

talkback

WINTER 2023

elha.com
east lothian housing association

Festive Closure Dates

We will be closed from **midday on Friday 22 December 2023** and will reopen at **9am on Wednesday 3 January 2024**. 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. Our maintenance company, R3, will be operating over the festive period and dealing with any emergency repairs, but you will not be able to book any appointments for routine repairs during that time.



Equality & Diversity Policy

Earlier this year, we invited tenants to take part in the review of our Equality & Diversity Policy. This review is now complete, and the updated policy can be found on our Policies page on elha.com.

www.elha.com/uploaded/elha2/secure_files/equality_diversity_policy_document.pdf

We also developed an Equalities & Human Rights Strategy, which formed part of the policy review.

www.elha.com/uploaded/elha2/secure_files/equality_human_rights_strategy_document.pdf

We are now required by the Scottish Housing Regulator to securely collect data from tenants, staff and Committee Members about protected characteristics* and use this to inform our services. If we know that a significant percentage of our tenants have a specific protected characteristic, we will want to consider how we can shape our services to help to meet their needs.

In light of these new requirements, we launched the Equalities Data Collection tool in My Home – a very obvious purple bar across the screen. The data we collect is anonymised, so while we don't know which of our tenants a record corresponds to, we know what percentage of our tenants have a protected characteristic.

We would like to thank the 60% of tenants who have now completed this form.



* The Equality Act 2010 specifies nine protected characteristic which are grounds on which discrimination is prohibited in law. Claims of discrimination cannot be made on any grounds other than:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

If you haven't filled in the form yet, you can do this by popping into your My Home account and clicking on the button in the purple bar.



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Tax Credits are Ending

Tax Credits are coming to an end, and if you currently receive Tax Credits, you will shortly receive a letter from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) explaining what you'll need to do and when to do it.



**Department
for Work &
Pensions**

You won't be moved automatically, so it's important to follow the instructions in the letter as soon as you receive it. The letter will be titled, 'Universal Credit Migration Notice'.

<https://bit.ly/48d5xcV>

There is support available, and we can help put you in touch with the best support for you, just drop us a message through the **Contact Us** form in your **My Home** account, by e-mailing enquiries@elha.com, clicking the chat button on any screen of elha.com or **My Home**, or calling us on **01620 825032**.



Planned Maintenance Update

The Planned Maintenance Programme for 2023/24 is still progressing well. The kitchen replacement project in Goose Green Court, Musselburgh is now on site with just five left to complete. The next kitchen replacement project will be in North High Street, Musselburgh, and surveys are now underway with an expected start in the New Year. The bathroom replacements in Tyne Park, Pencaitland are nearing completion now. Kitchens and door renewals are now completed at The Crofts with a few outstanding issues around materials to resolve. Kitchens at Walden Place/Terrace are completed as are heating replacement works at the Maltings and with a few exceptions, window installations at Delta View are now completed. If you were included in any of the planned works programmes for 2023/24 and have not had the planned works carried out because of access issues/availability, to enable the installations to take place please contact us and let us know so the work can be planned in at a date to suit your requirements. We will work with you to get the planned upgrades to your property carried out.

How Well Do We Communicate

We're about to review our Communications Strategy. This impacts on many areas of our work – tenant participation, data protection, customer services, advice services and more.

If you'd like to take part in reviewing our strategy, we'd love to hear your thoughts.

To get involved, email us at enquiries@elha.com, or call us on 01620 825032.



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 in your home, 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 visiting elha.com and clicking on the Live Help button.

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



National Report on Landlord Performance

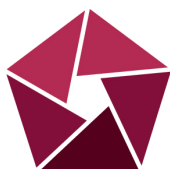


The Scottish Housing Regulator has published their National Report on social landlord's performance against the standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter for 2022/23.

Landlords reported the ongoing impact from the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and labour and material shortages have all contributed to a dip in tenant satisfaction.

To read more about the findings, visit the Regulator's website:

www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/national-reports-on-the-scottish-social-housing-charter/national-report-on-the-scottish-social-housing-charter-2022-2023



Scottish Housing Regulator

Digital Skills Training

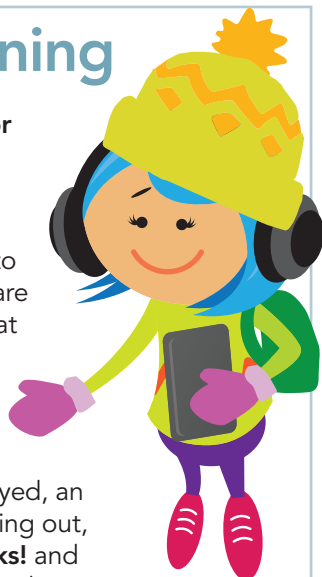
Did you know that there's low-cost or free digital skills training available in East Lothian? For example:

For anyone nearing or at retirement age, AbilityNet offer one-to-one help to get started. All **AbilityNet** volunteers are PVG checked, and can meet with you at home, in a nearby café with wi-fi access, or at a local library.

For more information call free on **0800 048 7642**.

For anyone who is long-term unemployed, an adult learner, a young person just starting out, or ex armed forces, **East Lothian Works!** and **Edinburgh College** have a range of free learning opportunities. For more information, call East Lothian Works! on **01620 827262**.

The Pennypit Centre in Prestonpans has a computer club every Friday morning, which costs £3. For more information call Angie at the centre on **01875 819635**.



Getting Along With Neighbours

Over the summer we were all far more aware of our neighbours, and lifestyle differences can flare up into low level neighbour niggles. Low level niggles can escalate into far more serious issues, and even antisocial behaviour complaints, so we have a leaflet and several webpages giving our tenants' tips on how to deal with niggles before they become complaints. Also available is information on how complaints are dealt with, Mediation services, and links to helpful organisations.

www.elha.com/page/ neighbour-complaints-asb-mediation



Ending Digital Poverty Day

Ending Digital Poverty Day was on 12 September this year, and to do our part we sent out a printed factsheet to all our offline tenants. This factsheet pointed out the benefits of going online, and gave information on the availability of affordable (or free!) devices, data and skills training in East Lothian. We can also help tenants access digital services, and have included a helpful jargon buster and checklist to make the process as easy as possible for our offline tenants.

James, our Housing & Community Outreach Worker, has been working with the Musselburgh Citizens Advice Bureau, and has already successfully applied for a free laptop for one of our tenants.

Get Ready for Winter



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



Winter Road Maintenance



While we don't own any roads (even if we own all the homes on a street, the roads are still adopted by East Lothian Council), we want to make sure our tenants know what to expect when it comes to winter road maintenance.

East Lothian Council has a handy Winter Maintenance section in the Roads & Transport area on their website, which gives you information on planning for adverse conditions, provision of grit & snow clearing services, priority tables (e.g. when there is snowfall, major routes to hospitals, fire stations and ambulance depots have priority).

<https://bit.ly/41kHWVC>

Please remember that if you are snowed in, it is very likely that everyone else is too, and while clearing your street may be very important for you, it may not be a priority area.



Helping with the Cost of Living Crisis Leaflet



East Lothian Council have published a very helpful and wide-ranging leaflet, to help East Lothian residents access support and advice during the cost of living crisis.

<https://bit.ly/46QNx7n>

New Development

The first two phases of our new development in Dunbar, Pikemen Crescent, now have tenants, and the third phase has been advertised and should be ready in February. The Dunbar Housing Officer, Hannah even put on her hard hat and has been out to check on the progress, and things look great.

(We tried to convince Hannah to take a selfie in one of the new homes, but she declined on the grounds that a floral dress doesn't accessorise well with steel toecap boots and a hard hat.)

Our TIG-Scrutiny tenants also visited the new homes. They're currently scrutinising tenant satisfaction with new builds and the 'defects period', which is the 12 months after a new build home is completed, while any little niggles with the home are resolved.

Future phases of this development will be advertised through These Homes and promoted on our Facebook page. To keep up to date with progress, see our New Developments page, or follow our Facebook.



How Your Christmas Shopping Can Help Raise Money

If you are doing any Christmas shopping online, please check if the shop you're buying from is registered with Easyfundraising and select East Lothian Care & Repair Charitable Trust.

It's vital that we continue to raise funds for the Trust as it supports Care & Repair clients by providing financial assistance to those who cannot afford essential maintenance or adaptations, which will enable them to continue to live independent in their own homes and communities. We have already seen an increase in applications to the Charitable Trust this year. The Trust is also involved in joint initiatives with Care & Repair and provided security lights & motion sensor lights that Care & Repair were then able to provide to clients free of charge. It's the simple items like this that can make such a difference to an older or disabled person's confidence, security and wellbeing.

The Trust receives no Government funding and relies on fundraising and donations to raise revenue, so every little bit helps. And with the high energy bills, general living costs and the current position with the private sector housing grants for adaptations, the Trust will be required more than ever to provide financial assistance to those most in need.

For more information, and details on how to fundraise online, visit Care & Repair's helpful information page:

www.careandrepaireastlothian.co.uk/page/how-to-fundraise-online



www.elha.com/new_developments
www.facebook.com/eastlothianhousingassociation
www.thesehomes.com

Staff News



Michelle is Back!

Housing Officer, Michelle Cassidy, has returned from maternity leave and has changed her name to Michelle Perry. As a result we have made some slight changes to the areas that the Housing Officers manage and Michelle, who works three days a week, is now covering the Musselburgh and Whitecraig areas.

Apprentice Jenny Ready for Work

R3 Repairs have been sending office staff out and about to get a feel for the work they plan. This included R3's office-based Modern Apprentice, Jenny – seen here modelling the always stylish hard hat, safety boots and hi-vis vest.



Hello Janko

Say hello to Janko, in our Finance team. Janko has been with us on a temporary contract, and we're delighted to have him join us as a permanent member of staff.

Janko is working as a Purchase Ledger Account Assistant, and is passionate about learning new skills, helping solve problems, and football.

Welcome Charlie, Farewell Duncan

It's all change as Charlie Cooley arrives as our new Director of R3 & Asset Management. Charlie replaces Duncan Mackay, who has retired after 14 years.

Charlie joined us in August 2023, as part of a succession plan to ensure a smooth transition, both for the management of our Asset Management team, as well as for R3, allowing Duncan to leave in late October 2023.

Charlie has worked in the maintenance sector for the last 18 years, most recently as Head of Operations with Novus Property Solutions, and previously in other varied roles including Area Maintenance Manager, Senior Surveyor, Design & Construction Bid Manager, Performance & Continuous Improvement Manager and Operations Manager.

Our Chief Executive, Martin Pollhammer, said:

"Whilst I'm delighted to welcome Charlie to ELHA, and I think it speaks volumes about our standing in the housing and maintenance sectors that we were able to attract such an outstanding candidate to the post, it is of course difficult for all of us at ELHA to see such a long-standing colleague leave. Duncan helped us develop the first self-service digital repairs service for tenants in the UK, become the first housing association to develop a star rating system for our homes, leading the way in asset management, and led from the start the first ever digital maintenance company, R3, which we can proudly say has had its head in the clouds since day one, right back in 2011. Duncan leaves R3 in excellent shape, with a raft of new contracts and customers having led a healthy recovery from the pandemic and impacts of Brexit, and obviously leaves with our best wishes for a healthy and happy retirement."



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

