

Housing Brief

Advising and supporting our tenants to enjoy their homes

Winter Campaign and Food Hardship Fund

LHA are able to announce that along with the £192k we received from the SFHA Social Fuel Fund to help tenants, we were able to obtain a further £10k from the Food Hardship Fund to be able to support approximately 150 tenants in crisis and in need of food, to access between £50-100 one off payments.

It is likely this will be pre-paid vouchers for a local supermarket or via tenant bank accounts. The purpose of the Food Hardship Fund is to remove stigma from receiving help by offering cash assistance or equivalent.

So far we have given out 410 payments to tenants either aged 65+, on Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, totalling £102k. We have been able to speak to over 30 tenants at our community sessions as part of the winter campaign where we were able to help tenants cut some costs through heated throws, air fryers and slow cookers. (If you attended one of these community sessions, you may be wondering where your item has got to. We are working through these lists and will get deliveries out to you very soon.)

We also made contact with a number of tenants to discuss how they are managing during the winter and made referrals to Allenergy for support. Allenergy, with the support of funding from LHA, can offer cash support, fuel vouchers and items to help heat the body or keep cooking costs down.

Please remember if you are struggling with your food and fuel bills or fuel debt, it doesn't matter if you are in or out of work, we can help you.

Who can I speak to?

Your Housing Officer can be contacted directly on:

-  **Melody Robinson 07464 829 028**
-  **Tony Dickson 07717 684 004**
-  **housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk**

You can contact Allenergy on:

-  **01631 565183**
-  **www.alienergy.org.uk**



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Tenant Engagement

Your voice. Your tenancy. Your house. Your home.



Following the recent Tenant Participation Survey, we are looking to review our Tenant Participation Strategy, with an emphasis on varied communication methods that include online questionnaires for policy reviews, briefings, focus groups and information sessions rather than the specific 'in-person' Your Voice Group sessions. We will continue embedding Your Voice into all that we do.



We have a number of tenants who were interested in being part of a focus group to develop the strategy and we will be contacting you soon, but we wish to extend that offer.

If you are interested, please email the Housing Services Coordinator, Brian Pearson at: bpearson@lochaberhousing.org.uk

We will be carrying out our 'blether' sessions in the community to meet and discuss the strategy. This work will commence in March for the next 6 months.

Tenant Satisfaction Focus Groups

You said ...We listened...

Following the Tenant Satisfaction Survey last year we held Focus Groups for tenant feedback and the following areas for improvement have been identified by tenants:



- Improving feedback and keeping tenants informed across the LHA Group on what we do that impacts them individually or collectively, will become part of our Communication Strategy and Customer Service Standards
- Ensuring that we do what we say we will do and communicate with tenants to ensure they understand will become part of our communication strategy and Customer Services Standard
- Ensuring tenant expectations are met through response timescales i.e letters within 5 days will become part of our Communication Strategy and Customer Services Standards Improved consultation and engagement with tenants (Your Voice Activity) when planning works. This includes understanding and managing expectations, providing clarity on what will be happening and how the works will improve the property and their living environment. This will become part of the Asset Management Policy and Procedures, and the Tenant Engagement Strategy
- LHA will take the lead to maintain a positive relationship throughout the works with the tenant and seek feedback when completed This will become part of the Asset Management Policy and Procedures, and the Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Ensure post works reports are prepared for the Senior Management Team that reassures the consultation and engagement processes have been completed along with tenant feedback and that all feedback from tenants is reported along with any problems experienced in the works for lessons learned. This will be part of the Asset Management Policy and Procedures, and the Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Review our heating systems and their efficiency etc, along with consultations with tenants on heating systems moving forward Asset Management Policy & Procedures and the Tenant Engagement Strategy.

Letting Standards Consultation

As a follow on to the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and Void Consultation, new tenants had the opportunity to meet with our Chief Executive and Asset Manager, with discussions on their experience of the re-let process. This feedback is being used to review and develop our letting standards.

If you are interested in being part of the letting standards working group, please email housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk



Tenant Briefings

LHA has improved the level of communication and information that we provide our tenants using Tenant Briefings and social media. Over the last year these have covered the cost of living, tenant satisfaction survey, updates on changes within the Association, tenant participation review, My Home – Online Portal, Allenergy, and support with energy advice and fuel costs.

Most recent briefings before Christmas covered the cost of living, fuel costs and support available along with information on heat use, dampness prevention, and condensation.



There are lots of ways you can keep up to date with LHA news, events, community posts, welfare advice and support, plus many more.

If you haven't already done so, why not follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our YouTube Channel. Our website has a wealth of useful information and leaflets to download too. If you can't find what you are looking for, please contact us.

We are committed to communicating more with you and providing faster news, that benefits and supports you with your tenancy. If you have any suggestions to make, please email us at:

housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk



Tenant Charter Update

The Scottish Government Tenants' Charter has been updated from November 2022. The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities.

The first Charter came into effect on 1 April 2012 and was reviewed during 2016. This revised Charter was approved on 5 October 2022 and became effective from 1 November 2022.

The Charter helps us to improve the quality and value of the services we provide, by:

- stating clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from us, helping you to hold us to account
- focusing the efforts of LHA on achieving outcomes that matter to our customers
- providing the basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess and report on how well we are performing. This assessment enables the Regulator, ourselves, tenants and other customers to identify areas of strong performance and areas needing improvement.

The changes to the Charter were relatively minor, and included the following:

- Incorporating a reference to human rights and the 'right to housing' for all individuals
- The need for landlords to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.
- The benefits of using a range of non-digital and digital communications, in accessible formats that meet individual needs.

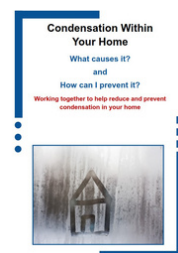
The charter can be found at: <https://bit.ly/TheScottishSocialHousingCharter>

Preventing Condensation and Mould

Condensation is caused when moisture held in warm air meets a cold surface like a window or a wall and condenses into water droplets. If this happens on a regular basis, mould will start to grow. If you start to notice mould spores starting to grow on windows, ceilings or walls, spray and wipe down with a mould prohibitor to stop the mould spreading as soon as you notice it.

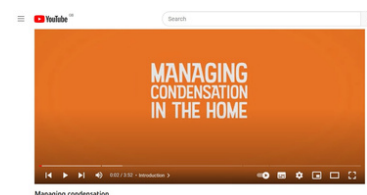
For more advice on how to reduce condensation, this leaflet can be downloaded from our website:

<https://bit.ly/CondensationWithinYourHome>



This handy video from the Energy Saving Trust also gives lots of helpful advice on how to reduce condensation in your home

<https://bit.ly/ManagingCondensationandMould>



If you are concerned about mould in your home, please contact us immediately.

Solar PV Panels

Lochaber Housing Association along with all other social landlords in Scotland have been challenged to meet targets to reduce the carbon that is released from our combined housing stock. The next milestone that must be met is Energy Efficiency in Scottish Social Housing (ESSH2) which must be achieved by 2032. Following on from this target is the Net Zero Carbon, which has had a lot of coverage on the media platforms and will require to be met by 2040.



These two targets, although achievable, will be difficult and will require a long-term strategy to be put in place. To meet these ESSH targets LHA will require to make a large financial investment initially over the next ten years and relying on funding support and grants to achieve the ESSH target.

In 2021 LHA were able to access funding which allowed us to survey our properties on the suitability of installing Solar PV (photovoltaic) Panels. 98 surveys were completed, and we were able to progress the installation of panels on 61 properties, however, in March 2022 the funding was withdrawn and the replacement ECO4 funding does not cover our properties. Your property may have been surveyed and we will hold this information until further funding becomes available.

The systems that are installed are dependent on the weather and work on daylight, the brighter the day the more that it generates. Unfortunately, with Fort William's ever changing weather, generation can fluctuate with cloud cover and the position of the sun, so there is no guarantee of how much power will be generated and at what time. The systems have an indicator light which flashes faster as generation rises and a counter which gives an indication on the accumulated power generated since installation.

The solar PV system will accept a storage battery to allow excess generated power to be stored for use later in the day when the daylight falls. It is hoped that this will be added in the future to give a more robust solar PV system and bring greater energy savings to tenants.

We are continually looking for funding to assist us in achieving enhanced energy efficient systems for our properties. Our ambition is to continue the programme of installing Solar PV panels, insulation and energy efficient heating systems.

Heating Meter Change

If you are in an LHA property that has standard storage heating or the new Quantum storage heating, you will have a two-meter system (dual tariff), more commonly known as Total Heat Total Control (THTC). One of these meters records your domestic energy consumption and the second, the consumption of your heating and hot water which has a lower tariff charge. The energy supplier, Scottish & Southern Energy has recently become OVO Energy and unfortunately, OVO are withdrawing support of these dual tariff Radio-Teleswitched (RTS) meters.

You may have already been notified, or will be notified shortly, by your energy supplier, that from the end of March 2023 they will be beginning to withdraw from the dual tariff you currently receive and will be replacing your existing two meters with a single smart meter. You will be required to contact your supplier to arrange a suitable date and time for this change to happen. Unfortunately, each tenant must make contact as the supplier will not engage or discuss with anybody who is not the account owner. To contact your supplier you should phone **0345 071 7972**.



Say Hello... Wave Goodbye...

The LHA group would like to wish James Illingworth well as he leaves the Property Services team. James joined the company in 2018 and has recently completed an electrical apprenticeship. He leaves us to take up a position in a local firm and we wish him the best for the future.

Kiah Ferreira began a two year modern apprenticeship in 2021 providing administrative support to the Customer Services department. A vacancy arose within the department and following our recruitment process, Kiah has successfully secured a full time administrative role. Kiah has worked hard and has shown a willingness to learn new skills and we are pleased that she is joining the team on a permanent basis.

We are absolutely delighted that our commitment and established protocol for employing apprentices continues to pay dividends. Investing in our young people remains a key objective for the LHA Group.

Finally, Michael Slezas has recently joined the LHA Group as a Technical officer and is based in our Asset Management department. Michael joins us with a wealth of experience and knowledge and is a welcome addition to the team.



Michael Slezas

Employability Service

As part of our poverty reduction and tenancy sustainment work, we are looking to develop a partnership approach with the Highland Council's Employability Service.

Offering tenants access to the employability services locally, and open to those who are either in low paid unskilled employment or not in work, the service can offer digital skills, SQA qualifications and assistance to build the skills to enter or find employment.



The Employability Service will be able to offer one2one services or group work. We hope in the future to also hold community events similar to the Winter Campaign, so tenants can come along for a chat and see what help is available.

Whilst this work is not part of the DWP, any participation could count towards your claimant commitment.

Office closures 2023

Our offices will be closed on the following days:

Friday 7th April

Monday 10th April

Monday 1st May

Monday 8th May

4pm Friday 22nd December

and reopen Thursday 4th January 2024



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.