

talkback

SUMMER 2021

elha.com
east lothian housing association

Welcome to Performance 365

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



Our annual performance figures have been updated on our Performance 365 microsite, <https://performance365.elha.com>!

That's now three years of data we have available for those of you who like to see how we're doing. Obviously, the pandemic and the Lockdowns have had an impact on some figures, but we hope you'll be pleasantly surprised by how well we did in the end.

If you would like to suggest information to be included next year, or if you would like to discuss the figures with us, please let us know by e-mailing enquiries@elha.com or calling on **01620 825032**. While we're not quite ready to re-start the 'sticky bun' focus group just yet, if any tenants would be interested in looking at how we get these figures, we're happy to arrange an informal get together using our Teams video conferencing tool.

OPEN

We're Open

Our office opening hours are now back to pre-pandemic times. Safety rules are in place – visitors must wear a face mask, and only two people (or one group from a single household) can be in the office at any time. Please be aware that most of our staff are still working from home, so if you would like to speak with a specific person, please call ahead on **01620 825032**, and give details about what you want to discuss so that an appointment or call back can be made.

We are also carrying out alterations to the office while most staff are working from home. We have made arrangements to minimise any disruption to our services, but if we do miss a phone call, please leave a message or e-mail us at enquiries@elha.com and we will get straight back to you.

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Social Security Scotland Update

The Best Start grant payments have increased from 1 April by 1%. The new amounts are:

- Pregnancy and baby payment (first child) increased from £600 to £606
- Pregnancy and baby payment (other children) increased from £300 to £303
- Multiple birth supplement increased from £300 to £303
- Early learning payment increased from £250 to £252.50
- School age payment increased from £250 to £252.50

Visit Social Security Scotland's website to claim or get more info.
www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/



Fire Alarm Upgrades

If your fire alarm wasn't upgraded before the lockdown began at the end of 2020, we will be in touch with you soon to arrange this maintenance work. We are legally required to update your alarm, so this visit is important. All our staff have PPE and know how to minimise risk to anyone they visit.



THESE HOMES Available!

We started listing available homes on These Homes on 20 April, and so far this has gone really well. The first nine homes advertised were a good mix of houses and flats, both large and small, and both general needs and amenity (over 50s) homes.

If you are interested in transferring to a new home, perhaps to take advantage of the new Priority Pass for tenants who want to move from a flat to a house, go to www.thesehomes.com. There you can register and apply for priority by clicking the Register button in

the top right corner of the page and following the instructions. The registration process asks a number of questions about your circumstances to make sure the system knows what you're looking for and where, so please leave plenty of time to complete the form.

If you have any questions, there is a **Guide to These Homes** available at <https://bit.ly/3xm7Nga> and there are frequent updates on our Facebook page, or you can e-mail thesehomes@elha.com.

Recent Scams

By Phone

Action Fraud has issued a warning to the public about a National Insurance scam.



The scam starts with an automated phone call stating that the person's National Insurance number has been compromised, and asking them to press 1 to speak with someone to resolve the issue

Once connected, the scammers request personal information which can be used for identity theft.



By Text Message

A text message scam attempting to get internet banking details for HSBC accounts has been identified. People have received a text message pretending to be from HSBC, stating that a payment was attempted from a new device, and that if this payment was not the account holder, they should click on a link.

This link takes them to a page which looks like the log in page for the HSBC's internet banking. This enables scammers to harvest the log in information for accounts.

Visit Action Fraud to find out how you can safeguard yourself against scammers:
www.actionfraud.police.uk/

Consultation Calendar

Consultation/Survey	Start Date	Report to Committee
Communal Maintenance surveys	October/November 2021	February 2022
Garden Care Scheme survey	September 2021	November 2021
Annual Rent & Service Charge Consultation*	January 2022	February 2022

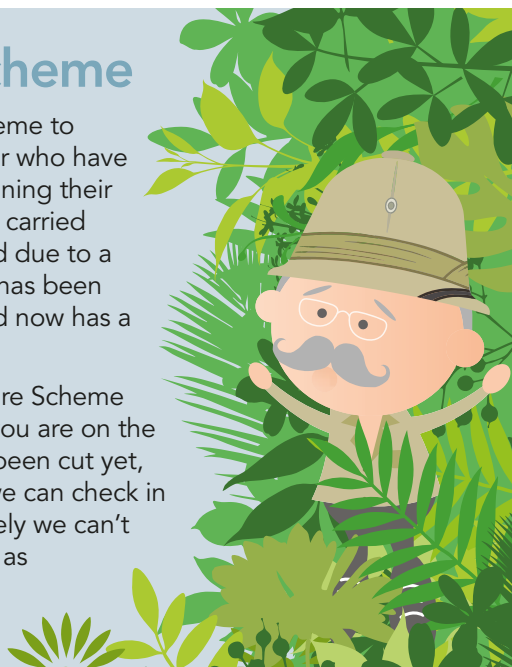
Please note that we also run year-round satisfaction surveys on repairs*, allocations*, neighbour nuisance, the Money & Home Energy Advice service and complaints handling.

*Participation in these is required to qualify for Platinum Key Tenant Discounts

Garden Care Scheme

We provide a Garden Care Scheme to tenants who are aged over 70 or who have a disability which makes maintaining their garden impossible. The work is carried out by East Lothian Council, and due to a number of factors, the Scheme has been slow to get started this year, and now has a large backlog to work through.

Grass cutting for the Garden Care Scheme resumed on the 3rd of May. If you are on the Scheme, and your grass hasn't been cut yet, please get in touch with us so we can check in with the contractor. Unfortunately we can't say when your grass will be cut, as this depends very much on the weather.



Are you Missing Out on Pension Credit & a Council Tax Reduction?

New figures from Age Scotland reveal that older people on low incomes missed out on £88 million in Council Tax Reduction support last year. This is often due to also missing out on Pension Credit. It is estimated that at least 123,000 older households in Scotland are not claiming the Pension Credit they are entitled to which would make them eligible for full Council Tax Reduction.

If you're not claiming Pension Credit, and you think you may be eligible, you can call Age Scotland's 'Check in, Cash out' free entitlement check helpline on 0800 12 44 222, or pop into your My Home account and fill in the Money Advice form (it's the button under your rent statement in your My Home account).

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/



For News & Updates – Facebook

If you'd like to know what's going on, and the latest on a wide range of topics, from available properties we're advertising, to new benefits from Social Security Scotland, local Community Engagement, sneak peeks at new services and so much more – follow our Facebook page.



We post regular updates, and a lot more information goes through Facebook than we can fit in an E-Talk, so don't miss out – give us a click!

www.facebook.com/eastlothianhousingassociation

School Age Payments - Update

Applications for the School Age Payment are now open to families who get tax credits or certain benefits and have a child who was born between 1 March 2016 and 28 February 2017. If you qualify for the School Age Payment, you'll receive £252.50 for each child born within these dates.

The new School Age Payment has not replaced the School Clothing Grant nor does it affect such payments in any way. If you want to apply for both benefits, you can.

mygov.scot

Wee Red Upcycles project

We're delighted to announce that we will be working in partnership with Wee Red Upcycles, a Community Interest Company (CIC) based in Haddington, to help support our tenants with mental health problems or additional support needs. Wee Red Upcycles provides creativity and upskilling workshops through recycling furniture, crafting, painting and decorating and more, to tackle social isolation, improve wellbeing, and teach new skills. More to come shortly!

www.weeredupcycles.org



Housing First Project

A joint project between Women's Aid East & Midlothian (WAEML), East Lothian Council and ELHA, has received a two-year grant from the Scottish Government's Third Sector Homelessness Fund.



The funding will create East Lothian's very first Housing First project for women experiencing domestic abuse. Housing First provides ordinary, settled housing as the first response for people whose homelessness and housing insecurity is made harder by experiences such as trauma, addictions and mental health problems.

Housing First is backed by world-leading experts in the field of homelessness, human rights and housing. Women who are subjected to domestic abuse are some of the hardest to reach, often at the highest risk and, as such, require a specialist gendered and trauma informed response. There has been increasing recognition of the linked experiences of gender-based violence, homelessness and severe and multiple disadvantages.

Housing First for Women will provide a person-centred response, addressing all of the needs of the individual.



New Complaint Procedure

We like to think that most of our tenants are happy with the services we provide but we know we don't always get it right, and there may be times when you need to make a complaint. No one should ever feel that they are 'being a nuisance' by complaining – we really welcome them! We use the feedback received through complaints to shape our services, and they help us to identify the areas we need to improve in.

We follow the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure, and this has recently been updated. You can read the new Procedure and our most recent complaint report on elha.com, or we can send a copy out on request.

If you need to make a complaint, you can click the 'Make a Complaint' button in your My Home account, e-mail enquiries@elha.com or call us on **01620 825032**.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman:
www.spsso.org.uk



Estate Complaints

We are currently receiving a higher than normal volume of complaints, mostly about the condition of gardens and communal areas, and about the level of service our new stair cleaning contractor is providing.

Our Housing Staff are still working from home and only carrying out essential visits, though we have increased our presence outside on the estates. We are trying to resolve all the issues that have been reported but this is taking us longer than it would normally do, so please bear with us.

Please know that if you report an issue, we make a record of it and will investigate the problem, but some of these matters may take time to resolve. For example, if you report that your neighbour has an overgrown garden, we will take the matter seriously and will try to work with them to get the garden tidied, but this is not always as easy as it sounds and can take us weeks or months to sort out. Similarly, if rubbish or items have been dumped in communal areas, staff will first contact tenants to try to find out who has done this before arranging the items to be lifted. Otherwise this means charging the costs of this work to everyone living in the stair rather than charging the person who actually did it.

Our new stair cleaning contract, which started on 1st April 2021, has generated quite a few complaints and we can only apologise for this; it is taking the new contractor a little time to adapt to our way of working. Our Housing Manager has recently met with the contractor to discuss all of your concerns and we have been assured that your complaints will be properly rectified and the service improved. Though this is a very basic cleaning service we do expect a good level of service from our contractor and we will be monitoring this contract very closely in the coming months.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

