



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Welcome to the first edition of our updated newsletter – the “Homes for Life Broadcast”.

I am Jamila Greig, I am a tenant and I live in Cockenzie. I have been on the Board for a number of years and currently hold the position of Chair, since last year. As you may be aware, we are making a number of positive changes at HfL and you will find a lot of information inside this Newsletter about what is happening.



As a Board we met recently and set out our Business Plan short term objectives to 31 March 2022. You will find these inside too and they fall under the headings of “Improve our properties, improve our services, improve our performance and improve our governance” all of which will have a positive impact on you, our tenants and other service users. The Board will hold a further Business Planning session in October where we will look further ahead.

We, as a Board, and the staff team, want to hear your views and we have issued a consultation survey on how we will shape our services going forward. If you haven't fed in your views yet, please do so by completing the form issued or phoning the office by 5pm 30th September 2021 to be included in the prize draw where 5 tenants will win a **£50 Love2shop gift vouchers** for answering the 6 questions.

We are also looking for tenants to join a resident's group/focus group. If this is something you are interested in, please contact the office for more details.

You can also contact me directly by telephoning the office and asking for a call back or emailing me on Jamila.greig@homesforlife.co.uk

Kind Regards

Jamila Greig

REPORT FROM OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Our AGM took place virtually on **15 September 2021** where we had 22 members present either in person or by proxy. The meeting heard the update from the Chair on what had been a “difficult year” for the organisation. To summarise, following a whistleblowing incident, the Board uncovered a number of governance issues which are in the process of being rectified. An Interim Manager, Wendy McCracken, was appointed and has compiled a Governance Improvement Plan which the Board are working through. The Scottish Housing Regulator is being kept aware of the progress and tenants will start to see improvements in services and works and a replacement programme being rolled out on our homes.

Members then heard about the healthy financial report for 2020/21, re-appointed Azets as auditors and made appointments to the Board. At the end of the meeting a discussion took place about the changes which were in progress at Homes for Life. Finally, the Chair thanked all for being present including representatives from ELC and ELHA. She thanked the staff for their hard work and finally Board members, past and present for their valued contributions throughout the year.



BOARD MEMBERS UPDATE

At the AGM Members appointed two new Board Members Sarah Steel and Craig Russell. The list of Board Members is shown below:

Name	Town if local	Member Type	Position
Jamila Greig	Cockenzie	Tenant	Chair
Olga Krasteva	Cockenzie	Tenant	Vice-Chair
David Rose	Longniddry	Other interested party	
Gordon Leitch	Gladsmuir	Tenant	
Graeme MacGregor	Haddington	Other interested party	
Luke Bullock	North Berwick	Tenant	
Donna Wight	Ormiston	Tenant	
Sarah Steel		Other interested party	
Craig Russell		Other interested party	

We will provide information on each Board Member within the next Broadcast edition due out in December.

BUSINESS PLANNING MID-YEAR SESSION INTERIM OBJECTIVES TO 31 MARCH 2022

Improve Our Properties



- ✓ Stock condition survey
- ✓ Stock valuations
- ✓ Compile Asset Management Strategy
- ✓ Health & Safety Management
- ✓ Establish improvement & replacement programme
- ✓ Future proof our properties
- ✓ Review repairs services

Improve Our Performance



- ✓ Review our IT and service provision platforms
- ✓ Implement new staff structure
- ✓ Implement a staff appraisal system
- ✓ Live our values
- ✓ Benchmark our performance against others
- ✓ Implement value for money strategy
- ✓ Learn from complaints

Improve Our Services



- ✓ Listen to and learn from our tenants – be a responsive service
- ✓ Commission a full Tenant Satisfaction Survey
- ✓ Compile and consult on service standards
- ✓ “Get to know our tenants” process
- ✓ Set up tenant panel/focus groups
- ✓ Compile a tenant participation strategy
- ✓ Implement innovative practices

Improve Our Governance



- ✓ Implement our Governance Improvement Plan
- ✓ Review Internal Audit Plan
- ✓ Implement our Board Recruitment, Induction & Effectiveness Policy
- ✓ Improve our relationship with our key stakeholders
- ✓ Carry out a Strategic Options Appraisal
- ✓ Update our Business Plan
- ✓ Embed Risk Management Strategy




LANDLORD REPORT 2020/21

The Scottish Housing Regulator, who regulates all Scottish registered social landlords (RSLs), collects and issues performance statistics for the whole sector.

Our latest performance is shown in the table below.



In the 2020/21 column:

-  Green figures mean that we did better than the average of all RSLs
-  Red figures mean that we did worse than the average of all RSLs
-  Black figures mean that there is no comparison figure.

The areas being concentrated on are repairs and maintenance, resolving anti social behaviour problems and turning around empty properties. It should be noted however, these figures were against the backdrop of COVID-19 restrictions.

Area of comparison	How we did in 2019/20	How we did in 2020/21	Sector Average 2020/21
Homes and Rent			
Rental Income from our properties	£1.268m	£1.288m	
Rent increase applied from 1 April 2020	2.3%	1.0%	
2 apt rent average monthly rent	£80.05	£82.36	£79.48
3 apt rent average monthly rent	£91.44	£93.18	£82.60
4 apt rent average monthly rent	£98.64	£100.38	£89.81
% tenants who were satisfied with overall service	93.6%	90.9%	89.0%
% tenants think landlord good at keeping them informed	98.6%	94.9%	91.7%
% tenants happy with opportunities to participate	87.2%	91.9%	86.6%
Quality and maintenance of homes			
% of our homes meeting SHQS	98.3%	98.3%	91.0%
Average hours to complete emergency repairs	2.4	5.0	4.2
Average days to complete non-emergency repairs	9.3	8.9	6.7
% of reactive repairs carried out right first time	82.4%	86.9%	91.5%
% satisfaction with repairs & maintenance service	89.8%	93.0%	90.1%
Neighbourhoods			
% of anti-social behaviour cases resolve	95%	89.3%	94.4%
Value for Money			
% rent due collected in year	99.3%	100.5%	99.1%
% rent due not collected through homes being empty	0.1%	0.4%	1.4%
Average length taken to relet homes in last year (days)	13.4	76.8	56.3

If you would like to see more information on how HfL performs against other landlords you can use the comparison tool on the SHR website <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/comparison-tool>

OFFICE UPDATE

Staff continue to work from home however we are reviewing in consultation with you how you would prefer to receive your services in the future. A report on the outcome of the survey will be included in the next Newsletter

MAINTENANCE UPDATE



Reactive Repairs

With the easing of COVID restrictions, it is easy to feel the impact from the pandemic is receding.

Unfortunately, the impact on repairs services continues. Our contractors are facing the same issues as everyone in the construction industry – a combination of material shortages, labour shortages and staff self-isolating is making a big impact on the service they deliver which in turn has an impact on how we deliver our services to you. We continue to work closely with all our contractors to try to minimise the disruption to you.

Everyone in the Maintenance Team would like to thank all tenants who have helped us maintain a 100% safety check record for our properties with gas heating. Every gas boiler requires an annual safety check and we are pleased to say that all have been completed on time. This is due to you, our tenants, helping us arrange access for the gas contractor for these critical safety checks and any related work that needs carried out.

Planned Maintenance. Stock Condition Survey

You received a letter recently to advise you that from the end of September, stock condition surveys will be commencing on all of our properties.

We have appointed JMP Construction & Property Consultants (JMP) to carry out the surveys. They will require access to your home.

JMP will be in touch with you directly to arrange a suitable time for the survey. The surveyor will have identification on them and a letter of authority from Homes for Life which they will produce. If you have any doubts about callers being genuine please contact the office.

These surveys are really important to us as from the information we will receive, we will start putting together programmes for replacement kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors etc and let you know when these are likely to be planned for your property.



Stock Valuations

To allow us to fund the programme of repairs and renewals we need to know how much private finance, (loans) we can raise. This is based on the rental income and the condition of our properties. We have appointed a company called Jones Lang LaSalle Limited (JLL) to carry out these valuations. Although you may see them out and about, they will not require access to your home.

LD2 Requirements - Interlinked alarms

By February 2022, every home in Scotland needs interlinked fire alarms. They are alarms that talk to each other - so when one goes off, they all go off.



From February 2022 every home will need to have:

- one smoke alarm in the room you spend most of the day, usually your living room
- one smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings
- one heat alarm in the kitchen
- All smoke and heat alarms should be mounted on the ceiling and interlinked.

If you have a carbon-fuelled appliance, like a boiler, fire, heater or flue you must also have a carbon monoxide detector. This does not need to be linked to the fire alarms.

As with all Social landlords we are carrying out a programme of work to make sure interlinked fire alarms are in place and that we are fully compliant by the deadline. To date most of the work has been completed or is underway. Contact a member of the team if you need any further information on this.



Electrical inspections

Electrical problems are one of the most common causes of home fires. From March 2022, every landlord in Scotland has to carry out an electrical inspection of all the installations, fixtures, and fittings in a property.

During an inspection, the electrical contractor will:

- test all the electrical appliances in the home
- make sure all the wiring is safe
- make sure electrical circuits aren't overloaded
- check for fire hazards
- check for risks of electric shock

These inspections have to be carried out at least once every five years. We have a programme of inspections in place.



Fire Risk Assessments

Over the next 4 weeks, a company called Omni Risk will be carrying out Fire Risk Assessments in the communal areas of all our flats. They may need access to check your close, so please help us by accommodating them.

Energy Efficiency

The vast majority of our properties meet the Scottish Governments Energy Efficiency targets.

For the few which don't, mainly because they are older properties, a company called Greenskye Energy will be visiting these properties to check what work we can carry out improve the energy efficiency, resulting in efficient and warmer homes!

HOUSING MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Allocations of Property

Homes for Life currently uses the services of Castle Rock Edinvar to allocate our properties. Since April last year they rebranded to “Home Search”.

To ensure that our allocations service fully meets the requirements of our applicants we are currently undergoing a review of this service. Please let me know if you have any comments regarding your experience and how you feel it may be improved.

Internal Waiting List

During COVID-19 several of our properties became vacant and we have been using our internal applicants waiting list to allocate them. Given we are a small housing organisation we have a limited turnaround of properties but if you would like to be added to our Internal Waiting List please email info@homesforlife.co.uk requesting an application form. Once completed we will add you to our list for any future availability subject to meeting your needs.

Communal Stairs/Closes

Each common stair acts as a means of exit in the event of a fire, heavy smoke, or a sudden explosion. One of the most common call outs for the fire service is a fire started deliberately in a stairwells.

Any combustible material left on a stair can invite this potential trouble. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service require that common stair areas are kept clear:

- No rubbish or old items of furniture on stairs as these are usually highly combustible
- No items such as car tyres, bookshelves or wooden tables should be left in stairwells
- No bicycles should be stored in the stair as these could impede your exit from the building
- No plant pots on the floors in hallways as these are a potential trip hazard in a smoke- filled stair
- Any storage/service cupboards on stairs should remain locked
- No Smoking on stairwells



Estate management

We have enjoyed some lovely weather this summer and during COVID restrictions many residents placed garden furniture in communal areas. We ask that the equipment is moved when not in use to enable the communal grass cutting to go ahead.

- Main doors to the building should remain secure and NOT be left open
- The doors to your own home should not be left open and unattended
- Report any faulty lighting which might affect your ability to see in a stairwell

Regular close inspections are carried out by staff and any matters of concern such as lighting, handrails, windows and door security reported and repaired as required.

If you have any concerns relating to potential fire hazards within your development, please contact any member of staff, in confidence.

We ask that stairways are not used for the storage of any items including bicycles, pushchairs and recycle boxes. This is a fire safety requirement.

Rent Payments

Your rent is payable monthly in advance and is due on the first of each month. There are SIX ways you can pay your rent:

Our preferred method of payment is Direct Debit.

1. 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 (automated) - contact telephone payments with your allpay card number on: 0844 557 8321. If you require a new Allpay card please let us know.



3. By Callpay - use your debit card by calling us on 01620 829300



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. By your Smartphone - Allpay have recently launched their new smartphone app. The app is available for Apple and Android smartphones and is free to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play.



For any further information about paying your rent, please contact a member of the housing team.



Help with housing costs

If you are having difficulty with your finances and managing your rent it is always worth contracting us. We can make referrals to the Citizen Advice Bureau on your behalf or alternatively you can contact them yourself on:

Musselburgh: Tel No. 0131 653 2748
or 0131 6651141

Haddington: Tel No. 01620 824471

Problems paying your rent or other bills?

If you are having problems managing your finances you may wish to discuss this with your local Citizen's Advice Bureaux: Haddington **01620 824471**, Musselburgh **0131 665 2248** or with the Welfare Rights Team, Musselburgh **0131 665 3711** who can give you confidential tailored advice.

Tackling anti-social behaviour

We are committed to tackling anti-social behaviour. However, to keep you and our team safe and to ensure we comply with social distancing guidelines we are not currently carrying out home, or office appointments and our annual estate walkabout has been postponed.

We continue to work very closely with East Lothian Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Police Scotland to tackle any anti-social or estate issues that arise.



How do I report anti-social behaviour or estate issues?

You should report any incidents to a member of the housing team.

We will record the detail of your report and investigate according to our anti-social behaviour policy.

You can also call the East Lothian Anti-Social Behaviour Helpline on **0845 618518**. This is service is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week, or email **asb@eastlothian.gov.uk** this is an easy, safe and effective way to report anti-social behaviour in your area. Don't suffer in silence - please call us!

SAFEGUARDING

Homes for Life recognises that safeguarding adults and other vulnerable people at risk is everyone's responsibility. We are committed to safeguarding the welfare of adults at risk and working with other partners to promote and fully implement local multi-agency safeguarding policies and procedures.

We recognise that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and that as a housing provider we have an important role in promoting the wellbeing of children, safeguarding and protecting them from harm.

We are committed to working in partnership with children, parents, carers and other agencies to improve outcomes for children and to fully implement local multi-agency child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures.

If you have any concerns about anyone you feel may be at risk, please contact a member of the housing team.

MEET THE TEAM – MAINTENANCE



In the recent issue of the Bulletin you met me, David Illius Senior Maintenance Officer. I have now been in post for what has been a very quick 8 weeks!. Things have been really busy in the maintenance and repairs team as we deal with the catch up following the impact of COVID on local tradesmen and getting supplies of spares etc! I have visited a lot of our properties and met quite a few of you and I hope to get round and meet more of you as our works progress.

Health and Safety is one of the areas I have responsibility for and over the last 8 weeks I have been reviewing our practices, policies and procedures in this area and I am looking at how we can improve. We are carrying out a full Health & Safety audit in the coming months to ensure we are complying with all legislative requirements.

Hello, my name is Caroline Murray, and I have worked in housing for over 33 years. I started with HfL 14 years ago covering maternity leave. On the postholders return to work the post was changed to job share with both of



Hi, I am Graeme Darling your maintenance officer. My background in housing spans over 12 years having come from a management position for one of the largest property companies in Edinburgh I spent many years working as a specialist technical consultant on construction and maintenance projects across the city. I joined Homes for Life nearly a year ago eager for a new challenge and to make a positive difference in my local community.

Having started during lockdown has certainly been a challenge with many restrictions making general repairs and maintenance difficult. Despite this it has been a pleasure meeting some of you and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your patience during this time. As we return to carrying out a full maintenance and repair programme, I am eager to ensure the service we provide will be second to none.

us sharing all the duties relating to housing management and maintenance. vFollowing the most recent staff re-structure, I now hold the position of Maintenance Admin Assistant and I will be providing admin support to the maintenance team in all aspects of maintenance services and repairs. I will have spoken to many of you over the years and I look forward to speaking to all of you over the years to come.



I now work a Monday to Thursday, on a Friday you can always contact the other members of the Maintenance Team with any issues.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Winter Fuel Allowance 2021/22 Eligibility

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>

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 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 £25 for each 7-day period of very cold weather between 1 November 2021 and 31 March 2022. Further information can be found at www.coldweatherpayments.dwp.gov.uk

BT - Social Housing Tariff

In June 2021 BT launched a new at cost social tariff for people on benefits, they are

1. **£15 a month 36Mbps fibre and 700 minutes of free calls per month**
2. **£20 a month 67Mbps fibre and unlimited free calls each month**

BT to launch new at-cost social tariff in June – offering support to over four million households on low income.



Help with Energy Costs

The UK Government has agreed emergency measures with energy suppliers to support you if you're using a prepayment meter or if you are struggling financially. Options may include:

- Reviewing bill payment plans, including debt repayment plans
- Payment breaks or reductions giving you more time to pay
- Access to hardship funds (in some cases)
- No credit meter will be disconnected during the pandemic. Visit your supplier's website or contact them for specific advice

If you or someone you know is vulnerable, of pensionable age, has children under 5 years old, a disability or a long-term medical condition, it's important to let your energy supplier know. Each energy supplier keeps a priority Service Register of people who may need additional assistance, such as in a power cut or in dealing with supplier representatives. It's free to be added to the list.

WEBSITE UPDATE

We are currently updating our website so please bear with us while we update it and make it more user friendly.

WWW.HOMESFORLIFE.CO.UK



WINTER TIPS

As we are approaching the autumn and winter months, we are likely to see ice and frost. These conditions can cause frozen or burst pipes and risks of hypothermia. You can make sure you and your home are 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 your 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 for your path.
- 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 - it's 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 TB MACKAY on **0131 552 6103**

REPAIRS EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

During office Hours

Our general repairs contractor is TB Mackay. To report a repair please contact them directly on **0131 552 6103**.

Outside Office Hours

For all EMERGENCY Repairs outside office hours that cannot wait until the next day, contact TB Mackay on **0131 552 6103** - except Gas Central Heating.

Gas Repairs and Servicing

Our Contractor for Gas Central Heating is **KINGDOM GAS SERVICES LIMITED** please contact them directly on Freephone: **0800 389 9463** or Telephone: **01334 650452**



STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Although the team are remote working, please continue to contact the office telephone number on **01620 829300** or email info@homesforlife.co.uk

Alternatively, individual officer contact details are below:

Interim Manager - Wendy McCracken
e: wendy@homesforlife.co.uk | t: 01620 829300

Maintenance Department

Senior Maintenance Officer - David Illius
e: David.illius@homesforlife.co.uk | t: 07496 179629

Maintenance Officer - Graeme Darling
e: graeme@homesforlife.co.uk | t: 07496 179620

Maintenance Admin Assistant - Caroline Murray
e: caroline@homesforlife.co.uk | t: 07375 059665

Housing Management Department

Senior Housing Officer (Acting) - Donna Dougal
e: donna@homesforlife.co.uk | t: 07496 179664

Housing Admin Assistant - Jennifer Nisbet
e: jennifer@homesforlife.co.uk | t: 07495 453873

We also have two new members of staff about to join the team. Zoe Stevenson as Community Housing Officer and Lynn Moodie as Corporate Services/ Finance Assistant. You will “meet them” in the next issue.



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

There are lots of people you may want to get hold of in a hurry, so here is a list of some numbers that you might find useful.

Bulk Uplift Services Contact

01875 615 131

Children's Services Social Work Team

01620 827 827

Crimestoppers

0800 555 111

ELC Homelessness Hotline

0800 169 1611

ELC Homelessness Prevention Team

01620 827 536

ELC Homelessness Response Team

0800 169 1611 / 01620 827536

ELC Social Care

Direct 01875 824309

Out of hours (Freephone) 0800 731 6969

Emergency Social Work Service

0800 731 6969

Gas Leaks

0800 111 999

Housing Access Team

0800 169 1611

Housing Benefit & Council Tax Enquiries

01620 827 827

Scottish Government Coronavirus Helpline

0800 111 4000

Scottish power energy network lookup for power cuts https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/postcode_lookup.aspx

Scottish Water

0800 0778 778

Social Work Department - Community Care

0845 603 1576

Samaritans

116 123

Universal Credit Support Service

08081 699901

Welfare Rights Team, Brunton Hall

0131 653 5228

WORRIED ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE?

If you are in danger call 999. Police Scotland will help.

Please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff if you are experiencing domestic abuse, we will treat all disclosures as confidential and provide advice and information or referrals to appropriate support agencies.

Support services are available if you are experiencing abuse in your home:

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline – this is available 24/7 and can be contact by calling **0800 027 1234** or by emailing helpline@sdfmh.org.uk. This service also provides a webchat facility, which can be found at www.sdfmh.org.uk

Mens Advice Line – 0808 801 0327

Galop National LGBT and Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0800 999 5428

Scottish Womens Aid - <https://womensaid.scot/>

Scottish Women's Rights Centre – provides free legal information, advice and presentation to women suffering domestic abuse.

Further information can be found at www.scottishwomensrightcentre.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland – provides support to anyone suffering sexual violence. Contact can be made via **08088 01 03 02** (freephone number) available every day, between 6pm and midnight. Further information can be found at www.rapecrisiscotland.org.uk

Homes for Life Housing Partnership 57 Market Street, Haddington, East Lothian, EH41 3JG
is a recognized Scottish Charity No 028542. Company Registration No. 188299.
Telephone 01620 829300 Fax 01620 829993 E-mail info@homesforlife.co.uk Web www.homesforlife.co.uk