

TENANTS NEWSLETTER

OFFICE OPENING TIMES

Monday - Thursday 9.00am to 5.00pm

Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm

Contact us on 01620 829300

Or by email info@homesforlife.co.uk

Homes for Life Housing Partnership

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HADDINGTON

East Lothian

EH41 3JG

Tel 01620 829300

Fax 01620 829993

www.homesforlife.co.uk



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QUICK REMINDERS:

- AGM – Wed 14th September 2011 6.30 for 7pm
- Did you cancel your Standing Order and switch to Direct Debit or payment card?
- Please see all your enclosures,
- check the website www.homesforlife.co.uk

Please also find enclosed:

- Noise Nuisance phone numbers post card
- **Any Changes** update form and Fair Collection/Processing Notice to sign and return in the prepaid envelope

Prize Draw



For all tenants who have completed and returned both the "Any Changes?" questionnaire and Data Protection declaration by 22nd August will be drawn at the Board Meeting on 31st August

1st Prize - £50

3 x 2nd Prize - £25

5 x 3rd Prize - £15 Tesco shopping voucher

Tenant Panel Meeting



The Tenant Panel Meeting held on Wednesday 8th June

At the last Panel meeting on 8th June the Panel discussed the Proposed Repairs procurement, the Tenant Participation review, the Social Housing Charter and areas for Service development. It is likely that the Social Housing Charter will involve tenants in the assessment of our services. For more information on the Charter, or to add your own ideas or comments, go to the Housing Charter [website: http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk](http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk). If you don't have internet access, and would like to be notified when the consultation period starts or if you think you might be interested in inspecting the quality of your services then please get in touch.

We are delighted that 3 more tenants have expressed interest in becoming involved as Tenant Directors on the Board of Homes for Life. We have sent out further information on the duties and responsibilities involved in being a Tenant Director and invited these tenants to attend the August Board meeting as observers with a view to being elected at the AGM in September.

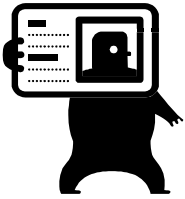
Tenant involvement is crucial as it helps the Company to develop and improve your services

Roof Repairs

We're aware that there are a number of roof and rhone repairs that are still outstanding and have arranged for these to be completed by an external contractor. If you have reported a roof repair prior to April 2011 which hasn't been attended to please contact the office on 01620 829300 and ask to speak to Hilary.

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Bogus callers



Please make sure you ask to see proof of identity for all tradesmen

Not all burglars break into homes - some will try to trick or con their way in. They are known as Bogus callers and will pretend to be on official business from respectable concerns such as the Utility Companies - Gas, Electricity and Water - or the Council. They may claim to be tradesmen or workmen calling to carry out urgent repairs. Bogus callers succeed because they sound believable, so don't be fooled. Make sure in your own mind that they are whom they claim to be by following these simple steps.

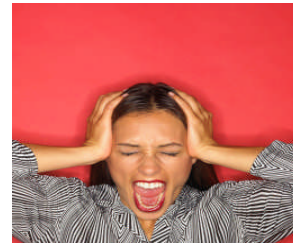
- Ask callers for proof of identity. Genuine tradesmen should carry an identification card with their photograph on. Check this carefully. If you are unsure, telephone the company the caller claims to represent.
- The Utilities now offer a password identification system. Any caller from one of these companies should be able to give a pre-arranged password as additional proof of identity.
- Beware of callers who attempt to distract you by claiming that there is something untoward in your rear garden or somewhere which may encourage you to leave your house - they may have an accomplice awaiting this distraction.
- If you are not convinced of the identity of the caller, don't let them in. Ask the caller to come back later and arrange for a friend, relative or a neighbour to return or ask the caller to contact this person.
- Take care when disposing of personal data, it might be used by criminals

Digital Switchover

Digital TV switchover in Scotland is now complete, extending coverage and choice to an extra one million viewers previously unable to receive digital television through an aerial. Our contractor reviewed the communal aerials Homes for Life is responsible for and declared them all satisfactory. If you do not have a communal aerial, the upkeep of your aerial is your responsibility.

Viewers should continue to retune their Freeview box occasionally to make sure they receive the latest services. Anyone still needing help with reception problems or with setting up and using digital equipment, should get in touch with Digital UK via their website (www.digitaluk.co.uk) or advice line (08456 50 50 50).

Noise nuisance and Anti-social behaviour



Are you suffering from the behaviour of your neighbours, or those who live round about you?

During working hours you should contact our office on 01620 829300. Out of office hours East Lothian Council provide us with use of the Noise team and an anti-social behaviour helpline numbers for you to contact.

We've enclosed a handy size card with the relevant phone numbers for you to keep by your phone in case you need to report noise or anti-social nuisance.

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Investment Programme 2011 -2012

Last year:

We spent approximately ½ million pounds on upgrading some of our properties. Only a small amount of snagging now remains outstanding from last year's contract for improvement of our 27 older 'trickle transfer' ex East Lothian Council homes. These homes now all meet the **Scottish Housing Quality Standard** after a package which included - upgrading of kitchens, bathrooms and heating; rewiring; insulation; and necessary repairs to roofs, gutters and render.

We also completed extensive render repairs for external staircases to flats at **Muirfield, Gullane**.



This year :

We have budgeted for just over **£92,000** for:

- Painting of windows and doors - **Barga Court, Cockenzie** (We plan to try and address pattern staining on render at same time, but render itself is not due to be recoated for another 10-15 years.)
- Electrical testing - initially **Barga Court, Cockenzie**, followed towards the end of the financial year by **Hare's Close, Cockenzie; Davidson Terrace, Kennedy Court, and Market Street, Haddington; Longstone Avenue, East Linton; and Bankfoot, Prestonpans**.
- Loft insulation top up to current standards - Hares Close, Cockenzie
- External Stairs - further repairs if required to - render at stairs; seals at stairs and landings, and addressing ponding problems. Developments with external stairs include -**Hares Close, and Barga Court, Cockenzie; Goldenstones, Dunbar; Limeylands, Ormiston; Roodlands, Haddington; and Muirfield, Gullane**. Note **not all** external stairs in these developments will be affected.
- Flushing and treatment of cold water storage tanks and related works as a precautionary measure to help prevent legionella - flats at Market Street and Kennedy Court, Haddington; upper flats and houses at MacFarlane Court, Elphinstone; and Bankfoot, Prestonpans. If you would like to know more about legionella and Legionnaire's Disease, information can be found on the **Health & Safety Executive website, www.hse.gov.uk**.

Anyone included in these works will get due notice as they are arranged.

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Tenant Participation Review 2010 -2011

Home's for Life's Tenant Participation Strategy sets out what we mean by Participation and sets out what this will mean to you in practice.

- How we will consult you
- What we will consult you about
- How you can get involved in decision making
- How you can help us improve services
- How you and your neighbours can form a registered tenant group (RTO)
- How you can get involved, through membership, attending meetings, take part in policy and service reviews

We have continued to consult our tenants' regularly throughout this period and informed them through regular newsletters, briefing notes and to meet with our Tenant Panel representatives through meetings as well as through our AGM.

What did we do during 2010-2011?

Consultation

- **Ongoing Consultation on Tenant Satisfaction**
We continuously survey our tenant's satisfaction through questionnaires sent out after each repair, gas servicing and home visits after allocations. Issues raised are followed up and policy/procedures amended as necessary to improve our service
These include:-
 - **Repairs Satisfaction Surveys**
 - of all reactive maintenance repairs - 619 surveys were sent out with a 48% response rate
 - Gas Service and Repair call outs – 298 surveys were sent out with a 43% response rate
 - **Post Allocation Surveys** – we carried out 17 post allocation visits.
- **Annual Rent increase**
Each year we write out to all our tenants seeking their views on the proposed April rent increase.
 - For the increase that would take place in April 2011 for the 2nd year we consulted on a below inflation increase- this year of 3.3% (at the time inflation was between 3.7% - 4.8%)
 - After a meeting to consult with our tenant Panel we went out to wider consultation with all tenants through postal survey. We had a 14% response rate and need to improve on that

We will continue to consult and/or provide information to any tenant who wishes to discuss housing or community matters on an individual or group basis.

TENANTS NEWSLETTER

Information

- **Newsletter**
 - We produce newsletters 4 times a year, so we have a direct way of communicating with and consulting our tenants. The newsletters also provided feedback from consultations and prize draws.
- **Annual Report**
 - All our tenants were issued with a copy of the Annual Report in October 2010 informing them how the Company had performed over the previous year.
- **Tenants Handbook**
 - Our tenant handbook provides essential information for tenants and is updated on an ongoing basis as policies are reviewed on useful information changes. However this is still outstanding for a full review and we are aware that many tenants do not have a copy with the most up to date information.
- **Language line**
 - In order to be able to communicate with tenants who's first language isn't English we have an account with LanguageLine who offer interpretation services on a pay as you go basis
- **Modernisation**
 - Throughout the modernisation of our 27 older properties, we have continued to keep tenants informed through general updates and individual visits. Regrettably due to significant delays this has needed significant and regular liaison.

Participation

- **Tenant Panel –**
 - The Tenant Panel gives tenants an opportunity to become more involved in the decision making process of the Company and has been established since 2008. Its purpose is to
 - To promote the interests of all Tenants;
 - To influence and contribute to the practices and policies that govern the provision of housing services ;
 - To generate ideas and proposals which may benefit the Company's Tenants;
 - Review policies and performance of the Company on matters that may affect all of Homes for Life's tenants;
 - During the **2010-11** the Tenant Panel have helped with the review of a new Pet Policy and the Annual Rent Increase.
- **Estate Walkabouts**
 - Our Tenant Estate Walkabout programme commenced again in July 2010 with visits carried out at 11 of our developments. There was a good turn out from tenants overall, and where tenants were unable to attend they made contact with the office so their ideas could be included
 - During the walkabouts staff noted a number of tenants were making a particular effort to maintain their gardens or the common areas and it was decided to recognise these tenants through an annual award presentation at the Annual General Meeting. Tenants have reacted very positively to this.
- **Membership**
 - At each new sign up tenants are provided with copies of our Tenant Participation Strategy and encouraged to become members. **40% of our tenancies include members of the Company - an increase of 3% from 2009-2010**



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Performance 2010 -2011

Allocations

There were 18 changes of tenancy during the year.

Relets	10
Mutual Exchanges	4
Transfers	4

Homehunt Pass used

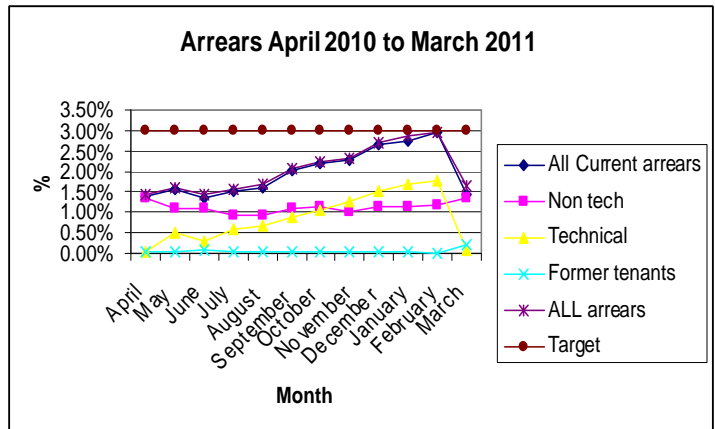
Gold Plus Priority (Homeless)	3
ELC Nomination (Homeless)	2
Gold Medical	1
Silver O/C	1
No pass	3

Development	Type of Property	Size of Property	Successful Applicant	Nos of applicants	Registration date of successful applicant	Successful Household size/type
DUNBAR	Upper flat	2 apt	Gold Homeless Pass	58	10/11/2009	single female
COCKENZIE	Upper flat	2 apt	Silver Overcrowding	138	26/01/2010	couple
COCKENZIE	Upper flat	3 apt	No Pass	137	29/09/2006	couple +1 child
COCKENZIE	Upper flat	3apt	Gold Homeless Pass	120	02/02/2010	couple +1 child
ELPHINSTONE	Lower flat	2 apt	No Pass	78	12/04/2010	couple
ELPHINSTONE	Lower flat	2 apt	No pass	99	16/03/2010	single male
ELPHINSTONE	Upper flat	2 apt	ELC Homeles Nom	102	n/a	single female
GIFFORD	Upper flat	2apt	ELC Homeles Nom	44	n/a	single male
INNERWICK	Bungalow	2apt	Gold Homeless Pass	44	12/11/2010	single female
WEST BARNs	Bungalow	3apt	Gold Medical	80	20/05/2010	single female

Voids – time taken to relet a vacant property

Average void period days for year	7.3 days
Average void rent loss for year	£66.78
Total void rent loss for year	£ 934.95
Total void repairs expenditure for year	£ 318.17
Total Void loss as % of annual rent receivable - £1,088,312.02	0.12%

Arrears – rent charged by the Company but not paid.



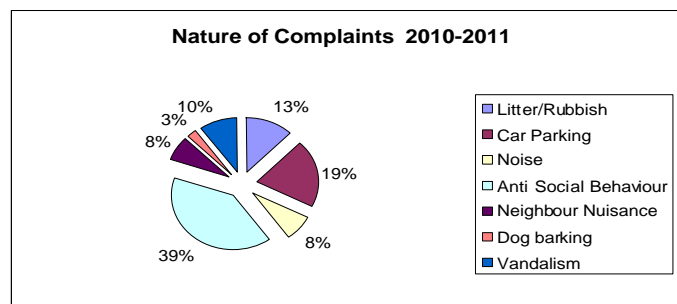
Repairs

APRIL 2010 to MARCH 2011		
Priority of Repair	% of Jobs within Target	Targets
Emergency - Day	97%	100%
Emergency - Night	99%	100%
Mobile Working	83%	90%
Normal	74%	90%

Technical arrears are arrears that arise due to the delayed payment of Housing Benefit – not as a result of tenants not meeting their rent commitment

Complaints

There were 12 Service complaints over the year - 11 concerning contractors and 1 anonymous complaint regarding an allocation. No complaints reached 2nd stage.



TENANTS NEWSLETTER

Updating your contact details and Data protection – help us to help you!

We need to update your details!

We've become aware that we don't always hold current telephone numbers for many of our tenants and that there have been a number of household changes which we haven't been told about – e.g partners moved in, children born or moved away. **It is essential that this information is as up to date as possible** – for example we may need to contact you in an emergency to deal with repairs and we have a statutory duty to know who is living in our properties when it comes to serving legal documents.

Protecting and sharing your information

We are a Data Controller in terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 because we collect, store and sometimes share information about living people. It is only lawful for us to do this if at least **one** of the following conditions is met;

- The person (data subject) has given active consent for the data to be collected and used in the proposed way; or
- It is necessary for the purposes of a contract involving the person e.g a tenancy agreement; or
- It is necessary for us to comply with our legal obligations; or
- It is necessary to protect the vital interests of the person e.g life or death situations; or
- It is necessary for the administration of justice or statutory functions; or
- It is for the pursuit of the legitimate interests of the data controller

Anyone who has been allocated a tenancy with us through nomination or homehunt has already consented to us holding and processing data (information), including sensitive data, for the purposes of making decisions about whether or not to allocate. They have also agreed to this information being kept for the duration of their tenancy

During your tenancy, to provide services and promote the social wellbeing of our tenants, Homes for Life may need to share your personal and sensitive information with local authorities and partners. **(See enclosed Fair Processing Notice)** It is preferable that we process, and in particular share, data with active consent, however, this may not always be practical. Wherever possible, we will seek your direct consent at the time that you supply the information, for example on housing application forms or when signing your tenancy agreement.

The sharing of sensitive personal data where your consent has not been directly secured will only be for promoting your personal or community wellbeing for example in saving life, reducing crime, reducing accidents and improving health. The need to share this information will only be in circumstances where the balance of benefit to you and the community far outweighs the remote possibility that you or any other individual could suffer any detriment or we are required to do so by law. The likelihood of any such detriment will also be further reduced by strict data sharing protocols between Homes for Life and its partners and tight security in terms of the transfer of information.

More information about Data Protection is available in our Data Protection Policy, our Data Protection Registration, as well as on the Data Commissioner's website www.ico.gov.uk.



Please complete the enclosed “Any Changes?” Form and return it along with your signed Fair Collection Notice in the pre paid envelope provided.

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We use **allpay.net** to collect rent.



There are **four** ways you can pay your rent through **allpay.net**

Our preferred method of payment is Direct Debit.

1. By 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 with your allpay number :

0844 557 8321

3. Online at

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

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

In order to use any of the services other than Direct Debit you need your allpay card number. If you don't have an allpay card and would like to pay by one of the card methods – please contact the office and we can order one for you.

REMINDER

Repairs Telephone Numbers



1. DURING OFFICE HOURS

Phone East Lothian Council's call centre on:

01875 824311

2. EMERGENCY REPAIRS

Outside office hours for an **EMERGENCY** repair (except Gas Central Heating) that cannot wait until the morning - Contact East Lothian Council's Property Service on their Emergency Number

01875 612 818

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**.

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 the following number –

0800 111 999

Telephone 01620 829300

Fax 01620 829993

email: info@homesforlife.co.uk

Registered Social Landlord No.311

Registered Charity No.028542

Company Limited by Guarantee

Company Registration No. 188299