



# HOMES FOR LIFE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

## Winter Newsletter 2019-20

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### Rent Consultation

We recently wrote out to all tenants advising on the proposed annual rent increase of 2.25% from April 2020.

	<b>Proposed Annual Rent Increase</b>
Homes for Life Housing Partnership	2.25%
Other Local Registered Social Landlords (Average of other RSL proposed rent increase – excluding ELC)	3%

The deadline for returning your survey on the proposed increase was 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020. We will now review your feedback for presentation to the Board and will be contacting all tenants following the Boards decision by the end of February 2020.

### Thank You!

We would like to thank all tenants who took the time to complete our survey by post or online in response to our consultation. You were entered in to the prize draw to win one of six £50 high street vouchers and the winners are announced on the back page of this newsletter.

# Keep Warm & Safe

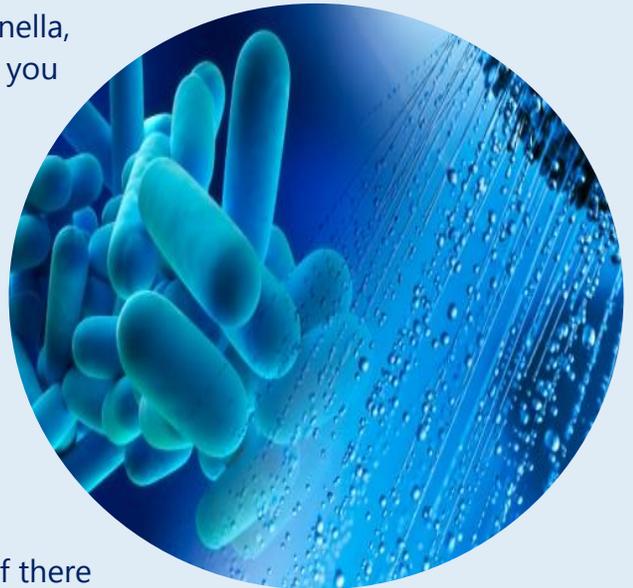
## LEGIONNELLA – REMINDER TO ALL TENANTS

With this newsletter we enclose a Tenants Guide to Legionella, the guide explains what Legionella is, the risks it poses to you and what steps of prevention you can take.

You should;

- Read the enclosed Tenants Guide.
- Regularly clean and disinfect showerheads - these have the means of creating and dispersing water droplets (aerosols) which may be inhaled causing a foreseeable risk of exposure to Legionella.
- Run all taps, showers and flush toilets before use on returning to the property after a period of absence
- Contact us if the hot water is not heating properly or if there are any other problems with the system so that appropriate action can be taken.

Our specialist contractors, Southern Heating and Plumbing, will shortly be contacting tenants whose properties have cold water storage tanks to carry out periodic preventative inspections.



## Use Toilet Cleaner Tablets? You might be re-charged!



Do you put drop-in toilet cleaner tablets in your toilet cistern? These tablets may seem like a simple solution to keeping your toilet bowl clean, but they can certainly be more trouble than they are worth and we recommend you change to a different method of keeping your toilet fresh.

These tablets will corrode the internal parts of the cistern and are prone to causing blockages preventing the bowl from refilling after flushing. In the event of a breakdown of the cistern using these toilet cleaner tablets the cost of a repair may be recharged to you.

## Warm Homes Discount Scheme

You may be entitled to a discount off up to £140 of your electricity or gas bill for winter 2019 to 2020 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme. It's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March and the discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment. Please contact your supplier to find out more.



## Winter Fuel Payment

You may be entitled to help to pay your heating bills. You will usually receive a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you are eligible. More information on your eligibility for this payment can be obtained from the Winter Fuel Payment Centre by calling 0800 731 0160 or online at <https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment/how-to-claim>.

The deadline for claiming payments for winter 2019 to 2020 is 31 March 2020

## Cold Weather Payment

If you are in receipt of the below benefits you may get Cold Weather Payments.

- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Support for Mortgage Interest

If you are eligible to receive a Cold Weather Payment it will be paid to you automatically and the average temperature in your area is to be recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees celsius or below for 7 consecutive days. A payment of £23 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March 2020. Further information can be found at [www.coldweatherpayments.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.coldweatherpayments.dwp.gov.uk)



# COMING UP!

## Air Source Heat Pump & Unvented Cylinder Services

Our specialist contractors will shortly be contacting tenants whose homes are fitted with either an Electric Unvented Cylinder heating system or Air Source Heat Pump to arrange access for the completion of the annual services of these systems.

The services will be carried out within regular working hours, should you be unable to personally provide access, we ask that you arrange for a family member or friend to provide access to the property in your absence to accommodate.

The specialist contractors undertaking the servicing are;

- Southern Plumbing & Heating - Electric Unvented Cylinders
- Renewable Heat Strategies – Air Source Heat Pumps

## Retirement & Review of Our Team

Following the retirement of our previous Customer Service Manager we have been reviewing our staffing. Currently we have our Housing Officer Michelle Scott as Acting Customer Services Manager, pending recruitment of a permanent replacement and we have recruited a Temporary Housing Officer Donna Dougal.

Our part time Customer Service Assistants Jennifer & Caroline have increased hours on a temporary basis. Jennifer is now undertaking some home visits and arrears management work and Caroline is focusing more on repairs & maintenance. We are also recruiting a temporary Administrative Assistant.

## Office Opening Hours are Changing

The office opening hours are changing with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

Our main opening hours of Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm and 9am to 4pm on a Friday remain unchanged however we will now be closed 12:30pm to 1:30pm Monday to Friday.



There will also be additional closures on a monthly basis to allow for staff training. Any additional closures will be detailed on the front page of our website going forward.

## Prize Draw Winners

Our six winners have been randomly selected. Each winner will receive a £50 high street voucher. Not all tenants wished for their details to be published in the newsletter and so we have only listed four of our winners below.

We will shortly be in contact with all winners for you to receive your voucher.

### Prize Draw Winners

- Mr & Mrs Bowd, Elphinstone
- Mrs Kellet, Gullane
- Mr Bradford, East Linton
- Mrs Watt, West Barns

### Useful Numbers

Repairs: Call **Novus** on 01506 242120 (same number for emergency repairs)

Gas Central Heating Repairs: Call **Kingdom Gas** on 0800 389 9463 or 01334 650452

Antisocial Behaviour: Call East Lothian Council **Antisocial Behaviour Helpline** on 01875 824 307

**Homes for Life Housing Partnership**  
**57 Market Street, Haddington, East Lothian, EH41 3JG**  
**01620 829300**  
**[www.homesforlife.co.uk](http://www.homesforlife.co.uk)**



# Winter Tips

Living in Scotland we are likely to see winter bring snow and ice to us for another couple of months yet. These conditions can cause frozen or burst pipes and risks of hypothermia.

You can make sure you and your home for ready to stay warm and safe with a little bit of help from our **Winter Tips**.



- If you plan to be away from home for more than 24hrs, set you heating to come on for a couple of hours a day and leave a key with a friend or neighbour.
- In cold weather, keep as warm as possible and wear extra layers, and keeping at least one room in the house heated.
- Ensure you have a supply of salt or grit.
- Check the weather forecast and keep up to date with the latest weather warnings, travel advice and road conditions.
- Take extra care when cycling, walking or driving.
- Check on vulnerable neighbours or relatives.
- If you lose power, call 105 - its free of charge and will put you through to your local network operator who can give you help and advice.
- **If your pipes freeze**, find the stop valve and turn it off immediately. Open all



cold taps to drain the system, but never turn on the hot taps because if you have a hot water cylinder, this may collapse if the pipes leading to it are frozen. Call a licensed plumber if you are in any doubt about what to do.

- Before attempting to thaw out your pipes, check for leaking joints or bursts. If there are none, and if it is safe to do so, then gently heat any frozen sections with a heated cloth wrapped around the pipe. Never apply a direct flame or attempt to thaw pipes by switching on your immersion heater or central heating boiler.
- If your pipes burst, find the stop valve which controls the water supply entering your home. If you suspect you have a burst pipe, turn off the water supply immediately.

**If a pipe has burst in your home Call NOVUS immediately on 01506 242 120.**