

talkback

WINTER 2019

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east lothian housing association

Thank You!

We'd like to give a big thank you to all the tenants who have:

- Taken part in our large **Tenant Satisfaction survey** by agreeing to be interviewed by **Research Resource**
- Completed either the **print or online survey of the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy**
- Given feedback on the new **format of the My Home rent statement**
- Told us how well (or poorly) the **Garden Care Service** has been maintaining the gardens of our older and/or less able tenants



We know it's been a busy few months for surveys and consultations, and it's not over yet as the rent increase consultation will be coming in January 2020, and we just want to let you know that we really appreciate every response we get back – particularly the ones with suggestions for improvements.



Festive Closures

We close our doors at **12.30pm** on **Tuesday 24 December 2019** and reopen at **9am** on **Monday 6 January 2020**.

The Repairline number **03000 999 247** will be available for emergency repairs only.

If you would normally make a rent payment between those dates, please be aware that Direct Debits will not show up on your account until we reopen and can update the system. Payments made through My Home will still show up immediately, so if you normally use Allpay or come into the office to pay your rent, this might be the ideal time to get started in My Home.

Advice for Winter

Where to get information and advice on preparing for winter:

The Met Office

The Met Office is a very good resource, with articles on how to prepare for winter, what to do if you're caught in a winter storm, how to keep your home warm in the winter, and more.

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice/your-home>

East Lothian Council

ELC have a lot of information on Winter Road Services: snow cleaning on roads and footpaths and what are considered priorities, and how to request grit bins or get an existing grit bin refilled.

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210566/roads_and_transport/12354/winter_maintenance



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Winter is Coming - Are You Ready?

Winter has been unreliable for the last few years – the largest snowfall in recent years was in March 2018, which was technically spring! Be prepared for the cold weather whenever it shows up, and make sure that you avoid frozen or burst pipes this winter. It's always a good idea to have a small portable heater in your home for emergencies, in case you suffer a heating system breakdown. We will attend to breakdowns as soon as possible but if it happens in the middle of a winter storm, you might have to wait longer than normal.

We will not normally treat frozen pipes as an emergency, particularly in snowy weather when staff and tradesmen might be snowed in themselves.



Avoiding frozen pipes

You can avoid frozen pipes and lessen the damage if they do happen:

- Make sure that all your water pipes are lagged/insulated. If they are not, please book a Property Officer inspection through **My Home**, or give us a call on **01620 825032** and choose **'any other maintenance issue'** on the phone system
- Try to keep the heat in your home at an even temperature rather than turning the heat on and off
- Allow heat to vent into the attic or roof space
- If you're going away and are leaving the property empty for more than a few days, make sure that your system is drained down. We will turn off your water and drain down the system free of charge before you go on holiday – so please tell us if you are going away, and give us plenty of notice!



If your pipes do freeze

- Turn off the water at the stop valve. If you do not know where your stop valve is, the information should be in your **My Property** documents, or you can call our Asset Management team on **01620 825032** (choose any other maintenance issue from the phone menu) for advice.
- Switch off any water heaters, e.g. immersion heater
- Switch off the central heating. If you have a coal heating system, let the fire die down. Do not attempt to drain the boiler unless the fire has gone out
- Open all taps at sinks and baths
- If possible collect water in the bath for flushing the toilet and for washing



1. The 'two tier' system for homelessness assessment was abolished many years ago. If ELC have accepted a duty to rehouse someone, they will be eligible for a Platinum pass with us, and if a dozen applicants who make best use of a property have a Platinum pass, it will be offered to the one who has held the pass the longest.



Feedback on Facebook

The review of our Allocations Policy has highlighted a number of misconceptions about social housing, so we have been doing a 'Friday Myth Buster' feature on Facebook.

We will continue until we run out of misconceptions to debunk. If you have anything you'd like us to clarify, please leave a comment on Facebook, or send us a private message if it's personal – we're happy to help.

[www.facebook.com/
eastlothianhousingassociation](http://www.facebook.com/eastlothianhousingassociation)





We don't know if you've noticed...

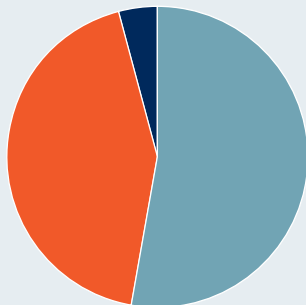
...but we've made a few small changes to My Home.



The main one is that we've changed the format of your rent statement to make it easier to understand.

We surveyed our TIG-Web tenants to find out what they thought of the change, and whether not we should keep it or go back to the old 'ledger style' format.

We had a fantastic response from the TIG-Web, and while 53% said they didn't have a preference, only 4% said they wanted to return to the previous version.



Should we keep this format, or go back to the original ledger style?

- I have no preference
- Keep this format
- Go back to the ledger style

Another change is the names of your files in My Documents – we've removed the date and timestamps from the filenames. Removing those from the links to your documents makes them easier to read if you need to find something quickly. They'll still be there if you download a document – that's an important part of your audit trail.

We also now have the ability to put a notice on your account if something important is going on – for example, if there's an important consultation happening, we can remind you to take part. This should be particularly helpful for Platinum Key tenants, who need to respond to surveys to retain their full discount.

✉ **MY NOTICES** DISMISS

! If you haven't already taken part in the Allocations Policy Review, please download the document and complete the survey by 29 November. [Allocations Policy Review 2019](#) ✕

E-News

Next year we're going to be looking at options for a better paper-free newsletter.

We'll be trying out smaller, more frequent updates for paper-free tenants, and we'd like to hear from you; what you like or don't like about it, so we will include a feedback option at the bottom of each newsletter.

And if you'd like to switch to paper-free, to get your letters and newsletters by e-mail, just pop into your **My Home** account and flip the paper-free slider over to 'On'.

 **Paper Free:** **ON**



What's in a Service Charge?

Around a third of our tenants have a service charge, which is charged on top of their rent. If you have a service charge, the details of how much you pay will be on the rent increase letter you get at the end of February (or on the first page of your Tenancy Agreement if you're a new tenant).

Service charges do not increase in the same way as your rent may do, this is because these charges are for services we arrange on your behalf with other companies. For example, if you are in an amenity flat, you will pay a service charge for the upkeep of your community alarm, the telephone line your alarm uses, and the warden service which is on call if you need assistance. We have no say over how much this costs – we are charged an annual or quarterly amount for these services, and pass these costs on as service charges. If the warden service increases its costs by 20%, we must increase the service charge by 20%.

The same goes for things like communal stair cleaning and communal electricity – the cost of the service is spread over all the tenants receiving the service – we're in the middle doing the administration. It is also possible for service charges to go down – for example, in the past we have been able to negotiate better deals for electricity, and tenants have benefitted from this.



Scottish Housing Regulator News

The Scottish Housing Regulator has published '*How we regulate: a guide for tenants and service users.*'

This short, summary guide lets people know more about:

- Who we are and what we do
- What you can expect from your landlord
- How you can find out about your landlord's performance
- How to raise a concern about your landlord

This includes two short videos about who we are and what we do and how to raise a concern about a social landlord.

A version is also under development with British Sign Language Scotland, and should be available soon.



Prize Draw Winners

Congratulations to **Mr Marek Derwan** from Musselburgh, **Mr Michael Cochrane** from Wallyford and **Mr Robert McLaughlin** from Whitecraig who have each won £50 in our monthly repair survey prize draw.

We draw one lucky winner every month, so make sure you remember to click through to leave your feedback when you get a repair survey e-mail (or send back your completed survey forms if you're not paper-free yet).

