

Your Quarterly 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



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Enclosures:

- **2nd Quarter Rent Statement**
- **Annual Performance Report**
- **Regulator's Landlord Report**
- **Local Landlord Comparisons**
- **Survey**

Consultations:

Please let us know on the enclosed survey what you like or dislike about this year's Annual Report and any suggestions or feedback on the draft policies. **All feed back very welcome!**

Annual General Meeting 2019

We were delighted to welcome so many people including tenants to our 21st AGM, on 11th September 2019. 45 people attended of which 30 were tenants, an excellent turnout, our 2nd highest ever.

Thank you very much if you came along!

Our Chair, Alan Brown, welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a presentation on the key achievements and challenges for Homes for Life during 2018-19. These included planned maintenance, tenant consultations and an extensive list of service and policy reviews. As it was our 21st AGM, Alan noted long service from David Rose as a voluntary Director and the retiring Housing Manager, Hilary Mark, as both having been with Homes for Life for the past 21 years.



After the AGM there are 3 potential vacancies for Directors. Any interested tenants or others please contact the office for more details

Chiene & Tait reported on the company's healthy finances. We have limited loan debt, and significant reserves for reinvestment in an ambitious planned maintenance program over the coming 3 years.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE If your home is part of this year's programme, we'll be in touch with further detail, including your proposed dates and any choices

Annual General Meeting 2019

Some of this year's winners...

Donna from Haddington won a Good Neighbour award



David & Wilma from Gullane won one of the Best Hanging basket awards



Community Pride Awards

Awards were presented to those who had made outstanding contributions to the community through their gardens, common areas or helping neighbours.

We were also delighted to make a donation to Citizen Advice Bureau and Peepton Post for their contributions to the community.

Due to data protection we no longer publish the full list of winners. A modified copy of the presentation is available on the website.

Your Annual Performance Report is enclosed. **Please send back the enclosed survey.**



... And everyone admired Alex from Elphinstone's summer house!

Annual General Meeting 2019 *Cont.*

Jemiel Benison from Citizen's Advice, Haddington gave a presentation on the numerous services tenants can access for free through the CAB.

With your Summer Newsletter we included the new Help to Claim Service and Financial Health Check (*it is available on our website if you can't lay your hands on it*)



Haddington CAB

Ways to Access the various services:

Generalist Service

Opening hours : Monday to Friday:

10.00 - 12.30 (Drop In and Appointments) and 13.30 - 16.00 (Appointments Only)

46 Court Street, Haddington, EH41 3NP

Telephone: 01620 824471 Fax: 01620 822390

Website: <https://www.haddingtoncab.org.uk/>

Email: cab@haddingtoncab.org.uk

Disabled Access – Home Visits can be arranged.

Outreach Venues

Dunbar Tuesday: 09.30 - 12.00, Bleachingfield Centre ,Countess Crescent , Dunbar, EH42 1DX

Telephone: 01620 824471

North Berwick Wednesday: 10.00 - 12.00 Coastal Communities Museum , School Road, North Berwick, EH39 4JU Telephone: 01620 824471

These are Drop In Services, no appointment required.

Help to Claim— Phone: 0800 023 2581 (Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm). Webchat: www.cas.org.uk/helptoclaim (Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm). Face-to-face: Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Money Talk Team Phone: 0800 085 7145

Pensionwise Phone 0800 138 3944 Website: <https://www.pensionwise.gov.uk/en/>

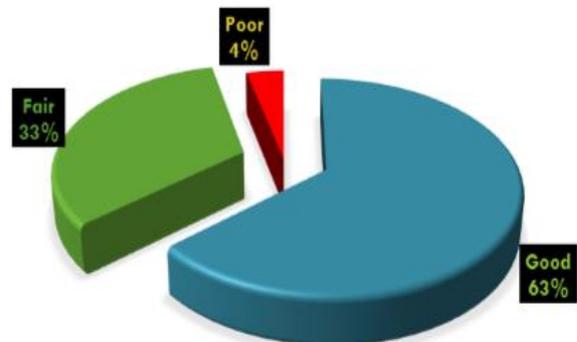
Digital Access: Call: 07506 800 373 Email: cab@haddingtoncab.casonline.org.uk

Rate My Estate

We had an excellent overall response of 56 forms returned. Only 2 tenants rated their estate Poor at Gullane and Elphinstone - both unhappy with parking. More tenants rated their estate as Fair rather than Good this year - with 50% or more respondents at Hare's Close, Walden Terr and MacFarlane Court not selecting Fair, again their comments were mainly concerned with parking.

Other issues raised included dog fouling and landscaping. The most common request was for gutter cleaning and this should be reported directly to Novus on 01506 242 120

RATE MY ESTATE 2019



Rent Statement

before the 1st of each month. Your statement has been printed including transactions up to 3rd October which means your account should have a zero balance unless you are in arrears or are in receipt of Housing Benefit or on a Managed Payment for Universal Credit.



Month	Quarter	Dates
July	Quarter 1	1 April to 30 June
October	Quarter 2	1 July to 30 September
January	Quarter 3	1 October to 31 December
April	Quarter 4	1 January to 31 March

If you have any problems understanding your statement please don't hesitate to contact us.

Local rent comparisons general needs

Weekly Rents for 2017/18

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom
	Average	Average	Average
Homes for Life	76.77	87.44	93.24
East Lothian HA	82.85	93.31	102.72
Castle Rock	80.37	92.16	103.47
Dunedin Canmore	89.59	99.32	107.21
Scottish Average	76.10	77.70	84.44

Freedom of Information

From 11 November 2019, RSLs will be classed as public bodies for the purposes of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) 2002 Act (FOISA). This means that tenants and other individuals will be able to request information from RSLs that may not currently be available to the public at large. Scotland's RSLs are not complete strangers to information law, as they are already subject to the right of access to environmental information set out in the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIRs).



The Order sets out that FOI will apply in relation to any activities in relation to housing services, as defined in section 165 of the 2010 Housing (Scotland) Act. There are, however two parts of the normal definition of housing services which are **NOT** included in the Order's definition.

- Information held in relation to the provision of services for owners and occupiers of houses – e.g. factoring services.
- Information held in relation to the management of non-social housing – e.g. on private or mid-market rental accommodation.

Rights WILL, therefore, apply to information held in relation to any activity in relation to the following housing services:

- The prevention and alleviation of homelessness
- Management of social housing accommodation

• You can ask for any information you think a public authority may hold. The right only covers recorded information which includes information held on computers, in emails and in printed or handwritten documents as well as images, video and audio recordings.

• You should identify the information you want as clearly as possible.

• Your request can be in the form of a question, rather than a request for specific documents, but the authority does not have to answer your question if this would mean creating new information or giving an opinion or judgment on information that is not already recorded.

• Some information may not be given to you because it is exempt, for example because it would unfairly reveal personal details about somebody else.

FOI: The duty to respond



Requests must be made in writing



Most requests must be responded to in 20-working days



Covers **recorded** information only



Requests can only be refused in certain circumstances

→  Information not held
 It costs too much
 An exemption applies



Scottish Housing Regulator

Engagement Plan In February 2019 the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) published a new Regulatory Framework outlining how it regulates Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the housing and homelessness services provided by local authorities. Under that new framework the Regulator also published Engagement Plans for all RSLs, including Homes for Life. We complied with the SHR's request to submit our current Business Plan and supporting documents to SHR by the end of May 2019. Both the Engagement Plan and the Business Plan can be found on our website.

www.homesforlife.co.uk

Annual Assurance Statement

A new requirement of the Regulator is that by the end of October each year, Social landlords must submit an Annual Assurance Statement providing assurance that their organisation complies with the relevant requirements of the Regulatory Framework.

This includes regulatory requirements that apply to all social landlords and the Standards of Governance and Financial Management that apply to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Where a landlord does not fully comply, it should set out in the Statement how and when it will make the necessary improvements to ensure compliance.

The Statement will confirm our level of compliance with all of the relevant requirements set out at chapter 3 of the Regulator's Framework, including:

- all relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- all relevant legislative duties
- the Standards of Governance and Financial Management (RSLs only)

Sources of assurance will include:

- reports and updates from our management team
- feedback from tenants and other customers
- benchmarking with other landlords
- assurance from our internal audit function
- assurance, reports and analysis from others, including our external auditors

The Board will be considering the Assurance Statement at its October meeting and the Assurance Statement will be shared with tenants, including through our website once it has been submitted to the Regulator.

Performance Reports

Your Annual Performance Report, the Regulator's Landlord Report and a Local Landlord Comparison report are enclosed.

All reports show Homes for Life is performing well in comparison with its peers.

From the most recent tenant satisfaction survey:

- 93.6% said they were satisfied with the overall service it provided, compared to the Scottish average of 90.1%.
- 98.6% felt that your landlord was good at keeping them informed about its services and outcomes compared to the Scottish average of 91.6%.
- 87.2% of tenants were satisfied with the opportunities to participate in your landlord's decision making, compared to the Scottish average of 86.5%.

Our average rents are now lower than other Housing Associations operating locally and we do not charge separate Service Charges. This is as a result of our pursuing a conscious policy to implement only the lowest rent increases necessary for prudent management since the recession.

Although there has been a recent significant increase in tenant reported satisfaction, the area we will focus on for improvement on is Repairs. We will be consulting our tenants prior to re-procurement next year.

Consultations

We have a number of items up on the website looking for tenant input and feedback. There are Word documents on the site you can download, complete and email back to info@homesforlife.co.uk . If you would prefer a paper copy please contact the office and we'll send one out to you.

Draft policies we'd like your feedback on and response forms can be found here : <https://www.homesforlife.co.uk/Consultations/I44.htm> . The policies are:

- **Customer Care Standards** – *this is new and we'd really like you to let us know what you think*
- **Letting Standard** – *this is adding detail to our Void Policy on the standard we want a property to be when we sign up a new tenant*
- **Tenancy Management Policy** – *this has been updated with the changes brought in with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014*

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. **Telephone** the office on **01620 829300** with your Debit card – we can take **one off** payments over the phone 📞

4. **Online at**
<https://www.allpayments.net/allpayments>

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

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

Repairs

1. **DURING Office Hours**

Phone **NOVUS** on **01506 242120**

2. **OUT of Office Hours Call the same number 01506 242120**

But please remember that only repairs that cannot wait until the following morning should be reported 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– 01875 824 307

Telephone 01620 829300

Fax 01620 829993

email: info@homesforlife.co.uk

Registered Social Landlord No.311 Property Factor Reg. No. PF0000219

Registered Charity No.028542

Company Limited by Guarantee

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