

talkback

AUTUMN 2016

elha.com
east lothian housing association



Dovecot Farm Development

Most of our recent housing developments have been made up of 1 and 2 bedroom properties (which are in the highest demand), so it made a nice change to have a development of larger family homes.

The twenty four 3 bedroom houses and four 2 bedroom flats in Haddington were advertised through Homehunt in late September, and we are now working through the allocations. We hope to start handing over keys to new tenants in November.



STOP PRESS

We now know the street addresses of all the properties in the Dovecot Farm Development - Bothwell Avenue.

Prize Draw Winners

Congratulations to Mr G Turner from Tranent, Ms L de Costa from Haddington and Ms S Ferguson from Cockenzie, who all won £50 in the monthly repair satisfaction survey prize draw.



Remember, you are entered into the repair satisfaction survey prize draw **every time you give us feedback 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).

Annual General Meeting

Our 2017 AGM took place on 25 September, at the Maitlandfield Hotel in Haddington. The theme was 'Through the Looking Glass' and the Mad Hatter once again attended to make sure everyone was offered a cup of tea (or grudgingly, coffee). The guest speaker was Alice Herself, also known as Dr Mary Taylor, former Chief Executive of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.



The Mad Hatter and ELHA staff at the 2017 AGM

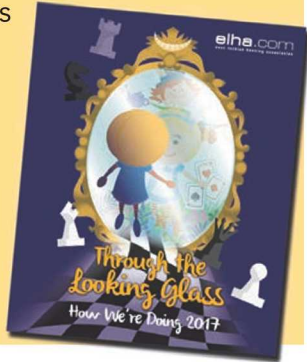
IN THIS ISSUE OF TALKBACK

How We're Doing	2
Congratulations Leah & Lewis	2
Dog Registration.....	2
Welcome Gemma!	2
Goodbye John	2
Thank you, community Payback.....	3
Fire Safety	4
How to TIG.....	4
Thank you for Getting Involved	4
How Do We Compare	5
Key Tenants – Pending Discounts.....	5
Coming Soon – Friends & Family	5
What About Repairs?	5
Are You Paper Free?.....	5
Our Power.....	6
Universal Credit & Rent Arrears	6
Can You Read This?	6

How We're Doing

Everyone should now have received this year's **How We're Doing** booklet, either by email or in the post. If you have not received your copy, please get in touch to let us know.

As usual, we're keen to hear what you think of this year's report – we have to provide a lot of information and try to make it interesting, but your comments can help us to improve. And if you'd like to be part of the focus group which checks the information in next year's booklet, please tick the box for an invite – participation is not compulsory, but it is appreciated. We bring out the good tea and coffee, and lay on tasty treats for the How We're Doing Focus Group.



Congratulations Leah and Lewis!

R3 Apprentice,
Leah Horeckyj
and Care
& Repair
Apprentice
Lewis Briggs
have both
completed
their SQV 3
in Business
Administration.



Leah and Lewis are the fourth and fifth apprentices who have completed their qualifications since the ELHA Group began taking on modern apprentices in early 2015. Leah joins previous apprentices, Kyle, Lily and Roisin as a full member of staff, while Lewis has accepted a job offer from a local pharmacy as a Dispenser/Pharmacy Assistant.

Dog Registration is now Closed

Dog Registration for all dogs in flats is now closed. Sixty dogs currently living in ELHA flats are safely registered, and no further dogs in flats without a private garden will be allowed. If you haven't registered your dog, and someone makes a complaint, we may ask you to immediately remove the dog from your home.

If you missed the deadline, we can accept a late registration if you can provide independent proof that you owned the dog before 1 April 2017, e.g. microchip records.



Welcome Gemma!

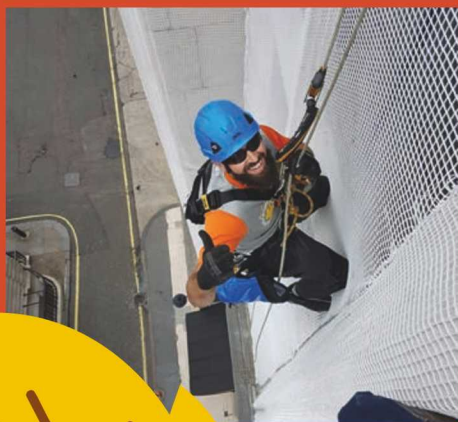
We have a new Housing Officer, taking over from John McNally. Gemma Rutherford has joined us from Link Housing Association, where she was a Money Adviser. Gemma is also a former ELHA tenant, so she brings an interesting new perspective to the Housing Team.



Goodbye John

Some of you may already be aware that Housing Officer, John McNally left ELHA in the summer. What you might not know is that he has left Housing completely, and is now training as a Rope Access Technician.

We all think he's mad, but it looks like he's having fun!



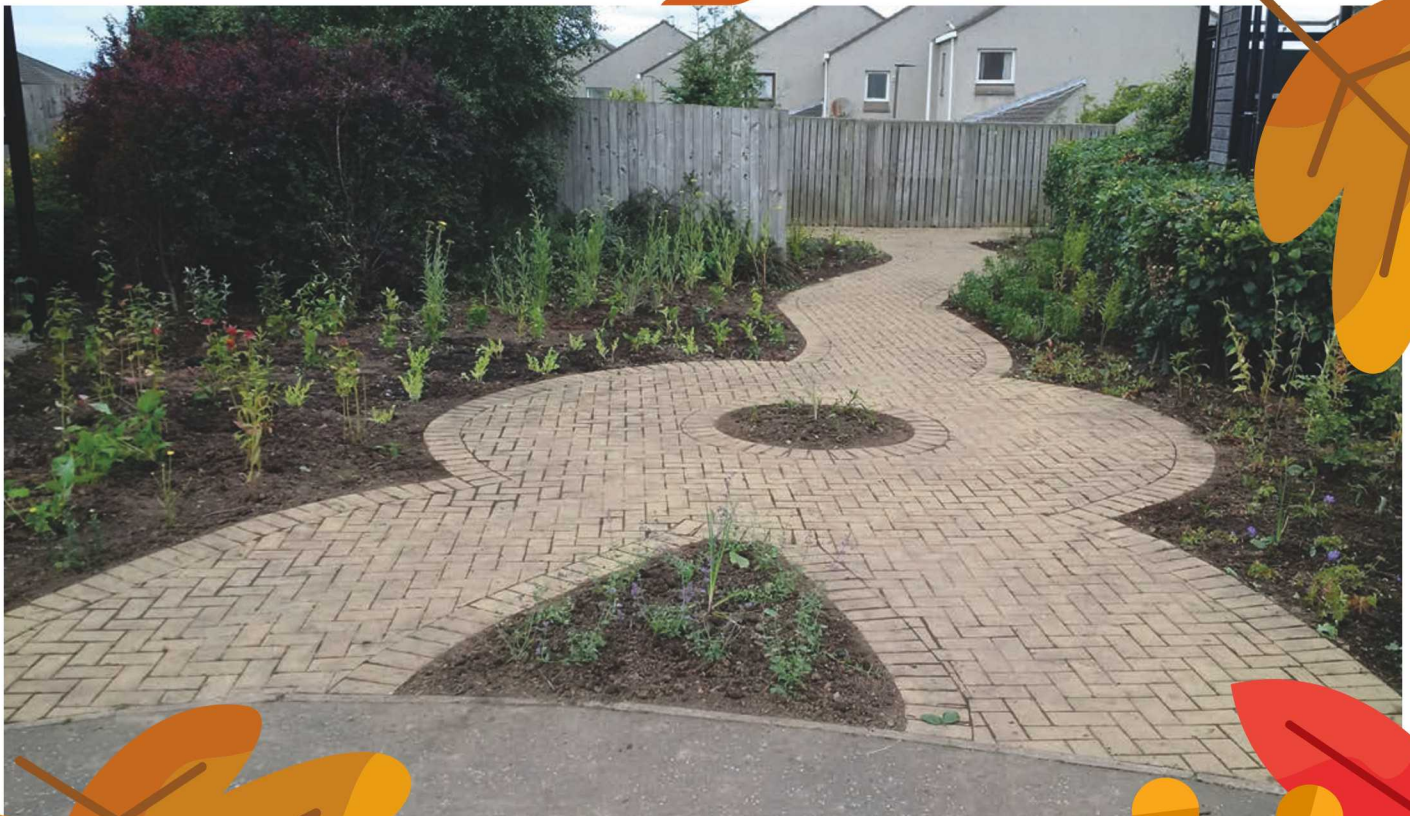


Thank you, Community Payback Team!

The community garden project at The Hedges in Tranent unfortunately looked like it might fall by the wayside. Despite there being plans in place for the garden drawn up by East Lothian Council and funds set aside for plants to go in, there was a lack of volunteers to get the ground dug over and planted up. So in stepped the Community Payback Team. The plants are now in place, and although there is still some work to do, things are looking much better!

The Council's Community Payback Team supports the work of community and charitable organisations by taking on a variety of jobs that enhance the physical environment for the benefit of the community. This includes grounds clearance, upgrading and maintenance, and path creation and development. Community Payback also places individual clients with local charities and social enterprises to support their activities.

Working on local projects means that people on Community Payback orders have a sense of pride and achievement in what they are doing and this can often transform how people think about their role in the community. At the same time, the wider public get the chance to see offenders doing something positive and can start to view them in a new light which is at the heart of the Community Justice agenda.



Fire Safety

After the tragedy at Grenfell Tower in London, fire safety in flats is on everyone's radar. Although we do not have any large tower blocks or any buildings using flammable cladding, around a quarter of our housing stock is flats accessed off a communal stair.

Fire in a communal stair is extremely dangerous, as residents can be trapped on upper floors by rising smoke. This is why we do not allow tenants to leave anything in the communal stairs - a bike or pushchair might not normally seem like a danger but if the stair is full of smoke and it can't be seen, it could easily stop people from escaping.

Our Housing Officers will place large red stickers on anything they find in a communal stair.

These stickers are very obvious and very sticky and, if they are ignored, we will remove the

item and charge the tenant the cost of doing so.



"Computing is not about computers any more.

It is about living."

Nicholas Negroponte

We would like to give everyone, whether you are a tech-head or a technophobe, a big thank you for taking part in the Key Tenant Survey, carried out by Knowledge Partnership. The results of this survey into how the wide range of people our tenants represent are adapting to a digital world will be helpful to us and to the Scottish Government to gauge how best to apply digital services wisely.



How to TIG

Our Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) is made up of many different tenants who get involved in many different ways. Some come to regular meetings, some only get involved through My Home, and some get involved for a single focus group on an issue they're passionate about.

TIG-Panel

These are the tenants you'll see in the TIG in Action photos – they meet every 2 months and look at everything from how we're spending the Tenant Participation budget, to taking trips out to visit new build developments, to giving their opinion on our policies when they're up for review.

TIG-Scrutiny

This group is mostly made up of TIG-Panel members, but is open to anyone with a particular interest in any part of our business that the Group decides to examine. The scrutiny group takes on one project a year, and drills right down to find out what we do in a specific area, where we get it right and how we could do it better.

TIG-Web

The TIG-Web is a two-fold group. Initially it was formed as a mailing list of tenants who wanted to test our new digital services. It is still used for this purpose, but it has also expanded with the introduction of the Key Tenant Scheme to include digital surveys and consultations. Anyone wishing to apply for a Platinum Key tenant discount must join TIG-Web in their My Home account before the Platinum discount application form can be unlocked.

TIG-Focus

Focus groups can be everything from an annual event, e.g. checking the information we put into our How We're Doing booklet for accuracy, to a one-off, e.g. a stair meeting to decide the type and layout of a new bin store. We keep track of what tenants are interested in, and what they've been involved with in the past, so we can invite them to take part in other events they may be interested in.

If you'd like to learn more, or you'd like to come along to a meeting just to see what it's like, please get in touch with our Customer Information Officer, Mary Hargreaves by e-mailing info@elha.com, using the **Live Help** to chat or leave a message, or calling on **01620 825032** ext 228.



How Do We Compare?

The Scottish Housing Regulator has now released performance information for all Scottish Social Housing landlords.

If you'd like to see how we compare, you can find a comparison tool on the Scottish Housing Regulator's website:

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk



**Scottish Housing
Regulator**

Key Tenants - Pending Payments Progress

If you're a Gold or Platinum Key Tenant who receives Housing Benefit (HB), you'll be glad to know that the new HB Regulation appears to be progressing smoothly through its consultation stage in the UK Parliament.

We're hopeful that you will get your pending discounts applied before Christmas – watch this space.



Coming Soon – Friends & Family Accounts

We understand that some of you may not want to use a computer, smartphone or tablet and may feel excluded from **My Home**. But many of those who feel like that will have friends or close family members who never have their phone out of their hand.

So we're developing **My Home Friends & Family** to make it easier for a named representative to help you manage your tenancy– e.g. report repairs, make rent payments, etc. You can apply to set up the account, which will give your representative access to your **My Home** account and hopefully help you to qualify for a monthly rent discount.



We can also accept applications directly from someone acting on your behalf to request a Friends and Family login – for example someone who has a Power of Attorney or other good reason to help you manage your affairs.

Your **My Home** account is covered by the Data Protection Act. A Friends & Family account CANNOT be set up without your knowledge and consent unless there are very good documented reasons to do so. **My Home Friends and Family** is being set up to assist tenants who want someone they trust to be able to access the wide range of services in **My Home** and help them to save money through the Key Tenant Scheme.

What About Our Repairs?

We have started to review our Maintenance Policy - this is the policy that explains how we look after the buildings we own and the standards we set, such as how quickly we will come out and deal with repairs, and how we consult with our tenants on what work is done in their home.

We would like to get your feedback on what we do and how we do it and will shortly be publishing a short survey on **My Home** to help with this. If you can, please go into your **My Home** account to complete this survey and, if you haven't yet done so, this would be the ideal time to set up your account.



Are you a Paper Free Hotmail User?

Please make sure you have added **@elha.com** to your Hotmail/Windows Live safe senders. If you're not sure how to do this, there is a link to a tutorial above the log in page on **My Home**. If you have chosen to become paper-free, you are responsible for making sure your e-mail client is not blocking e-mails from us.

**Windows Live
Hotmail**



Fair, simple and low-cost energy

Our Power is Scotland's first not-for-profit energy supplier, established by social housing providers and local authorities including ELHA to offer great service and, most importantly, fairer prices for your gas and electricity.

Our Power's focus is on you rather than on distributing profits to shareholders. This makes Our Power a different kind of organisation as they will use any surplus generated to support their mission. Their values also ensure they guarantee personal customer service and their fairest tariffs to help you save money on your energy bills.

OurPower
making energy fairer 

Our Power's latest offering is a 12 month fixed-term tariff. As with their existing tariffs, it is the same price whether customers pay by Direct Debit or Pay As You Go. The fixed rate tariff went live on 1st October – customers will be able to switch through the Our Power website at www.our-power.co.uk.

Do You Have a Combi-Boiler and PV Panels?

If you do, you may also be able get a Sunamp energy storage battery fitted which could give you additional savings on your utility bills. To find out more about this, please get in touch with Keith Bader by using the **My Home** contact form, e-mailing enquiries@elha.com or calling R3 on **03000 999 247**.



WARNING Universal Credit and Rent Arrears

If you are on Universal Credit (UC), and you have rent arrears, it is very important that you maintain any arrangements you make to pay off the arrears. If you don't keep to a repayment plan, to avoid arrears increasing and the possibility of eviction action, we will have no choice but to ask the DWP to deduct money from your benefit and pay it directly to us to reduce the arrears. **The DWP will not consult you or us about how much you can afford to have deducted from your UC payment each month** and they can take up to 20% of your income to pay off your arrears.

Recently we requested arrears direct payments for a tenant who has repeatedly broken their arrears repayment arrangement. The DWP assessed this at rent plus almost £100 a month; considerably more than the tenant would have been paying if they had stuck to the repayment plan they had agreed with us. These deductions from the tenant's UC will remain in place until their arrears are clear making it much harder for them to budget.

If you are struggling to keep to a repayment plan to clear rent arrears our Money Adviser can help you negotiate with creditors and check that you are getting all of the money you are entitled to.

Maintaining an arrangement is also important if you are working. We can apply to have your wages arrested if you allow rent arrears to build up and don't keep to a repayment arrangement. This would mean that your employer would be required to make deductions from your wages to cover your debts – an uncomfortable situation for everyone concerned.



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 the newsletter as a PDF, and PDFs can be resized so the text will be as large as you'd like.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

