Message in a Bottle

If you have a medical condition, East Lothian Council’s SafeLink Scheme – aka ‘Message in a Bottle’ - may be of interest. The scheme is a simple way to make sure that any medical professionals visiting your home during an emergency can quickly find your important medical information. The bottle should be kept in your fridge, and contains an information sheet for you to complete. The sheet has space for a photo, name, contact details for your next of kin, carer and doctor, plus information on any illnesses or allergies and your medication. Three alert stickers are also included, one for the bottle, one for the fridge door and one to be placed somewhere visible to someone entering your home.

To get a free Message in a Bottle, call East Lothian Council on 01620 82524 or e-mail communitycare@eastlothian.gov.uk

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for handling complaints about public services in Scotland. If you are unsatisfied with our service, and have followed our Complaints Procedure, and you feel your complaint remains unresolved, you have the right to contact the SPSO:

Freeport EH41
Edinburgh E1H 08R
0870 011 5378
www.sps.org.uk

Another UK First for ELHA!

Book Your Own Repair Appointment On-Line

All our tenants can now book their own repair appointments on-line. We have done away with the old repair reporting form, and brought in a new system which also gives tenants the opportunity to schedule the time repair staff will call.

We’re the first Housing Association in the UK to offer this service, which is provided jointly by ELHA and R3 Repairs Limited. For more information on registering for on-line repair services, visit our website, elha.com.

Our 2010 AGM

R3 Repairs Limited, the move to our new Head Office in Market Street and our biggest ever development programme.

Carolyne Allison from CA Market Research was our Guest Speaker and gave the audience a comprehensive insight into the results of our 2009 Tenant Survey. Data from the survey was very positive with 94% of our tenants satisfied with the Association as a landlord and 95% satisfied with the overall quality of service that we provide.

Obviously, we are delighted with these results, but we still have work to do to achieve an even higher standard of service to our tenants.

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Further key facts about the stigma surrounding mental health problems in Scotland and advice about how you can take action to support individuals you may know with mental health problems are available on-line at www.seemescotland.org.uk.

To show your support for “see me” campaign to end the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problem sign up to their Wall of Support online.

Community Award for ELHA’s Arthur

Arthur Thornton, a resident of Osborne Court sheltered housing in Cockenzie, has been named a community champion by Cockenzie and Port Seton Community Council in their annual achievement awards.

Arthur was nominated by Elaine Leitch, Sheltered Housing Officer, and his friends at Osborne Court for all the help that he gives to the other residents there. Arthur is always doing things for other residents, including going out shopping for his neighbours, some of whom are not able to get out and about much. He helps out so much that Elaine even refers to Arthur as her assistant!

As a reward for his dedication to his community, Arthur received a certificate and a trophy. Congratulations Arthur!
Fun Day

On Friday 13 August we held our first Tenant Event Fun Day at Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre. We all had our fingers crossed for good weather and it paid off – we had brilliant blue skies and warm sun. Perfect weather for the bouncy castle!

We had a great turn out and a lot of interest in our priority tenancies – particularly our Healthy Working Lives information stall with its scary collection of visual aids. Staff were there to answer questions, give advice, and with members of our Tenant Participation Working Group available, we were able to raise awareness about getting involved.

New Staff

A belated welcome to new Finance Officer, Nicola Sales. Nicola joined us just after the Spring newsletter came out & someone realised they needed to avoid being included in the Summer edition. Nicola joins us from Re-Union Canal Boats, and we hope Nicola’s transition from water to land goes smoothly.

Know Your Rights - Succession

If you are living in one of our properties which is someone else’s tenancy, you may be eligible to succeed or ‘inheriting’ the tenancy if the tenant dies.

There are three levels of succession:
Level 1: a spouse or partner of the tenant, who is living in the home at the time;
Level 2: a relative of the tenant, who was still living at home, or had lived in the home for at least six months;
Level 3: a carer on a deceased tenant, who had given up a secure tenancy to care for the tenant, and had been living in the home for at least six months.

If you are sub-letting the property or a non-related lodger, you are not entitled to succeed to the tenancy.

If the home is designed or adapted for the person with special needs, one will qualify at level 2 or 3 unless they had the same features or adaptations.

If a person would have qualified at level 2 or 3, we will make other suitable accommodation available.

Press The Big Red Button

When we launched the Live Help Service on our website, several people - including some members of staff were sceptical. Did we really need our own chat room? Would anyone use it? What would it offer that a phone call wouldn’t?

After two and a half years in use, the Live Help has more than proved itself. With several ‘chats’ a day, we’re answering enquiries on a huge range of topics – everything from ‘What time do you open?’ to questions about Housing Law and Tenants Rights.

The Live Help has been very useful for tenants and applicants with speech or hearing problems. Also for people with quick questions who don’t want to go through our phone switchboard.

And, of course, for those people out there who prefer to communicate online.

The Live Help Service is available from 9.30 - 12 and 2 - 4.30 Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 2 - 4.30 on Tuesdays, 9.30 - 12 and 2 - 4 on Fridays. When the Live Help is offline, you can leave a message and a member of staff will get back to you as soon as we re-open.

Home Contents Insurance - Are You COMPLETELY Covered?

When choosing home contents insurance, please make sure that your cover includes ‘laddered fittings’ and the cost of redecorating. Many insurance providers don’t cover things like broken windows or water/fire damaged wallpaper/print on their home contents policies. As broken windows (unless broken during a crime) and interior decoration are a tenant’s responsibility, they are not covered by our buildings insurance.

To make sure you are completely covered, we recommend that you take out home contents insurance from a provider who specialises in social housing.

For example: the SH4A Diamond Insurance Scheme or Jacky and Lloyd Thompson’s Crystal Insurance Scheme.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact us for a prospectus and application form on 01620 5032 or e-mail enquiries@elha.com.

If I Ran ELHA I Would…” Winner

Congratulations to Mr C Curran from Prestongrange, who wins £25 of shopping vouchers. Mr Curran’s suggestion was:

“Make sure every tenant is able to get the most from their central heating, as systems vary from scheme to scheme. Many people, especially amenity housing residents, find the latest digital controls and regulators confusing and daunting. It would be a tremendous help to elderly residents to have their systems explained to them, as in my case I now have a massive electrical bill. This would undoubtedly been much less if I had some advice on regulating the heating.”

Our Chief Executive, Martin Polfhammer said, “I liked this suggestion the most because it’s very relevant at the moment – we have had one or two problems where people’s energy bills have been high, probably because the heating system wasn’t being used as efficiently as possible. We do spend time when we sign up a new tenant to explain the system – but we also explain a lot of other things at that time too, so I think we can do better.

Chris’ comments made me realise that I don’t even know how to use my own heating system at home as well as the time of energy and tariff you use.”

“So, what we intend to do is to develop a new service, available free of charge to all our tenants, to visit people at home and advise how best to use the heating system, what energy tariffs to use and so on. We need to think carefully about how best to deliver this service, and we are contacting our partner agencies to see what services are already available. We will launch the service through Talkback once we have worked out how best to deliver it, our service can provide a free check and explain how heating controls work – if you would like us to do this, please contact us using the big red button on the website, or telephone or visit Head Office.”

Could Your Shower Make You Ill?

You may have heard of Legionnaires Disease but did you know that you can catch it from your shower? In healthy adults Legionnaires Disease causes flu like symptoms but in old people, young children or anyone whose immune system is compromised, it can be fatal.

Legionella bacteria live and grow in warm, stagnant water, for example in the hose of your tap, particularly if the hose is allowed to lie in warm bathwater. When the shower is turned on the bacteria can be expelled in the form of a fine spray, the only way it can be ingested by humans.

If you have a shower, you can avoid the risk of catching Legionnaires Disease by taking the following simple precautions:

Drain all of the water from the hose every time you use the shower,
Clean the hose and nozzle regularly using a mild bleach solution, especially if you haven’t used the shower for a while,
Replace your shower hose and nozzle regularly, at least every two years.

Garden Share Scheme

Following the success of the Edinburgh Garden Share Scheme, we would like to measure interest for a similar scheme in East Lothian.

People who are no longer able to take care of their garden would be matched up with people who enjoy gardening but have no garden of their own. All or part of the garden could be handed over to a green-fingered enthusiast, with all parties enjoying the benefits – the tenant gets a well-maintained garden (keeping a neat and tidy is a requirement of your tenancy) and the horticulturalist gets a chance to grow their own food, create something beautiful or even just get a little extra exercise.

If you think this scheme is a good idea, and if you might be interested in taking part, please contact our Customer Information Officer, Mary Hargreaves, by e-mailing info@elha.com, phoning 01620 825032 or visiting elha.com and pressing the Big Red Button.

Ooops… We made a mistake in the last newsletter – pest control is not covered under Right to Repair. It’s a service we provide at no cost to our tenants as a courtesy.

2011 Calendar Competition

East Lothian’s Past – old photos, images or memorabilia of East Lothian.

As we ourselves have moved into one of East Lothian’s historic buildings, we have decided that this year’s calendar competition should celebrate the past. The past in this case being anything older than ELHA itself (we’re 22 this year). First prize is a whopping £500 in shopping vouchers, with £15 in vouchers for the runner up.

Submission guidelines:

• We can accept digital photos, scans or originals.
• If you don’t want to part with an original print or can’t take a photo of your memorabilia, you can pop into our office and a member of staff can scan your image or photograph your memorabilia and return it to you in minutes.

• The deadline for submissions is the 1st of December
• Digital photos can be sent to info@elha.com
• Printed photos can be sent to 18-20 Market Street, Haddington, East Lothian EH41 3LJ

Also, if anyone has any old photos of the Courier Building, we’d love to make a copy for the rather bare wall of our new offices.

Friday the 13th