

TIG in Action - A Letter from our TIG Convenor

What is TIG? TIG is the acronym for our Tenant Involvement Group.

Who are the members of TIG? We are ordinary men and women, from various backgrounds, who are Tenants in one of the many homes provided by ELHA.

What does TIG do? Members of TIG meet every two months to discuss, scrutinise and analyse the various workings of the Housing Association. We also make suggestions about possible innovations and additions to ELHA Policies. We are not decision-makers but, rather, are advisors to ELHA's Management Teams and Staff Members presenting the "tenants' eye views" of ELHA. We work alongside members of ELHA Staff to bring your concerns to their attention and to provide a positive input into housing issues and procedures.

Do you need any special talents or experience?

No, just be yourself and tell us things from your point of view – what you would like our Housing Association to be and give us some fresh ideas. Who knows – one day your ideas might be just what we are looking for and may become policy!

- Do you like a challenge?
- Do you like scrutinising policies and working practices?
- Do you like analysing figures and processes?
- Do you have two or three hours to spare every two months?
- Would you like to be part of our dynamic team?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes" – we need YOU!

We would welcome new members from any and all backgrounds and all ages to come and join us! We are a happy bunch of people who enjoy debating and discussing different aspects of Housing and Housing Policies.

If you feel you can contribute or would like to get involved, please contact us at ELHA through the website, elha.com, by e-mailing info@elha.com or calling on 01620 825032.

Do come and join us – we look forward to welcoming you!

Rebekah Gronowski
(TIG Convenor)



How We Compare

As well as providing all of our tenants with information about how we perform against the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) also want all tenants to be able to compare their landlord's performance with other landlords so that the information is put into context. You can find the comparison at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk, where you will also be able to choose which landlords to compare us against. The SHR's Landlord Report can also be downloaded from elha.com.

We do really well in some areas - time taken to complete repairs, rent lost while properties are empty and the number of our properties that meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. We're about average in other areas - keeping tenants informed about our services, getting repairs right first time and satisfaction with our repairs service.

There are some comparisons we don't think are very helpful - for example our rents are compared to the average of all rents in Scotland which includes local authorities (Councils) and this makes them look high. As we explain regularly, Councils and Housing Associations are completely different organisations. If our rents were compared with rents in the private rented sector they would look low but the comparison would not be valid because we are not a private landlord! We have done our own comparisons and our rents are similar to other Housing Associations in East Lothian.

	ELHA	CRE	HfL	DC	Average
1 bedroom	£72.23	£78.64	£70.34	£78.91	£75.03
2 bedrooms	£80.80	£83.98	£79.80	£88.22	£83.20
3 bedrooms	£89.10	£92.27	£85.51	£96.03	£90.73
4+ bedrooms	£99.52	£92.39	n/a	£101.72	£97.88

ELHA – East Lothian Housing Association

CRE – Castle Rock Edinvar

HfL – Homes for Life Housing Partnership

DC – Dunedin Canmore

Some of the information used by the SHR comes from our last large scale Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which was in 2012. We undertake these surveys every three years, so representatives from BMG Market Research will soon be visiting every ELHA development to collect up to date information, and the results will be published in the New Year.



talkback

AUTUMN 2015

elha.com
east lothian housing association



Everyone should have received their copy of our **How We're Doing** booklet, either as a printed document, or a digital download. If you haven't received your copy, please let us know and we'll send one out to you in your preferred format.

As with previous years, we would like your feedback – we think this year's is our best yet, but it's your opinions that matter. **Are we giving you the information you want? Is it easy to understand? Is there anything missing?**

If you'd like to let us know what you think, you can fill out and return the comment card, or complete the digital survey.

At the end of October one lucky responder will win a £50 shopping voucher.



Annual General Meeting 28 September 2015

We had a good turnout with just over 40 people attending this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Maitlandfield House Hotel, Haddington.

We gave our members a sneak preview of the new look elha.com and our new range of digital services, which was well received.

Our guest speaker Raymond Young CBE, then gave a preview of his new book "Affordable Homes in Rural Scotland" which includes a chapter about the role which ELHA played in the development of the housing association movement in Scotland. He especially thanked Peter Hayman, one of our Management Committee Members and former Chairman, for his contribution towards this section of the book and for the level of detail he was able to provide. The book will be available to buy from late-October 2015 and we'll publish more detail about it in the next issue of Talkback.



Prize Draw Winners

Congratulations to Ms Knox, from Ormiston, Mrs Bisset from Haddington and Mr & Mrs Gay from East Linton who won £50 each in our monthly repair satisfaction prize draw.



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Welcome Brian!

Brian Parkin is the new Housing Officer for Cockenzie, Macmerry, Musselburgh, Port Seton, Wallyford and Whitecraig, taking over from Claire McMillan, who is moving to a new role, the details of which will be in our next edition.

Brian comes to us from Waverley Housing, where he was also a Housing Officer.

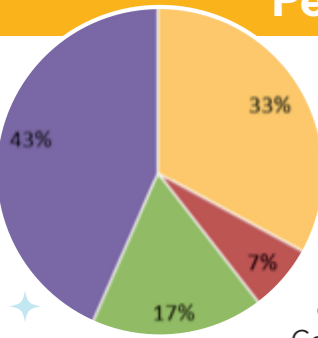


Pets In Flats – A Can of Worms!

We had a phenomenal response to our summer comment card survey. The question of whether or not to ban pets in flats with a communal stair for new tenants brought a storm of comments both for and against the proposal.

Most interesting were the comments from people who were opposed to the ban, but then went on to suggest tougher restrictions on pets in flats. Common responses were to only ban dogs, to limit pets to just one pet per flat, or to remove permission to keep a pet at the first sign of trouble.

Given the results of the survey, it's clear changes have to be made (only 43% of you think things should stay the same), so watch this space for news, and let us know if you have any other ideas on this subject.



- Ban pets in flats
- Not sure
- Some restrictions
- Don't ban pets

Money Advice – Case Study

I saw a tenant recently who had just moved into a new home. As she was part of the Housing Benefit Direct Payment Project, I popped in to make sure she knew how the project works.

At the visit it became clear that although she had her Housing Benefit well in hand, there were other issues which needed to be sorted out. She had hardly any furniture or essential household items and although she had applied to the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) for help, most of the items had been refused. She did not know what to do next or where she could get any other help.

I contacted the SWF on her behalf and asked why they had refused much of her application. When they explained their reasons, I did not agree, so I asked for a review of her application. I wrote to them about the seriousness of her situation and that the items requested should have been made 'high priority' in the original decision.

The application was reviewed by the Team Leader, and she agreed with me. This meant that our tenant was given furniture, white goods, and carpets. This made a huge difference to her, helping her to turn her new property into a comfortable home.



Anne Rattray
Money adviser

Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount isn't just for pensioners – if you are on benefits, you can apply for the discount.



Many of the energy suppliers' **Warm Homes Discount** schemes are now open – eligible customers could get up to £140 off their electricity bills. Home Energy Scotland's friendly advisers can check your eligibility for this or you can contact your energy supplier directly.

For more information please call the advice line on **0808 808 2282**.

When you call ...

When you call us, you might not always be able to speak to the person you wanted to talk to. This may be because the Property Officer or Housing Officer is out on home visits that day.

If the person you want to talk to is out of the office you should give our Receptionist a brief summary of why you are calling, and they may be able to put you through to someone else in the right department who may be able to help. If no one else can help, the Receptionist will take your details and ask the relevant staff member to call you back. If the staff member is unable to call you within 24 hours, another member of staff will call to let you know.



Our Modern Apprentices

In March we took on our first Modern Apprentice, and two more joined us in September. Our apprentices learn on the job, receive a monthly salary, get practical experience, and work towards industry-recognised vocational qualifications during their 18 month stay.



from left to right, Kyle, Kim, Lily and Roisin

Our Modern Apprentice in Finance, Kyle Campbell, started with the Association in March and has already achieved his Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) level 2 accounting qualification and is now working towards his level 3.

Our Modern Apprentices in Asset Management, Roisin Goodlet and Executive Support, Lily Henderson started with the Association in September 2015. They are both working towards their Business and Administration level 3 Qualification.

We also have an office Modern Apprentice within R3 Repairs, Kim Ramsay who started in June 2015 and has already completed two of her modules towards Business and Administration level 3!

Young people are key to developing our business. They bring new energy, are keen to learn and offer new ideas which can only enhance the current services we offer to our tenants. We wish them well!

My Home – A Sneak Peek!

Those of you who have joined our TIG-Web will have seen bits and pieces of this, and both TIG-Web and our Facebook followers were involved in planning new digital services. We're almost ready to show the rest of you what we've been up to – a one-stop shop for all your tenancy needs!

The screenshot shows the 'my home' section of the elha.com website. It features a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'HOUSING', 'RENT', 'REPAIRS', 'ABOUT US', 'INFO', and 'CONTACT US'. Below the navigation, there's a welcome message and a 'NEED HELP? CLICK HERE' button. The main content area is divided into several service tiles:

- MY FAMILY:** Lists residents at the address: Mr. Arthur Jones, Mrs. Sophie Jones, Miss. Emma Jones, Mr. Peter Jenkins. Includes a 'Do More >>' button.
- MY HOUSE:** Shows a recent repair: 'Last Repair: 02/05/14 Description: Roof Repair to rear roof and gutter. Status: Completed'. Includes buttons for 'Report a repair >>', 'Repair history >>', and 'Do More >>'.
- MY ACCOUNT:** Shows 'Up to date' status with a '2' icon. Lists payments: '01/08/14: Rent - £287.00', '03/07/14: Allpay payment - £34.00', '28/03/14: Housing benefit - £224.00'. Includes buttons for 'Pay Rent >>', 'Rent Statement >>', and 'Do More >>'.
- MY TENANCY:** Shows tenant details: 'Tenant Reference: ELHA/445/33', 'Email Address: example@btconnect.com', 'Address: 23 Smith Street, Haddington, East Lothian, EH41 3JL', 'Tenancy Type: Scottish Secure Tenancy'. Includes a '1' icon and buttons for 'Right to Buy', 'Tenancy Start Date: 21st September 2008', 'Paper Free: On', 'Make Changes >>', and 'Moving On >>'.
- MY IDEAS & OPINIONS:** Includes a '4' icon and buttons for 'TIG Zone >>', 'Join In >>', 'My Complaints >>', 'PRAISE >>', and 'GRUMBLE >>'.
- MY DOCUMENTS:** Shows 'Last document filed: Tenancy Agreement.doc Added: (12/03/11)'. Includes buttons for 'My Documents >>' and 'Send New Mail >>'.

- 1 Just got a new e-mail address? You can update our systems at the click of a button on My Home.
- 2 Need to make a rent payment, but the office is closed? Just click the 'pay my rent' button in My Home and do it online – no AllPay reference needed. Your payment will show up on your rent account immediately.
- 3 Want to let us know that you have a new addition to the family, but never get a chance to get to the phone? Pop the details into My Home – it's faster than phoning, and My Home doesn't mind if you need to take a 5 minute break in the middle to change a nappy.
- 4 Save a tree, go Paper-Free!