

larkfield news

creating a better neighbourhood



Help us improve our services

ARE YOU:

- a Larkfield tenant or resident living in the Larkfield area;
- looking for a rewarding way to have a say in your local community; and
- interested in developing (and improving) quality, customer-focused services for Larkfield tenants, owners and other customers?

IF SO, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We provide affordable housing and services to over 2,000 customers in the Inverclyde area and are led by a voluntary Management Committee. We are looking for new tenant and resident members to join us.

Our aim is to provide affordable homes and services that meet local needs and support our communities.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

As a committee member you will assist in:

- ensuring Larkfield housing is run effectively;
- monitoring performance and service quality;
- setting our future goals; and
- considering and developing new community projects.

You'll be working with like-minded people to achieve our objectives. Although this is a voluntary role, it also offers an opportunity for personal development and access to a range of learning, development, and networking opportunities. Ongoing support is available as part of your role through induction, mentoring and access to seminars and conferences.

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

No formal qualifications are required. If you share our values and passion for developing and improving services, we would like to hear from you. We are committed to improving equality and diversity on our committee and we welcome applications from all sectors of the community.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact us on **01475 630930** or **info@larkfieldha.org.uk**.

Welcome



to the latest edition of Larkfield News. Inside, you will find information on our new

Building Resilience for a Better Home project, Energy Activators and an update on our current working arrangements.

You will also see we are looking for tenants and residents to get involved. We have always promoted ourselves as a “tenant-led” organisation and are keen more tenants and residents join us in improving our services and making a positive difference within the Larkfield neighbourhood.

On behalf of the staff and committee, we hope you’ve enjoyed the summer and the sunny weather.

Suzanne Harris
Chairperson

Covid-19 update

GETTING IN TOUCH

While our office may be closed in line with current government guidelines, our staff are still available for all tenants and other customers during our normal opening times: Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri 9am to 4pm; Wed 9am -12.30pm by contacting **01475 630930** or **info@larkfieldha.org.uk**.

YOU CAN ALSO USE OUR ‘MY LARKFIELD’ TENANCY APP TO STAY IN TOUCH

This gives you the option to check and pay your rent, report a repair and update the information we hold on you. You can download the app from the App Store or Google Play.

HOUSING SERVICE

Our housing team is available should you want to discuss your tenancy, rent payments or neighbourhood issues.

If you are having any problems in paying your rent it is important you contact our housing team as soon as you know there is a problem.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Our reactive repairs service has been fully resumed, however, normal timescales may still be difficult to achieve in some routine repairs due to Covid-related issues.

Thank you for your continued patience and co-operation during this time.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

We will be closed on Friday 3 and Monday 6 September 2021 for the local September holiday.

If you need an emergency repair when the office is closed, call Gas Sure on **01294 468 113** for any gas, heating or hot water emergency.

For all other emergencies, call Bield 24hr Response on **01294 468 113**.

You can also visit our website **www.larkfieldha.org.uk** for further information on reporting emergency repairs outwith office hours.

Free self-help coaching for Larkfield tenants

'Building Resilience for a Better Home' is a new project which offers free self-help coaching sessions to Larkfield tenants who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues, including anxiety, stress, low mood, depression and sleep difficulties.

You can access up to nine online sessions with our LinkLiving self-help coaches where you will learn techniques you can use to manage your mental health.

Using a tailored approach, self-help coaches will introduce you to a range of resources, techniques and tools to help better manage your mental health, help you to identify personal outcomes to work towards, and encourage you to connect to other services and sources of support in the community.



WHAT IS 'SUPPORTED SELF-HELP'?

Supported self-help is a short-term process to support someone in understanding and managing current difficulties with their mental health.

If you are interested in this service, please contact your housing officer on **01475 630930** or contact LinkLiving directly:

Web: www.linkliving.org.uk

Email: lareception@linkgroup.org.uk

Call: **01324 466860**

LARKFIELD OWNER OCCUPIERS – ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CHARGE 2020/21

You should have received your annual common landscape maintenance charge for 2020/21. Payment is now due and we would urge anyone who has not yet made their payment to do so now to avoid any additional charges.

You can also set up an affordable payment plan to spread the cost of your charge for next year. This can be paid by Direct Debit or on your Allpay card.

WORDSEARCH WINNERS

The winners of our spring wordsearch were Mr A. Bowie and Mrs J McLaughlin who each won a £25 Amazon voucher. Congratulations to our winners!

VALUING YOUR FEEDBACK – PERFORMANCE UPDATE 20/21

This is our performance report for the six-month period from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report shows how we are performing in meeting our timescales, delivering satisfactory outcomes, and implementing changes to improve our services.

During this period, we recorded 14 complaints. No compliments were recorded during this period.

Stage 1 – Front line complaints

Complaints by service

COMPLAINT REASON	No. of complaints
REACTIVE REPAIRS SERVICES	9
LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE CONTRACT	3
GAS CONTRACTOR	1
PLANNED MAINTENANCE CONTRACT	1
TOTAL	14

14 complaints were dealt with through Stage 1 of our complaints process. 93% of complaints were responded to within our target timescale of five working days. Our average time to respond was 2.5 (working) days. Six complaints (42.8%) were upheld (i.e. found to be justified).

We received no Stage 2 complaint during this period.

If a complaint is upheld, we will look to implement changes to improve our future customer service.

Learning lessons and what we are doing to improve our customer service:

- Increased monitoring and engagement with our reactive repair contractors to ensure Covid-related backlog of non-emergency repairs are cleared and any emerging issues identified quickly and communicated to tenants.
- Increased monitoring and engagement with our new landscape maintenance contractor to ensure initial complaints are dealt with quickly and by an on-site supervisor.
- Increased communication between Larkfield and tenants to ensure tenants are informed of progress at all stages of the repairs process.

Heat, smoke and carbon monoxide detection works

The Scottish Government introduced a new fire and smoke alarm standard for all homeowners and landlords, and we are legally required to comply with the new standard in all our properties.

Smoke alarms should be installed in hallways and landings and heat alarms installed in every kitchen. All smoke and heat alarms should be interlinked and carbon monoxide alarms fitted where there is, for example, a gas boiler or fire in the property.

We have appointed Gas Sure to carry out the required detection upgrade works and by the end of June, works were completed within approximately 98% of our properties.

If you haven't been able to provide Gas Sure access to your home to have this work completed, please contact us to arrange for works to be carried out in your home.



LARKFIELD FOOD SHARE

Larkfield Food Share operates on a Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday at 11am from Larkfield Community Hall on Lothian Road. Please bring your own bag and mask, and remember to socially distance when queuing. Food Share has been set up by the community to help tackle food waste.



ENERGY ACTIVATORS

The Energy Activators project continues to thrive, providing invaluable support to tenants of Larkfield, Oaktree and Cloch Housing Associations.

To date, the Energy Activators have helped 79 Larkfield tenants with issues like comparing tariffs and suppliers for a better deal, registering for priority services with their energy providers and accessing direct funding for both non-prepayment and prepayment customers.

With winter fast approaching, the Warm Home Discount schemes will be opening soon, and the Energy Activators can help you to apply for the £140 payment from your energy provider. To chat about this, or any other matter relating to your energy bills, please call the office on **01475 630 930**.

Don't risk your tenancy

Cannabis is a Class 2 Drug and in Scotland it is illegal to:

- Possess or use cannabis
- Cultivate cannabis
- Sell cannabis

CANNABIS USE

Unfortunately, there has been an increase in the number of complaints received from residents about the smell of cannabis from neighbouring properties.

This is particularly a problem in blocks of flats, and it is often not clear which resident is either smoking cannabis themselves or allowing others who visit to smoke it.

The complaints are not just confined to flats however, smoking cannabis in a private garden is also illegal and anti-social behaviour.

It is illegal to possess cannabis and use it – even within your own home. In addition to being illegal, it is also a breach of tenancy.

Our Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement contains the following clauses relating to drug use:

Clause 2.3

You must not use or allow the house to be used for illegal or immoral purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: having controlled drugs in the house. You must not carry out any act in the house or in the neighbourhood which may lead to a criminal conviction against you or any member of the household or persons visiting the property.

Clause 3.3

In particular you, those living with you, and your visitors must not:

- use your house, or allow it to be used, for illegal or immoral purposes;
- loiter or cause nuisance in any open space within the neighbourhood;
- use or sell unlawful drugs or sell alcohol.

Clause 3.4

In addition, you, those living with you, and your visitors must not do the following in an anti-social way:

- use drugs or alcohol.

It is clear taking illegal drugs is a breach of tenancy and if sufficient evidence of the breach can be obtained, then legal action will be taken. We will always pass on any information received to the Police and we strongly encourage neighbours to do the same if they have concerns about illegal drug use.

You can call the Police on **101** or Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

CANNABIS CULTIVATION

The Police in Inverclyde successfully found several large-scale cannabis cultivations. Production has stopped, the plants and equipment have been destroyed and charges are pending. The value of the drugs found in the last six months is around £1.4 million.

There is a very serious and dangerous aspect to cannabis cultivation, and it is very important the public is aware of the danger.

To cultivate cannabis plants, large amounts of heat and light are needed and in many cases the criminals involved in this cultivation will tamper with the electricity supply. This is extremely dangerous and could result in a fire or an explosion. High power fans or extraction devices are often used to disguise the smell, and these can overheat. There is an increased chance of electric shocks, and these can prove fatal and again increases the risk of fire or explosion.

Whilst it is often the case industrial type premises are used for large scale cultivations, domestic premises are often used too. Even cultivation of a few plants in a house or flat is dangerous to the occupants and others as well as being illegal.

Some signs to watch out for are:

- Strong smell
- Condensation on windows
- Windows closed in hot weather
- Noise from fans running
- Heat radiating from the property
- Flickering lights in the close or your own flat on a regular basis

If you have any concerns about a property, please either contact the Police or your housing officer to discuss your concerns. You can report it anonymously by using the Crimestoppers number **0800 555 111**.

SELLING CANNABIS

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) provides for a new streamlined eviction process where there has been a criminal conviction punishable by imprisonment for antisocial or criminal behaviour within the previous 12 months, committed in or in the vicinity of the house by the tenant or someone residing in or visiting the house.

The above process would apply to a conviction for cultivating or selling drugs, including cannabis.

We will always take eviction action against tenants, or someone residing or visiting the house, who is convicted of cultivating or selling drugs from one of our properties.

Inverclyde Common Housing Register (ICHR) update



The ICHR team is still working from home and, although we reduced our hours of operation due to Covid, we are delighted our phone hours are now back to normal. If you call **01475 807011** during office hours, someone will be there to answer your call.

We're now well underway with our new online form and software and are working hard to make this as user friendly as possible. If you are having any issues applying or bidding, please let us know!

Our Housing Allocations Policy is now due for review. This is a process where we ask you for your opinions on our policy: is there anything you feel we should change or do slightly differently? We have started this process internally so the next stage will be to ask you for your input. This will be in a survey format and will only take a few minutes to complete.

We have also kicked off our annual housing list review; this is when you get an email asking you to login to your housing application, check all the information is up to date, make any changes and sign the declaration at the end. You must do this if you want to keep your application live on our register. If you don't respond to the review your application will be cancelled, however we will give you notice of this.

If you would like any further information, please contact us on **01475 630930** or **info@inverclydechr.org.uk**.

Helping Hands

Helping Hands, a local charity, is appealing for donations of any unwanted white goods and/or items of furniture. Please contact the shop on **07934 172 798** by phone or text message to arrange a free uplift.



14 Lothian Road, Larkfield, Greenock PA16 0PG

t: 01475 630930

e: info@larkfieldha.org.uk

www.larkfieldha.org.uk

Office opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am – 4pm

Wednesday 9am – 12.30pm. Closed Wednesday afternoon.

Larkfield Housing Association will produce this information on request in Braille, Audio Tape, Large Print and Community Languages. Larkfield Housing Association Limited is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, Registered Number: 2509 R(S), Registered Office: 14 Lothian Road, Greenock PA16 0PG. It is a Charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number: SC032418; a Registered Social Landlord with the Scottish Housing Regulator, Registration Number: HCB 293; and registered as a Property Factor Id: PF000279. Part of the Link group © Link Group Ltd.