

talkback

SUMMER 2016



GOLD!

Karen Barry, our Housing Manager, collected our Gold Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Accreditation at the recent TP Workers Conference. It's now hanging proudly in our Reception.



We're not going to rest on our laurels though – we are always looking at new and better ways to get tenants involved in shaping our future, from something as simple as returning a 5 minute comment card right up to joining our Management Committee.

We now have a whole section of My Home dedicated to your Ideas and Opinions, and you can follow what our TIG Members are doing in our TIG in Action articles in every edition of Talkback. Keep your eye out for consultation and surveys – you can respond whichever way you prefer, on paper, via webform, over the phone, or during a home visit – it's up to you. And if you have an idea for improving services, or would like to start a tenant group, let us know. We can help with advice, start-up costs and admin work.



Lesley Baird, Chief Executive of TPAS Scotland, and Karen Barry, ELHA Housing Manager

Faster. Cheaper. Greener. Go PAPER FREE on My Home



If you're the sort of person who checks their e-mails every day or two, go paper-free. It takes 2-3 days for a letter to arrive, but only a moment to receive an e-mail. You don't even need to have activated your My Home account, just let a member of staff know you'd prefer to get our letters by e-mail and we'll flip the switch for you!

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Tell us about our service

Have you had a complaint about your neighbour, or been complained about? Were you happy with the way we dealt with it? We will be reviewing our Antisocial Behaviour Policy in November, and we'd love to hear from you, with comments – good or bad – to help us improve the way we deal with neighbour complaints.

To let us know about your experiences, please fill in and return the 5 minute comment card, or log in to **My Home** to complete the summer survey. If you haven't activated your My Home account, you can also fill in the survey on our **Facebook** page.

If you have been involved in a neighbour dispute recently, our Administration Team may get in touch to discuss how well or poorly you think we handled it.



Check Your Rhones

The next time it rains, go outside and check to make sure that rainwater is draining correctly. It's very easy to miss leaves, bird nests and other rubbish collecting in your rhones and downpipes while the weather is nice. A blocked rhone can cause a lot of damage to your home in a very short period of time during heavy rainfall, so it's important to keep an eye on it, particularly if your home has trees growing nearby.

If you need to get your rhones cleared, you can book a repair through **My Home**, or call the repair line on **03000 999 247**.



Estate Inspections

This year's estate inspections are getting underway. If you would like to attend an inspection or point out an area of concern in your neighbourhood, please get in touch, either by completing the form on the **'Dates for your Diary'** page or calling us on **01620 825032**.



Smoke Gets In Your Eyes...

Please remember that when an R3 operative, or other contractor, is carrying out a repair in your home, your home has temporarily become his or her workplace. We ask that you not smoke while someone is working in your home. If you do smoke, the operative is entitled to leave your home without carrying out your repair.

Equally, our staff and contractors should not smoke in your home or garden. If they do, feel free to ask them not to, or contact us by clicking the **My Complaints button in My Home**, or calling us on **01620 825032**.



Dogs in Flats

The first thing we need to make clear is that we will not ask any current tenant to get rid of their dog(s) unless they are causing a nuisance.

Complaints about dogs make up a significant number of the neighbour complaints we deal with, from barking to fouling to dogs being allowed out unsupervised. While we urge anyone experiencing problems with a neighbour's dog to speak to their neighbour, and if that doesn't work to report them to us or the Dog Warden, the problems are most often reported in communal stair flats where dog owners have to work a bit harder. Last year we ran a 5 minute comment card survey to find out your opinions about a possible ban on pets in flats which have a communal stair. This was the most responded to comment card survey we've ever done, and the comments were really interesting. It was obvious that this was a very emotive topic, and we needed to find out more from tenants who live in communal stair flats and who are most affected.

We gave tenants in communal stair flats four possible solutions to choose from:

- A complete ban on dogs in communal stair flats for new tenants in the future
- Tenants in a communal stair could only get a dog if they first applied for and received permission from us. We would only grant permission if the tenant had no tenancy issues, and the permission could be withdrawn if complaints were made about the dog
- Tenants in a communal stair would be allowed to have one dog, but it must be registered with ELHA. If we receive a complaint about a dog which is unregistered, we could take action to have the dog removed
- Tenants in a communal stair would be allowed to have one registered dog, but could apply to have more, with the same rules as above

Of the 277 tenants who live in a communal stair flat, 82 responded – that's 30%, which is a fantastic response rate. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to return the form, or respond on **My Home**.

The results were close, with a total ban on dog(s) for new tenants in communal stair flats coming out on top. This would mean that if this is introduced, any available properties in a stair from that time will be advertised as 'no dogs'. We will also be asking all current tenants in flats to register their dog(s) – this is just so we know who has dog(s) in communal flats – we're not going to ask anyone to get rid of a registered dog for no reason. However, if you don't register your dog(s), and someone complains about one or more of them, we may take action to have the dog(s) removed.

We realise that this is a significant change and so will be taking the proposal to our Management Committee as part of the review of our Tenancy Management policy in February 2017. So if you have any comments that you would like them to consider, please get in touch either through **My Home**, by e-mailing info@elha.com or calling us on **01620 825032** before a final decision is made.



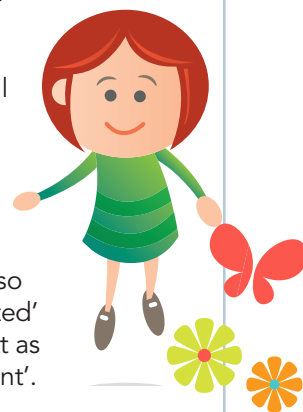
UC Universal Credit

Claiming Universal Credit, for Tenants with no Internet Access

All Universal Credit claims are made and managed online. This means that after you make a claim, you have to log in every day to see if you have new tasks to complete, e.g. making an appointment to see your Job Coach.

So what do you do if you don't know how to use a computer, or don't have internet access and live a bus trip away from your nearest library?

The most important thing is to **let your Job Coach know**. Make it clear right from the start that you can't use a computer, or that it will cost you money to travel to your nearest free internet access point. In these cases, your Job Coach can use other methods to help you manage your claim, or can cover your bus fares. They can also help you access free 'getting started' computer classes, which will count as part of your 'Claimant Commitment'.



ELHA Assistance Scheme

We operate an Assistance Scheme to help tenants where there is a shortfall in benefits, either because they are under occupying a property (commonly known as the 'Bedroom Tax') or because of the Universal Credit 'waiting period'.

Universal Credit Waiting Period

The waiting period means that even though you have been assessed as being entitled to receive Universal Credit, the payments, which will include an amount to cover your rent, will only start after the waiting period is over i.e. one week after your claim is made.

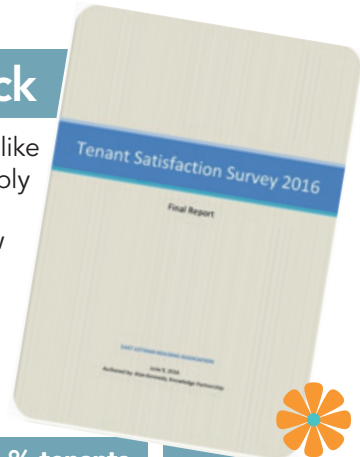
Not everyone will be affected by the waiting period, but if you are, you can apply to have the rent for this waiting period written off. You can find out more about the scheme, and how to apply, in My Home, by visiting the Tenancy Sustainment section of elha.com, or by contacting your Housing Officer.



Large Scale Tenant Satisfaction Survey – Your Feedback

Earlier this year Knowledge Partnership carried out a tenant survey (TSS) on our behalf. We would like to thank the 650 anonymous tenants who gave up their time to take part. Your feedback is incredibly useful – it is used in the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to measure our performance and benchmark us against other organisations, it's used to identify where we need to improve, and how improvements in the past have impacted on tenant satisfaction.

Below are the top line results compared to the 2013 TSS, and if you'd like to read the full report, it is available to download on elha.com. If you do not have internet access, we will be sending out a summary report later this year.



Top Line Results:

2016 Service	% tenants very or fairly satisfied 2016	% tenants very or fairly satisfied 2013	Change
Overall satisfaction with ELHA service	88%	83%	↑
Rent is value for money	70%	68%	↑
Gas servicing arrangement	95%	93%	↑
Repairs service – last 12 months repair	88%	85%	↑
Repair contractor showed ID	76%	70%	↑
Contractor kept to appt.	88%	89%	↓
Quality of home	89%	87%	↑
Quality of home on moving in	93%	78%	↑
Management of neighbourhood by ELHA	92%	85%	↑
Friendly and approachable staff	96%	91%	↑
Being able to quickly get in touch with the relevant person or department	93%	84%	↑
The help and/or advice given by staff	89%	77%	↑
Being kept informed about services	89%	87%	↑
Enabling tenants to participate in decision making	74%	66%	↑
How well tenants are kept informed following contact	61%	65%	↓
ELHA listens and takes action	66%	65%	↑
Satisfaction with outcome of most recent contact	58%	54%	↑
Providing the service tenants expect from their landlord	91%	85%	↑
ELHA has a good reputation in local area	86%	81%	↑

We're pleased with the results – you've told us that you are more satisfied than you were in 2013 in almost all of the key areas. Of course, there's always room for improvement, and we will be working with the TIG to build an action plan to try to improve areas with lower satisfaction.

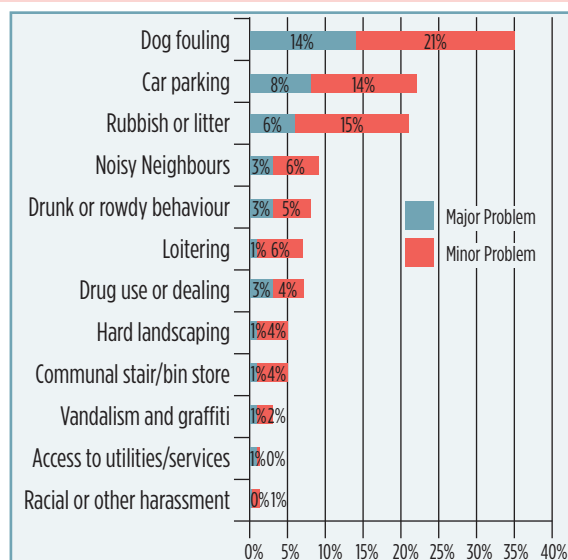
Your Concerns

Something we look at very closely is what you think are the biggest problems in your neighbourhood.



No surprises here for those of you following the Dogs in Flats issue (see page 3) – dog fouling is the largest problem area, with over a third of the tenants who took part saying it was a major or minor problem. Car parking and rubbish/litter problems also came high on the list, with just over one tenant in five saying that one or both was a major or minor problem.

We will be analysing the results by area and trying to address the problems. Keep your eye on future editions to see how we're dealing with these issues, or let us know your suggestions for improving things by contacting your Housing Officer or our Customer Information Officer by e-mail at info@elha.com or calling on **01620 825032**.





Consultation Calendar

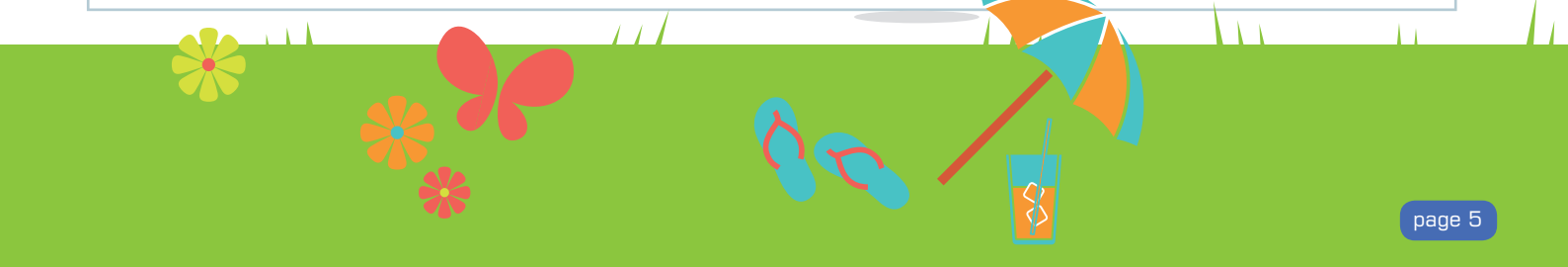
Consultation/survey	Start	Status	Reported to
Customer Care Targets	June 2016	Open to all tenants (see page 6 for more information)	Housing & Property Sub Committee August 2016
Communal Cleaning Consultation	July 2016	Open to all tenants who receive a communal cleaning charge (stair/bin store cleaning)	TIG-Panel & Housing & Property Sub Committee August 2016
Tenancy Sustainment Policy	August 2016	Tenants were consulted in the Spring 2016 Talkback & the My Home Spring Survey	Housing & Property Sub Committee November 2016
Garden Care Review	August 2016	Open to tenants on the Garden Care Scheme	TIG-Panel & Housing & Property Sub Committee November 2016
Information & Advice Policy Review	October 2016	Desktop review	Management Committee February 2016
Tenant Participation Strategy Review	November 2016	The TIG-Panel are currently reviewing the strategy	Housing & Property Sub Committee February 2016
Temporary Housing & Decant Policy	November 2016	Desktop review	Management Committee March 2017
ASB Policy Review	November 2016	Open to all tenants (see page 2 for more information)	Housing & Property Sub Committee February 2017
Domestic Abuse Policy Review	November 2016	Desktop review	Management Committee March 2017
Rent Increase Consultation	January 2017	Open to all tenants	Finance & Audit Sub Committee February 2017
Tenancy Management Policy Review	February 2017	Will be open to all tenants, more information in a future edition	TIG-Panel & Housing & Property Sub Committee February 2017

TIG in Action – Bus Tour

Our TIG-Panel took a tour around our rural and east coast stock in April this year, including a drive by of the new build properties in East Linton, and the flats going up on Bayswell Road in Dunbar. But we didn't just show the pretty parts – the TIG also got a chance to see inside the communal stair of a block with management issues, and heard anecdotes about past evictions.

The tour was a fun and informative day, and the TIG have plans to visit our new development at Inglis Farm in Cockenzie once it's completed.

If you'd like more information about joining the TIG-Panel, or working with us in any of the many other ways available, please get in touch with us by filling in the 'Join In' form in **My Home**, e-mailing **info@elha.com** or calling Mary on **01620 825032**.



Customer Care Targets

We aim to respond to tenants and other service users as quickly as we can. We manage around 1,300 properties, so it can take time to work through an entire day's worth of phone messages, e-mails, Facebook messages, application forms, etc, particularly if we have to do some research or investigation before we are able to respond. We have recently reviewed our targets for responding to customers, and would like to know what you think.

Phone calls

Answer the telephone

Target response time (all within)

6 rings

Respond to your voice mail

1 working day

Office Meetings

By Appointment

We will see you on time

Appointment Required

You will get an appointment within 1 week

Written Communication

Reply to your letter (including email)

5 working days

If we cannot reply to your letter in 5 days, we will let you know we've received it and respond in full

10 Working days

Statutory Requests (e.g. application for an exchange, to add a joint tenant, sublet) etc:

Acknowledgement

2 working days

Full response

20 working days

Respond to your texts

1 working day

Reply to your comments on Facebook

1 working day

Consultations

Respond to individual comments

20 working days

Feedback to tenants on outcome

3 months

Complaints:

Stage 1

5 working days

Stage 2 Acknowledge receipt of complaint

3 working days

Full response

20 working days

Appeals Against Decisions

1st Appeal Acknowledgement

2 working days

Full response

10 working days

2nd Appeal Acknowledgement

2 working days

Full response

20 working days

Anti-Social Behaviour – initial response to complaint

Category A – very serious, e.g. violence involved

3 working days

Category B – serious or persistent issues

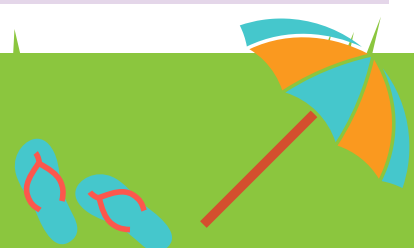
5 working days

Category C – routine

10 working days



To let us know what you think about these targets, please fill out and return the 5 minute comment card, or log into your **My Home** account and complete the Summer Survey.



Dumped Furniture

If you are planning on buying new furniture, please remember that if you need to use the Council's bulky waste (uplift) service for your old furniture, you must organise this well in advance. The waiting time for an uplift can be 8 – 10 weeks. If you have not ordered an uplift, or if you have several weeks before your old furniture can be picked up, you must either store the furniture in your home or dispose of it yourself. Furniture lying around is unsightly and can be dangerous, if you leave furniture outside your property, including in communal bin stores, we may remove it and charge you

the cost of picking up and disposing of your furniture.

Check with the company you are buying from, many of them offer to take away your old furniture or appliances for a small or no fee when they deliver your purchases. If your old furniture is in good condition, please consider donating it to the Recycling First Project, which provides furnishings and other household goods to low income households.

East Lothian has four Recycling Centres, in Dunbar, North Berwick, Macmerry and Wallyford (Kinweogar),



which take household waste and recycling that cannot be collected at the kerbside. These centres are open 7 days a week, from 8.30am to 4pm (6.15pm in the summer).

To book an uplift, call: **01875 824 305**

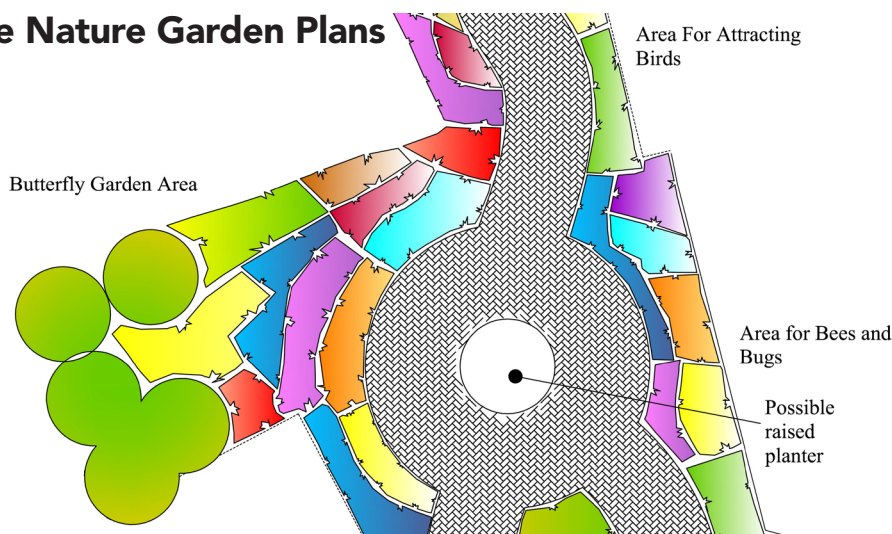
To donate your old furniture, call: **01875 615797**

The Hedges Project Needs Your Help

Would you be able to give up a little time this summer to help get the Children's Nature Garden at The Hedges up and running? The Project has funding in place, including an award from the Co-Op, but needs volunteers to help with the organisation side of things and clearing the weeds that are creeping into the site.

This needn't be a long term commitment - most of the groundwork has already been done: the paths are there, the beds marked out, all that's needed is topsoil and plants to create a really lovely community garden. This would be an ideal holiday activity for parents and kids this summer.

The Nature Garden Plans



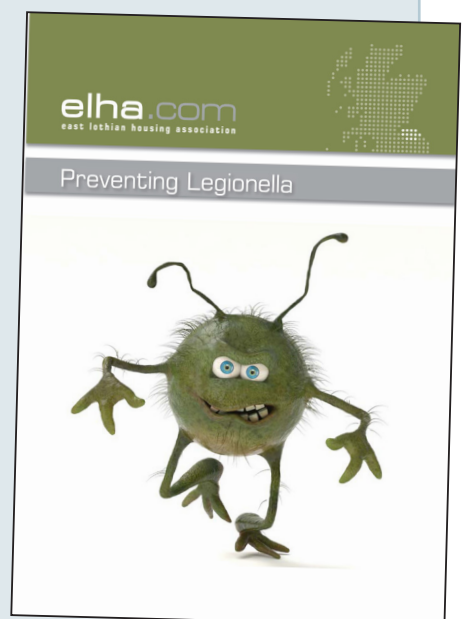
If you live in the Windygoul area, and have an interest in gardening, or would just like to help out so that the project can meet the funding rules for a Community Group, please contact The Hedges Project – **without your support, the garden can't be finished and the grant money will have to be returned.**

You can get in touch through us by e-mailing info@elha.com or telephoning John McNally on **01620 825032**, or with the Project directly through The Hedges Community Group Children's Nature Garden Project Facebook page.

Legionella

During the summer months, it's important to make sure you clean your shower head and any shower hoses regularly by running a cleaning solution through them. While Legionella is usually harmless, it can be very dangerous if it is inhaled – for example, in tiny water droplets released into the air when you are showering.

If you would like to learn more, we have a Preventing Legionella leaflet, available to download from elha.com, or you can pick one up at our office.



Smoke Detectors



Did you know?

There are more than 7,000 reported fires in homes every year in Scotland. House fires can have a devastating effect, and they result in around 60 deaths and 1,700 injuries each year.

According to national fire statistics, homes which are fitted with smoke detectors can detect a fire within 5 minutes of the fire starting; reducing the fatal casualty rates. It makes sense to test your smoke detector weekly to make sure it is working correctly.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), offer a free home fire safety visit during which they can carry out a Fire Risk Assessment in your home. To book your assessment, call on 0800 0731 999, or visit the SFRS website and fill in their online form: www.firescotland.gov.uk

Please do not tamper or interfere with any home safety devices – if your smoke or Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector isn't working, the maintenance work must be carried out by R3's qualified staff. If yours isn't working, please get in touch through My Home, or call the repair line on **03000 999 247** to arrange for someone to come out and check it.

Please Remember!

Smoke and fire detectors are intended to reduce the risk of fire and loss of life, injury and damage to property – make sure they're working, make sure you and your family are safe.

Stop Press! The Rental Exchange

The Rental Exchange launched on the 1st of July, meaning that all tenants who have not opted out of the scheme will now pass digital verification checks when they apply for online deals. Tenants not on full Housing Benefit will also benefit from being able to build a credit rating.

The Benefit Cap – Are You Affected?

The benefit cap is the maximum amount of benefit (including Housing Benefit) that non-working households are allowed to receive and will reduce later this year. If you will be affected by this, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will have sent you a letter. The cap will be approximately £258 per week for single applicants (including rent), and approximately £385 per week (including rent) for families. The cap excludes things like Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP), for people unable to work due to ill health.

If you have received a letter informing you that you will be affected by the cap, please get in touch. You can request a visit from Anne, our Money Adviser, through your Housing Officer or by filling out the request form in **My Home**. Anne can help you manage your finances – last year she helped 179 tenants claim over £566,000 in benefits, grants and other support – that's an average of over £3,000 each!

Prize Draw Winners

Congratulations to Diane Harper from Prestonpans, Margaret Ritchie from Haddington and Jane Marshall from Whitecraig 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 on a repair. It's now even easier to give feedback – just click the Repair History button in My Home. If you haven't activated your My Home account yet, just drop us an e-mail at info@elha.com and we'll send you out a link to get started.



CAN YOU READ THIS?

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.

