

# Spring Edition Newsletter 2023



# Take our survey, National Panel help us improve services...

Would you like to help improve social landlord services in Scotland? The latest National Panel survey is now available to all tenants and service users!

The Panel is one of the ways that the Scottish Housing Regulator can hear what tenants and service users think and make sure it focuses on the important things. Members receive occasional surveys and invites to take part in other feedback exercises. Participation is always optional and you can leave at any time.

We want to include a diverse range of people on the Panel, including those who are not involved in other ways of giving views on landlord services. Members include council and housing association tenants, people who have used homeless services, homeowners who receive social landlord factoring or common repairs, and people living on social rented Gypsy/Traveller sites.

#### Take part...

- Online at www.bit.ly/shr-panel
- Call 0800 433 7212
- Get a printed copy on natpan@engagescotland.co.uk
- or call **0800 433 7212**

# Keeping You Informed...

It is important that tenants provide the Co-operative with the most up to date contact details. This will enable us to keep you up to date on our services, share important information with you and advise you on what is happening in your community.

To update your contact details you can email enquiries@forgewoodcoop.org.uk with your name, address and mobile number and preferred email address that we can use to communicate with you. Alternatively call us on 01698 263311 and speak to a member of staff.

# **Estate Walkabouts**

We are planning to carry out estate management walkabouts during the Spring/ Summer and late Autumn. These walkabouts enable residents to come along and join staff in a walk around our estates and identify/discuss any areas of concern along with ways they could be improved.

If you are interested in attending these estate walkabouts please contact the office.



# Outcome of the Rent Consultation 2023/24

This year the rent setting process was the most challenging yet, given the cost of living crisis.

Following our tenant consultation and Rent Review Focus Group meeting in January, the Co-operative's Management Committee considered the views of tenants, the 3 options under consideration and the running costs contained within the budgets for 2023/24.

Taken all these factors into consideration they reached the difficult but necessary decision to

increase the rents by 5% for the year 2023/24 which reflects very well with the Scottish Average.

A big thank you to everyone who took part in the Rent Consultation Survey and attended the Rent Review Focus Group meeting. Your views are important to us and are taken into consideration when making the final decision.

#### Rent Increase from 1 April 2023

You will have received a letter confirming your new rent charge from 1 April 2023.

#### Have you increased your payments to reflect this?

#### Do you receive Housing Benefit?

Should you receive housing benefit we will have notified North Lanarkshire Council, Housing Benefit Department of your new 4 weekly rent charge. They will in turn revise your claim with your new rent charge and you will receive a letter from them advising of your new award.

#### Do you claim Universal Credit?

If you receive your housing costs (rent) via Universal Credit it is your responsibility to notify the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) of any changes to your charge. You can do this via your online Universal Credit account/journal. You should receive a "To-Do" notification requesting you to advise them of any change of housing cost. Please follow the necessary steps to ensure your new rent charge is updated on your journal as failure to do so will affect the amount of Universal Credit you will receive.

#### Do you pay by standing order?

If you pay by standing order you **must** contact your bank to increase your payments from 1 April 2023 as this will not be done automatically.

## Do you pay by other payment methods?

If you pay by any other method, please ensure you pay the correct amount to prevent your rent account going into arrears. You can refer to the "How to Pay" article contained within this newsletter.

For information, help and support or if you are having difficulty paying your rent, please contact Susan by email **susan@forgewoodcoop.org.uk** or phone on **077769 90405**.

You have a legal and contractual obligation to pay your rent. Please do not put your home at risk by refusing to pay or by failing to engage with us.

#### Well Done to our Prize Draw Winners!

We have two lucky prize draw winners who entered our Rent Consultation Survey...... Angie Robinson and Marek Dziekan.





# Rent First... Don't forget to pay your rent

It is important that all tenants pay their rent on time.

The Co-operative use the rent we collect to deliver the services we provide i.e. repairs service, planned improvements etc.

We understand in today's current climate that this can be difficult and we are also here to support and assist you, however paying your rent should be your top priority.

Don't put your home at risk by missing your rent payments.



## How to pay...

We offer a variety methods for you to pay your rent which are:-

#### Register online -

@ www.allpayments.net using the 19 digit number on your Allpay card. You can pay free of charge using your debit or credit card.





#### Virtual Payment -

Using your debit or credit card you can make a payment over the phone by calling a member of staff at the Co-operative.

#### Online banking -

Using your unique rent reference number and the Co-operative's bank details:

Bank of Scotland/ Sort code 80-09-15/ Account number 00357497.



#### **Phone App -**

Use Allpay payment App. Download for free with Apple & Android smart phone. For more info www.allpay.net/app.



#### **Bank Payment -**

(standing order) - You can download and complete a form at www.forgewoodcoop.org.uk or set up via your online banking using our bank details (as above).



#### **By Phone -**

Dial **0330 041 6497** for Allpay's automated phone payment service using debit or credit card.







At the **Post Office** by using your Allpay card. You can pay by cash/debit/credit card.



**Paypoint -** Using your Allpay card at any PayPoint outlet.

For further details look on the "Rent" section of our website

www.forgewoodcoop.org.uk

If you have fallen behind with your rent payments and accrued rent arrears, it is vital that you act quickly and contact your Housing Officer, Susan Kane.

For information, help and support please contact Susan by email susan@forgewoodcoop.org.uk or phone on 077769 90405.



# Don't be afraid to ask for help!

Money is something we all worry about especially now as we see a rise in our food, gas, electricity, fuel and we wonder how we will make our money stretch to ensure that we meet our basic needs.

Our AFTAR Project is available for anyone who requires support to claim benefits, financial / budgeting, debt, council tax, energy advice, assistance with digital learning.

We understand these worries and concerns and we are here to help you. You can get in touch by calling us on **01698 263311** and we can make an appointment with an Advisor.

Here is a list of the services Citizens Advice Bureau provide within our centres:-

#### Are you struggling financially?

If you are struggling financially, please contact the Co-operative and we can make an appointment with Robert our Income/Money Advisor.



Struggling with

He can assist with claiming benefits, maximising income, debt issues or sourcing funding to pay off/reduce your debts, help with energy advice, council tax etc.

Please call us on **01698 263311** and we can arrange an appointment.

# You can get free energy advice and support...

Caroline, Energy Advisor will assist with advice on energy bills and usage and help with billing issues, fuel debt, benefits entitlement and energy efficiency.

Should you require an appointment with Caroline please contact the office on **01698 263311**.

#### Free Digital Learning

This service is provided within the centre.... please come along.

o-operative Ltd





# New Cost of Living Payments from Spring 2023

As part of the Government plans to assist people with the rising energy costs they have devised a plan to award various payments to help towards the high energy bills that everyone is facing.

### Cost of Living Payments 2023 to 2024

The government has announced further Cost of Living Payments between spring 2023 and spring 2024. These payments are:

- £301 First Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2023
- £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment – during Summer 2023
- £300 Second Cost of Living Payment – during Autumn 2023

- £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment – during Winter 2023/4
- £299 Third Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2024

Those eligible will be paid automatically, and there will be no need to apply.

For more details go to https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payments-2023-to-2024



## Do you need a referral for a food bank?

Have you experienced a problem with your benefits, had an unexpected expense or a change to your household circumstances and it has left you with no money?

If so, contact the office on **01698 263311** or email **yvonne@forgewoodcoop.org.uk** to arrange for a referral to be sent through to our community foodbank.

Foodbank support is available locally on Thursday serving those in need across the community of North Lanarkshire.





## **Kerbside Uplifts of Bulk Items**

the estate.

As you are aware our contractors, Cameron Cleaning carry out our kerb side / bulk uplifts within our estates at times scheduled by the Co-operative.

As they separate the bulk uplift items for recycling purposes, it can result in multiple uplifts which may run into the following day.

To allow the contractor to follow this process, please allow a day after the scheduled uplift before reporting any items to the Co-operative that have not been uplifted within

#### **Landscape Maintenance**

As the growing season is upon us the landscape contractor, Murray Landscapes will commence with the cutting of the grass in all our communal areas early April.

We should thereafter be in a regular programme of work with the grass scheduled to be cut every fortnight.



The contractor will not cut any grass where dog foul has been left lying. It is essential that all dog owners clear up any mess to allow the landscapers to attend all areas.

#### **Glorious Gardens**

Spring is nearly upon us and with it comes the growing season....so if you have a garden, we encourage you to maintain it.

Should you have a private garden area or driveway we would remind all tenants of their obligations to ensure that the garden is well maintained throughout the year.

Our housing staff will be out and about inspecting gardens throughout the summer to ensure that tenants are maintaining the legal obligation in their tenancy agreement to keep their gardens tidy.

I'm sure you'll all agree that the area looks lovely when people take the time to look after their gardens and keep all paths/ driveways free of litter and weeds.

# Garden **Competitio** Will You Be A Winner?

We are again holding our annual garden competition. Last years was closely fought and this year we are sure that there will be just as many green fingered tenants who are making great efforts to brighten up their garden areas.

You can either enter your own garden into the competition or if you have a neighbour you would like to nominate for having a beautiful garden, please email enquiries@forgewoodcoop.org.uk providing your name, address, phone number and photos. All entries must be submitted to the Co-operative by **31 July 2023**. No entries will be accepted after the closing date.

In addition to this we will also be carrying out a walk round of all our estates within July to identify any gardens we will enter into the garden competition.

All entries will be independently judged by our landscapers, Murray Landscapes. Winners will be notified by the end of August 2023 who will receive a prize kindly donated by our judges.

All winners' photos will be printed in the Autumn edition of our newsletter...

Gardening is a healthy, fun activity so happy gardening and good luck!

## **COMMUNITY TEAM UPDATE**

Hello,

It's been another busy time for the Community Team......from weekly lunch club to a community clean up, easy exercise to social history, from first aid courses to play with food.

As we step into spring we have made a programme of new events and activities. For more information please contact the Community Team on community@forgewoodcoop.org.uk 07495 549 065 / 01698 263311.









# **Spotlight on Community Cinema**

Our Community Cinema events continue to provide fun days out for the community.

Recently the kids were mesmerised by Lyle, the amazing singing crocodile. For grown-ups RESPECT detailed the fascinating life of talented songstress Aretha Franklin

Please watch our noticeboards and social media pages for details of exciting new screenings that will take place in the weeks ahead.

Our cinema events are free to attend and all movies are shown on our genuine full size cinema screen – drinks and snacks are included too. We would love to see you there! Our cinema events are free to attend



# **COMMUNITY TEAM UPDATE**





# **Community Team Contact**

For more information please contact:

Richard Bolton Community Development Officer community@forgewoodcoop.org.uk 07495 549 065 01698 263311



COMMUNITY





FORGEWOOD HOLDINGS



Thanks to our funders and partners

# Putting Tenant Safety First Fire Safety within Your home

Scotland's firefighters are calling on communities to help stop preventable deaths in house fires – by making a five-minute phone call.

"Make the Call" is a hard-hitting appeal to carers, family, friends to those who are at risk of serious injury or even death because of an accidental fire in their home.

The latest statistics show that more than 20 people who are over the age of 50, smoke and either have mobility issues, live alone, or use medical oxygen have already been injured, some seriously, by such fires between January 1 and April 30 this year. Tragically, 12 of those people sadly passed away.

Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) are appealing to communities across Scotland to help save a life and consider home fire safety when checking in on vulnerable neighbours, patients, friends and family members and to put them in touch with SFRS wherever possible using the free Home Fire Safety Visit phone line.



As part of their commitment to building a safer Scotland they offer everyone in Scotland a free home fire safety visit. They will help you sort out a fire escape plan and provide information about smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms.

Contact SFRS on: **0800 0731 999** | Text «FIRE" to **80800** from your mobile phone

Alternatively email your local Community Action Team on W.LANCommunityActionTeam@firescotland.gov.uk

#### Fire Safety In Closes - Keep them Clear!

As your landlord, we have an obligation to do everything we can to keep our tenants safe. This includes making sure that all closes, shared internal areas, landings and stairwells are kept free of all items and personal possessions.

We appreciate that you may think a few items stored in your close may not

appear to pose a risk. However in a smoke filled area, any items could help fire to spread and also cause a hazard which prevents a safe escape.

You can help keep everyone safe by making sure nothing is left in your close or communal area at any time.



# Fire Protection in your Home

Regular routine testing and maintenance of your smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms are very important to ensure they are working properly.

By taking a few minutes of your time every week by using the integral test button on the alarms could save the lives of you and your family.

If you have any missing or faulty smoke, heat or carbon monoxide alarms, or require assistance with testing your alarms, please contact our office on **01698 263311**.

### **Contents Insurance**

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. We strongly recommend that you take out home contents insurance.

No matter how careful you are, there is always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen and home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind.

The Co-operative is not responsible for covering damage to any of your possessions in case of fire or flood, this includes decoration and floor coverings.

We suggest that all tenants take out home contents insurance, either through Thistle Tenant Risk Home Contents Insurance

Scheme or by making your own arrangements.

To find our more information on the options and costs of Thistle Tenant Risk:-

- Call 0345 450 7286;
- Request an application pack from the Co-operative;
- Visit https://www. thistletenantsscotland.co.uk where you can also request someone to call you back!



# Congratulations

to our Test it Tuesday Champion.....Alistair Hamilton who entered and won our prize draw!

Many thanks to Saltire our gas heating contractors who kindly donated the prize.

# Crime Stoppers. Speak up Stay safe

#### Tel 0800 555 111

100% anonymous Always

At CrimeStoppers, they believe everyone has the right to feel safe, wherever they live.

They are here to help you tackle crime in your community - by phone and online, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Crimestoppers is an independent charity that gives you the power to speak up and stop crime, 100% anonymously.

We know that it can be difficult to come forward with information. You might have seen or heard something about a crime but don't know what to do, or are scared to give information. It's easy to think there is nothing you can do, but CrimeStoppers can offer you a safe way to do this.





# Manage condensation in your home



A build-up of moisture in the home can cause a range of problems and can potentially damage the fabric of the building if allowed to continue.

Condensation happens when moist air touches a cool surface. It forms water droplets and moisture on the surface.

If this continues over a period of time and does not dry out, it encourages mould growth.

#### Do:

- ✓ Keep a window open when drying clothes indoors;
- ✓ Keep the internal kitchen door closed when cooking;
- ✓ Keep lids on pots and pans when cooking;
- ✓ Use an extractor fan in the kitchen and bathroom:
- ✓ Open the window after a bath or shower and open the door;
- ✓ Try to keep a good level of background heating throughout the property;
- ✓ Try to dry clothes outside where possible;
- Make sure air can circulate by leaving gaps between furniture and wall.

It can also happen when large pieces of furniture, for example wardrobes and beds, are placed against an outside wall.

Preventing condensation in the home is your responsibility but the good news is there are steps you can take to stop it happening. There are many ways to reduce the risk of condensation in your home which are listed below.

You can treat little spots of mould quickly and easily. Use three parts warm water and one part bleach. Make sure you dry the wall after cleaning it. This should become part of your regular cleaning routine.

If this doesn't work, speak to the Co-operative.

#### Don't:

- **★** Dry clothes over warm radiators;
- ➤ Block off any ventilation around the house such as air bricks or trickle vents on windows:
- Use tumble driers unless they are self-condensing or vented with a hose outside;
- ➤ Overfill cupboards and wardrobes;
- Keep furniture and beds hard against walls;
- Keep the door open when cooking or bathing.

#### How to tackle mould growth

Condensation can cause mould to form in your home and lead to staining or damaging wallpaper, wall surfaces, window frames, furniture and clothing.

You can treat little spots of mould quickly and easily.

Use three part warm water and one part bleach.

If you have followed the advice and you still have problems please call us on **01698 263311** and we will check out your home for any problems.





# Tenant Alterations/ Improvement



Unfortunately, it has been identified by our contractor that some tenants have carried out alterations to their home without consent and the work has failed to meet current safety regulations or have been carried out by a qualified and competent tradesmen.

In these cases it has been found that a shower has been installed above the bath and has failed to meet the required electrical safety installation standards.

This practice could put the safety of yourself, your family and others at risk by not meeting the required standards.

As tenant safety is paramount, in cases such as these, the work will be rectified by our contractor and the cost recharged to the tenant.

Tenants should always seek permission from the Co-operative to carry out any alterations and improvements they are thinking about to their home or any part connected to the property.

We have a duty to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that any alterations carried out by tenants conform to all relevant Planning and Building Technical Standards regulation.

In addition the Co-operative must be satisfied that any proposed alterations will not adversely affect the property, neighbouring properties or tenants.

Therefore, tenants wishing to carry out alterations/improvements to their home must request an alteration form from the Co-operative and must receive written consent before proceeding with any works.

#### **Emergency call-outs resulting in recharge**

We have been made aware by our contractor that tenants are contacting them through the out of hours emergency service to attend to non-repair call outs. Some examples of these are:-

- Tenant reports no hot water or heating

   Engineer reports that boiler has been turned off at switch;
- Tenant reports no electricity –
   Engineer reports that tenant has no money in electric meter;
- Tenant reports electric keeps tripping

   Engineer reports faulty house
   appliance, kettle tripping electrics;

These are only a few examples....we ask that you make sure your repair request is an emergency before you call out a contractor outwith the normal working hours which are Mon- Fri from 9am – 4.30pm.

If a call out has been made to a contractor and it is found to be a non-repair the cost of this will be recharged to the tenant.

As a tenant you have a responsibility to ensure the repair has not been caused by something you have failed to check or do within your home before calling out a contractor in an emergency resulting in an unnecessary call.



We do our best to monitor communal areas and attend to repairs that would cause a hazard. However should you notice a hazard or anything you feel poses a risk, then please let us know by emailing enquiries@forgewoodcoop.org.uk and providing a picture where possible.

Or alternatively, call our office on **01698 263311** and speak to a member of staff.

# Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results 2022/23



Thanks to all of you who took part in our recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey which took place in November/December 2022 by independent market research company, Knowledge Partnership.

140 face to face surveys were carried out by them during this time and the results have been published below.

As we are committed to continuous improvement, the feedback is vital to help us better understand the needs of our tenants. We will use the findings to identify what we have done well, where we need to do better and more importantly, it will help us make appropriate changes to improve our services where required.

We have listed the results from this survey and that of the last 3 yearly survey which was held in 2019. We have also detailed the Scottish Landlord Average which will allow you to look at how we are comparing to that of other landlords in Scotland.

We are delighted with the outcome of the surveys and a huge thanks to all tenants who took part.

The results /performance are shown by the percentage of tenants that were very or fairly satisfied in the following areas:-

••

Remained the same



Positive Outcome



Negative Outcome

We have two lucky prize draw winners who participated in our Tenant Satisfaction Survey......

Suzanne Kelly and Mr & Mrs Kerrigan. Well done!

ARC indicator	Question	% tenants very and fairly satisfied 2019	% tenants very and fairly satisfied 2022	Scottish landlord average 2022 (source ARC data – mixed methods)	
Indicator 1	Overall service provided to tenants by the Co-operative.	90.9%	91.4%	83.1%	
Indicator 2	The Co-operative keeping tenants informed about their services and decisions.	96.5%	87.1%	86.2%	
Indicator 5	Tenants satisfied about the opportunities given for them to participate in the Co-operative's decision-making processes.	90.9%	85.7%	81.6%	
Indicator 7	Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are tenants with the quality of their home.	87.5%	86.4%	81.0%	
Indicator 12	Thinking about the LAST time repairs or maintenance was carried out, how satisfied or dissatisfied are tenants with the repair service provided by the Co-operative?	88.0%	88.7%	90.0%	
Indicator 13	Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied with the Co-operative's contribution to the management of the neighbourhood.	89.6%	89.3%	80.3%	
Indicator 25	Taking into account the accommodation and the services provided by the Co-operative to what extent does the rent represents good or poor value for money.	85.4%	81.4%	78.8%	



#### **What a Performance**

We provide performance information to our tenants to demonstrate how we are performing as a landlord and to highlight areas for improvement. We are pleased to confirm we remain strong in all areas and a snapshot is provided below which highlights our performance from 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022.

EMPTY HOMES (VOID) & ALLOCATION INFORMATION	1 Apr. to 31 Dec. 2021 (same period last year)	1 Apr. to 31 Dec. 2022 (same period last year)	Scottish Average
Number of terminations	8 + 1 Mutual Exchange	15	
Rental loss for year as a percentage of annual income	0.11%	0.19%	1.43%
Number of re-lets	8 + 1 Mutual Exchange	16	
Average number of calendar days void for relets	10 days	9.56 days	51.57 days
RENT INFORMATION			
Total rent due (annual)	£860,439	£887,167	
Gross rent arrears in £	£19,485	£20,210	
Gross rent arrears as a % of total rent due	2.26%	2.28%	6.34%
REPAIRS	1 Apr. to 31 Dec. 2021 (same period last year)	1 Apr. to 31 Dec. 2022 (same period last year)	Scottish Average
% of gas services done before anniversary date	100%	100%	N/A
No of emergency repairs reported in period	51	77	N/A
Time taken (in hours) to complete emergency repairs	2.7 hrs	3.7 hrs	4.22 hrs
No of jobs failed (not completed in timescale target)	0	0	N/A

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED 1/4/22 – 31/12/22	Number Received	Resolved	Upheld	Some Upheld (Partially)	Not Upheld	Withdrawn
No of 1st stage complaints responded to in full Stage 1 - (Front line 5 Working Days)	6	2	4	0	0	0
No of 2nd stage complaints responded to in full Stage 2 - (20 Working Days)	2	1	0	0	1	0

161

3.5 days

0

#### **Timescales to Resolve**

No of non-emergency repairs reported in period

Time taken (in days) to complete non-emergency repairs

No of jobs failed (not completed in timescale target)

When a complaint is received, we aim to resolve the matter within 5 working days however if the complaint is more complex and requires a full investigation we aim to respond within 20 working days. We responded to 8 of these complaints on time.



N/A

6.74 days

N/A

177

3 days





The office will be closed Friday 7 April 2023 and Monday 10 April 2023 for the Easter Weekend.

#### **Useful Numbers**

(Including Emergency Contacts)

- » Saltire Facilities Management Ltd Emergency Repair Number 0845 606 1555 (all gas central heating faults 24 hours)
- » Saltire Facilities Management Ltd Servicing Number **01698 743647**
- » Rodgers and Johnston (all other out of hour EMERGENCY REPAIRS) 0844 **247 2120** (Freephone number **0800** 9992520)
- » North Lanarkshire Council (housing benefits and council tax) 01698 403210
- » North Line North Lanarkshire's 0345 143 0015 contact centre dealing with Bulk uplift, bins, roads and lighting, abandoned vehicles, Dog fouling, dog nuisance, gritting
- » TRANSCO (National Grid) (smell of gas) 0800 111 999
- » POLICE SCOTLAND 101 (999 **EMERGENCY**)
- » FIRE BRIGADE (999 EMERGENCY) or text "FIRE" to 80800 from your mobile phone
- » SCOTTISH WATER 0800 077 8778
- » **ELECTRICAL DAMAGE** to electrical supply or network equipment Call 105 or your own electrical supplier
- » CRIMESTOPPERS 0800 555 111
- » ALLPAY 0330 041 6497

# **Joint Staffing** update

Laura Sneddon...we are delighted to announce that Laura has been appointed on a permanent full time basis from April as our Administration Assistant in Housing. Laura initially joined us as a Modern Apprentice.

**Zarah Bano.....**we are delighted to announce that Zarah has been appointed on a permanent full time basis from April as our Administration Assistant in Maintenance. Zarah initially joined as a Modern Apprentice.

## **Prefer Paperless?**

Did you know you can receive this newsletter by email?

Going paperless is better for our planet and helps us to keep costs down.

We want to make sure that we are providing you with the best value for money.....email kevin@forgewoodcoop.org.uk to make the switch today.

### **Different Formats**

We are striving to make this newsletter as accessible as possible for everyone.

Should you require a copy in large print, audio or in another language, please contact our office on **01698 263311** where our staff will be happy to assist.





FORGEWOOD HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LTD

Forgewood Community Centre, 49 Dinmont Crescent, Motherwell





enquiries@forgewoodcoop.org.uk



www.forgewoodcoop.org.uk













