

talkback

WINTER 2022



Festive Closure Dates



We will be closed from 12.30pm on Friday 23 December 2022 and will reopen at 9.00am on Wednesday 4 January 2023.

If you have an emergency while our offices are closed, please call our usual office number, **01620 825032**, which will give you information on what to do next. R3 Repairs Limited, will be operating over the festive period and dealing with any emergency repairs, but you will not be able to book any routine repairs on those dates.

Remember that **My Home** never closes, and our Rent Collector never sleeps either, so all those services will continue to operate as normal.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all at ELHA!

Coming Soon to These Homes – Homes for Life Properties!



We are pleased to tell you that our neighbours, Homes for Life Housing Partnership, will be joining us on These Homes later this year. This will provide more opportunities for applicants on our Housing Register to access housing in East Lothian.

If you are registered with These Homes, you will shortly see properties advertised by Homes for Life in the same way as we advertise our own, and you can apply for them. If you have an ELHA Priority Pass it will also be valid for any Homes for Life properties advertised, you do not need to apply for an additional Priority Pass.

We will also include any Homes for Life properties on our weekly Facebook update.

For more information on Homes for Life Housing Partnership, visit their webpage.

www.homesforlife.co.uk/

Energy Help Vouchers

Do you have a (non smart) prepayment meter? If you do, please make sure you have claimed your £66.00 Energy Help Vouchers – payable each month from October 2022 to March 2023. You should receive these on the 1st of the month by SMS text, email or post, and they can be redeemed at your usual top-up point.



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DWP Benefit Update

The Government is increasing benefits in line with inflation by 10.1%. Working age families will see their benefit payments rise from April 2023. The Government is also providing support this winter for people who need help now, including money off energy bills and Cost of Living Payments.

Pensioners in Great Britain will benefit from a 10.1% increase to their State Pension in April 2023. A full basic State Pension will increase from £141.85 to £156.20 each week, and the new State Pension will increase from £185.15 to £203.85. Pension Credits will also increase by 10.1% in April 2023.

UK households on means-tested benefits will receive an additional Cost of Living Payment of £900 in 2023-24. This will be made in more than one instalment.

People across the UK on non-means-tested disability benefits will receive a further £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment in 2023-24, to help with the additional costs they face. This is in addition to the Cost-of-Living Payments for households on means-tested benefits and pensioner households, if eligible.

Pensioner households across the UK will receive an additional £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment in 2023-24 to help with bills. This is in addition to means-tested benefits and disability payments, if eligible.

In April next year the benefit cap will also increase by 10.1%.

We will keep you updated with additional information as it is announced.

Recoverable Hardship Payments

If you have applied to the DWP to stop your Recoverable Hardship Payment (RHP) payments and they refused, you can now re-apply to have this decision assessed.

Recoverable Hardship Payments give money to people who have seen their benefits reduced by sanctions or a fraud penalty. You must apply for them with evidence of need, and each request is reviewed individually. You can request for the recovery of these payments to be waived (stopped), and must provide evidence to show that paying back the money is either unaffordable or would affect you or your family's health or wellbeing.

An exercise has been started to look at previous waiver requests that took place prior to 11 January 2021. A guidance page on GOV.UK explains the process and asks claimants to share evidence if they feel their RHP should be waived.

Applications can only be considered if a request was made to waive the RHP between 1 January 2014 and 11 January 2021 and was refused at the time.

Applications will open on 19 December 2022.



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Hope for the Best, Prepare for the Worst!

If the worst happened and you had a fire, flood or other disaster how would you replace your belongings? While we have buildings insurance to make repairs to your home, we are not responsible for your furniture, the decoration or any of your personal belongings. That's why we recommend that all of our tenants take out home contents insurance, and we can provide information on insurance providers who specialise in insurance for Housing Association tenants.

For more information, please contact us by e-mailing enquiries@elha.com, calling on **01620 825032**, or clicking on the **Live Help** button.

And on that note – please take care with candles over the festive period!



Would you like to help improve social landlord services in Scotland? Add your voice to the National Panel of Tenants and Service Users!



Add Your Voice, Help Improve Services

The Panel is one of the ways that the Scottish Housing Regulator can hear what tenants and service users think and make sure it focuses on the important things. Members receive occasional surveys and invites to take part in other feedback exercises. Participation is always optional and you can leave at any time.

We want to include a diverse range of people on the Panel, including those who are not involved in other ways of giving views on landlord services. Members include Council and Housing Association tenants, people who have used homeless services, homeowners who receive social landlord factoring or common repairs, and people living on social rented Gypsy/Traveller sites.

If you'd like to take part you can do so:

Online at: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/shr-panel/

By calling: **0800 433 7212**

Or you can request a printed form by emailing natpan@engagescotland.co.uk or calling on **0800 433 7212**



Fixing for a Future

Fixing for a Future is a community initiative based in East Linton. Their aims are to create a better informed, more resilient community, with the skills to repair belongings, leading to a reduction in landfill waste and CO2 emissions.

Coming up in early 2023, Fixing for a Future will be delivering fantastic free workshops in repair skills at venues across East Lothian.

Available are:

Bike Repair & Maintenance 6 Week Course

2 hours each week (a weekday morning) for 6 weeks.

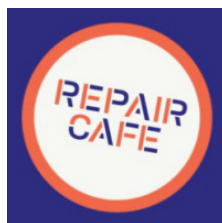
You'll learn all the skills you need to maintain and repair your bike, including lessons on punctures, brake cables, gear cables and cleaning.

Clothing & Textiles Repair 6 Week Course

2 hours each week (a weekday morning) for 6 weeks.

You'll learn all the skills you need to mend your clothes, including lessons on threading a sewing machine, hemming, zips, patching and darning.

If you would like to know more about these workshops, please contact your Housing Officer on **01620 825032** or email enquiries@elha.com by Friday 16th December.



Understanding Your Energy Bills

It's more important than ever that everyone understands tariffs, bills and energy usage.

Citizens Advice has some excellent information of every aspect of your energy supply, from how to read your meter, to making your home energy efficient, to accessing grants and support, to switching suppliers and so much more.

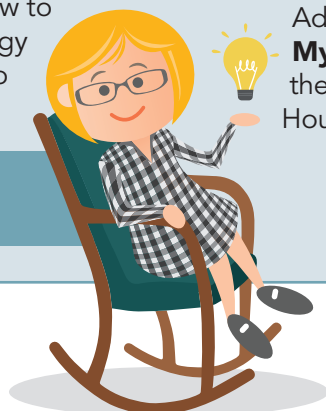
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/

We can also help, through our **Money & Home Energy Advice Service**. To request to chat with

Anne, our Money & Home Energy Adviser, just pop into

My Home and leave a message using the 'Energy Advice' form in your My House box or call us on **01620 825032**

citizens advice



Benefit Update for Parents



Scottish Child Payments Extended

The Scottish Child Payment will be extended to all under 16-year olds from 14 November 2022 and the payment will increase from £20 to £25 each week for families in receipt of the following qualifying benefits:

- Universal Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Pension Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance (JSA)
- Income-related employment and support allowance (ESA)

It is necessary to apply for the Scottish Child Payment.

Claims can be made online at mygov.scot or by phone **0800 182 2222**.

Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payment

The fourth and final Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payment due in December, is to be doubled from £130 to £260. This payment is made automatically by East Lothian Council to families for each child entitled to free school meals due to low income.

It is necessary to apply for free school meals to be registered to receive this payment.

Child Winter Heating Payments

The Child Winter Heating Assistance payment of £214.10, which is an annual payment to help disabled children and young people heat their homes, will be paid automatically to families for anyone under 19 who receive the following qualifying benefits:

- The highest rate of the care component of Child Disability Payment or Disability Living Allowance for children
- The enhanced rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment
- The enhanced rate of the daily living component of Adult Disability Payment

Young Carer Grants

Young people aged 16, 17 and 18 can receive a grant of £326.65 a year if they are caring for someone on average 16 hours a week who receives a disability benefit.

Young carers can apply if they are at school, in further education, employed or unemployed. People can apply once a year as long as they remain eligible. The payment is a cash benefit and people can spend it as they choose.

For more information on these and other benefits provided by Social Security Scotland, visit their website: www.socialsecurity.gov.scot

Young Patients Family Fund

If you have a child in hospital you can claim for the costs of travel and food through the Young Patients Family Fund. This is available to parents, primary carers and siblings under 18 when a baby, child or young person under 18 is receiving inpatient care, regardless of income. The Fund can cover transport to hospital once a day, meals and in some cases, accommodation.

For more information and how to apply visit the website:

www.mygov.scot/young-patients-family-fund



Our 2022 Annual General Meeting



Our AGM was held on Thursday 29 September 2022 at The Maitlandfield Hotel, Haddington. This was the first AGM that has been held face to face since the pandemic, and there was a good turnout.



Our Chair, Peter Ewart reflected on his role having served his five-year term. He highlighted that ELHA continues to be a leader in digital services which was key to helping to respond to the challenges of the pandemic, and that the Association remains the only housing association in the UK offering monthly rent discounts. Peter also highlighted the current Cost of Living crisis which he stated is very high up on the agenda for the Management Committee. Our Chief Executive, Martin Pollhammer gave a presentation on developments in some of our new digital services, including the launch of our new Rent Management system, a self-service tool for tenants to make their own repayment agreement without having to meet or speak to a member of staff.

Pay My Rent

Account Statement

Rent Agreements

Money Advice



Following the AGM, Brian Logan was elected Chair taking over from Peter Ewart. A new member, Paul Hillard, also joined the Management Committee. Paul is an experienced Housing Professional, has significant Non-Executive Director experience, and is currently a Board Member of City of Glasgow College.

If you're interested in becoming a member of ELHA, and attending our next AGM, or joining our Management Committee, please get in touch. You can fill in a 'join in' form in your **My Home** account, or you can request a copy of the 'Becoming a Member' leaflet and application form by e-mailing us at enquiries@elha.com, or calling on **01620 825032** and selecting '3' from the phone menu. Lifetime membership only costs £1!



MacMillan Coffee Morning

Our Healthy Happy Staff Group held a MacMillan Coffee Morning on the 1st of November, and put the call out for cake donations. Everyone joined in very enthusiastically, both by donating cakes and eating them.

We raised £229.38 for MacMillan Cancer Support.

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Lammermuir Larder

Warming a bed is cheaper than warming a bedroom!

Lammermuir Larder received funding from the Haddington and District Community Council, Begreen Dunbar and EDF for their winter projects. We worked with them to provide electric blankets to some of our older tenants.

If you'd like to find out more about Lammermuir Larder, they have a website: www.lammermuirlarder.co.uk





Thank You for Taking Part

A big thank you to all the tenants who took part in our tenant satisfaction survey. Knowledge Partnership has now completed their interviews, and we expect to have some results for you in the new year.

New Staff & New Duties



Welcome to **Stacey Wringe**, who has joined the Housing Team. Some of you may recognise Stacie as previously working in Reception. Stacie will be our newest Housing Assistant.



Many of you will also know **Hannah Strachan**, who started with us as a Modern Apprentice several years ago. Hannah has since become a familiar face in many of our estates working as an Estates Assistant, and is now the new Housing Officer for Dirleton, Dunbar, East Linton, Gullane, Innerwick, North Berwick, Ormiston, Stenton and West Barns.



Housing Assistant, **Bimal Giri**, will be picking up the estate management work from Hannah, so please say hello if you spot him out and about!



£400 Energy Payment Scam

Please watch out for a text message claiming to be from the Government, inviting you to apply for £400 discount from the Energy Support Scheme.

It's a scam!

Every household is entitled to this discount, but it will be paid directly to your energy supplier over 6 months from October 2022. You do not need to apply.

Most phone providers are part of a scheme that allows customers to report suspicious text messages for free by forwarding it to 7726.

If you forward a text to 7726, your provider can investigate the origin of the text and arrange to block or ban the sender, if it's found to be malicious.

You can also take a screenshot or screen recording of the text message and send it to the National Cyber Security Centre at report@phishing.gov.uk

