

# Housing Brief

Advising and supporting our tenants to enjoy their homes

## Meet our New Chair

Following our AGM in August the Association has recently appointed a new Chairperson. Cathy Osborn joined as a Board member in June 2022, becoming our Vice Chair in October 2023 and has now accepted the role of Chairperson. Cathy brings with her a lifetime of experience of working in the affordable housing sector with both councils and housing associations. She takes over the helm from Andrew Carr, a long standing Board Member of the Association and Chairperson since 2020 who is required under our rules to step down after five years.



Cathy Osborn

Our CEO Margaret Moynihan said she is delighted that Cathy has agreed to be our new Chairperson and wished to thank Andrew for his support during his time as Chair, and was very pleased that Andrew would continue with the Board of the Association in the role of Vice-Chair.

## ALienergy - Supporting our Tenants



LHA continue to work closely with ALienergy to address fuel poverty and support tenants who are struggling with energy costs. Funding from the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund (part of wider Scottish Government funding) has enabled them to provide support in the form of advice, discretionary payments and energy efficient household appliances.

One of our tenants was referred to ALienergy by their Housing Officer as they had received a large bill when changing electricity supplier. The ALienergy Advisor visited them at home, and after going through the electricity statement identified an error – their meter readings had been mixed up. The Advisor took new readings and photos, and supported the tenant to contact their supplier. The Advisor also supported an application to the Association's discretionary support fund and the tenant was awarded £500 for energy costs and a heated throw and air fryer.

Your Housing Officer can refer you to ALienergy if you are struggling, and they can provide tailored advice and assistance to you, as well as applying for support from the discretionary fund.

We're here to help.

Contact your Housing Officer on:



**01397 702530**



**housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk**



# Tenant Consultations

Since the last Housing Brief, **Your Voice** members have again provided valuable feedback to the 5 Minute surveys, this time covering Tenant Talk 2025 and the new Communications Strategy. The feedback has been reviewed by the Board and amendments made to take it into account. An example of this feedback is:

*'it would be useful to know what the acronyms FOI, GDPR and ICO stand for. Anyone not working for an organisation using them regularly are unlikely to know what they refer to'.*

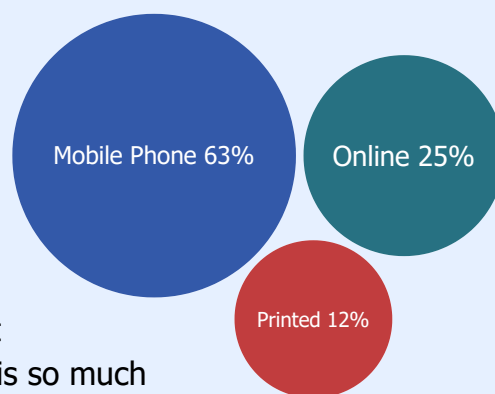
Going forward, we will make sure that if we use acronyms, that we include a description with them.

When asked 'Having read the Communications Strategy, do you have a greater understanding of how we aim to communicate?' whilst 73% of respondents felt they had a greater understanding of how we aim to communicate, it was also noted that we have not been achieving our communications timescales.



This feedback has been added to our Communications Action Plan and further changes will be made to ensure we achieve our targets in future.

For Tenant Talk, to assist with our journey in becoming 'digital first' we asked **Your Voice** members how they read Tenant Talk. This feedback is extremely encouraging, with a total of 88% reading either on a mobile phone or online - laptop or tablet.



88% of respondents felt the amount of information given was about right, with the remaining 13% saying there is not enough. As there is so much data to report on each year, we make sure that in each Tenant Talk we provide the link to our landlord's page on the Scottish Housing Regulator's website, which provides even more information on how we are performing. To find out more visit: <https://bit.ly/LandlordReport>

Please take these opportunities to get involved, be heard and help shape your housing future. More information can be found on our website or by contacting your Housing Officer:



<https://www.lochaberhousing.org.uk/your-voice/>



[housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk](mailto:housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk)

## Missed Appointments are Costing You



Housing Surveys are an important part of ensuring that the Association maintains your home to a satisfactory standard. Defects can be spotted early so repairs can be made promptly. We also have a regulatory responsibility to visit your home to conduct important safety checks on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, despite this, we are still trying to gain access to a staggering **36** properties. These visits are vital for tenants' safety and must be completed.

These visits are vital for tenants' safety and must be completed, yet around a quarter of the appointments we make are missed by customers. This will help us to keep your home safe and make sure time and money that could be spent upgrading homes isn't wasted on missed appointments.

# How to Get the Most Out of Your Heating this Winter

The Association has various different types of heating and domestic hot water systems across its housing stock. It is important to have the knowledge of how you control and use your system to gain the most efficient running costs to your property, especially when we are all experiencing higher fuel costs.



To help you understand how to use your system at its best efficiency,

**Changeworks** has a fantastic website with lots of useful information and guides.

Visit: <https://bit.ly/ManagingYourHeating>. In addition to this, our Asset Department can reissue you with instructions on how to use your system efficiently. If you have any questions or would like support with the settings for your heating system, please contact us.

☎ **01397 702530** or ✉ [info@lochaberhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@lochaberhousing.org.uk)

Remember it is important to heat your property to a minimum 16 degrees for your health and reduce the chance of condensation within your property.

## Happy Retirement Sean!

This month we will be saying goodbye to long standing staff member Sean Doherty, our Director of Asset Management. Sean is retiring having joined the Association in 2001 as a Technical Officer for our Care & Repair service.

Over the years, Sean has seen many changes at the Association including the transfer of around 200 properties to the Association from Scottish Homes, the building of over 300 new homes throughout Lochaber, and the formation of our inhouse maintenance team, bringing countless apprenticeship opportunities.

Everyone at the LHA Group wishes Sean all the very best in his retirement.

## Christmas Carols

Staff at the LHA Group have been carol singing for visitors to the High Street since 2017.



Our carol singing is in support of the Save the Children initiative Christmas Jumper Day.

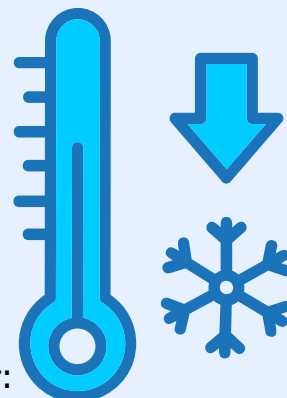
This year, weather permitted we will be outside our offices on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December at 3.00pm.

Please come and join us.

## Are You Cold Weather Ready?

There are many ways that cold weather can be prevented from causing damage to your home and it's contents. Try and avoid burst pipes and damage to your home this winter by keeping your home reasonably warm day and night. In particularly cold weather keep the heating on during the night at a low temperature.

Further guidance is given in our leaflet **Cold Weather and Frost Alert Advice**. LHA **does not** insure your furniture, belongings and other personal items within your home against theft, fire, vandalism, burst pipes and other household risks. We strongly advise you to take out contents insurance so that if the worst happens your insurers would cover the costs for you.



For further information and an application pack please contact your Housing Officer:

☎ **01397 702530** or ✉ [housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk](mailto:housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk)



## LOCHABER HANDYPERSON SERVICE

Lochaber Handyperson Service will complete minor repairs, tasks and small jobs around the home to contribute to your well-being and safety. The service is available to people aged 65 or over, and to people living with a disability. We do not charge for our labour or travel expenses, but you may have to make a contribution towards parts and materials as required.



If you would like assistance, or know of someone who may benefit, please contact Lochaber Handyperson Service (a subsidiary of LHA.)

 **01397 706333**  **info@lcr.org.uk**

 <https://www.lochaberhousing.org.uk/request-handyperson-service>



## EDI Survey, the results are in...



Thank you to everyone who completed a recent survey where we sought to collect equalities data. While collecting and using equality data is necessary to ensure that we comply with the general equality duties, it also helps us to better understand and meet the needs of all of our tenants.

Research Resource collected the data on behalf of the Association and have compiled an anonymous report which will be considered by our Board of Management.



**Lochaber Housing Association  
would like to wish  
you a Merry Christmas**

**For general enquiries our telephone lines  
will be closed**

**4:00pm Tuesday 23rd December  
and re-open**

**9:00am Monday 5th January**

**For out of hours emergency repairs only**

 **0141 473 2710**

## Rent Account

If you view your rent account between 1st and 5th January, please note that the January rent will not have been applied.

However, payments can be made in the normal way and the correct rent balance will be available from the 5th.

We are committed to removing any barriers to communication. Upon request, this newsletter can be produced in another format e.g. braille or large print.

Where English is not your first language, LHA will provide on request, written information in your first language.

