

larkfield news

creating a better neighbourhood



Welcome



to the third edition of Larkfield News for 2021. Inside, you will find information on heating and energy advice, our new management committee and support funds available to tenants.

While our office remains closed to the public, most of our services have restarted in line with Scottish Government guidelines. We are still available for you to call, or, if you would like an appointment with a member of the team, please call our office on **01475 630 930** to arrange this.

On behalf of the Committee and staff, I wish you all a very merry festive period and happy New Year!

Suzanne Harris
Chairperson

Festive opening hours

We will close at 4pm on Friday 24 December 2021 and re-open at 9am on Thursday 6 January 2022.

Please note: we only operate an emergency repairs service during this period – only emergency repairs will be dealt with until the office re-opens on 6 January 2022.

Emergency contacts:

General emergency repairs – 0800 783 7937

Emergency gas repairs – 01294 468 113

Larkfield Housing celebrates another successful year!

Larkfield members, committee members and staff gathered online on 19 September for our 2021 Annual General Meeting and to reflect on our successes during an unprecedented year.

In her annual report to members, Suzanne Harris, our Chairperson, outlined our response to the Covid-19 pandemic, during which we supported tenants, customers and staff, and maintained service delivery. Guests also heard how we continued to invest across our stock during the year with £237,000 spent on planned and cyclical repair works and £274,000 on reactive repairs.

Welcome to our new Committee members

Our Management Committee was delighted to welcome five new members:

- Mareta Greig
- Tracey Thompson
- John Scott
- Elizabeth McLean
- Carol Crawford
- Jim Lennon

This year's office bearers are:

- Suzanne Harris (chairperson)
- Aileen Hunter (vice chair)
- William Rice (secretary)



£0.37 million investment programme for Larkfield homes

In 2021, we continued to focus on compliance safety works within the home and external decoration and lighting works.

These works included:

- Electrical safety testing – 25% of properties
- External decoration works – Auchmead Road, Cambridge Road, Devon Road, Dorset Road, Essex Road, Lincoln Road, Oxford Road, Pembroke Road, Suffolk Road and Warwick Road
- Internal replacement doors (Phase 1 – up to 30 properties)
- External lighting (Phase 2)
- External roughcasting improvement works - Banff Road/Banff Place flats



We'll be providing you with more information in the coming months.

Tell us what you think of our Payment to Tenants Policy!

Payments to tenants may happen because of repair work, home improvements carried out by tenants or the operation of the complaints procedure. The policy also covers decoration allowances payable in new tenancies where the decoration is poor.

In some cases, the way payments are calculated is set out in law or regulatory guidance. In other cases, we will have discretion to award payments in line with the payment levels set out in the policy. Proposed payment levels for decoration allowances and disturbance allowances have been increased in line with inflation.

This policy considers those payments and ensures we have an accountable, fair and transparent system in place which compensates tenants who may have experienced significant inconvenience because of an action or a failure to act by Larkfield, or a contractor acting on our behalf.

You can read the full draft policy on our website at www.larkfieldha.org.uk/media/2718/draft-version-payments-to-tenants-policy.pdf.

To share your views on the policy, call **01475 630 930** or email info@larkfieldha.org.uk.

Repairs service update

Following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, we are providing a full reactive repairs service again and carrying out inspections where required. However, the pandemic is continuing to impact on our service and timescales for the completion of non-emergency repairs.

Our main reactive maintenance contractor, Link Property, is

experiencing short notice absences as staff are being contacted by Trace and Protect Scotland. This means some jobs are being cancelled at short-notice and re-booked.

It is increasingly difficult to get construction supplies, with basic items such as timber, silicone and cement products being in very short supply. Our contractors will continue to do their best to source materials, but it may affect our normal response timescales for some non-emergency repairs. We really appreciate your continued understanding during this very challenging time.



Building Resilience for a Better Home

It's been a tough year with many people experiencing stress, low mood, depression and anxiety – some of us for the first time.



We've teamed up with LinkLiving to deliver "Building Resilience for a Better Home" - a new project offering nine, free one-to-one sessions with trained self-help coaches to help you learn useful techniques to better manage your mental health.

The service is available to all Larkfield tenants. If you are interested, please contact a member of the Larkfield team on **01475 630930** or **info@larkfieldha.org.uk** or contact LinkLiving directly on **01324 466 860** or **lareception@linkgroup.org.uk**.

Frost precautions

- Keep your home reasonably warm, even if there is no one home during the day. In the very cold weather it is always better to leave your heating on at a low temperature.
- Never leave a tap dripping. If you have a dripping tap you should report it immediately.
- When it is very cold it is always better, if possible, to open the hatch to the roof space. This allows the warm air to circulate and helps to prevent frozen pipes in your roof space.
- Find out where your stop valve is located, so that you can turn off your water should a burst pipe occur.
- Check the insulation around your pipes and water tank. If there is none or a section is missing you should report this to us immediately.

If you are going away:

- Leave a key with a friend, relative or neighbour and tell us who the key holder is. If you don't want to tell us who the key holder is, leave the emergency telephone numbers with the person who has your key. Also ask them to visit your home regularly (once a day) to check that everything is ok.

Frozen pipes

If cold weather is forecast, or during a cold snap, keep your heating on a constant low temperature to help prevent pipes from freezing.

If you can't afford to keep the heating on in all rooms, make sure you heat your living room throughout the day and heat your bedroom before you go to sleep.

If you find frozen pipes:

- Find the main water valve, close it and switch off gas and electric water heaters.
- Gently heat the frozen section of the pipe using a fan heater or hairdryer or, alternatively, you can wrap a hot water bottle or heated cloth around the pipe. Start from the tap side and work towards the frozen section of the pipe.

What to do if your pipes burst:

- Turn off the supply at the valve and switch off electrical supply at mains
- Contact us on **01475 630930** during office open hours or **0800 783 7937** out of hours
- Open all taps to drain the system and switch off central heating systems or water heaters
- Warn neighbours if they are likely to be affected

Keep warm and save money with our winter energy-saving tips!

- Use heavy curtains and close them when it gets dark to keep heat in.
- Keep your radiators clear and avoid putting furniture against them. Drying washing on the radiators will make your house colder and causes condensation and mould.
- Regularly bleed your radiators to avoid cold spots.
- Set your thermostat to between 18°C and 21°C degrees.
- You can keep warm without turning up the heating by putting on an extra layer of clothing and wearing socks.



Want to find out more?

- Home Energy Scotland: call **0808 808 2282** or email **advice@sc.homeenergyscotland.org.uk**
- Age Scotland: call **0800 12 44 222** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk**
- Energy Activators Project – call **01475 630930**

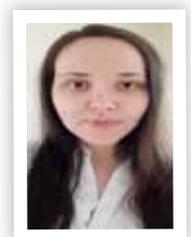
If your heating system is not working, please contact GasSure on **01294 468 113**.

Hello and goodbye



Hi, my name is Mick McKendrick and I recently started as a Housing Officer with Larkfield Housing Association. I have 24 years' experience in housing and property services and have previously worked with Oak Tree HA and Cloch HA. I am delighted to be part of the team and look forward to getting to know tenants and residents in the Larkfield and Port Glasgow areas.

We say farewell to Sinead, our Project Administrator, who has been working with us for the past year. We wish Sinead all the very best in her new role as trainee housing officer at Yoker Housing Association.



Festive safety

Christmas is a time for celebration, but you should also be aware of the extra hazards in your home at this time of year. So, when you're decking the halls, make sure you follow Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's simple advice and stay safe.

Fairy lights

- Unplug fairy lights or other electrical Christmas decorations when you leave the house or go to bed.
- Check fairy lights are in good working order and replace any bulbs that have blown.
- Bulbs can get very hot, don't let them touch materials that can scorch or burn easily, such as paper or fabrics.
- Make sure the fuse in the plug is the correct rating.
- If you need to plug more than one appliance into an electrical socket use a multi-socket adaptor which is fitted with a fuse and has surge protection.

Decorations

- Decorations made of light tissue paper or cardboard burn easily.
- Don't attach them to lights or heaters.
- Don't put them immediately above or around the fireplace.
- Keep them away from candles.

Christmas trees

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can fill a room with fire and deadly gases.

1. Selecting a tree for Christmas

Always buy your tree from a reputable retailer to ensure freshness and quality. Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a potential fire hazard.

2. Caring for your tree

Don't place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace, heat vent or candles. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks. Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water.

3. Disposing of your tree

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling centre or having it taken away by a community pickup service.

Home contents insurance

Home contents insurance

Make sure you are covered for the unexpected by taking out home contents insurance.

What is home contents insurance?

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen, so home contents insurance can help provide peace of mind.

Why do I need it?

We do not cover your contents as part of the tenancy agreement so it's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for to help you decide if you need one.

How can we help?

To help you decide if home contents insurance is right for you, we have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks and Ageas Insurance Limited, who provide specialist Tenants Contents Insurance policies.

This home contents insurance scheme can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

How do I get more information?

Ask your housing officer for an application pack or call Thistle Tenant Risks on **0345 450 7286**.

Visit **thistletenants-scotland.co.uk** to request a free call back.

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Thistle's Data Protection Privacy Policy is online at **www.thistleinsurance.co.uk/Privacy-Policy**

Tips for your festive funds

This year has been challenging for a lot of people, with the impact of Covid-19, the energy crisis and overall rising costs for day-to-day items.

Here's some great money saving tips to help you cut back on spending over the festive/winter period:

- Set a Christmas budget. We like this online budget planner www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/use-our-budget-planner which puts you in control of your household spending.
- Use online coupons (Groupon, Itison, Wowcher, eBay etc).
- Consider using cashback sites (e.g. TopCashback) to get money back when you shop online.
- Purchase second-hand goods and sell what you no longer need (e.g. Facebook Marketplace, Gumtree, eBay etc) - you'll be amazed at the bargains you'll find.
- Make homemade decorations - you could even get the family involved.
- Buy next year's cards/wrap after Christmas - the savings are amazing
- Make Christmas table centres using foliage from your, or your family's, garden - check Pinterest for ideas.
- Secret Santa - set a small budget and buy one present, instead of presents for everyone or perhaps gift your time (e.g. babysit or offer to make a meal).
- Recycle everything, from last year's gift bags, tags, ribbon etc to used glass jars, which can be washed and decorated and used to gift homemade baking, candles, bath salts, bubble bath etc.

Pay your rent before it's spent!

Your home is important. Protect it by paying your rent on time. Make sure you put paying your rent top of your Christmas list this year.



We know Christmas puts a strain on your budget, but please think twice about delaying your rent or arrears

payments. Every year, some people opt for a quick fix at Christmas – then struggle to catch up in the new year.

If you're struggling to pay, please contact us as soon as possible. We can help you maximise your benefits and refer you to the council's welfare rights team for support and advice. However, if you choose not to pay, we will act and you could lose your home.



Warm Home Discount

You could get £140 off your electricity bill this winter with the Warm Home Discount Scheme. This is a one-off discount on your electricity bill between October and March. You can get this payment if you get the guaranteed credit element of Pension Credit or if you are on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria.

You can find out if you meet the criteria by contacting your energy supplier directly.

If you get the guaranteed credit element of Pension Credit haven't got a letter by 31 December 2021 call the helpline on **0800 731 0214**.

You can find out more online at www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme.

Cold Weather Payments

You may get Cold Weather Payments if you receive Pension Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit.

If you are eligible, you'll get a payment if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days. You'll get £25 for each seven-day period of very cold weather between 1 November 2021 and 31 March 2022.

You can find out more online at www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment.

Child Winter Heating Assistance

Child Winter Heating Assistance is an annual payment to help disabled children and young people and their families with increased heating costs over winter.

The payment for winter 2021-22 is £202. Payments are usually made from November onwards and can be automatic.

Children and young people in Scotland can get assistance if they're under 19 years old and receive one of the following 'qualifying benefits': the highest rate of the care component of Child Disability Payment; the highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance for children; or the enhanced daily living rate of Personal Independence Payment. They must be getting this on at least one day in the third full week of September.

If you think you should get Child Winter Heating Assistance but have not had a letter by 31 December 2021, contact Social Security Scotland.

You can find out more online at www.mygov.scot/child-winter-heating-assistance.

Crisis Grants/Foodbanks

If you are struggling to afford food and top up your electricity and gas meters, you can apply for a Crisis Grant.

You can find out more online at: www.mygov.scot/scottish-welfare-fund/crisis-grants. You may also be able to access the local foodbank **01475 787177**.

Would you like to get more involved?

We want to hear your views on how we can get you more involved in what we do.

We're currently reviewing our Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan, which focuses on:

- Developing our tenant-led service improvement group
- Continuing to provide new tenants with a welcome home starter pack
- Creating a new tenant handbook
- Continuing to support a range of community projects and tenant events
- Re-commencing annual tenancy visits
- Developing and progressing agreed actions from recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey to improve services
- Publishing an annual report card for tenants
- How we can improve our digital offering for tenants

To view a copy of the proposed strategy and action plan, visit

www.larkfieldha.org.uk/media/2720/draft-tenant-participation-strategy-2021-2024.pdf.

To give us feedback, call **01475 630 930** or email info@larkfieldha.org.uk.



MyLarkfield

DAY OR NIGHT...

Manage your tenancy at a touch!

Have you download our free customer app yet?

With MyLarkfield, you can report a repair, check your rent balance, pay your rent and much more 24 hours a day, seven days a week! Search **MyLarkfield** in Google Play and the App Store. All you need to register is your tenancy reference number.

For more information, visit

www.larkfieldha.org.uk/mylarkfield

Link Housing is part of the Link group of social enterprises.



Reporting significant performance failures to the Scottish Housing Regulator

As you may be aware, all housing associations are regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator. As part of their role, they deal with significant performance failures (SPF) reported to them by a tenant or tenant group. A SPF is where the landlord fails to: achieve outcomes as set out in the Regulator's Charter or which are agreed locally; report its annual return to the Regulator to its tenants; meet Regulatory Standards; or to take actions where tenants' interests are at risk, and it will significantly affect a large number of tenants.

Examples are - failing to do annual gas safety checks across the stock or not consulting on proposed rent increases or policies that affect tenants.

What should you do if you think we have a SPF?

You should contact us first to allow us to answer your complaint and to respond to any failure and, if we fail to deal with the issue, you can then take your SPF to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

You can download a factsheet about this here:

www.housingregulator.gov.scot/for-landlords/advisory-guidance/how-we-work/significant-performance-failures-factsheet-for-tenants

and visit our feedback page on our website:

www.larkfieldha.org.uk/feedback



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Office opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am – 4pm
Wednesday 9am – 12.30pm. Closed Wednesday afternoon.

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