Note for example, that for tenements the level of regular meetings is lower and level of problems with getting other people to pay their share higher compared with other types of dwelling.
- 4.25 However, since the tables do not distinguish between private sector and rented sector no attempt is made to draw many conclusions or conclusions of great depth and the tables are mainly included for completeness.

**Table 4.11: Who repairs and looks after the common parts of the block, like any common stairs, or the roof?**

Base population: Dwellings with shared or common parts: All

<u>Repairs by:</u>	Dwellings (thousands)				<u>Total</u>
	Type of dwelling				
	<u>House</u>	<u>Tenement</u>	<u>4-in-a-block</u>	<u>Other flat</u>	
Owners/residents	3	120	73	3	209
Owners/residents pay factor/property company	-	81	8	7	96
Council/housing association	8	200	73	60	341
Landlord	2	76	29	9	117
Owner pays cleaner/someone	-	2	-	1	3
Other	1	9	2	2	13
No-one	3	6	11	1	21
Don't know	1	20	7	1	29
<u>Total</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>485</u>	<u>183</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>776</u>

Categories for repairs are not mutually exclusive

**Table 4.12: Would you consider paying a factor/property management agent to maintain and repair the common parts of the building?**

Base population: Dwellings with shared or common parts: Not securing repairs and maintenance through factors, housing associations or landlords.

Dwellings (thousands)					
Consider paying to maintain/repair common parts	Type of dwelling				Total
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Yes	-	27	11	3	41
No	6	96	71	14	187
Don't know	-	10	3	-	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>243</b>

**Table 4.13: Do the people who live in this block regularly meet to discuss things like repairs and maintenance?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Dwellings (thousands)					
Block residents meet to discuss repairs	Type of dwelling				Total
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Yes	3	64	17	26	110
No	14	402	162	62	640
Don't know	-	19	4	4	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>776</b>

**Table 4.14: How easy or difficult is it to get common repairs done in this block**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Dwellings (thousands)					
Common repairs done with ease/difficulty	Type of dwelling				Total
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Very easy	7	128	45	35	215
Fairly Easy	2	159	68	34	263
Quite difficult	1	53	22	6	82
Very difficult	4	46	8	6	64
Don't know	4	99	39	11	152
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>776</b>

**Table 4.15: Are you aware of any occasions when people have failed to pay their share of repairs**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All with shared payments

Dwellings (thousands)					
Failed to pay share of repairs	Type of dwelling				Total
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Yes	-	37	4	2	43
No	17	438	175	87	717
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>760</b>

### Table 4.16: What did you do in that situation?

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: Where failed to pay in Table 4.5

What to do when failed to pay share	Dwellings (thousands)				Total
	Type of dwelling				
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Couldn't do repairs	-	5	2	-	7
Did repairs anyway	-	15	1	1	17
Owners residents took legal action	-	6	-	-	6
Obtained statutory notice from the council	-	1	-	-	1
Factor took legal action	-	9	1	1	12
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>37</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>43</b>

Categories are not mutually exclusive

### Table 4.17: Is there a maintenance fund or account that everyone pays into on a regular basis to cover repairs and maintenance of the common parts?

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Maintenance fund/account	Dwellings (thousands)				Total
	Type of dwelling				
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Yes	1	63	5	6	75
No	16	376	173	80	645
Don't know	-	46	5	6	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>776</b>

**Table 4.18: Still thinking of the common parts - are they regularly inspected and maintained or are works done only when there is an emergency**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Common parts: are they regularly inspected and maintained	Dwellings (thousands)				
	Type of dwelling				Total
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Regularly maintained	6	180	47	54	287
Work done only in emergency	7	224	107	21	359
Don't know	5	81	28	16	131
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>776</b>

**Table 4.19: Which of these things, if any, does the factor / council / Housing Association do to maintain the common parts of the building?**

Base population: Households or dwellings with shared or common parts: All

Activities	Dwellings (thousands)				Total
	Type of dwelling				
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Upkeep Share grounds	6	276	44	64	391
Maintenance / cleaning Share stair	3	182	5	57	248
Window cleaning	2	47	1	12	61
Repairs to roof	7	272	81	61	421
Clean gutters	7	229	70	43	350
Repairs to outside walls/windows	7	240	67	54	369
Repairs to door entry system	2	235	12	56	305
Surveys to identify problems	2	78	17	29	127
Don't know	2	26	10	3	42
None of these	5	105	70	12	192
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>776</b>

**Table 4.20: Does your household pay a regular service charge for this in addition to the mortgage/rent?**

Base population: Dwellings with shared or common parts: Asked if 'don't know' or 'none of these' for previous question.

Pay service charge for	Dwellings (thousands)				Total
	Type of dwelling				
	House	Tenement	4-in-a-block	Other flat	
Shared ground/stairs	2	99	10	13	124
Window cleaning	3	58	4	11	75
Repairs to roof	-	11	-	1	12
Cleaning gutters	-	2	-	-	2
Repairs outside walls/windows	1	35	6	5	47
Repairs door entry	1	48	3	7	58
Surveys to identify problems	1	47	5	7	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>367</b>

## A SCOTTISH HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY: QUESTIONNAIRE

Source: SCHC: Documentation of Social Survey Questions

A.1 All data is from the 2005/6 Scottish House Condition Survey. Private Sector includes owner occupied and private rented dwellings. Social Sector includes Housing Association/co-op and Local Authority/other stock. Tables are based on the questions below:

- who repairs and looks after the common parts of the block, like any common stairs, or the roof?
- would you consider paying a factor/property management agent to maintain and repair the common parts of the building?
- do the people who live in this block regularly meet to discuss things like repairs and maintenance?
- how easy or difficult is it to get common repairs done in this block?
- are you aware of any occasions when people have failed to pay their share of repairs?
- what did you do in that situation?
- is there a maintenance fund or account that everyone pays into on a regular basis to cover repairs and maintenance of the common parts?
- still thinking of the common parts - are they regularly inspected and maintained or is work done only when there is an emergency?
- which of these things, if any, does the factor/council/Housing Association, etc. do to maintain the common parts of the building?

- does your household pay a regular service charge for this in addition to the mortgage/rent? (asked if 'don't know' or 'none of these' for previous question.)

A.2 Additional information: all counts are rounded to the nearest thousand and percentages to the nearest integer. Estimates derived from between 30 and 100 cases and should be treated with considerable caution. A few estimates are derived from less than 30 cases and extreme caution should be used in their interpretation.