

talkback

SUMMER 2022

elha.com
east lothian housing association



Welcome to Performance 365

Check our latest results all year round with our Performance 365 service



Our 2021/22 figures and our summary leaflet are now available on our Performance 365 microsite. Once the Scottish Housing Regulator has had a chance to review the performance information for all

Scottish social housing landlords, you'll be able to compare our performance against the Scottish average, and/or other landlords. We will let you know when this information is available.

Engagement Plan

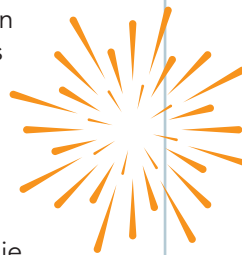
The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), which regulates social housing in Scotland, has published its Engagement Plans for the coming financial year. In recent years we have not had to provide the SHR with any information other than the standard annual returns all housing associations have to submit. However, this year, although we are still confirmed as fully compliant with the SHR's Governance Standards, we are required to provide some additional information on succession planning for our Management Committee. You can see a copy of our Engagement Plan here www.housingregulator.gov.scot



Scottish Housing Regulator

Congratulations

Congratulations to David in our Finance Team who has qualified as a Chartered Certified Accountant with ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants).



Well done also to Stephanie in the Housing Team, and Chris who's post is split between Care & Repair and Asset Management, who have both passed their SCQF Level 6 in Business and Administration.

To read our summary leaflet, or the full 2021-22 stats, go to elha.com and click on 'see our performance' in the big silver Latest Performance box.

LATEST PERFORMANCE



Check our latest results all year round with our Performance 365 service.

SEE OUR RESULTS

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Cost of Living Payments

The Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) have announced the following payments during 2022/23:



Department for Work & Pensions

July 2022: £325 for most benefit claimants

More than eight million UK claimants of Universal Credit, Tax Credits, Pension Credits and legacy benefits will receive a one-off payment of £650, paid in two instalments of £325. If you're on any of these benefits except Tax Credits, your first payment of £325 will arrive in your bank account from 14 July.

Claimants must have begun a claim for these benefits by 25 May 2022 at the latest to qualify for the first of the two payments. The £650 will be tax-free, will not count towards the Benefit Cap, and will not have any impact on existing benefit awards. This applies throughout the UK. In addition to the £650 for households on benefits, there will be a separate £300 payment for pensioners, and a £150 payment for disabled people, which can be paid on top of the £650 payment.

Late summer or early autumn 2022: £325 for some Tax Credit claimants

People on Tax Credits will also get £650 paid in two instalments but theirs will take longer to arrive because they are being administered by HMRC, not the DWP.

It's understood these are due in late summer or early autumn for the first payment, and by Christmas 2022 for the second payment. This applies throughout the UK.

By September 2022: £150 for disabled claimants.

£150 will be paid into the bank accounts of six million people on the following means-tested disability benefits:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- Scottish Disability Benefits
- Armed Forces Independence Payment
- Constant Attendance Allowance
- War Pension Mobility Supplement

People will have had to be claiming, or started a (later successful) claim for, these benefits by 25 May 2022. They will be paid directly, be exempt from tax, not count towards the Benefit Cap, and not have any impact on existing benefit awards.

The exact timing for these payments is not yet known because the DWP has not passed the necessary laws to pay the money. This applies throughout the UK.

Autumn 2022: Second £325 payment for benefit claimants

The Government says that the second instalment of the £650 one-off payment for people on benefits will arrive in the autumn for people on Universal Credit, Pension Credit, and most legacy benefits. Again, people on Tax Credits will have to wait longer - the only guarantee is they'll get it by the end of the year.

October 2022 to March 2023: £400 energy bills discount for all

A "buy now pay later" £200 discount off electricity bills from 1 October 2022 (which had to be paid back over five years) has been axed. Instead, all households will get £400 off their electricity bills from October as a non-repayable grant. It will happen over the course of six months

from October 2022 to March 2023. So, if you pay by monthly direct debit you may get £66.67 off your bill each month.

This grant is a direct discount off your bills, not cash you can spend, and you'll likely find that your monthly bills are still higher than they were at the same time last year. Customers with pre-payment meters will have the money applied to their meter or via a voucher.

An extra £150 will be paid for properties in Council Tax bands A-D, meaning millions of the lowest-income households will receive at least £1,200 in support this year.

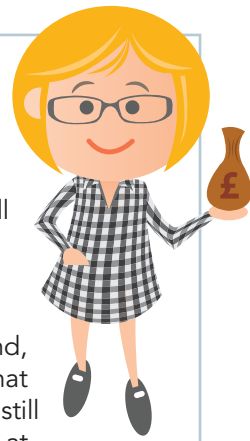
November to December 2022: £300 payment for most pensioners

A one-off 'Pensioner Cost of Living Payment' of £300 will go to pensioner households who receive Winter Fuel Payments in November or December. These payments will be paid alongside the Winter Fuel Payment which is worth between £100 and £300 for pensioners.

For most pensioner households, this will be paid by direct debit. People are eligible if they're aged 66 or over by 19 September 2022, although some pensioners do not qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment.

And:

The Government has also expanded support for the Household Support Fund – which helps people with food and energy bills – with an extra £421 million, on top of £79 million for devolved nations; the total value of this support now stands at £1.5 billion.





Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

School Age Payments

Social Security Scotland's School Age Payment is now open for applications for children born between 1 March 2017 and 28 Feb 2018.

The payment is available to low-income families on certain benefits and tax credits to help cover the costs of a child starting school.

Parents can access the payment, whether their child is attending school or not.

People can apply for the payment between 1 June 2022 and 28 February 2023.

Parents who are home-schooling or who have decided to defer their child's entry to Primary 1 until next year, should still apply for the payment by 28 February 2023.

A parent or carer of a child may be eligible if they receive any of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit (UC)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit (CTC)
- Working Tax Credit.

Parents and carers can get more information and apply at www.mygov.scot or by calling **0800 182 2222**.

www.mygov.scot



Occasionally Asked Questions

(A bit like a FAQ, but less frequent)

Q: Can I keep a snake in my home?

A: Yes, as long as the snake is legal to own in the UK, non-venomous and housed appropriately.

Q: What will happen to ELHA housing stock if the government give the greenlight to reintroducing the right to buy?

A: This proposal is for England and Wales only, and as social housing is a devolved sector, this would not affect us.

Q: Whose responsibility is it to maintain our car park?

A: That depends on where it is; some car parks are public and are adopted by East Lothian Council, and some are owned by us. You can report issues about those owned by us the same way you report issues with any other communal area (we have a plan in the works to make this easier – watch this space). If you are unsure who owns the car park in your area please get in touch and we can let you know.

Q: Do I have to ask permission to build a shed in my garden?

A: Yes. You must receive written permission from us before building any fixed structures in your garden. You should also check with East Lothian Council's Planning Department, in case they have any additional restrictions in your area.

Q: Are you building new houses?

A: Yes, but whilst we have a number of active discussions with developers, it is not easy to agree contracts and prices with them at the moment, given uncertainties in the labour and materials markets. We do have one small development on site at Hardgate in Haddington to convert our old office into three new affordable homes, and we hope to announce news of some new developments soon which we hope to complete in 2023 - watch this space!



(Keep these questions coming – you can e-mail them directly to info@elha.com or use the 'Suggestions for Talkback' form in your **My Ideas & Opinions box in My Home**)

New Staff

Not one but two of our long-serving Housing staff recently retired, so we now have a new Housing Assistant, Bimal and a Senior Housing Assistant, Lisa.



Bimal originally moved from Bhutan to Scotland in 2003, and has been living and working in Edinburgh since. Before joining us, Bimal worked as a community outreach worker in Edinburgh for 11 years. More recently Bimal worked with Viewpoint Housing Association and SACRO, and has achieved a post-graduate diploma in Housing from the University of Stirling.



Lisa joins us from Melville Housing Association where she worked for 22 years. Prior to this, she had worked with Midlothian Council and Scottish Homes, and she started her career as an apprentice with Scottish Special Homes in 1988 – over 30 years of Housing experience! Lisa has also recently completed the Chartered Institute of Housing's Level 4 qualification in Housing.



THESE HOMES


#beforeyouapply

For those of you not following our Facebook page (and you should, as we post a lot of helpful information on there), we're currently running the #BeforeYouApply campaign, giving applicants tips for what they need to be prepared for before they apply for a new home through our Digital Lettings Service, These Homes.

If you're considering a transfer, for example if you need a larger or smaller home, or you need to move to a ground floor property, our tenants can be eligible for additional priority over and above the usual Gold/Silver/Bronze categories. We do this because if an available property goes to an existing tenant, it frees up their property for someone else – meeting the housing needs of two households instead of just one.

The good news is that if you qualify for any These Homes Priority Passes and you're already a Platinum Key Tenant, then all we need to do is carry out a home inspection and if all is well, you'll qualify for a Gold Plus Transfer Pass right away. Even if you're not Platinum yet, you may still be able to qualify for the Gold Plus Transfer Pass, as long as you have a clear rent account and have no tenancy breaches.

For more information on qualifying for a Priority Pass, visit the Services section of elha.com, and you can find information on becoming a Platinum Key Tenant in your My Home account. And don't forget to follow our Facebook page for more tips on how to prepare #BeforeYouApply.

 www.facebook.com/eastlothianhousingassociation



Home Energy Advice



East Lothian Council have produced a fantastic leaflet with information for East Lothian residents concerned about rising energy costs.

Download the ELC leaflet

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/32208/managing_energy_bills_and_heating_your_home_-_leaflet_march_2022.pdf

The Home Heating Support Fund has been extended to March 2023. To find out more, visit the Home Heating Advice Scotland website: www.homeheatingadvice.scot

Debt charity Turn2Us also has a search tool for grants: Turn2Us: www.grants-search.turn2us.org.uk

There are also a number of assistance schemes available through energy suppliers:

Bulb Energy Fund: www.help.bulb.co.uk/hc/en-us/articles/360044896191-About-Bulb-s-Energy-Fund

British Gas Energy Trust: www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk

Ovo Energy Fund: www.ovoenergy.com/help/debt-and-energy-assistance

E.On Energy Fund: www.eonenergy.com/more-for-your-home/energy-fund.html

E.On Next Energy Fund: www.eonnextenergyfund.com

EDF Energy Customer Support Fund: www.edfenergy.com/for-home/help-centre/faq/extra-support-when-you-need-it?steps=23147

Scottish Power Hardship Fund: www.community.scottishpower.co.uk/t5/Extra-Help/Hardship-Fund/ta-p/53

Octo Assist Fund: www.octopus.energy/blog/struggling-to-pay/

If you have any concerns about your energy bills and would like to have a chat with our Money & Home Energy Adviser, Anne, please get in touch by sending Anne a message via the Help buttons in your My Home account, or e-mail us at enquiries@elha.com or call the office on 01620 825032 and choose the tenant and housing options from the phone system to chat with a member of staff. You don't need to be in debt to have a chat with Anne, she's here to help our tenants whatever their circumstances.

New Service Coming

**Rent Account
Management is Going
(even more) Digital.**

We want to let you know that we will be launching an exciting new service in September 2022 which will allow all our tenants to make digital rent agreements rather than having to phone our office to speak to their Housing Officer, email us or complete the contact form in My Home and then wait to hear from us.

What this means is that staff and tenants will be able to agree rent payment arrangements far more easily and quickly. For example, if someone wants to:

- **Pay their rent on the 15th of each month instead of the 1st because they receive their salary or Universal Credit on the 15th**
- **Change their frequency of their payment from monthly to weekly because they get paid weekly**
- **Clear an outstanding balance on their account by agreeing to pay the monthly rent plus an extra amount each month until the debt is clear**

We will let you know more about this new Service nearer the time but for now we want to let you know that from early July we will be upgrading our rent account management system so it runs on our My Home platform.

We will be inputting all the existing payment arrangements onto the new system on 5 July, so if you have any kind of existing arrangement in place, you'll see a new document detailing the arrangement in your My Documents folder. This doesn't mean you have a new arrangement, it's just your existing arrangement being updated in the new system.

Until the new system is up and running, if you want to make a new arrangement or change an existing arrangement, the process is the same – use the contact form in your **My Home account**, e-mail us at info@elha.com or call us on **01620 825032** and follow the phone prompts for rents.



2022-23 Consultation Calendar

Below are the consultations we will be carrying out over the next year.

If you are interested in taking a more active role in consultations, for example, reviewing the questions we'll be asking in this year's large tenant satisfaction survey, or seeing and commenting on consultation reports before they go public, please get in touch by e-mailing info@elha.com or having a chat with your Housing Officer.

If you are interested in being involved in the review our Tenant Participation Strategy, please get in touch with **Claire McMillan**, Housing Manager by emailing info@elha.com or calling **01620 825032**.



Consultation	Taking Part	Start Date
Tenant Participation Strategy	All tenants	Underway
Garden Care Review	Tenants on the Garden Care Scheme	October 2022
Large Tenant Satisfaction Survey	At least 50% of tenants	November 2022
Stair Cleaning Survey	Tenants on the Stair Cleaning Contract	November 2022
Rent Increase	All tenants	January 2023

TIG Panel

We had to bid a fond farewell to two of our long-standing TIG-Panel members, Rebekah Gronowski from Tranent and Heather Shaw from Haddington.

Rebekah joined the TIG in 2013 and served as the Convener for several years before stepping back down to member in 2018. Rebekah has been a valuable member of TIG-Web, taking a keen interest in digital services and scrutiny over the years.

"I have found the work most interesting; I thrive on work which uses my brain and challenges my intellect. It has been a real education for me to learn the minutiae of running a Housing Association



such as ours and I have appreciated learning how to conduct in-depth scrutiny of the many processes involved. I will miss our meetings and the interaction with you all, but I will stay in touch and will be a 'distance member' of TIG as and when needed. I look forward to seeing many of you at our next AGM, hopefully."

Heather joined the TIG in 2017, and has been an enthusiastic and reliable member since. As she and her husband have moved, and are no longer ELHA tenants, we have to say farewell. We're sad to see her go but wish all the best with her new home.

"I will miss it very much, it is such a friendly group and I learned so much. I wish you all every success in the future."



So – we have some space on our TIG-Panel. If you'd like to get involved, why not come along to a meeting or two to see if it is your thing? This year is likely to be an interesting one, with our Large Tenant Satisfaction Survey and a bus tour of some of our housing stock coming up in 2022-23 (plus all the usual – reviewing tenant feedback, complaint reporting, sneak peeks at new services and of course – getting to scrutinise areas of work where tenants think we could be meeting the Scottish Social Housing Charter objectives a little better!)

To let us know you're interested, you can have a chat with your Housing Officer, or fill in the 'Join In' form in your My Home account.

e-mail us at info@elha.com or call us on **01620 825032** and follow the phone prompts for rents.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

