

horizon news

newsletter for tenants

Good Neighbour Award

Congratulations go to Catherine Kennedy from Millside Gardens, Kilwinning and Adrian Chalet from Loch Linnhe Court, Whitburn who are the joint winners of our Good Neighbour Award 2016.

Having a good neighbour can make all the difference in a community and both Adrian and Catherine have gone the extra mile to show their neighbours that they care.

Catherine was nominated by her neighbour Janie Chafer who told us

“Catherine puts the care into caring.”

She said “Cath has been my neighbour for nine years and has been a great help and support to me. She helps me with tasks I can’t manage on my own such as gardening and decorating. She supports me in my charity work donating unwanted goods for raffles and church fairs. Nothing is too much trouble for her and I think she is the best neighbour around.”

Catherine was thrilled to win the Good Neighbour Award saying “I will treasure my certificate, have it framed and give it pride of place.”

Adrian was nominated by his neighbour Shirley Ann Heggie



who told us he regularly cuts the grass for her and other neighbours, takes out and returns the bins. He also keeps the estate tidy in between visits from our own Estates Team! Shirley Ann told us

“Adrian is an absolute gentleman and never passes without a friendly hello”.

Adrian was over the moon to receive an award. He said “it’s nice to be appreciated and I’m chuffed to bits”.

Both Catherine and Adrian receive a voucher for an afternoon tea for two as a thank you for being neighbourhood heroes.





Horizon AGM 2016

We welcomed 60 members and tenants to our AGM in September.

Tenants and members had the opportunity to find out about our planned maintenance service, Care and Repair services, Help to Adapt, Money Advice and more.

Professor Isobel Anderson from Stirling University provided an update on Horizon's study into the allocation of adapted social housing to disabled people, with Chris Baird, Board Member, telling us about his experiences as a peer researcher.

We showed a first draft of a film about the Link group of companies which includes Horizon. Horizon tenant Mr McCallum appears in the film, explaining the difference it makes to have a wheelchair accessible home.

Tenants who attended the AGM commented on how much they enjoyed it.

"The AGM was a great day and it was a fantastic opportunity to

meet staff and tenants from other areas. There are lots of ways to have input in to the work Horizon is doing and it's nice to feel that our opinions are valued and we're being listened to."

"I really enjoyed the AGM and it was good to see the film showcasing work that is carried out. Old neighbours of ours were featured in the film and it was great to see the difference that moving to more suitable housing has made to their lives."

Tenant Scrutiny

Our Spring Newsletter featured our plans to work with Tenant Information Service (TIS) and tenants to decide which services are a priority for tenant scrutiny.

Tenant scrutiny will give Horizon tenants the opportunity to examine and challenge how we deliver services, and to make recommendations to our Board for improvements.

In August, we invited you to four focus sessions to talk about what services you would like to examine. Thank you to the tenants who came along and participated in these lively sessions, facilitated by Lynda Johnstone from TIS.

Tenant scrutiny can take place in many different ways, and the

participants agreed that it would be good to start with some tenant-led inspections. They also agreed to look at Horizon's repairs and maintenance service first as it is a service that is important to tenants.

We will be inviting participants to a workshop with staff in December, where they will decide what aspects of the repairs service they want to review, and how they will approach it. Some of the options include mystery shopping, tenant-led inspections and reviewing performance information. We will then agree a plan for activities in 2017.

If you would like to take part in our tenant scrutiny activities, or would like to find out more about it, please contact Elaine Whyte, Housing and Communities Manager on 0330 303 0089.



BENEFIT CAP

The benefit cap imposes a limit on the total amount of income from certain benefits a household can receive. From **Monday 7 November 2016** the UK Government introduced a reduced benefit cap:

- **£384.62** a week if you have children or are a couple or
- **£257.69** a week if you are a single person.

If you receive more than this, your housing benefit will be reduced until you are brought within the cap. This means you will need to find the money to pay your rent yourself.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will write to you if you will be affected by the cap. There are a number of exemptions from the benefit cap so it is important to get advice and information if you will be affected.

Contact your Housing Officer on 0330 303 0089, if you think you may be affected by the cap.



Are you Winter Ready?

Preparing for snow and frost

- Keep an eye on the weather forecast.
- Have access to a shovel and grit to clear snow and ice from your path or driveway.
- Prepare a home emergency pack: emergency numbers, battery operated torch and radio, essential medication, bottled water and ready to eat food.
- Know how to deal with damage to your home (Call Horizon on **0330 303 0089**).
- Know how to switch off your electricity, gas and water supplies.

Prevent your pipes freezing or bursting

- Keep your home warm by leaving your heating on at the lowest setting at all times.
- If your pipes freeze...thaw them by wrapping heated cloths around them. NEVER use a naked flame.
- If your pipes burst, shut off the water supply at the stop valve then run all the cold water taps in the house until the water stops.
- If there is a risk of water coming into contact with electrical wiring or fittings turn off the electricity at the mains.
- Contact Horizon Housing Association or Horizon out of hours service on **0330 303 0089**.

Preparing for stormy weather

BEFORE

- Secure loose objects that could be blown around – wheelie bins, trampolines garden furniture.
- Close and securely fasten windows.
- Park your car away from trees and fences.

DURING

- Stay indoors if you can and only drive as necessary.
- Don't try to repair damage while the storm rages.

AFTER

- Don't touch any electrical cables that may have been blown down.
- Don't walk too close to walls buildings or trees that could have been weakened.

Winter weather can cause real problems and disruption and it is important to be to be 'Winter ready'. The Scottish Government provides lots of information, updated in 'real time' to help people cope with a range of emergencies. You can find this at www.readyscotland.org.uk

Save Money this Winter

There are lots of practical ways to reduce your heating costs:

- Switch your Energy Supplier. Try using a comparison website or contact your local advice shop. If you would like more help or information please call Horizon on **0330 303 0089**.
- Set your heating controls so heating comes on when you need it and is off when you don't.
- Wash clothes at 30 degrees rather than 40 degrees – this saves 40% of energy costs.
- Always do full loads when using a washing machine, tumble dryers, or dishwashers.
- Use energy saving bulbs – LED bulbs use a fraction of the power.
- Don't leave any appliances on standby – this could save up to £50 per year.
- Unplug phones, iPads or laptop chargers when not in use.



HELP TO APPLY FOR THE WARM HOME DISCOUNT

In Scotland, the estimated number of households living in fuel poverty is 845,000.

Horizon's Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Vikki Sayers can support tenants to access the Warm Home Discount. It helps tenants to access the cheapest tariff, if tenants are in debt with their fuel supplier, to a repayment plan, or access charities to try to clear the debt. If you would like help to apply, contact us on **0330 303 0089** or email e-mail@horizonhousing.org

“A household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it spends more than 10% of its income on all household fuel use. If over 20% of income is required, then this is termed as being in extreme fuel poverty” (Scottish Fuel Poverty Statement 2002).

Meet the Customer Services Team

Our Customer Services Team is your first point of contact when you call Horizon. These are the friendly voices you hear when you need to report a repair, pay your rent or need any questions answered.



The team is pictured above. Standing (L-R) Sonia Silver, Becky Tennant and Gail Harkins. Sitting (L-R) Alastair Burke, Moira Melville and Yvonne Walker.

Recycling at home

You can make the biggest difference to the amount you recycle at home.



Most metallic items are recyclable such as drinks and soup tins.

Why not try keeping a carrier bag in the hall for recycling your junk mail straight away?

On your way to school, supermarket or work, stop off at the recycling point and drop your recycling. This allows you to fit recycling into your lifestyle easily, and the kids will learn about recycling this way too.

Check the date you put out your recycling – find out from your council what day your recycling will be collected.

Empty your recycling storage point regularly to avoid it overflowing. Talk to everyone in your household about who is going to be responsible for this.

Here are some tips for recycling at home:

Flatten your cardboard boxes – you can get more in your bin that way.

All your plastic bottles can be recycled, from mouthwash to salad dressing.

It's more than just newspapers you can recycle – you can recycle envelopes, wrapping paper, birthday cards and even phone books. All types of cardboard can also be recycled, even toilet roll tubes and drinks cartons.



Councils are currently introducing various recycling initiatives and it is important to get involved. It's really easy to set up a simple recycling system at home. All it takes is having a place to store it! If you are not sure what you can recycle go to wiseuptowaste.org.uk/recycle for lots of information and advice.

Supporting other charities

Throughout the year Horizon staff support various charities that are close to their heart.



Staff support Guide Dogs for the Blind as we know many of our tenants are affected by visual impairments. They currently sponsor two guide dog puppies – Fifi and Fargo.

Staff donated our 'smalls' to Smalls for All recently. This charity distributes underwear to women and children living in orphanages, slums, displacement camps and hospitals across Africa.

Staff members continue to support charities that help people affected by cancer. Through coffee mornings, we raised £100 for Macmillan Cancer Research and £71.83 for Breast Cancer Care.

10 year old Clare Turley's family and friends have been working hard to raise funds to build a sensory playroom for Clare within her home at one of our Access Ownership properties in South Lanarkshire.

Horizon staff have also joined in the fundraising.....mainly by eating chocolate and biscuits! They decided to start an office tuck shop and donate any profits to this worthwhile cause.

Clare, who has cerebral palsy, was very happy to hear this and sent all staff a big kiss via email to say thanks.

Money we have raised since April 2016



Link Staff Conference 2016



Horizon staff attended the Link staff conference, as one of eight Link Group subsidiaries. Staff found it interesting to learn more about other departments and subsidiaries and were able to highlight the amazing work that Horizon does. All our hard work paid off and we were announced the winner of 'Best Stall' out of 33 other stands. Horizon's Managing Director, Julia Fitzpatrick, said that the Horizon team **"put together a fantastic display showing our commitment to homes and service that are accessible to all."**



Tell us about you!

Earlier this year, we asked our tenants to provide us with up to date contact details. We also asked about the benefits they received, and whether they needed advice or assistance. This information helps us provide our tenants with advice and information they need, and also offer services that could benefit them. Around one quarter of tenants returned this form. Those who completed the form were entered in to a prize draw to win a £50 voucher for one lucky tenant in the west and one in the east.

Well done!

Mr & Mrs Young, McTaggart Avenue, Denny and Mr and Mrs Smith, Mansion Street, Possilpark who won gift vouchers for completing and returning our survey to update contact details.



Rent Matters

If you're having problems keeping up with your rent, don't delay – we can help you sort it out. For advice please call your Housing Officer on **0330 303 0089**.



Everyone at Horizon Housing wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Competition Winners

Congratulations to our winner of the Children's movie competition 4 year old Ruby Carpenter from Elm Grove, Blackburn.



Horizon Housing Association Leving House, Fairbairn Place, Livingston, West Lothian, EH54 6TN.

**t: 0330 303 0089 e: e-mail@horizonhousing.org
www.horizonhousing.org**

Office Opening Hours:

Monday – Tuesday 9am – 5pm, Wednesday 10am – 5pm, Thursday 9am – 5pm, Friday 9am – 4pm

Festive Opening Hours:

Please note Horizon will be closed over the festive period as noted below:

Close Friday 23 December 2016 at 12.30pm and re-open 9.00am Wednesday 4th January 2017.

If you have an emergency during this period please contact the normal emergency numbers. Outwith these hours, our **emergency contacts** are:

For **Gas Heating/Hot Water** contact GasSure on **01294 468113**. All other emergencies please contact Bield Response 24 on **0800 783 7937**.



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