

talkback

SUMMER 2017



Welcome New Tenants!



Garrison Green

We have a whopping 53 new tenants, thanks to two new developments at the Chimneys in Cockenzie, and Garrison Green in Dunbar.

It's been hard work for everyone involved (for perspective, last year we only had 69 relets for the entire year), and it's not always gone smoothly. But it's always worth it on sign-up days, when we get to unlock everyone's doors and say 'welcome to your new home'.

There's also another 28 properties being built in Haddington at the moment, we expect to advertise them on Homehunt later in the year.



The Chimneys

STOP PRESS!

The Scottish Government is very interested in how My Home and the Key Tenant Scheme have changed people's behaviour (or haven't changed it), and have put funding in place to survey all our tenants.

We have asked Knowledge Partnership, who have run our last two large scale tenant satisfaction surveys, to carry this out.

The research will consist of two short surveys, around a year apart, and everyone who completes the face to face survey will receive a shopping voucher. So whether you love computers or wouldn't touch one with a 6 foot pole, you can benefit from taking part.

All tenants will receive a letter with more information shortly.

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Another Load of Old Rubbish

Oh no, not another newsletter article about waste collection!

It might actually be a good sign that a high proportion of the complaints we receive are about rubbish and dog poo.

We appreciate that it can be really annoying, but if a tenant's biggest source of dissatisfaction with their home is that empty crisp packets blow into their garden too often, surely it means we're keeping our tenants pretty satisfied?

Having said that...

When you put your bin and recycling box out, please make sure it is secured properly. If the cover for your recycling box has worn out, you can get a new one free of charge by popping into your nearest Council office, by contacting Waste Services on 01875 824305, or through the new 'My East Lothian' app – see below.

If stray rubbish does blow into your garden, it is your responsibility to pick it up and dispose of it.

If you don't, and we have to write to you about the condition of your garden, you could lose any rent discounts or transfer priority you have. It could stop you from being able to exchange your home, or make any changes to your tenancy like adding a joint tenant until you've resolved the problem.

Consultation Calendar 2017-18

Consultation	Consultation start date	Consult with
Chargeable Repairs Policy	July 2017	TIG
Maintenance Policy	December 2017	TIG
Rent Arrears Policy	September 2017	TIG
Rent Increase	January 2017	TIG & Service Users
My Home Survey	July 2017	TIG & Service Users

Planned Maintenance Calendar

Scheme	Works	Survey Start Date*
Tranent, Coalgate Avenue Coalgate Road	Heating Replacement (Gas)	on site
Whitecraig	Bathroom Replacement	on site
East Linton, Stories Park	Bathroom Replacement	September 2017
North Berwick, Quality Street	Bathroom Replacement	September 2017
Prestonpans, Salt Preston Place, Bankfoot	Bathroom Replacement	November to December 2017
Cockenzie, Osborne Court	Door Replacement	November 2017
Haddington, Yester Place	Re-roofing	September 2017
Haddington, Craig Avenue	Roughcast Renewal	October 2017
Stenton, The Crofts	Boundary Wall Repairs	TBC
Tranent, Plough Lane	Kitchen Replacement	October 2017
Musselburgh, North High Street	Kitchen Replacement	October 2017

* This is an estimated start date. All work is subject to a pre-contract survey.

App-y To See You

East Lothian Council has recently released an app which gives you a convenient shortcut for things like reporting fly tipping, abandoned vehicles or night time noise.

We really like this app, and would like all tenants with a smartphone to download it and use it to report relevant issues through it.

The app is free and can be downloaded from the App Store (iPhone) or Google Play (Android) – it's called 'My East Lothian'.

More information and downloads links can be found on the ELC website:

www.eastlothian.gov.uk, or on elha.com's 'Good Ideas' page.



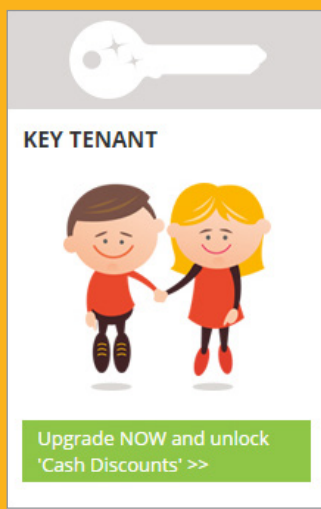
Have You Protected Your Dog?

If you live in a flat with no private garden, you will have been sent a Dog Registration form or, if you're paper free, a link to the Dog Registration form in My Home.

The purpose of the form is to let us know that you had a dog before 1 April 2017 and are exempt from the ban that was introduced that day.

If you do not register your dog, we will have to assume that you got it after the Dog Ban was introduced on 1 April 2017, and may ask you to re-home it.

If you have registered your dog, you have nothing to worry about. We promised when we introduced the ban that it would not affect tenants who already had a dog, as long as we have a record of it and there are no problems and/or complaints. If you're not sure if you need to fill out the form or not, just check in My Home before 31 July – if you can see a 'Dog Registration' link in your 'My Tenancy' box, you need to fill it in, if it's not there, you don't. If you need to register a dog and have lost the form we'll be happy to send you another.



Keep Your Discount!

Now that you've got your Key Tenant Scheme discount, make sure you don't lose it. The most common reason for losing a Platinum discount is not completing a survey on time, and the most common reason for losing a Gold discount is not setting up your Direct Debit in time.

RENT DISCOUNT What's Stopping You?

We've now been running our Key Tenant Scheme for three months, so those of you who applied and qualified straight away have already saved £30-£60. But we're puzzled to find that there are many people who meet all of the criteria to qualify for a rent discount but aren't getting one because they haven't applied!

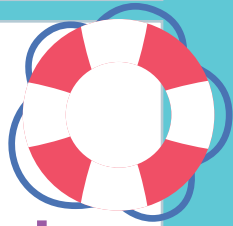
If you are paper-free and pay your rent by Direct Debit or Standing Order, you might just be one simple on-line form away from an extra £10 a month in your pocket. And if you have a clear rent account and flip that TIG-Web switch over to join the TIG-Web mailing list, that could be £20 a month – an extra £240 a year!

To see if you might be eligible to get a discount on your rent, just log into your My Home account, click on the Key Tenant box and have a look at the checklist. If you're not sure about anything, click on the Live Help button in My Home or on elha.com and chat to a member of staff (or leave a message if the office is closed).

Remember, the rent discount gives you an extra £10 or £20 to spend each month so it makes sense to apply, especially if you get help to pay your rent through either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.



Anne to the Rescue!



We never get tired of hearing good news from our Money Adviser, Anne Rattray. While the fact that she is responsible for making our tenants better off by over half a million pounds each year is impressive, it's the personal stories which really show how incredibly important our Money Advice Service is.

ANNE'S CASE STUDY:

"I just thought I would let you know about a Universal Credit (UC) case I have been dealing with since January. Our tenant is a full time student and a lone parent with one child, who receives a college bursary. I helped her claim UC in January to get help with her rent. On assessing her claim, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) took the full amount of her bursary into account as income. This was incorrect as her bursary included travel costs for the year of £1,500 which should have been disregarded as income.

To cut a very long story short, I spent 4 months negotiating with the DWP on her behalf to get them to change her income assessment, but they would not change it. After exhausting all possible avenues with them, including quoting every UC Regulation I could find relating to students and student income, I had to go through the whole appeal process. This was very time consuming, but it was the only way I could get the decision changed.

Today our tenant has sent me a screen shot from her journal and UC have changed her assessment and agreed that her travel costs should NOT be treated as income. Her UC is now correct and she should get 5 months arrears (around £800) paid to her."

Making a Home on a Budget

Our properties are completely empty when a new tenant moves in – no carpets, no curtains, not even a lampshade, and that can be intimidating for someone starting from scratch. For others, it can be a challenge they're more than ready to take on.

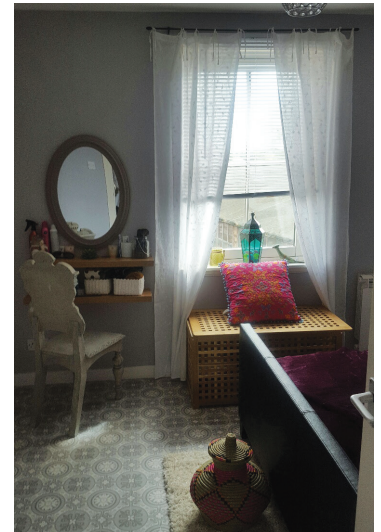
We recently allocated a flat to a local student. While very excited to have her own tenancy, there was a lot of work for her to do, and not much money to get it done.

In just a few short months, she had made good use of her Dulux Decorating Pack, on-line offers, eBay, local discount outlets and Dunbar Zero Waste, and had upcycled items many people would write off as junk into attractive and funky furniture. It wasn't long until a bare flat had been transformed into something that wouldn't look out of place in a home decorating magazine.

So, as you can see, even with a student's small budget, it's possible to create an amazing home.



For anyone else looking to turn their home into something beautiful – the resources are out there. Zero Waste has locations in Dunbar and now Musselburgh, Recycling 1st in Macmerry is a good source of second hand furniture. Facebook is a great resource, with pages like DIY on a Budget and For Sale & Wanted in East Lothian. Freecycle is also a fantastic way to find free furniture (and other things) if you have access to a van to carry it away.



How about this?

If you have problems reading our newsletter, we can provide it in large print, or on CD.

And don't forget – if you're paper-free you will receive all correspondence from us in a format that can be resized so the text will be as large as you'd like.

CAN YOU READ THIS?



Our New, Improved Repairs Service

We have good news for anyone who has been frustrated by the lack of a specific repair in My Home – there are now over **600** repairs to choose from, including things like pest control which weren't on there before. The new system is smarter too – if you've got a loose drawer in your kitchen, it'll send out a joiner to fix it – if you've got five loose drawers, it'll send out a Property Officer to find out why your kitchen is falling apart.



EMERGENCY REPAIRS
In an emergency we will be with you within 2 hours

GAS BOILER REPAIRS
EXAMPLES INCLUDE:
• Gas boiler repairs • Pump failure • Boiler valve repairs • Boiler thermostat repairs

SMALL JOBS
EXAMPLES INCLUDE:
• Leaking tap • Broken door handle • Light not working • Front door won't lock • Socket not working • Window repairs • Door repairs • Replace missing slates

LARGE JOBS
EXAMPLES INCLUDE:
• Replace kitchen • Replace bathroom • Replace heating system • Replace front door

You can also change your appointment – if you had booked someone to fix that leaky tap next week, but you're going to have to cover an extra shift at work that day, you can just go into your 'Repair History' page and click the calendar icon to book a new date and timeslot.



And finally, it's now much easier to use. We've kept the things you liked, like the box where you can leave a message for the repair operative, and got rid of the things you didn't like – all those 'get started' and 'order basket confirmation' pages that added an extra half dozen clicks to the process.

Hopefully, it'll be just what you need, but if it's not – please let us know. The best improvements to our systems have come from tenant feedback. If you spot something missing, just click the Live Help button to chat to staff or leave a message.



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MY ACCOUNT

- DASHBOARD
- LOGOUT

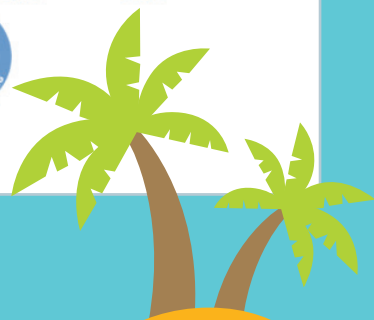
ELHA.COM SERVICES JOIN IN DOWNLOADS ABOUT US CONTACT US



Report A Repair

Text Only version

Search





**TIG-Focus Members,
Rebekah Gronowski
and Heather Shaw**



TIG in Action

Members of our TIG-Panel met with staff and Management Committee members to take a look around the recent new builds in Dunbar and Cockenzie. TIG-Focus are spot-checking our annual performance report, which was submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator in May, and helping us to decide what will go in this year's How We're Doing report which is due to be sent out to all tenants in September.



Press '1' for...

If you've phoned us recently, you'll know that we have a new phone system.

The system is intended to make it easier to get through to the right person to help – for example, if

you have a problem with your rent, you will be connected to the duty Housing Officer, rather than waiting for your Housing Officer's next day in the office.

While we think that the new system is an improvement, it's not infallible, and we are still working out some minor problems. If you've had any problems, please let us know – we need your input to help us to improve the system.

DRUG DEALING - WHO TO CONTACT

We try to help our tenants all we can but you wouldn't phone us if you needed an ambulance to get to hospital and you shouldn't phone us if you think one of your neighbours is dealing drugs.

Selling illegal drugs is a criminal offence and should be reported to the Police.

We cannot investigate accusations of drug dealing, and we cannot start court action to evict someone simply because 'everyone knows' a particular tenant is a drug dealer.

We can take action if the dealing causes anti-social behaviour, for example frequent noisy visitors at all hours, or if the tenant is convicted of dealing drugs from the property but the Police are the only ones who can investigate and prosecute drug dealers.

Prize Draw Winners

Congratulations to Ms McClung and Mr & Mrs Fairgrieve from Haddington and Ms Denholm from Prestonpans who all won £50 in the monthly repair satisfaction prize draw.

Remember, you are entered into the repair satisfaction prize draw every time you give us feedback, good or bad, on a repair. It's really easy to give feedback – just click the Repair History button in **My Home** and select the feedback option. If you haven't activated your My Home account yet, and you're not sure how, just click on the Live Help button to have a chat about it to staff (or leave a message if we're closed).



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

