

TENANTS NEWSLETTER

September 2009

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
57 Market Street
HADDINGTON
East Lothian
EH41 3JG
Tel 01620 829300
Fax 01620 829993



Here's your latest newsletter to let you know how your Company is doing

This is your newsletter - if you would like an article published please send it to:

Hilary Mark
Customer Service Manager
Homes for Life Housing Partnership
57 Market Street
Haddington
East Lothian
EH41 3JG

Homes for Life reserve the right to refuse publication

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NOTES:

1. Please note Kingdom Gas phone no. 0800 389 9463 Some tenants are *still* using the old contractor Hepburn's number.
2. Annual General Meeting and Prize Draw – Wed 16th September 7pm
3. Next Panel Meeting 9th December

Annual General Meeting
7pm – 8:30pm
Wednesday
16th September 2009
Town House, Haddington

Homes for Life will be holding its 11th Annual General Meeting on 16th September in the Town House in Haddington.

This offers an opportunity for members, tenants, and partner agencies to reflect on the company's achievements during the year.

We will also be carrying out the prize draw for the tenants who returned their entry for the Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

Additional Directors Vacancies

There will be vacancies on our Board of Directors for appointment of more tenants, as well as for co-option of others who have relevant expertise to offer. These are voluntary unpaid positions. Directors are expected to prepare for and attend 10 monthly Board meetings and other Committees. Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month. Induction and follow up training is available. If interested please contact us or come along to the meeting to find out more.

If you wish to attend, please contact Alison Hume, Administrator to confirm.
Tel 01620 829300 or email info@homesforlife.co.uk

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Tenant Survey Results

271 tenants were sent a questionnaire and 97 completed surveys were returned, representing 36% of all tenants. A prize draw of **37 prizes** totalling **£1350** was offered as an incentive for tenants to complete the questionnaire. Tenants were advised they had a 1:5 chance of winning but the actual chance rose to 1:3 by the closing date. In spite of the generous prizes and good odds the survey did not achieve a significantly higher response rate than previous surveys with very modest incentives.

1. Overall Service

There has been a slight decrease in Satisfaction with **Overall Service** down 4% since the previous survey, to 86% for the current survey.

	Satisfaction		Neither/no opinion		Dissatisfaction	
	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
2006	90%	74	7%	6	3%	3
2009	86%	83	8%	8	6%	6

2. Rents

	Satisfaction		Neither/no opinion		Dissatisfaction	
	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
2006	76%	62	14%	11	10%	8
2009	73%	70	10%	10	17%	16

Satisfaction that rents offer good **Value for Money** has decreased slightly since the previous survey by 3%, to 73% for the current survey. Dissatisfaction with this has increased by 7%, to 17% Of the 5 stating they were very dissatisfied 4 were in 2apt flats. The Company is aware that its rents for 2apt properties are higher than for peers and for other local RSLs and has set up a group to look at a means of addressing this.

3. Repairs

	Satisfaction		Neither/no opinion		Dissatisfaction	
	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
2006	82%	63	8%	6	10%	8
2009	77%	72	7%	7	16%	15

Satisfaction with the **Repairs Service** has decreased by 5%, from 82% since the previous

survey, to 77% for the current survey. Although fewer tenants are expressing satisfaction with the repairs service more are very satisfied – up 8% from 39% to 47%, suggesting repairs experience is variable dependant on which area team deals with the repair request. ELC have confirmed that they have had difficulties with one of their teams and that they expect a restructure of the service to have addressed this.

4. Information

Satisfaction with the Company's performance at Keeping Tenants Informed about matters of importance, which was already high, has increased by 5% since the previous survey, to 94%.

	Satisfaction		Neither/no opinion		Dissatisfaction	
	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
2006	89%	74	11%	9	0%	0
2009	94%	91	3%	3	3%	3

Satisfaction with the Company's performance at **Taking Account of Tenant Feedback** has increased significantly by 12% since the previous survey, to 86% for the current survey. The Company had identified this as an area that needed improvement after the 2006 survey.

	Satisfaction		Neither/no opinion		Dissatisfaction	
	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
2006	74%	61	27%	22	0%	0
2009	86%	83	10%	10	4%	4

Satisfaction with **Opportunities for Participation** has jumped 16% to 86%, with only 2% dissatisfaction.

	Satisfaction		Neither/no opinion		Dissatisfaction	
	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
2006	70%	58	29%	24	2%	2
2009	86%	84	11%	11	2%	2

Interest in becoming more involved in the management of the service, although more limited, has nonetheless increased by 11% to 30% of which 10 tenants are very interested. However, only 5% are very interested in attending a meeting, offering a more realistic view of difficulties in recruiting to either a Tenant Forum or the Board.

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Service

High levels of satisfaction and low levels of dissatisfaction were reported for **ease of contacting the right staff and ability of staff to deal with problems. 94% found staff helpful.** Access to the internet has increased from 47% to 61%, with a further 32% intending to have access in the next 3 years. The service tenants would most like to see added to the website is the ability to report a repair with 55 tenants requesting this.

The service issue which is of greatest priority to tenants continues to be Repairs and Maintenance. Value for Money for rent has dropped to 4th place with Overall Quality of Home, and Keeping Tenant Informed now being given more priority.

2009	2006
77% - Repairs and Maintenance	71% - Repairs and Maintenance
66% - Overall Quality of Home	60% - Value for Money for Rent
62% - Keeping Tenants informed	56% - Overall Quality of Home
56% - Value for Money for Rent	51% - Keeping Tenants Informed
24% - Taking Tenants Views into Account	39% - Taking Tenants Views into Account
9% - Involving Tenants in Management	13% - Involving Tenants in Management

Tenants were also asked how much they thought the same services need to be improved.

	No Improvement needed		Some Improvement Needed		Much Improvement Needed		No Opinion	
	2009	2006	2009	2006	2009	2006	2009	2006
Repairs and Maintenance	54	39	26	30	13	3	3	5
Value For Money for rent	38	38	38	20	13	7	6	13
Taking Tenants Views into Account	50	38	27	23	8	2	8	14
Keeping tenants informed	70	54	19	14	3	2	3	8
Overall Quality of Home	43	33	47	32	3	9	3	5
Involving Tenants in Management	67	47	18	13	2	2	7	17

The issues where a significant majority of respondents do not see any need for improvement are 'Keeping Tenants Informed', and 'Involving Tenants', at 70% and 67% respectively. In both cases there has been a significant increase in the share of respondents taking this view, up 16% for the former and 20% for the later.

It is encouraging that only relatively low share of respondents believe much improvement is needed in our performance for any of these issues. The only issues where more than 10% of respondents believe much improvement is needed are 'Repairs & Maintenance', and 'Value For Money For Rent', both at only 13%.

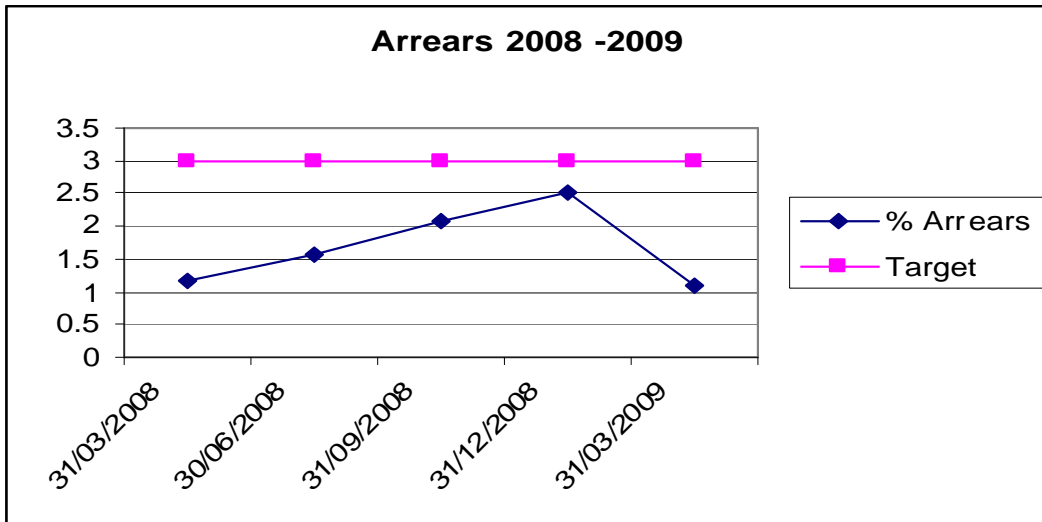
Unlike sample surveys which include only a representative cross section of tenants, we gave all of our tenants the chance to participate and express their views in this survey. It is reasonable to assume that most of those with concerns will have responded, and to consider any express dissatisfaction in the context of all of our tenants, rather than only those who returned survey forms.

A detailed Action Plan outlining proposed timescales and action to address areas of lower satisfaction will be prepared and circulated to all tenants.

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Housing Management Performance April 2008 - March 2009

Rent Arrears



Recovery of outstanding rent arrears has continued to be one of the strongest areas of performance for Homes for Life.

The number of tenants who owed the Company money for their rent at the end of the year has fallen even lower than from last year.

Well done our Tenants!

Arrears action taken during the year April 08 – March 09

Nos. of Notice of Proceedings (NoPs)	Nos. of current Live NoP's	Nos. of repayment arrangements made over the year	Nos. of Evictions carried out	Abandonment notices served
21	5	55	1	1

Evictions carried out

One eviction was carried out of a single male from Haddington with an arrears balance of £1299.52.

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Tenancy Changes - ALLOCATIONS for Year 01/04/08 - 31/03/09

We advertised 16 properties for relet which represents a turnover of 6%. The vacancies which arose were:

Development	Nos. vacancies	Property size	Average no. applicants
Cockenzie	2	2 x 3 apt flats	164.5
Dunbar	1	1 x 2apt flat	89
Elphinstone	2	1 x 2apt flat 1x 3 apt house	92.5
Gifford	4	3 x 2 apt flats 1x 4apt house	81.5
Gullane	1	1 x 2apt flat	64
Haddington	3	2 x 2apt flat 1x 3 apt flat	101
North Berwick	2	2 x 2 apt flats	61
Ormiston	1	1 x 3 apt flat	112

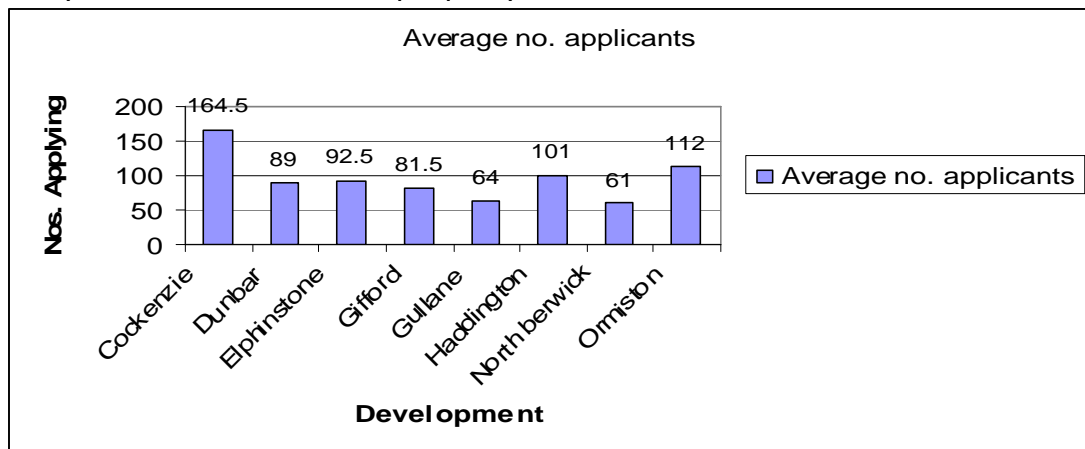
Homehunt Passes used

Passes Used	
Gold Pass – Homeless	7
Silver Pass - Medical	1
Bronze Pass – Over crowding	6
No pass	2

Other Tenancy changes

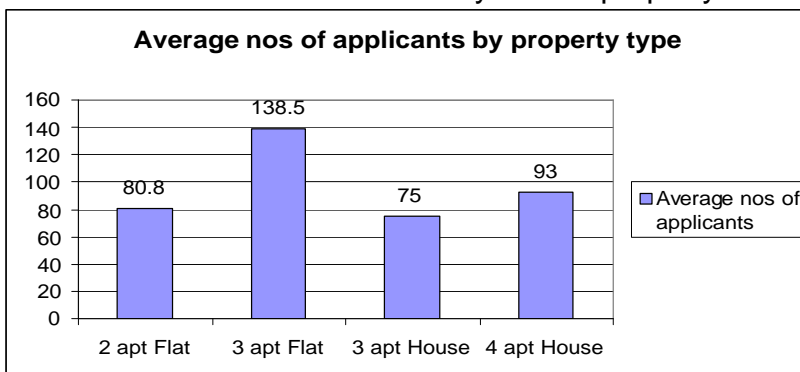
Internal transfers	4
Mutual exchanges	5

Demand by area advertised and property size



The table above shows the average number of people that registered an interest in properties we advertised by area.

The table below shows demand by size of property.



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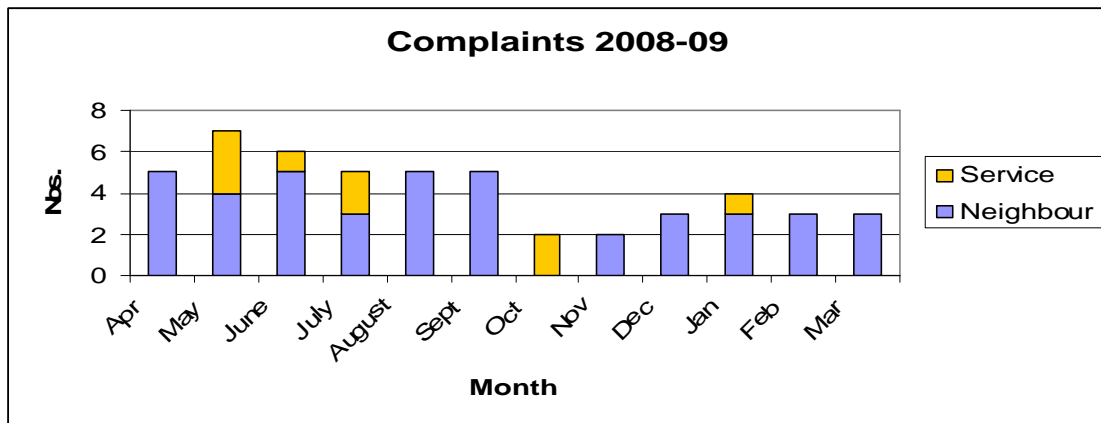
Complaints

For the year April 2008 – end March 2009 there have been 35 nuisance complaints made by 49 complainants.

Neighbour Complaints

The most frequent cause of complaint is **Noise**, followed by **Gardens**. With the summer months and school holidays, tenants need to be aware that with windows open, noise travels much further. **Please be a good neighbour!**

Nature of Complaint	2008-2009
Litter	4
Children	2
Noise	13
Pet fouling	4
Car Repairs/parking	5
Gardens	6
Antisocial Behaviour	1



Service Complaints

Service complaints were focused on poor service from our previous Gas contractor and previous Landscapers. The Company has since re-tendered for both services.

Repairs Performance

SUMMARY 2008/2009					
Priority of Repair	Code	Number Completed	Number Within Target	% of Jobs within Target	TARGETS
Emergency – Day/Night	A/B	100	93	93%	100%
Normal	E	413	307	74%	90%
TOTALS		513	400	78%	

We will be going out to tender for the Maintenance Contract soon and would like tenants to be part of the process in deciding what level of service they require and assist in selecting the successful applicants.

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Tenant Panel Meeting

The Tenant Panel met on 19th June. It looked at the possibility of restructuring rents, at planned maintenance of the trickle transfer properties and recent policy reviews.

Rent Restructure

As background information those in attendance were provided with:

1. An extract of Key Performance Indicator's from APSR 2007/8
2. Homes for Life Performance Statistics 2008-2009
3. An extract from the current Tenant Satisfaction Survey – (relating to satisfaction with Value for money for rents and the repairs service)
4. Information sheet on HfL rents by property size
5. An extract from the current Rent Policy relating to how rent is assessed for a property

The information provided showed that:

- a) The Company's 2 apt properties were £8.64 per week higher than the next nearest RSL's rent and £12.60 higher than the average weekly rent for the rural group for 2007/08,
- b) That from the initial results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey – that although 15 people were either Fairly or very dissatisfied with the value for money for rent it only ranked 5th in importance to those who responded and that 86% of tenants who expressed a view felt no improvement was needed on value for money for rent.

There followed a discussion regarding the Company's initial findings when looking at ways for a fairer spread of the rent burden between the smaller properties and the larger properties within the Company's housing stock.

The meeting was advised that due to the large number of 2 apartment properties it would not be possible to offer a meaningful rent reduction on these without passing on a very significant increase on the relatively few 4 apartments. There was therefore no 'quick fix'. It was agreed however that staff would continue to look at ways to address the 2apt rents.

Trickle Transfer Maintenance Summers Inman have been appointed to carry out a full measured survey of each Trickle Transfer home, to prepare detailed proposals for improvements, to secure tenders, and to oversee completion of the necessary work. The information gathered from these surveys and the drawings produced are essential for finalising proposals for improvements, and preparing tender documents as no property records were handed over to the Company when we received transfer of these homes from East Lothian Council.

It is likely that work required to ensure all 27 properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard will cost more than half a million pounds. This will need to be split over this and next financial year. We plan to prioritise improvements for those properties which are out with the gas supply grid and still have inefficient electric or solid fuel heating. When surveys are completed and detailed proposals are prepared we would be able to give a better indication of timescales and proposed works for each property.

Not all homes require all of the improvements, but the scope of works under consideration includes:

Replacement Heating, Additional insulation, Replacement of older external doors, Rewiring or improvement, Replacement of any remaining lead piping, Installation or replacement of fans to kitchens and bathrooms, Replacement of fitted kitchen units and worktops, Replacement bathrooms.

Other necessary works identified through surveys, including repairs to external render, roof, or internal plaster.

George Russell advised that there may be scope for flexibility if some tenants do not want the full package, provided SHQS requirements are met. He asked whether tenants without efficient heating would wish to see this upgraded before this winter if possible and the meeting confirmed it should.

**Next Tenant Panel Meeting
9th December 2009**

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East Lothian Council runs a Noise nuisance team

Night Time Noise Service between 1830 Hours - 0330 Hours on a Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday night. - **0131 311 3131**.

Day time noise (0900 Hours - 1700 Hours) during Monday to Friday **01620 827 365**

Day on a Saturday or a Sunday (or during other periods not covered by Noise Service) then you should call the Police on **0131 311 3131**.

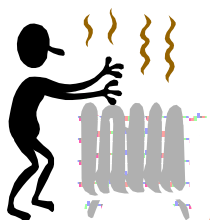
New Rule that wheelie bin lids must be completely closed

Stickers are being used to highlight to residents the need for them to ensure that no wheeled bins are overfilled and to inform them that ELC will only be collecting one wheeled bin from each property.

This is partly for health and safety reasons for staff securing the bins to the lifting gear in the correct and safe manner, to reduce manual handling and to ensure collection rounds can be completed on time. As well as the promotion of waste awareness through residents being limited to the actual wheeled bin capacity.

For example when the lid of a bin is raised the collection crew are unable to see if the bin has been secured properly to the bin lifters, there is also the chance that waste will be spilled from the bin when the collection crew move the bin to be emptied.

If residents are experiencing ongoing problems - like neighbours using their bin capacity a Waste Services Officer can visit the area to try to resolve the matter. Call ELC Waste Services 01620 827391 for further information



Annual Gas Inspections....if you can't keep the 1st appointment sent to you for your Annual Gas Service, please make sure that you phone Kingdom Gas to advise them you can't be available **and** that you make another appointment at the same time.

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 that cannot wait until the morning - Contact East Lothian Council's Property Service on their Emergency Number

01875 612 818

(For all EMERGENCY repairs except Gas Central Heating)

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 Engineering and if you experience any problems with your system you should call **0800 389 9463**.

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

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