

Tenant Newsletter



Office Opening Times

Monday—Thursday 9.00am to 5pm

Friday 9am to 4.00pm

Contact us on 01620 829300

Or by email info@homesforlife.co.uk

Spring 2019 

CONTENTS

EU Citizen support	1
Estate Walkabouts/Rate My Estate	2
Keep the Stairwell Clear!	3
Your new Housing Officer	4
Dog Fouling	4
Planned Maintenance Programme	5
Allocations 2018 – 19	6
Allocations Policy Review	6
Annual Satisfaction Survey feedback	7
Rent & Repairs Telephone Nos.	8

There's a lot in your newsletter this time – but we want some of it back!

Enclosures we need back:

1. Any Changes Survey 2019
2. Rate My Estate Survey 2019

NOTE: There are word versions of these surveys online if you prefer to complete them by email. They can be found on our website here:

<https://www.homesforlife.co.uk/Consultations/144.htm>



EU Citizens Support -Until the

UK leaves the EU on a set day your rights remain unchanged. The UK Government will announce when Brexit will happen.

Citizen Advice Bureaux have a new **part-time specialist helpline service** for EU citizens resident in Scotland, is called **EU Citizens Support**, and is funded by the Scottish Government. This service is free and impartial and is designed to help EU citizens and their families with issues and concerns around the EU Settlement Scheme. It is available across Scotland through the CAB network of local Citizens Advice bureaux find yours here – <https://www.cas.org.uk/bureaux>.

This service is for EU citizens who would like to apply for settled status, but have extra needs. For example, you may:

- have difficulty accessing an android mobile phone
- have limited access to the internet
- find it difficult to get the evidence you need to apply
- be at greater risk due to personal circumstances
- have specific immigration or residency issues.

You will be able to get free, confidential and impartial advice from their website, in person at [your local bureau](#) and on the phone. The new service has a national **helpline 0800 916 9847** and is open on:

- Monday and Friday mornings from 0900-1300, and
- Wednesday afternoons from 1300-1700

Estate Walkabouts

Do you want to help make your development a great place to live? If so, come and join an estate walkabout and help to improve the appearance of your estate.

What is the aim of an estate walkabout?

Estate walkabouts happen to give tenants and officers the chance to work together to identify improvement you would like to see in your development which will make it a better place to live.

What do I have to do? All you have to do to take part in the walkabout is turn up on the day! Or if you can't make it complete the enclosed Rate my Estate form either by mail or online.

Tuesday 21st May

Goldenstones Ave, Dunbar **10.00 am**
Smiddy Wynd and Prestonkirk, East Linton
11.45am

Thursday 23rd May

Limeylands Court, Ormiston **9.15am**
MacFarlane Court, Elphinstone **10.45am**

Tuesday 28th May

Roodlands Court, Haddington **10.00 am**
Davison Terr/Place, Haddington **10.45am**
Kennedy Court, Haddington **11.30am**

Thursday 30st May

Barga Court , Cockenzie **9.15am**
Hares Close, Cockenzie **10.15am**
Walden Terr/Pl, Gifford **2.30 pm**

Tuesday 4th June

Muirfield Drive/Gardens, Gullane **10.00am**

Rate My Estate



We have enclosed a survey for tenants who may not be able to attend the annual "walkabout" - this is an option to return a "Traffic Light" assessment of your development to let us know if there are any areas you'd like to suggest improvements.

See the enclosed Rate My Estate Guide



- Everything is fine – keep it up



- Some improvements needed



- Urgent attention needed

Keep the Stairwell Clear! The communal stair is your only means of escape in the event of a fire. The Housing Officer and Maintenance Officer carried out recent inspections and noted that **bicycles, push chairs** and **children's toys** were obstructing the exits; doors had been wedged open and there were several personal items such as **ornaments, flower pots, book cases, wall hangings** in communal areas. These now need to be removed.

When the Housing Officer begins the inspections from May 2019 we will look at all obstructions as a fire hazard and a Breach of your Tenancy.

We will be posting warning notices about the dangers of leaving things in the communal stair. A fire started in a communal stair can trap you, and can potentially kill. Even a small bag of rubbish, a child's plastic trike, or an old rug can create enough smoke to fill a whole stair. As a reminder to ALL tenants it is important that you familiarise yourself with the following as these are a list of things you can do to help to prevent the risk of fire:

As per section 2.13 of your tenancy Agreement

"No property belonging to you or anyone residing with you or anyone visiting you, including bicycles, motorcycles or prams, should be stored in any of the common parts except in areas set aside for storage. You must not do anything, which causes inconvenience or danger to anyone using the common parts."

- No refuse bags, combustible materials or items of furniture should be stored in common areas such as stairways, corridors. By keeping these areas clear it will protect escape routes and reduce the risk of deliberate fires.
- Fire alarm panels, fire doors and dry riser landing valves are there to assist with firefighting operations. If you see damage to any of these features, please report it immediately.
- Most doors in common areas are fire resisting and fitted with self closing devices and should never be wedged open.
- Bin rooms and access doors to the building should be kept secure to prevent intruders starting deliberate fires.
- There should be no gas cylinders, flammable liquids or fuels stored or used within a flat building.
- Don't store prams, bicycles or mobility scooters in communal areas without the permission of the landlord. You won't get permission if the fire safety of the block is put at risk.
- If you see anything in the communal areas that doesn't belong there, remove it or tell your landlord.
- Make sure you put all rubbish in the bins provided — don't leave it lying around in the refuse area as this can easily be set on fire. Even a small bag of rubbish can create enough smoke to fill a whole stair.

The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service provides free home safety advice. For more information call 0800 0731 999 ; text 80800 or visit their website at www.firescotland.gov.uk.

Your New Housing Officer

We are delighted to introduce your new Housing Officer **Michelle Scott**, who joins us from 7th May . Michelle fills the vacancy left by Jane MacDonald who we'd like to thank for her time here as she moves on to new challenges. Michelle is an experienced and qualified Housing Professional. She has worked in Housing for over 10 years. This includes more than 8 years as a generic Housing Officer with Registered Social Landlords - most recently at Waverly Housing and previously at Karbon Homes. We are a very small organisation and the post of Housing Officer is central to our service delivery so it was essential we found someone able to comfortably take on such a challenging role. We are therefore very pleased to have secured Michelle's services and look forward to working together. We'd also like to thank **Alison Vass** for so ably stepping in to provide cover during the recruitment period.



DOG FOULING



We've received a number of recent complaints about people not cleaning up after their dog. Not cleaning up after your dog is illegal as a result of The Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003. In 2016 the fixed penalty for leaving dog fouling was increased to £80 and can in some cases

lead to conviction and a fine of up to £500. **It is also a Breach of your Tenancy Agreement.** In addition to being a nuisance to pedestrians and walkers, dog fouling can also be dangerous to people's health.

What you can do:

- Follow the golden rules: Grab it, bag it, bin it.
- If you see someone allowing their dog to foul and if you feel safe, politely but firmly encourage them to clear up after their dog.
- If you don't feel that you can approach someone, report dog fouling to the Council's Dog Warden - particularly if you know who is letting their dog foul regularly.

You can report dog fouling to East Lothian Dog Warden online here

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/forms/form/10218/en/dog_fouling or by ringing **01875 824305** and asking to speak to the Dog Warden. To help them investigate and target warden patrols, please tell them:

- where and when fouling is happening
- the dog owner's name and address, if you know it
- what the dog looks like, including breed and colour
- your own contact details

Planned Maintenance 2018-2020

During 2018 - 2019, we completed £250,000 worth of planned maintenance work.

This included:

- **Kitchen and Gas Boiler replacements- 10 homes** at Roodlands Court, Haddington;
- **1st time Shower Installs – 84 homes** at Walden Terr/Place, Gifford; Forth Street, North Berwick; Barga Court, Cockenzie: Old Course Gate, Musselburgh and Market Street, Haddington. This completed our shower install program. **All HfL homes have now been offered showers.**
- **Periodic Electrical Safety Testing, remedials, servicing of electric heating and upgrading of Fire Protection Systems*(where required)- 137 homes** at Longstone Ave, East Linton; Hare's Close, Cockenzie; Bankfoot, Prestonpans; Kennedy Court, Davidson Terrace/Place, Market Street and Roodlands Court, Haddington; Goldenstones Ave, Dunbar; Limeylands Crt, Ormiston; Prestonkirk/Smiddy Wynd, East Linton; and MacFarlane Crt, Elphinstone.



During 2019-2020 we plan to complete a significantly larger programme of planned maintenance work. This includes:

- **Kitchen & Boiler Replacements- 6 homes** at St Andrew Street
- **Periodic Electrical Safety Testing, remedials, servicing of electric heating and upgrading of Fire Protection Systems*(where required)- 105 homes** at St Andrew & Forth Street, North Berwick; Muirfield Gardens & Drive, Gullane; Walden Place and Terrace, Gifford; Old Course Gate, Musselburgh;
- **External Painterwork- 304 homes** in all our developments.
- **Upgrading or replacement of heating –** balance of any outstanding works required to meet Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

Tenants whose homes are included in this programme will be contacted with further detail when available.

(A new legal standard for Fire Detection Systems will apply from Feb 2021. All HfL homes will meet this standard by Mar 2020.)*

Allocations 2018-2019

We advertised **10 vacancies** through Homehunt, of these **6 were allocated to priority homeless** pass holders. We arranged **3 internal transfers** and agreed **6 mutual exchanges**.

Area	Nos. of allocations	1 bed flat	2 bed flat	3 bed House	Average nos. of applicants per property
Totals	10	5	4	1	87
Cockenzie	1	-	1	-	175
Gullane	5	3	2	-	88
Gifford	2	1	-	1	75
North Berwick	1	-	1	-	71
East Linton	1	1	-	-	51

From this Allocation information you will see 90% of advertised allocations were for 1 and 2 bedroom flats. We advise tenants who are looking for larger properties or houses that a Mutual Exchange with another social landlord is very often a much quicker solution. 6 tenants exchanged last year. We always look at our own tenants needs before we advertise but were only able to accommodate **3** transfers.

We have a joint mutual exchange list with East Lothian Council and East Lothian HA called **East Lothian X-Changes**. You can search for a property here:

<https://www.elha.com/mutex/search>

Allocation Policy Changes

We started the consultation process last spring, asking for tenant volunteers to become involved in the review of the Allocation policy. We discussed the changes brought about by the **Housing (Scotland) Act 2014** with a presentation at our AGM in September. *(This is still available on our website).*

We subsequently had a meeting at the Maitlandfield Hotel with interested tenants, this was an interesting meeting with some very diverse views. We then sent out a survey to all our tenants, other agencies we work with and included a link to the survey on our homehunt adverts. The responses so far:

	Agree	Disagree
01 Home Ownership	78.9%	21.1%
02 Reasonable Preference Under Occupation	100%	0
3 Succeeding Tenancies	88.9%	11.1%
4 ASB Existing tenants	100%	0
4 ASB Low level breaches	100%	0
5 ASB Prospective tenants	95.0%	5.0%
6 Streamlined Eviction	94.7%	5.3%

Annual Satisfaction Survey

Enclosed is the full report on the results of our annual satisfaction survey. We carried out a postal survey over Oct/Nov 2018. We received 141 completed surveys, representing 51.6% of all tenants and 13 more than the last full survey in 2016. This is an excellent response level from a postal survey, and accepted as sufficient to take reassurance in accuracy in interpreting the majority of results.

We have maintained high satisfaction ratings across all areas questioned, 4 areas have shown increased satisfaction, 2 remained more or less the same (less than 1% change) and 2 areas show a drop in satisfaction.

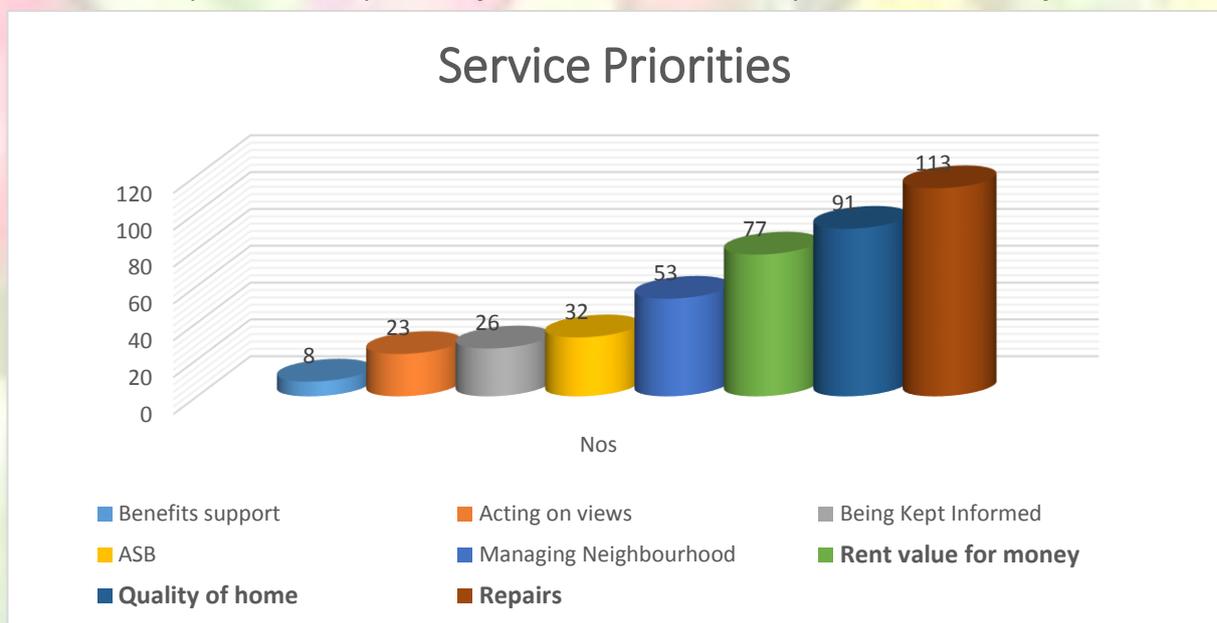
Areas with more than 1% increases in satisfaction – **Overall Satisfaction** with Homes for Life is up 4.6%; **Rent as Value for Money** had been decreasing but is up 3.9%; **Keeping Tenants Informed** up 6.4%. **Satisfaction with Standard of Home** when moving in shows the most increased satisfaction at 100% , up 20%.

Two areas remaining fairly static - **Satisfaction with Quality of Home** is down 0.5% and **Satisfaction with Repairs** has dropped by 0.5%

Areas showing more than 1% drop in - are **Management of Neighbourhood** down by 1.9% (8 tenants expressed dissatisfaction but there is no clear pattern to this) and **Opportunities to Participate** down 1.8% (though no tenants were dissatisfied). Although there were no tenant's expressing dissatisfaction with opportunities to participate there was an increase in people opting for Neither/Nor, up 2.6%.

Whilst the response rate is excellent, statistically 141 is a small number of responses so one tenant can make a difference of almost 1% either way. Also tenants opting for Neither Nor may not be dissatisfied but will reduce the overall % of active satisfaction. By removing Neither Nor we can look at Active Satisfaction which can offer greater indication of areas which may need more focus eg Repairs. Which is the only Area below 93% Active Satisfaction and 9.1% below the ARC average.

The 3 service issues which are of greatest priority to tenants continues to be **Repairs and Maintenance**, closely followed by **Quality of Home**, followed by **Value for Money** for rent.



Useful Numbers

We use **allpay.net** to collect rent. *In order to use any of the Allpay services other than Direct Debit or Callpay you need your allpay card number. Don't have one? Call us and we'll order one for you. We can take 'one off' payments by debit card over the phone or at the office counter.*



Rent

1. Our preferred method of payment is Direct Debit

All payments made by Direct Debit are guaranteed, this means that in the unlikely event a payment is made in error, you will receive a full and immediate refund. **Please contact the office and we can arrange your direct debit over the phone**

2. Telephone Payments - contact telephone payments on: **0844 557 8321**. You'll need your allpay no. to hand.

3. Online at

<https://www.allpayments.net/allpayments>

4. By allpay Card at various outlets – for example the **Post Office** or anywhere displaying the **Paypoint** logo

5. You can also pay rent using your Smartphone Allpay have launched their new **smartphone app**. The app is available for Apple and Android smartphones. Try scanning it!



Repairs

1. DURING Office Hours

Phone **Novus** on **01506 242 120**

2. OUT of Office Hours Call the same number 01506 242 120



But please remember that only repairs that cannot wait until the following morning to be reported, should be called in after 5pm

PLEASE NOTE - if you call out an emergency repair which is either your responsibility or which is not a genuine emergency, the cost of the call out and the repair will be charged back to you.

3. GAS CENTRAL HEATING

Your gas central heating is covered by a contract with **Kingdom Gas** and if you experience any problems with your system you should call **FREE** on **0800 389 9463** or **01334 650452**

THINK YOU SMELL GAS? If you think you can smell a gas leak, **NEVER** attempt to find a gas leak yourself. Instead contact **National Grid Gas plc** **immediately** on **0800 111 999**



Anti-Social Behaviour Hotline– 0845 6018518

Registered Social Landlord No: 311

Registered Charity No: SC028542, Property Factor Reg No Reg PF0000219, Company Limited by Guarantee, Company Registration No: 188299

Telephone 01620 829300

Fax 01620 829993

email: info@homesforlife.co.uk