

Special Edition Cost of Living

INTRODUCTION FROM OUR HOUSING SERVICES DIRECTOR

Welcome to the latest edition of Lanarkshire Housing Association Newsletter.



As the days get shorter and the temperatures drop, we know that many tenants will be turning on their heating for the first time in a while.

Whilst energy costs have reduced from the peak earlier this year, they are still much higher than before the start of the cost-of-living crisis and that many of you will still be finding it difficult to meet your energy

costs. We also know that this isn't limited to fuel costs.

Given this, I thought it would be a good opportunity to use this edition of our newsletter to highlight the various supports that are available to our tenants. We were really fortunate last winter to be able to help tenants through the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund and we saw first-hand the difference this additional help made to many people.

We have therefore been busy over the summer looking for other funding opportunities to supplement the help we offer to all tenants through the AFTAR Project and

were fortunate to be successful (read on for more information)

You may not have been in touch with us before for assistance, but I would urge any tenant that feels they could benefit from any of the initiatives detailed below to get in touch.

I hope you find the information included in this newsletter of interest and I would encourage you to provide any feedback to our team if there is anything else you would like to hear about.

Hopefully you will see from this newsletter, there are lots of supports available. It can be confusing to know what help you might be eligible for, or who best to deliver this. If in any doubt at all, please contact us on 01698 269119 and a member of the Housing Services Team can assist you.

Finally, and on behalf of all of the staff and Committee at Lanarkshire Housing Association, I would like to wish all our tenants a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2024.

Craig Russell

Housing Services Director

Charlie Millar – Obituary



It is with great sadness that we announce the death of our Chairperson, Charles Millar. Charles (Charlie) passed away in July following a short illness.

Originally a tenant of LHA, Charlie was elected to the management committee in 1984 where he served in a variety of positions but most recently as chairperson following his election in 2019.

Charlie was an unwavering supporter of the RSL movement in Scotland and championed the interests of tenants tirelessly during his long period of service with LHA.

The sudden and premature loss of Charlie came as a great shock to staff, committee and tenants. A frequent visitor to our office, Charlie was more than just a committee member, he was a colleague and a friend. He will be missed.

Inside this issue

- WAYS WE CAN HELP – COST OF LIVING
- TENANT PARTICIPATION UPDATE
- RENT REVIEW CONSULTATION
- WINTER WEATHER ADVICE

Ways we can help

AFTAR Project

We continue to offer assistance to all tenants through our long-established AFTAR (Advice for Tenants and Residents) Project which is delivered by Motherwell and Wishaw Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

The project offers us access to an experienced CAB advisor, Robert Mummery who is based within our offices on a Monday.

He can assist with a whole host of enquiries e.g. benefits, debts, emergency food parcels etc.

In 2022/23, AFTAR supported 315 LHA tenants with 641 issues resulting in £223,754 in client financial gain and £40,181 of rescheduled debt.

The AFTAR project is open to all LHA tenants. If you would like an appointment with Robert please contact the Housing Services Team and we can arrange this for you.



SFHA Social Housing Fuel Support Fund

Last winter, we obtained funding totalling £68,750 from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) under their Social Housing Fuel Support Fund.

We were able to use this to offer a variety of supports to over 300 tenants affected by the cost-of-living crisis/high energy costs. This included: -

- Winter Support Packs
- Fuel Vouchers
- Debt clearance on capped meters.

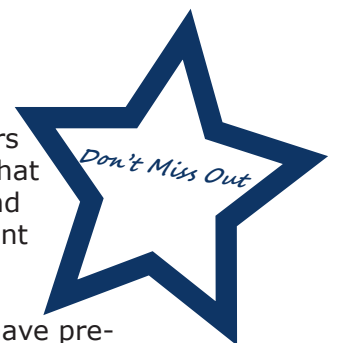


We were pleased when additional rounds of funding under the scheme were announced for the winter of 23/24 and we successfully applied again to ensure LHA tenants could again benefit from the scheme.

Details of the assistance available this winter is outlined below

Fuel Top-Up Assistance

Following our successful funding bid, we had a huge uptake of the top-up vouchers for electricity and gas offered to tenants last winter. We are delighted to advise that we have been successful again in our application to the latest round of funding and have obtained £25,000 to offer further fuel top-ups to all tenants with pre-payment meters.



If we helped you last year, we will be in touch with you directly. If not, and you have pre-payment meters, *please get in touch and we can ensure you benefit from this assistance*

We appreciate that it is not only tenants with pre-payment meters that will be experiencing the increased costs of utilities. Whilst this funding is explicitly to assist tenants on pre-payment meters, we can still try to assist other tenants through other supports available. Our Energy Advice Project detailed below is open to all tenants and we would encourage all tenants to get in touch.

Energy Advice Project

We have been successful in our bid to the SFHA Fuel Support Fund (Round 4) to support our tenants who require assistance and advice in relation to their energy costs. We have used this funding to work with Motherwell and Wishaw Citizen's Advice Bureau

Please see over for more information on the project and how it could help you.



Social Housing Fuel Support Project



WHAT CAN CAB HELP WITH?

- Crisis support and ongoing income maximisation
- Assistance for vulnerable energy customers
- Priority Service Register
- Funding for energy efficiency measures
- Any other energy issue including issues with billing, a supplier wanting to install pre-payment meters, making a complaint
- Supporting with ongoing energy issues
- Smart meters



HELP WITH ENERGY COSTS

There are a range of options available to help with the cost of energy, including:

- Energy Vouchers
- Warm Home Discount
- Winter Heating Payment
- Winter Fuel Payment
- Child Winter Heating Assistance

FUEL DEBT

- Help with the cost of energy bills
- Explore affordable payment plans and writing off debt.

ENERGY BILLS

- Billing Disputes
- Energy Inductions for vulnerable new tenants, proactively supporting good energy saving practices.
- Practical support and education (Behavioural Change) on energy reduction measures, referring to Home Energy Scotland to access government schemes



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Your property might benefit from improved insulation, draught-proofing, central heating system etc. Home Energy Scotland (0808 808 2282) can advise about possible grants and loans, and eligibility for each scheme. Your energy supplier may also be able to help with the cost of energy efficiency measures.



Contact Details

Get in contact with Lewis for more help

Lewis O'Neill

📞 07741735402
Freephone 0808 196 9180

✉️ lewis.oneill@motherwellcab.casonline.org.uk



Scottish Charity SC009733

Ways we can help

Warm Home Discount 2023- 2024

The Warm Home Discount is a Government Scheme that could award you £150 (including VAT) on your electricity account from your supplier.

There are two types of groups that can access this assistance: the [Core Group](#) and the [Broader Group](#).

[Core Group](#) - You will get the Warm Home Discount automatically if on 13 August 2023 all of the following applied:

- Your Energy supplier is part of the Warm Home Discount scheme
- Your or your partner's name is on the electricity account
- You or your partner are getting the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit (even if you get Savings Credit as well)

You should get a letter from your supplier between October 2023 and early January 2024 saying you are eligible for this scheme therefore you do not need to do anything else. If they do need more information from you then they will inform you about this as well as how to provide the required information.

Your supplier will add the Warm Home Discount amount to your account by 31 March 2024. If you do not get a letter by early January 2024 and you think you are eligible you will have to call the Warm Home Discount Scheme helpline on 0800 030 9322 before 29 February 2024 to apply.

[Broader Group](#) – If you don't meet the criteria for the Core Group you may be able to apply for the Broader Group. To be part of this group you would need to meet the following criteria:

- You will need to be on means-tested benefits (Universal Credit, Tax credits, Housing benefit, Income-Based Employment and support allowance, Income Based Jobseekers allowance or Income support)
- Your Supplier is part of the Warm Home Discount scheme
- Your name or your partner's name is on the bill, and you meet the criteria your energy supplier has put in place

In Scotland, the Warm Home Discount for those in the Broader Group is not done automatically compared to England and Wales. You have to apply for it on your supplier's website or by contacting them directly.

The number of discounts your supplier can provide is limited so you should contact them as early as possible. You should also check with your supplier if you can get it this year even if you were eligible for the discount last year.

If you are eligible, your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill by 31 March 2024. You will also need to remain with your supplier until they issue the Warm Home Discount to receive this.

If you need help with this please contact the Housing Team or your local Citizens Advice Bureau.



Winter Weather Advice

As we move into winter, and as temperatures drop, we thought it would be useful to share some handy tips to avoid the common issues that occur when a cold snap hits.

Programme Your Heating to Come on Regularly

With the cost of energy so high, it is understandable that you may be cutting back on using your heating. However, It is important that you ensure your home is heated in order to avoid burst pipes should temperatures drop suddenly.

One way to achieve this is to programme your heating system to come on regularly – or to keep it on continuously at a low temperature.

Our Energy Advisor, Lewis, will be able to advise you if you need any help or advice to do this. *Please get in touch.*

Ventilation

Condensation can be a problem all year round but can be made especially bad in the winter by windows being kept closed and heaters being on. Although it can be tempting to keep your windows and vents closed in colder months, this is when it is most important to ensure that your property is well ventilated to avoid condensation/damp.

You should avoid drying clothes indoors if you can as this will exacerbate any condensation problems you may already have. If doing so, you must open windows to fully air out your property whilst doing so.

If you have them, always use extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms and wipe away any condensation that does appear to prevent mould from building up on the windows and windowsills.

Frozen Pipes

When pipes freeze, this can create a build-up of pressure that may eventually cause the pipe to burst. If you suspect a pipe is frozen (probably if little/no water comes from your taps) then you should turn off your water at the stopcock (see below).

Keeping your heating on at a low temperature, as detailed above, is the best advice to avoid this happening. You may also be able to assist trying to thaw the pipe using a hot water bottle (but this will be dependent upon the location of the suspected frozen pipe and external temperatures).

If you suspect a pipe is frozen and would need advice on what to do, please call our Property Services Team on 01698 269119

Locate Your Stopcock and Know How to Switch it Off

The stopcock is the valve used for turning on and off the water supply within your property. The stopcock tends to be under the kitchen sink but can vary from property to property. To shut off the water supply, turn the stopcock clockwise.

The main risk to your property during cold weather is water damage from burst pipes. If this happens, knowing where the stopcock is to shut off the water supply is essential to help minimise water damage. You should then contact our Property Services Team immediately on 01698 269119 to make them aware.



Wise Group – Relational Mentoring

We have recently agreed a referral pathway with The Wise Group to their Relational Mentoring Scheme. This is at no cost to the Association (or the individual) and it provides holistic support to the whole household (if required).

If you think this is something that could help you (or a member of your household) please get in touch.

wise mentoring
inspiring positive change

Struggling with your fuel bills?

The Wise Group is here for you.

Our relational mentoring service provides free, 1-2-1 support to help you make positive steps towards the life you want. And it won't affect your benefits.

We can help you deal with all kinds of things, such as:

- household budgeting
- mental & physical health
- work & social skills

Don't know where to start? Talk to us. Contact your Fuel voucher provider or the organisation who provided this leaflet.

Delivered by the Wise Group on behalf of The Scottish Government

facebook.com/wisegroup.se

Mentoring to lift people out of poverty

Tenant Scrutiny Group/Focus Group

Our newly formed scrutiny group carried out their first scrutiny exercise earlier this year (with the support of the Tenants Information Service – TIS). We featured this in the Spring Newsletter and the group produced a report to staff on their recommendations for improvements which were accepted and included in our updated Void Management Policy. These included: -



- revisions to the Associations 'lettable' standard
- the introduction of minimum cleaning standards
- low-energy lightbulbs provided in every room
- consider retaining existing floorcoverings (where these are clean and in good condition) to help incoming tenants

The group have now decided that they would like to look at LHA's approach to reactive repairs and they have met with Association staff to agree the scope of their review.

If you are interested in taking part in this or future scrutiny exercises, please get in touch with our Housing Services Team.

The group also had the opportunity in November, to talk with Association staff about the upcoming rent review from April 2024. They had the opportunity to hear about how we arrived at the options proposed and about our investment priorities for future years.

Communication Review

As part of our drive to modernise our services we will be undertaking a review of our tenant communication preferences next year. We understand that many people prefer to receive information electronically e.g., by email/text message rather than by post.

To facilitate this, the review will include confirmation of up-to-date mobile numbers and email addresses for those who wish to receive information this way.

We will also take the opportunity to



gather your feedback on the content of our communication such as our newsletter or rent review etc. We want to know that we are sharing information that is of interest to you and to hear any ideas or suggestions about things that we could include.

Whilst we look to modernise our services, we do understand that digital is not suitable for everyone so we would always ensure that printed copies of documents can be available for those that need them.

English as a Second or Other Language

If you live in Lanarkshire and English is not your first language, you can take part in language classes to help you with everyday situations. These classes are held at various community facilities and are fun and relaxed.

Classes cover – speaking English, reading English, writing English and listening to English being spoken.

If you would like to know more about these classes, the contact details are below:-

North Lanarkshire – phone 01236 812595 or email cld@northlan.gov.uk

South Lanarkshire – phone 01698 452154 or email slcboost@glow.sch.uk

2024 Rent Review – Tenant Consultation

The tenant consultation exercise for our Rent Review for 2024 is now open. It is open for responses between 15th November and 22nd December 2023. You should have already received the consultation documentation by post and/or text message.

Hopefully you have found the information issued helpful to you and we would welcome any specific feedback/comments.

Thank you if you have already responded. If not, and if it is more convenient, you can respond using the QR code below (it should only take a few minutes to cast your vote).

Upon completion of the consultation exercise, a final proposal will be taken to our Management Committee meeting in February 2024 for approval and all tenants will be given at least 28 days' notice of the changes to their rents and service charges from 2nd April 2024.





2024 Calendar

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

February

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	1	2

March

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

April

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

June

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

July

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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28	29	30	31	1	2	3

August

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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September

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

October

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
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27	28	29	30	31	1	2

November

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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December

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4