



## How We're Doing



# How We're Doing

**We publish information about how we are performing every year in our annual report. However, we like to give more detail on the issues which interest our tenants – last year we put this information in our Talkback newsletter, but this year we decided to put the information in a separate booklet.**

We were inspected by the Scottish Housing Regulator during 2011-12. We achieved an overall 'B' grade. The Regulator's inspection report can be downloaded from [elha.com](http://elha.com).

If after you've read the information in this booklet, you think we're doing well or there are areas for improvement and you have suggestions as to how we can do this, please let us know.

## About Us

We are a Registered Scottish Charity run by a Management Committee. There are currently 15 Management Committee Members, who are all unpaid volunteers who live in or near East Lothian. We employ 42 full time, and 5 part time members of staff.

We have 1332 properties:

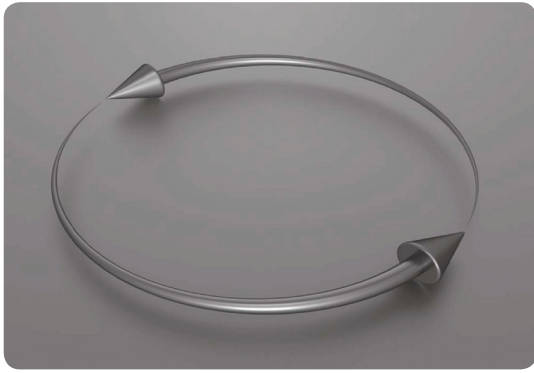
- 1047 general needs
- 100 amenity (over 50s)
- 57 shared ownership
- 24 wheelchair adapted
- 16 sheltered
- 15 ambulant disabled
- 3 hostels
- 6 workshop homes
- 7 workshops
- 33 garages
- 24 garage plots

Our average monthly rents are:

	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 bedrooms	5 bedrooms	6 bedrooms
Flat	£275.34	£307.20	£316.93			
Bungalow	£283.73	£329.87	£329.55	£372.97		
House	£262.65	£328.74	£359.57	£399.65	£439.88	£435.67

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## Mutual Exchanges

With the lack of properties available for reletting and the high demand for housing in East Lothian, mutual exchanges are fast becoming the most popular way for Council and Housing Association tenants to move home.

In 2011-12 we received 73 applications for mutual exchanges.

- 30 were approved
- 20 were refused by us
- 17 were refused by the other landlord
- 6 were withdrawn by one of the applicants

The most common reasons we had for refusing an exchange were:

- The exchange would have led to overcrowding
- The condition of one of the properties was unacceptable

Other reasons for refusal were:

- Rent arrears
- Antisocial behaviour
- One of the applying households were not available for visits

There is a legal requirement to make a decision on an application within 28 days, and we met this target in 70 of the 73 applications.

The average time taken to respond to an application was 19 days.

## Empty Homes

We do our best to make sure properties lie empty for as short a time as possible. As soon as a tenant notifies us in writing that they are moving out, we advertise the property so we can have a new tenant waiting to move in as soon as the property is ready.

We encourage tenants who are moving out to leave the property in good order, and operate a tenant reward scheme. Tenants who are moving out get a £100 reward if the rent account is clear, we don't need to order any repairs, clean the property or issue the new tenant with a decoration allowance. Last year we only awarded 1 Tenant Reward payment. This could mean that this scheme is not working and we will seek some of your views about it this year.

Our target for getting a property ready for a new tenant is 21 days – this gives us time to inspect the property, order repairs and get them done, safety check the gas and electric fittings, and have an Energy Performance Certificate produced (this is a legal requirement, and we cannot relet a property without one).

We are happy to report that our average relet time for 2011-12 was only 20 days. The rent loss from empty homes was £18,474.23, a reduction of £6,231.58 from last year.

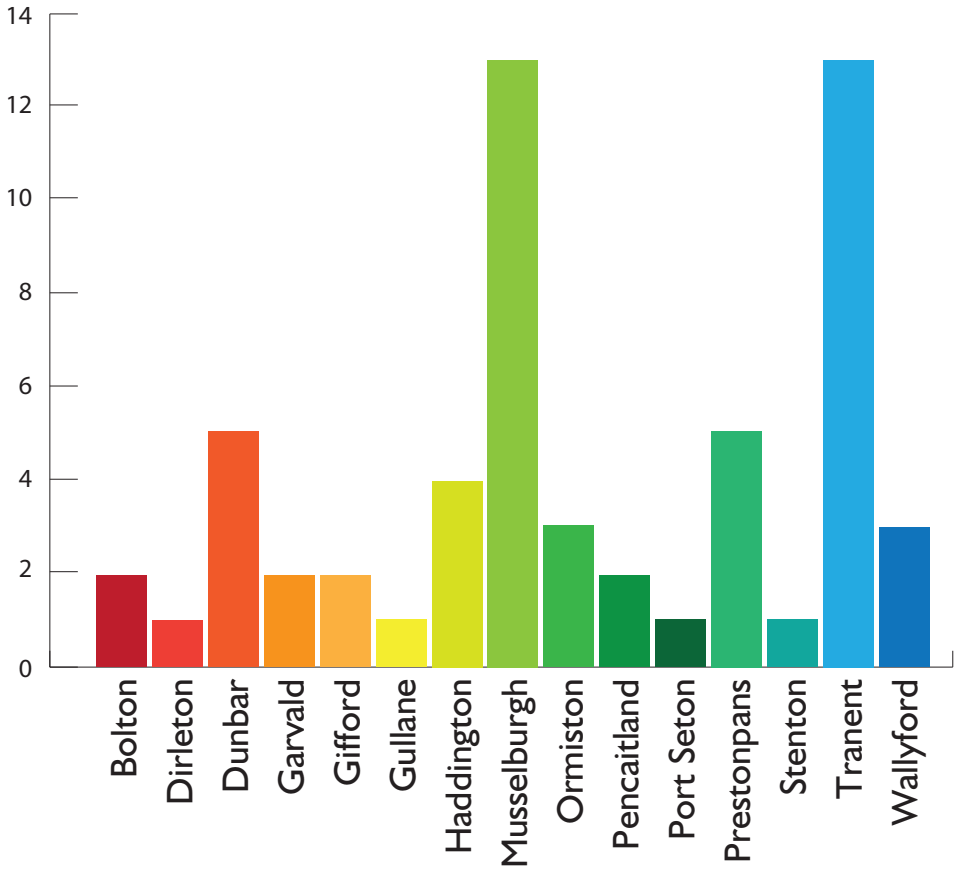
The top reasons for tenancies ending are:

1. Transfer to a more suitable property
2. Death of a tenant
3. Eviction for rent arrears



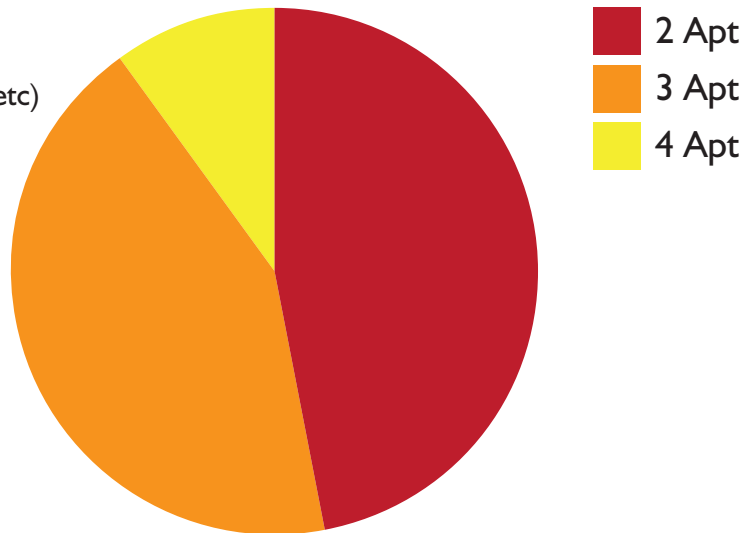
## Empty Homes continued

Last year we had 58 relet properties, in the following areas:



And in the following sizes  
(2 apartment = 1 bedroom,  
3 apartment = 2 bedroom, etc)

You can get more detailed information on our properties and the number of relets in each area on [elha.com](http://elha.com) (the 'About Us' section of the website has a map of our housing stock which includes information of the types of properties we have in that area, and last year's relet figures).



# Complaints

We try to deal with complaints about our service quickly and informally. Most complaints are dealt with as soon as we are aware of them by the person who



has received the complaint. Occasionally if this doesn't work, or if the complaint is more serious, we will use our formal complaints procedure. In 2011-12 we received 13 formal complaints:

- 9 complaints were received as first stage complaints, 5 were resolved and 4 passed to stage two.
- In addition to the 4 complaints which came from stage one, 1 new complaint was received as a second stage complaint. 4 of these complaints were resolved, and 1 was passed to stage three.
- In addition to the complaint passed up from stage two, 3 stage three complaints were received. Of these, 2 were resolved and 2 passed to stage four.
- Both of the complaints which reached stage four were resolved at that level and none were passed to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

Once we receive a formal complaint, we will let you know we have received the complaint straight away, and you should receive a full reply within 10 working days. If we can't reply within the 10 working days (perhaps because of a lengthy investigation), we will write to you explaining the reasons for this and let you know when we expect to be able to answer in full.

In 2012 the complaints procedure will change from a 4 – step process to 2 steps.

For more information on the SPSO, visit the official website at: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk) or call on 0800 377 7330.

## Policies

The following policies were introduced or reviewed in 2011-12

- Management Committee Membership
- Equalities and Diversity Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Openness and Confidentiality Policy
- Smoke Free policy
- Sustainability Policy
- East Lothian Anti Social Behaviour Policy/ Partnership

You can view all these policies on-line at [elha.com](http://elha.com).

We also consulted tenants and Homehunt applicants on changes to our Allocations Policy. Due to the timing of upgrades to our allocation system, the proposed changes to the policy will not be put into effect until later in the year.

## Financial Inclusion Service

Our Financial Inclusion Service (FIS) started operating last year, and had an immediate positive effect for our tenants. The FIS is provided in partnership with Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association, and is free, confidential, and available to any tenant who would like financial advice.

In 2011-12 106 cases were referred to the service, and 89 cases were completed and closed by the end of the financial year. Of these cases the following gains were made for our tenants:

Backdated benefits	£7,951.62
Ongoing benefits value (annually)	£88,936.87
Social Fund awards	£7,543.00
Charitable Trust / Goods received in kind	£700.00
<b>Total Gains</b>	<b>£105,131.49</b>

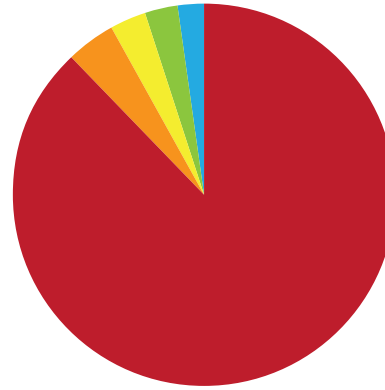
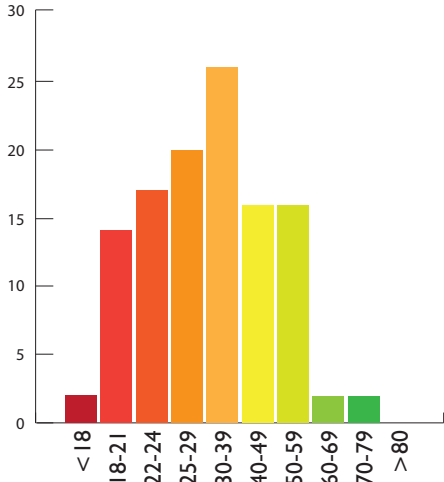
**Each tenant referred is better off by an average of £1,000 over the year!**



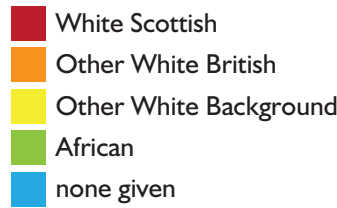
**CASTLE ROCK EDINVAR**  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

# Our New Tenants

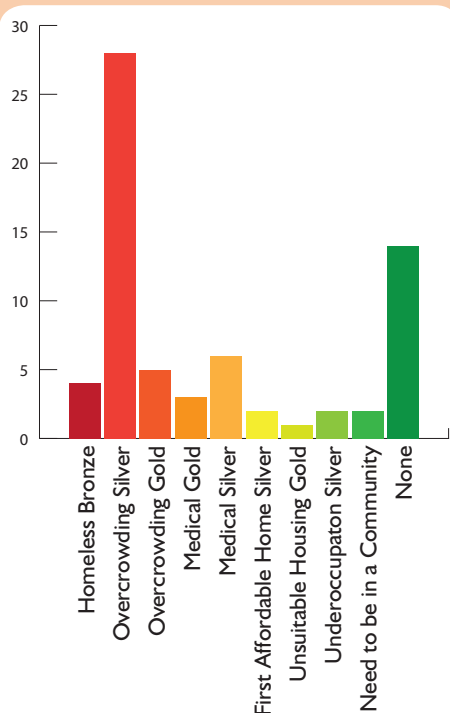
We housed 116 households last year (58 relets and 58 new builds). These new tenants are from all age ranges:



The ethnic breakdown shows less of a range, with most new tenants being White Scottish:



Most new tenants got an offer of a home from us because they have a priority pass. Half our available properties are allocated to households which East Lothian Council have assessed as priority homeless (these are advertised as Gold Plus Priority Pass Valid), the other half are available to applicants with other levels of priority.



Because we want to know how well we've performed, every new tenant has the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey.

We asked new tenants:

How satisfied they were with the information they were given at the start of their tenancy

Sufficient	100%
Too Much	0%
Not Enough	0%

How they found our staff

friendly, helpful, polite	53%
friendly	33%
friendly, polite	7%
friendly, unhelpful	7%

Were they satisfied with the standard of repair in their new home

Yes	73%
No	20%
Did not answer	7%

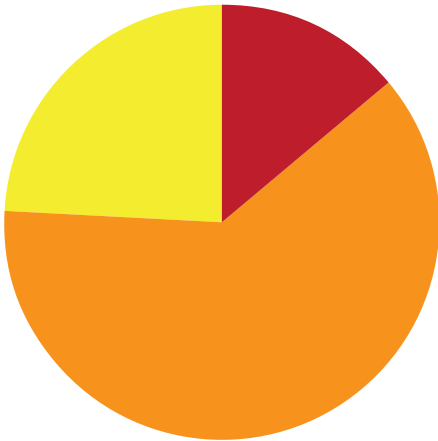
# New Developments

We had two new developments over the year, The Waggonway in Tranent and The Granary conversion in Haddington.



Many of these new build properties are 3 apartment (2 bedroom) properties, but also included some single bedroom flats, larger family homes and homes for tenants with special needs.

Satisfaction levels with the flats at The Granary were consistently high, with an overall average score of 9.5 on a scale of 1 to 10, the higher the score, the higher the level of satisfaction.



- 2 Apt
- 3 Apt
- 4 Apt

Satisfaction surveys are still being carried out at The Waggonway.

# Rent Arrears

While we receive some funding from the Scottish Government to help build new properties, everything else – running costs, repairs, loan repayments, etc comes from the rent you pay. We understand that sometimes tenants can find paying their rent hard, and will do everything we can to help a tenant who is having difficulty paying their rent. Only as a last resort will we will take court action against the tenant and apply to have them evicted.

Last year we referred 12 arrears cases to the courts.

**In 2011-12 we evicted five tenants for rent arrears.**

At the end of the financial year, we were owed £142,390.24 in rent arrears (an increase of £7,834.68 since 2010-11). That's enough to pay for:

- 142 new front doors, or
- 40 new kitchens, or
- 71 new bathrooms, or
- 35 new central heating systems

So please – pay your rent on time. If we take you to court, you will have to pay court costs on top of your rent arrears, which can add up to hundreds of pounds. If you're having difficulty, even if you're not in arrears at the moment, ask your Housing Officer for help or fill in the Financial Inclusion Service self-referral form on [elha.com](http://elha.com).





# Repairs

## Planned & Cyclical Maintenance

During 2011-12 our subsidiary maintenance company R3 Repairs Limited carried out the majority of our planned and cyclical maintenance. During the year we spent £1,011,419; and:

- Installed 80 new kitchens
- Installed 75 new bathrooms
- Renewed 17 central heating systems
- Repainted 118 properties

R3 also carried out the majority of our routine repairs, and most were completed within target. There were 6549 routine repairs carried out over the year – that's more than five repairs for each property we own.

Routine Repairs	Target	Outcome
Emergency repairs (make safe in 2 hours)	98%	96%
Right to Repair requests (complete in 24 hours)	100%	100%
Urgent repairs (complete in 3 working days)	95%	95%
Routine repairs (complete in 10 working days)	95%	94.5%
Pre-inspections completed on the agreed date	100%	100%
% of all repairs post-inspected	20%	17%
Empty property repairs (completed within 10 working days)	95%	96%
Overall satisfaction with service	95%	85%

92% of our properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS), and we aim to increase this to 100% through our maintenance program.

756 of our properties require an annual gas safety check, at the end of the year we had completed all the required inspections on time.

## Adaptations

During the year we carried out 39 minor medical adaptations, and 16 major medical adaptations to tenant's homes. Adaptations included:

- Installing level access showers
- Installing stair-lifts
- Putting grab-rails in place

## Alterations & Improvements

We approved 60 applications for tenant alterations/improvements to their home.





# Tenancy Sustainment

We hope that there will only be good reasons for one of our tenants moving out (an expanding family, a better job in a new area, etc). Tenancy Sustainment is the name given to the procedures we use to help tenants stay in their homes when they are having problems. Given how hard it is to get a tenancy in the first place, it's really important.

When a tenant moves into one of our properties we offer help in a variety of ways – tenants on a low income and who have no furniture can be referred to ELVON's Recycling 1st Project. We can also help fill in Housing Benefit application forms, and refer the new tenant to our Financial Inclusion Service, etc. We aim to make sure that less than 10% of new tenancies fail.

## Failed Tenancies

Any tenancy which lasts less than one year is considered a 'failed' tenancy. During 2011/12, we had 9 tenancies which ended within one year. The reasons for these failed tenancies were:

- Exchanged into another tenancy
- Were rehoused by Council
- Died
- Ended due to problems

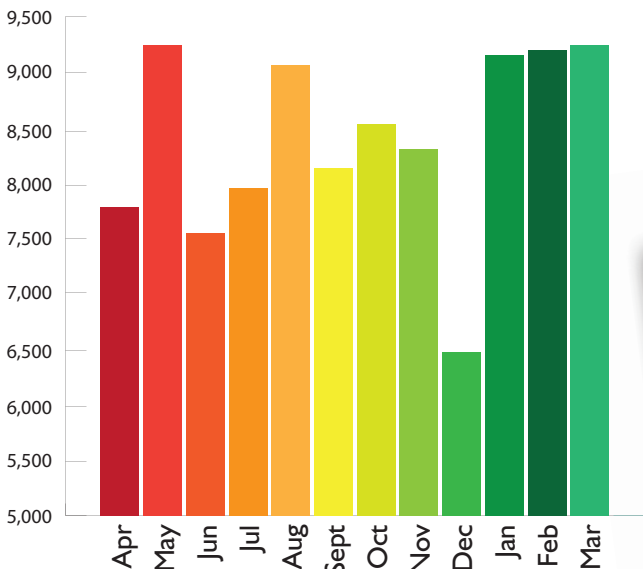
## Settling in Visits

We try to visit all new tenants four to six weeks after they've moved in, to make sure they're settling in. Sometimes a problem isn't apparent during the excitement of moving into a new home, so we call and check that everything is going okay.

In 2011/12 we started 146 new tenancies (relets, new builds and exchanges) and carried out 96 settling in visits.

# Website

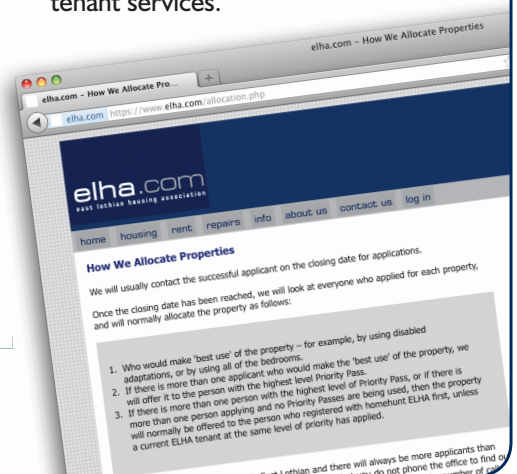
Last year we had 100,873 visits to our website.



The most commonly visited pages (after the front page) were:

- Mutual exchange search
- Available properties
- Contact Us
- Vacancies at ELHA
- How to apply for housing

At the end of the financial year, 22% of our tenants were registered for on-line tenant services.



# Antisocial Behaviour

On the whole, East Lothian is a very nice place to live, with a lower than average level of antisocial behaviour. In an ideal world, all of our tenants would get along. Unfortunately that isn't always the case, and when anti-social behaviour is reported, we take it very seriously. We work in partnership with East Lothian Council's Antisocial Behaviour Team and operate a joint Antisocial Behaviour policy.

The majority of our cases are resolved at an early stage by getting neighbours to talk to each other about their problems, either on their own, or through East Lothian Community Mediation Service. We only refer antisocial behaviour cases to court as a last resort.

Our Antisocial Behaviour Policy splits the complaints we receive into 3 categories:

- **Category A** – Incidents of a very serious antisocial nature, physical violence, criminal conviction, harassment including racial harassment, escalation or increase in frequency of disturbances or excessive noise. We aim to investigate and make our initial assessment of such complaints within 3 working days.
- **Category B** - Includes incidents which indicate serious antisocial behaviour, such as persistent excessive noise, frequent disturbances, threats of violence, vandalism. We aim to investigate and make our initial assessment of such complaints within 5 working days.
- **Category C** - Incidents which breach a tenancy condition but which aren't quite so serious, e.g. occasional noise, not closing a secure stair door, dumping rubbish, noisy or uncontrolled pets, will fall into this category. We aim to investigate and make our initial assessment of such complaints within 10 working days.



**antisocial  
behaviour**

**Don't sit in silence.**

During 2011-12 we received the following complaints:

- Category A - 1
- Category B - 15
- Category C - 132

We aim to resolve neighbour disputes within our targets, whether this is by getting tenants to talk over their problems, referring tenants to mediation services, issuing an Anti Social Behaviour warning, or taking legal action. In reality, cases often drag on for much longer, particularly when there is persistent anti social behaviour. We responded to 119 (90%) of complaints made in 2011-12 within target.

# Tenant Participation

## Taking Part and Shaping Services

There are many ways to get involved in our work. We want to ensure that we are delivering high quality services and the only way we know if we are getting it right is if you get involved and you give us your views.

During the last year tenants have been involved in many ways:

## Tenant Involvement Group (TIG)

The TIG met 4 times during the year. Some of their work involved the review of Housing policies, assisting in the start up of our new Facebook page and attending Tenant Participation conferences. The TIG is an informal group made up of tenants and committee members, and we are always happy to welcome tenants to come along, take part, and express an opinion.

If you would like join the TIG, or just to try it out by coming to a meeting, please contact our Customer Information Officer, Mary Hargreaves on 01620 825032 or by e-mailing [info@elha.com](mailto:info@elha.com).

## Information & Consultations

We produced a range of information during the year and consulted tenants and service users on a range of subjects. This included:

- 4 Newsletters
- 2 Information leaflets
- Our Annual Report, the style of which was quite unique and generally well received.

All consultations can be completed on-line at [elha.com](http://elha.com). We carried out the following in 2011-12:

- Rent Increase
- Garden Care Service
- Stair Cleaning Contract
- Allocations Policy

Satisfaction Surveys were carried out for the following areas and results reported on to our Management Committee:

- Day to Day Repair Service
- Allocations and Mutual Exchanges

## Working with Tenants / Tenant Groups

Staff worked and consulted with several registered tenant organisation and informal tenant groups over the course of the year.

As part of the inspection carried out by the Scottish Housing Regulator during 2011-12, we held a meeting where tenants could speak with the Regulator.

Estate inspections were carried out from April to September, and many tenants attended these walks around their estate with their Housing Officers. Several estate improvements were identified during the 2011-12 inspection, which have since been carried out.

## Accreditation / Memberships

We have achieved Tenant Participation Advisory Service accreditation for our work on Tenant Participation.



We have achieved Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers accreditation at type I for our work on providing information and advice.



We have joined Happy to Translate, which lays out service standards for providing information in a way which suits our tenants.



We have a range of information and advice leaflets which you can download at **elha.com**, pick up from our office, or request copies in a variety of alternative formats – just ask!



**elha.com**  
east lothian housing association

**18-20 Market Street, Haddington, East Lothian EH41 3JL**  
Scottish Charity No SCO28900 Registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965, Registered No 2266R(S)

**W: elha.com E: enquiries@elha.com**  
**T: 01620 825032 F: 01620 826596**  
**Text: elha then your message to 88222**  
**(message charged at standard rates)**



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