

THE OCHIL VIEW

Find us on  

customerservices@ochilviewha.co.uk
www.ochilviewha.co.uk

Welcome from the Chair

Hello, and welcome to the first Newsletter of 2023. I hope you had a lovely time over the festive period.

It has been a really busy start to the year at Ochil View Housing Association. We have launched our Helping Hand Plan in January, setting out the different ways we can help and support tenants. One of these was our first ever Meet, Heat and Eat events across four of our areas.

This was an opportunity for tenants to come along on a Saturday for a free bowl of soup, refreshments, and a chance to talk to staff about issues such as fuel vouchers and benefits guidance. There was also a range of freebies and competitions to keep the younger ones entertained!

We were delighted with the response we received to these, with around 75 tenants able to attend over the four dates in Tullibody, Alloa, Tillicoultry and High Valleyfield. Tenants said how worthwhile these were and we received lots of positive feedback in general about Ochil View as a landlord.

Thanks to funding, we have been able to offer a range of energy-saving prizes, such as air fryers, at these events. In addition, the Association has been visiting our older and more vulnerable tenants with a free heated throw and energy-saving lightbulbs from the funding pot. This has also been a great opportunity to chat with these tenants to see if we can offer any more help.

Elsewhere in this edition, you will find further information on the outcomes of the rent consultation carried out in December and January. Thank you to over 400 of you who took the time to respond. We also have news on the scrutiny group and the launch of our garden competition, not to mention some Easter competitions!

**Many thanks.
Take care,
Margaret**



A Helping Hand for Tenants



In these challenging times, we have been working hard to help tenants in as many ways as we can. We were delighted to secure nearly £100,000 through several different funding projects we applied for towards the end of 2022 and early this year. With this money, we have been able to offer a range of items.

All tenants were invited to apply for a one-off fuel voucher to help with heating costs. 641 tenants took up the offer, each receiving around £50 towards their bills. We also acquired money to provide a range of energy-saving products, such as air fryers, slow cookers, electric throws and power banks. And in February, we were successful in getting £25,000 worth of supermarket vouchers. You can read much more on how we distributed all this on Page 6 of this Newsletter.

Tenants have been kind enough to give us feedback on how receiving something has made a difference. Here are just a couple of the comments that came into us:

"Thank you for everything Ochil View have done, I can have my heating on today thanks to receiving a fuel voucher."

"I felt I just had to write to thank you so very much for everything you sent. That lovely warm electric fleece is absolutely marvellous, as are the bulbs and the £50 fuel voucher".





Planned Maintenance

We receive lots of queries around the renewal of the major components in people's homes such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors. We assign lifespans to components so that we can plan for when they may break down and require renewal. The graphics below highlights lifespans for the most common component:



Even though a component has a lifespan, it may not be renewed when it reaches that age. For example, a boiler may still be in good working condition and requiring minimal repairs at 15 years old, so delaying its renewal allows us to spend less, managing our finances more effectively, and focus renewal of only those components that are beyond economical repair.

We continually review our investment programme including component lifespans. We also undertake surveys one year ahead of planned replacement programmes to re-assess components before committing to renew them. This is all part of a continual programme of ensuring we invest where it is required and ensuring our finances are healthy.

Current / Future Investment

We use component lifespans to project our future investment alongside other factors such as inflation. This helps us determine our overall financial viability as an organisation. Our financial plans make standard assumptions on inflation for now and the years ahead, and when inflation is high, as it is currently, this can have a significant impact on what we can invest now and in the future.

For example, if we increase rents at levels below inflation, this means we have to use our cash reserves to fund investment plans. If this happens over a longer period, then our cash reserves reduce over time which has a negative impact on our financial stability.

Following the rent consultation and setting rents at a level below current inflation, it has resulted in us taking some difficult decisions around our investment plans for the upcoming year (2023-24) with the majority of projects being postponed. We appreciate this may cause upset to some tenants but we have to ensure our financial position remains strong both now and in the future.

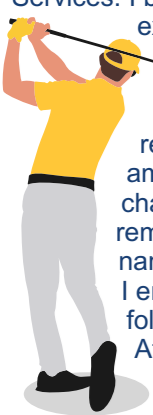
Where work is being postponed, our aim is to re-start these programmes in 2024-25 however this will depend on the financial climate at that time and following next year's rent consultation.

If you have any questions on this, you can contact Ailsa Sadowski or Andrew Gibb.

Welcome TO STEPHEN

With Anne Smith's promotion to Chief Executive, we held a robust recruitment process to fill the role of Director of Finance and Corporate Services. Stephen Wilson was appointed in February after an interim period with the Association. Welcome Stephen!

I am Stephen Wilson, and I am delighted to take up the role of Director of Finance & Corporate Services. I bring more than 35 years' experience of working in both private and public sectors as well as most recently the third sector. I am looking forward to the challenges of the role and remembering everyone's name!! Outside of work I enjoy playing golf and following Dunfermline Athletic.



As a result of Joanne Reid (Housing Officer) and Katie McPhait (Assistant Housing Services Officer) going off on maternity leave in April, we have some temporary internal changes to tell you about.



Joanne Reid, Adele Rae and Katie McPhait



Kirsten Kirkwood



Leona Hens



Tara Hamilton

How are we doing?

We are now operating all services again following previous disruptions. Here is how we performed during April to December 2022:

Where we performed well:

average length of time to complete emergency repairs: **1 hour 14 minutes**

(New) tenants satisfied with condition of home on taking up tenancy: **100%**

reactive repairs appointments kept: **93.65%**

planned maintenance works v programme: **95.89%**

average time to let a house **24.39 days**

current tenancy arrears: **3.44%**

% of annual lets to homeless applicants **28.28%**

Stage 2 complaints resolved within timescale: **100%**

rent collected as a % of rent due **99.70%**

Where we didn't do so well:-

average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs: **5.62 days**

repairs completed right first time **89.55%**

repairs completed on target: **94.72%**

tenants satisfied with the repairs service **84.00%**

Stage 1 complaints resolved within timescale: **92.16%**

Questions or comments? Contact Andrew Gibb, Director of Property Services or Linda McLaren, Director of Housing Services.

Positive feedback

We now have a system set up for tenants to share their positive experiences with Ochil View Housing and we've received some lovely comments already. Here's just a few:

"Have no complaints at all. My dealings with this housing association is first class. Any repairs we have had were carried out in a very courteous manner. Much appreciated."

"We are very appreciative of all your efforts to help us and get things sorted out"

"I would like to thank Ochil View staff and Logie Joiner for the quick response all sorted within 30 mins from phone call to getting into house, amazing service. Thank You."

"Thanks so much for all your help. I have taken a massive step to getting help with debts - I have been speaking to a financial advisor and will be actioning this going forward to give me a more stress-free life. I can't thank you enough."

"Overwhelmed with the food parcel. Really overwhelmed. Really appreciated. Please pass on my thanks, it means a lot"

You can share your positive experiences of Ochil View anytime. Just give us a call, chat to a staff member or pop into our office.

Complaints, Comments and Suggestions

All complaints and comments are welcome as they help change and improve our services.

Here is how we did between April and December 2022:

For 102 Stage 1 Complaints, we resolved 92.16% within timescale (4 days)

For 16 Stage 2 Complaints, we resolved 100% within timescale (20 days)

Here is an example of how we have responded to a complaint:

A contractor attended but did not carry out works as agreed, resulting in a wasted appointment. We arranged for a re-visit, the contractor fully explained what should have been done and works were completed to the tenants satisfaction. This has also been reviewed with the contractor about ensuring we carry out works as agreed.

So far this year, we received further praise on where we performed well with 117 positive comments. Examples of this are:

"The engineer was amazing and took the time to check full boiler. I feel he went above and beyond his job." – Existing tenant comment on a repair.

"Very helpful when I need a little extra support!" – Feedback from current tenant on a staff member.

"The repair was completed to a high standard and I was very pleased" – Repairs feedback from current tenant.

Questions or comments: Contact Andrew Gibb, Director of Property Services.

Staff Changes! From April the below staff changes will take place:

Staff Name Current Role Temporary Role from April

Adele Rae	Assistant Housing Services Officer	Housing Services Officer
Kirsten Kirkwood	Customer Services Assistant	Assistant Housing Services Officer
Leona Hens	Property Services Assistant	Assistant Housing Services Officer
Tara Hamilton	Customer Services Assistant	Property Services Assistant

We are currently in the process of recruiting two new temporary Customer Service Assistants who will be covering Kirsten and Tara's posts.

We look forward to welcoming and supporting everyone into their new roles, and we wish Joanne and Katie all the very best for their Maternity leave.

MONEY MATTERS



HERE IS AN UPDATE FROM OUR TENANCY SUSTAINMENT TEAM

CHANGES TO BENEFITS IN THE UK FOR 2023



Changes to the benefits system are due to come into force in 2023. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has set out a schedule for a range of updates and changes to benefits, with a particular focus on Universal Credit.

UK BENEFITS TO RISE IN APRIL

Following an announcement in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, most benefits will be updated by 10.1%.

The full list includes:

Universal Credit	Housing Benefit	Pension Credit
Attendance Allowance	Constant Attendance Allowance	Carer's Allowance
Disability Living Allowance	Employment and Support Allowance	Jobseekers Allowance
Maternity Allowance	Income Support	Personal Independence Payment
State Pension	Widows Benefit	Severe Disablement Allowance
Industrial Injuries Disablement Allowance	Industrial Death Benefit	Incapacity Benefit
Bereavement Benefit	Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental pay	

For example: Universal Credit for a single person over 25 will increase from £334.91 per month to £525.72 per month. The Benefit Cap will also be raised by 10.1%. The monthly cap will increase from £1,116.67 to £1,229.42 for a single person and from £1,667.67 to £1,835 for couples and families.

State Pension Triple Lock back in place

With the triple lock guarantee being kept in place, the full state pension will also rise by 10.1%, meaning that the new State Pension will rise from £185.15 to £203.85 per week, with the Basic State Pension increasing from £141.85 to £156.20 per week.

UC Universal Credit UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND CHANGES TO THE NUMBER OF WORKING HOURS

From 30 Jan 23 the Administrative Earnings Threshold of Universal Credit will be raised to a higher level which means more people will have to actively look for work whilst claiming.

The threshold will be raised from the equivalent of 12 hours on the National Living Wage to the equivalent of 15 hours on the National Living Wage, or £617 for single people and £988 for couples.

People earning below this threshold will be placed in an intensive work search group where they will face more pressure to boost their pay.

In addition, people who work 15 to 35 hours per week at minimum wage will be required to meet a work coach to increase their hours or earnings.

MIGRATING ON TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT

The DWP intends to continue the process of moving people who are on legacy benefits (see list below) onto Universal Credit.

Legacy Benefits are:

- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

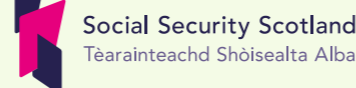
Universal Credit has replaced the benefits above, combining them into one single benefit payment. Unlike the legacy benefits, Universal Credit is paid monthly, although claimants in Scotland can opt to have payments made fortnightly.

If you receive a letter from the DWP called a Migration Notice please contact us as some of your existing benefits will be ending. Each individual circumstance will be different, due to the nature of the benefits you might be in receipt of, so it is important that you receive advice on what you need to do and how you will be affected.

The DWP is intending to carry out the migration over 2023 and 2024.

Note- There is an exception for people who get ESA and who are not in receipt of tax credits. These claimants will not be moved onto Universal Credit until 2028 at the earliest.

CHANGES TO BENEFITS IN SCOTLAND FOR 2023



Scottish Benefits also to rise in April

The Scottish Government has announced that devolved benefits, including Scottish Child Payments, Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payments will be updated.

Scottish Child Payments was increased from £20 per week to £25 per week in November 2022.

Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payments will be increased by 10.1%

Switch to Scottish Carer's Allowance

The Scottish Government has been working towards delivering a new benefit that will start to replace Carer's Allowance by the end of this year, with a full roll out expected for Spring 2024. It is planned that this will continue to provide the extra £245.70 Carer's Allowance Supplement payments twice a year, and will increase the monthly payment by around 13%. We hope to bring you more information about this as the year progresses.

Other changes that have happened over the last 3 months

- ✓ From February 2023 of the Winter Heating Payment (previously called Low Income Winter Heating Assistance) which replaces the Cold Weather Payment in Scotland.
- ✓ Migration of working age adults in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment onto Adult Disability Payment continues.

Future changes that will happen over the next 3 months

- ✓ Spring – The Scottish Government intends to have transferred all recipients of child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) on to Child Disability Payment
- ✓ Continuation of migration of legacy benefit applicants on to Universal Credit

For further information on any of the above please contact Margaret or Robert in the Tenancy Sustainment Team on 01259 722899 or at tenancysustainment@ochilviewha.co.uk



Margaret Hall,
Tenancy Sustainment
Officer



Robert Cowan,
Tenancy Sustainment
Assistant

Alteration And Adaptation Permission Requests

If you would like to make any alterations or improvements to your property you will require first our written permission.

Examples of permission requests include: Change to flooring, external decoration, internal doors, fencing, any external work to the property, CCTV etc. If you are in doubt as to whether permission is needed then contact us and we can advise you.

To apply for our permission, you must tell us in writing details of changes that you would like to carry out. We will reply with our decision within one month. In the reply we will inform you of our decision and if there are any conditions attached if permission is provided.

CCTV: Please note that due to data protection laws, all forms of CCTV do require permission. This includes Ring Doorbells and anything that captures and records images.

Written permissions can be requested via My Home, email customer.services@ochilviewha.co.uk or by letter.

Gas and Electrical Safety Checks



Our no access rate for Gas servicing for January has declined.

275 visits arranged and 128 no access visits which equates to 46.55% of visits.

It is important you allow access to your home so that we as the landlord can carry out safety checks for your Gas and Electrical.

Your Gas is legally required to be inspected annually and we start trying to gain access at least 8 weeks before your service is due.

The Electrical checks are required to be carried out every five years and we start to book these in within the year due.

If you are unable to keep any appointments made, then please notify us and we can reschedule. We would rather this than attend and get no answer.

It is part of your tenancy agreement to allow us access to carry these services out.



Quality Assurance Checks



We have appointed NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting), to carry out our quality assurance checks.

The Association will monitor the performance of contractors and external consultants and will undertake regular inspections during contracts to ensure work is carried out to specification.

These checks are carried out for gas servicing, gas & electrical repairs, electrical periodic inspections, and void works. 10% of jobs in each category are carried out.

The contractors will have ID on them and will call ahead to arrange access. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Logie welcomes another new apprentice!

Rebekka started with Logie on 6th January after the company she worked for made all their plumbers redundant - she is currently in her 2nd year so starts working with Logie with some experience already!

Rebekka likes music festivals and cycling! We hope she settles in well!





Tenant Engagement Roundup

Ochil View's first ever Tenant Scrutiny Group is now officially up and running! Tenant scrutiny is all about giving tenants the power and independence to review how well we are performing in delivering services and putting forward recommendations to the Board on any ways they think we can improve. Staff will be on hand to support the group and provide any information they may need. The group have agreed their terms of reference and are ready to go! We are excited to see what they want to look at first and we will provide more updates on it in the next Newsletter.

Along with tenant scrutiny, tenants have also had the opportunity to have their say in recent surveys. The most prominent of these was the rent consultation one. We received a significant response to this, with over 400 tenants replying. This was a massive increase from the previous year's total of just 32. With more tenants replying through our new survey system, it gives us a much wider perspective on how tenants feel on issues such as rent, repairs etc.

Prior to the rent survey, we asked for tenants' thoughts on our Annual Performance Report, which was issued in October 2022. Again, we received a strong response, with 216 replies. The feedback was largely very positive on how well we are delivering our services.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to provide us with feedback, be it through surveys or in conversations with staff.

We are always keen to explore different ways tenants can participate in the decisions we make. If you would like to get involved in some way, don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

You can speak to any member of staff about this.

More on Our Helping Hand Plan



As we discussed on the front page, with the current cost of living crisis, we have been working hard to help tenants in as many ways as we can. Towards the end of 2022, we applied for funding through two initiatives, The Scottish Federation of Housing Fuel Support Fund and Employers in Voluntary Housing Support Grants. We were absolutely delighted to learn that we had been successful with both bids, totaling nearly £70,000. **In February, we received £25,000 from the SFHA Winter Hardship Fund for food vouchers. With all this, we were able to organise the following:**

Meet, Heat & Eat Events

We held our first ever Meet, Heat and Eat events in January. **These were an opportunity for tenants to meet with us at four different venues on a Saturday for a free bowl of soup, rolls and refreshments.** It also allowed us the chance to offer support and guidance to tenants, arrange fuel vouchers and offer energy-saving products. We also had some fantastic competitions for kids and adults, with prizes such as slow cookers and air fryers on offer. The response to the events was brilliant, with around 75 tenants coming over the 2 days. We received some lovely tenant feedback too, many talking about their positive experience with Ochil View Housing as a landlord. Here is one example:

"I went to the one in Sterling Mills yesterday. The staff are brilliant, gave me a warm welcome and sound advice. Thank you for the goodies, was well appreciated."

Thank you to everyone who came along and made it such a worthwhile experience. We hope to do more of these in the not-too-distant future.



Fuel Vouchers

Along with these events, the funding we acquired allowed us to offer all tenants the opportunity to apply for a fuel voucher. This was a one-off amount to help with heating costs. We were able to help 641 tenants with this, each receiving around £50 via a text message or email. Again, tenants gave us some very positive responses to this, one commenting:

"Thank you so much for arranging this Donald, it really means a lot you didn't need to. I've never been used to any help so I really do appreciate this."

Welfare Visits

The third project we were able to launch thanks to this funding, was our welfare visits. All tenants over 66 and/or regarded as vulnerable in any way, were visited by staff from the Housing team. They brought with them a free electric throw and energy-saving lightbulbs amongst other things and helped tenants with advice around cost-of-living and general tenancy issues. It was lovely to check in with tenants and they were delighted with their cosy throws, as you can see with Sheila modelling hers here:



Christmas Events

We always love Christmas time as it means organising lots of giveaways for our tenants! We held our 12 days of Christmas event, giving a gift voucher or goodies hamper to one lucky tenant each day in the run up to Santa's visit. We also had a special Christmas Eve Box to give to a young Ochil Viewer who could create a Christmas Jumper and the winner was Emily, aged 9 from Alloa. **Here is her fantastic design:**



We were also kindly invited along to Banchory Primary School in December. We had gathered lots of fantastic toys and books and so held a tombola to help raise some funds for their school. Not only that, we had some prizes for the teachers and parents to win, not to mention free festive tattoos for all!

Thank you to the school for inviting us along, and for letting us hear their wonderful Christmas Concert beforehand. We managed to raise £257 for the school and received some lovely feedback from the pupils:

"I loved that you got to win prizes"

"I liked that there was some free stuff so that even if I didn't have much money, I could still have fun"

"I won a flying disco ball and I was so shocked"

"I won a teddy and it made me feel really happy"

MOTHER'S DAY COMPETITION

Mother's Day is on 19th March, the perfect time to celebrate all the supermums or super mother figures out there! And we have a fantastic beauty gift box to give away for one lucky Ochil View mum! To enter the competition, all you have to do is nominate your Super Mum! Tell us who it is and what makes her so special. Only Super Mums who are Ochil View tenants can be nominated **Entries close on Tuesday 21st March and we'll announce the winner shortly after!**

You can enter by emailing us at: tenantengagement@ochilviewha.co.uk or via our social media channels. You can also text your response to 07874 864 323 or pop a note through our letterbox! **Good luck!**



Annual Gardening Competition

Don't forget to start preparing your gardens/ pots and planters for our annual gardening competition. See some tips below from our landscaping contractors ID Verde who sponsor the competition:

Get to know your garden: Is it north or south facing? Where does the sun hit the ground? The answers to these could help you know what and where to place pots or plant.

Learn how to plant: Planting plants properly will ensure they grow and live for a long time. Properly prepare the soil before planting.

Start small: Don't take on too much at once, it is easier to do a little bit at a time.

Bee kind to wildlife: Bees pollinate which helps our plants grow, breed and produce food. This keeps the cycle of life turning. Plant bee friendly flowers.

FREE SUNFLOWER SEEDS!! We have a lot of sunflower seeds in the office which are perfect to plant in gardens or in pots. Pop in and get a bag! They are easy to plant and grow and bees and birds love them too!



Kids Corner

With Easter just around the corner, we think it is an egg-cellent time to have a couple of competitions for all the little bunnys out there!

We have some fantastic prizes, including a big chocolate egg, to give away!

First up, we have hidden Easter eggs all across this Newsletter. Can you help find them all and tell us how many there are?

Next, we have our very own Easter chick who arrived here in the office a few days ago. But she doesn't have a name! Can you suggest a good name for our furry friend and the name we like most will get to take her home!



Here's how to send your entries: Email, to: tenantengagement@ochilviewha.co.uk

Text or Phone to **07874 864 323**

Social Media - **send us a message via our Facebook page**

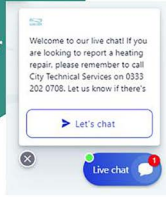
Post - **Pop your answers through our letterbox**

Remember to include your name, age and address when sending your entries in. Competition closes on Friday 31st March. Good luck!



LIVE CHAT

Remember we have a live chat function on our website!
This is operational between Monday-Friday 9am-5pm and we are here to answer any queries you may have! Just log on to our website and click on the small blue bubble bottom right!



Help with Hoarding

Our Housing Officers are on hand to help and support anyone who is struggling with Hoarding within their home.



We can offer help and work with tenants to improve the condition of their tenancy, making progress no matter how big or small. Tenant engagement is key so we can provide support and assistance to those who need it.

Although this is a very daunting task for those with hoarding tendencies, Ochil View are here to help. One tenant who received help from us commented:

“The staff have been really good whilst working with me and the contractors who came out and cleared the property were amazing. I feel I could let my tenancy go back to how it was before, but the continual support and regular visits keep me motivated. It has really helped my mental health, and everyone has been so considerate and non-judgemental regarding my situation.”

If you would like to talk to someone about hoarding then please contact your Housing Services Officer or email us at housing@ochilviewha.co.uk and someone will contact you.

Property purchases

Ochil View receives yearly funding from the Scottish Government to purchase properties from the open market. Do you know anyone who would be interesting in selling to us? Call us on 01259 722899 for further information!



Don't forget to change your clocks

Don't be left behind! At 2am on Sunday 26th March 2023 the clocks will go forward one hour in the UK. Are the lighter nights and warmer weather on the way? Here's hoping!



Passive Sensing Project

Following our recent workshop at Stirling University, the Association is now taking part in a project to monitor indoor home environments, looking at factors such as damp, heat, light levels and air quality. The aim being to better understand how they relate to occupants behaviour, health and well-being. We have a small number of households taking part and hope to see the results by the summer. The results should help feed into decisions about how we can improve tenants homes.



Unacceptable Actions and Expected Behaviours

The Association's values are at the core of our customer service delivery. Our values are to be open, transparent, responsive and trustworthy and our aim is to deliver a high standard of service to all our customers.



All customers will be treated with courtesy, respect, fairness and dignity and the Association expects this in return from all customers contacting our staff.

We understand customers may contact the Association in times of trouble and distress and may act out of character in stressful and frustrating situations, however our staff have a right to do their jobs without being treated badly and there are certain behaviours which will not be tolerated.

Examples of such behaviour -

- Verbal abuse/swearing, aggression, threats, personal derogatory remarks and allegations.
- Unreasonable demands
- Unreasonable persistence



Although instances of unacceptable behaviour towards staff are relatively low, we would remind all customers that unacceptable behaviour will be taken very seriously.

The Association's Unacceptable Actions Policy is in place to manage situations where actions/behaviour is deemed unacceptable. Depending on the severity of such behaviour, action can be taken to restrict or limit how customers can access our services. We would hope, however that such action would rarely be necessary.



Public Holidays

Our office will be closed for the following dates:

Easter Weekend

Friday 7th April 2023 & Monday 10th April 2023

King Charles III Coronation

Monday 8th May 2023

We wish everyone a very happy Easter.

