

Horizon's new research reveals shortfall in homes for wheelchair users



The research was carried out by North Star Consulting and Research and Horizon, and supported by the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland. You can download the report from our website or contact us for a copy at business@horizonhousing.org or by telephone on **0330 303 0089**.

Horizon has just published a major new research report, **Still minding the step? A new estimation of the housing needs of wheelchair users in Scotland**. We show that over 17,200 wheelchair user households in Scotland – one in five – don't have an accessible home. The human impact of this on the disabled person and their family members is huge, as we see almost every day when we

speaking to applicants for our vacant adapted homes.

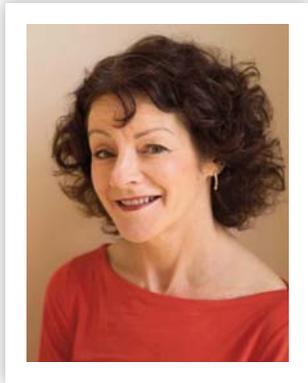
We make nine recommendations to the Scottish Government, local authorities and housing providers about how to address the growing needs. More homes need to be built to full wheelchair accessible standards; systems for adapting homes, and for allocating accessible homes, need to improve homes.



NEW LETTINGS PLAN FOR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOMES

We have adopted a new lettings plan to improve how we allocate empty homes designed to wheelchair standards. The plan is designed to ensure fuller consideration of the needs of applicants than is possible with our current choice based system, Homehunt. The new approach will involve home visits to applicants (where possible) so we can also offer housing options advice. The Lettings Plan is available on our website or for more information please contact your Housing Officer.

Horizon's Managing Director off to pastures new



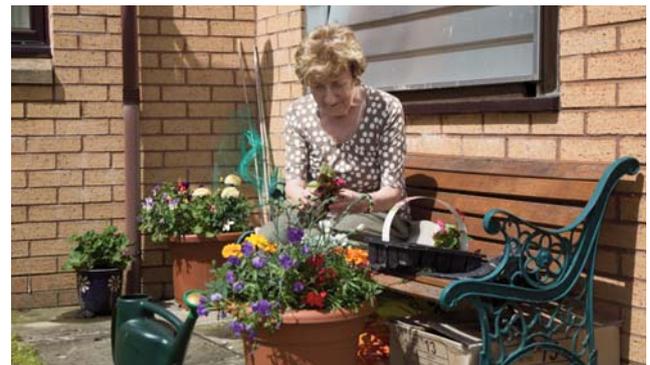
Julia Fitzpatrick, Managing Director, is stepping down in June 2018 after almost eight years at the helm.

Julia said "It has been a privilege to work with Horizon's dedicated staff and Board, Link and our many partners, who are committed to providing quality homes and services. Horizon has a clear sense of purpose that our work should enable people, particularly disabled people, to live full independent lives in the community they choose. I know that Horizon is well placed to build on this strength, and will continue to be one of its supporters as I move into my next venture."

Frances Wood, Horizon's Chairperson said "Julia has been an enormous asset to Horizon and she will be much missed. She leaves a well performing, highly regarded organisation and we must now look forward to the challenge of recruiting a successor."

New tenants settle in

In the last six months, we have welcomed 30 new tenants, many moving into one of our existing homes, and others into a brand new home in Stoneyburn, West Lothian.



We work closely with tenants and contractors or developers to try and resolve any teething problems as quickly as possible. We try to visit all new tenants after a few months to check how things are going and ask for your feedback on any aspect of the new tenancy process which we could improve.

New tenants can access our many services which aim to help you make the most of your new home. These include welfare rights, money advice and access to the internet, or helping you link up with other agencies.

"We are lucky to have pleasant neighbours and look forward to seeing more of them when the better weather arrives in spring time."

"I am really enjoying living in my new house, it's so nice and quiet."

Please contact us on **0330 303 0089** or **e-mail@horizonhousing.org** on any tenancy matter.

IMPROVING HOMES IN 2018 – 2019

We aim to keep Horizon homes well maintained by replacing kitchens, bathrooms and boilers when these are getting to the end of their life. We also have a programme of wider estate improvements such as painting and replacing fencing.

We use our detailed property survey information and feedback from tenants about the types of work they most want to see happen in order to set budget priorities.

In 2018 – 19 we will invest £540,000 in planned works:

New kitchens	Dock Street, Carronshore; Mansion Street, Possilpark; Tennyson Gardens, Blantyre.
New bathrooms	Mainhill Avenue and Mainhill Gardens, Erskine; John Smith Gardens, Coatbridge.
New boilers	Dock Street, Carronshore; Millside Gardens, Kilwinning; McMartin Court, Whitburn; Rashielee Drive, Erskine.
New common entrance doors	Rowan Drive and Elm Court, Blackburn.

We will write to affected tenants to arrange surveys and to discuss the proposed works. In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact Graeme Swanson, our Asset Planning Officer, on 0330 303 0089.

Prevention is better than cure

A few simple steps can help keep your home running smoothly:

- **Keep your windows draught free and easy to open.** Brush out dirt and cobwebs from your window checks and spray the moving parts with a lubricant (like WD40 which you can get in many supermarkets).
- **Stop water from gathering in your exterior door threshold.** There are three drain holes in the threshold bar at your front or back door. Clear these out as dirt can block them, causing the water to run back into the house.
- **Keep your shower trap clean.** Hair can block drains and stop water from draining away. It's also worth checking that the silicone seal is intact around the shower tray and cubicle.
- **Sink and bath drains.** Use a drain cleaner every two/three months to keep the pipes clear.
- **Gas meter box doors.** Always lock the doors after use to reduce damage to the door and keep the inside dry.

If you spot a problem you can't fix, report this to us as soon as possible to prevent it from getting worse.



Join in – many ways to have your say



RIG goes from strength to strength

It has been a great first year for our Residents Improvement Group (RIG). What's been achieved so far?

- Our name, remit – and logo!
- A report from our first tenant led inspection (on how Horizon communicates with tenants about repairs). We're now getting feedback on how Horizon will put improvements in place.
- New members welcomed – eight tenants are now regularly involved.
- We "road tested" Horizon's new website.
- Got involved in producing Horizon's Annual Report to Tenants and rent increase leaflet.
- We've started our second inspection on Horizon's 'lettable standard' – the standard for properties when they are let to new tenants. Watch out for our report and recommendations in the spring.

What's next?

Horizon has asked the RIG if it would get involved in the final design of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey for 2018 and the action plan to address any issues that may be highlighted by the results.

If you'd like to join RIG, or just want to find out more about what they do, please talk to your Housing Officer on 0330 303 0089 or



Become a Horizon member

Horizon has its own members – people who want to support Horizon and its work. This is another way of being involved, hearing more about what we do, and having a say in important decisions that affect tenants. You can download a membership application form from our website or contact us to send you this. It's only £1 to become a shareholder and have a stake in your landlord!

www.horizonhousing.org/about-us/governance/become-a-member/

Estate Champions

We are looking for resident volunteers to act as Estate Champions. With trained eyes and ears, Estate Champions raise any concerns or report communal repairs and issues to Horizon staff on a regular basis. We will follow up all reports to help make a difference to the quality of the place you live in.

No special qualifications are needed, but the role will suit people who are looking to learn new skills, gain useful experience and who are interested in their community.

If you are interested in becoming a Champion for your estate, please contact your Housing Officer on **0330 303 0089**.



Tenant Satisfaction Survey

It has been three years since we carried out a full tenant satisfaction survey in 2015, and we have asked independent research company Research Resource to carry out our 2018 survey. The survey is your opportunity to give us your thoughts and views on all aspects of our service.

The survey will take place in early summer, and we will be in touch with more information when the details have been agreed. We would like to thank all tenants in advance for their assistance and taking the time to give us your feedback.

Summer's coming – how about “Tea in the carpark”?

Our “Tea in the carpark” events were a great success last summer. We plan to organise more events in developments this year so we can meet with tenants to discuss their views on our services, homes and opportunities for community involvement.



Need a LIFT to buy a home?

If you want to buy a home it can be difficult, confusing, and sometimes just more than you can afford, especially for first time buyers. Link has been administering the Scottish Government LIFT scheme for over 10 years and helped more than 9000 people to buy a home.

What is the LIFT scheme?

The LIFT shared equity scheme provides eligible applicants with funding of between 10% and 40% towards the purchase of a property that has been advertised on the open market.

The scheme helps first time buyers and gives priority to particular groups of applicants, including:

- First time buyers
- People who rent from a local authority or a housing association
- Disabled people with a housing need
- Members of the Armed Forces
- Veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the past two years
- Widows, widowers and other partners of service personnel for up to two years after their partner has been killed while serving in the armed forces

People who are aged over 60 and can demonstrate a need to move can also apply to the Older Person's Scheme and where some different criteria apply.

Morag Campbell recently used the LIFT Open Market Shared Equity Scheme to help to buy her dream home.

“Trying to save the standard minimum 10% deposit meant I thought it was going to take years to get onto the property ladder. Once I found out about the LIFT scheme and how this could help me, I realised that this would ease the financial pressure and enable me to buy my first home a lot sooner than I thought possible. This scheme is brilliant for helping with that first scary step!”

If you think you meet the criteria and would like to apply, please visit an Independent Financial Adviser to secure a decision in principle or mortgage promise from a Bank or Building Society, then complete the online application form at:

www.linkhousing.org.uk/LIFT





Spring clean your finances

Spring is a great time for a fresh start. Here are some ideas to help spruce up your finances.

Get ahead with rent payments

Your rent is due in advance on or before the 1st of each month. Take away the worry by keeping your payments up to date. You can pay in a variety of ways:

- **Direct Debit** – a stress free paperless payment, taken directly from your bank account. Contact us to set this up over the phone, with your bank account number and sort code to hand.
- **Mobile app payment** – download the Allpay app, and set up a phone reminder of the date you need to pay.

Shop around

Comparing and switching your energy, broadband or phone supplier or package can make a big difference to your bills – as much as £300 a year. We can help you with this, or take a look at websites accredited by ofgem (www.ofgem.gov.uk).

Are you getting your benefit entitlement?

It's a complex system and you may be missing out. We can run a benefit check for you, support you to make a claim or to manage a change in your circumstances.

Save for a rainy day

Get into the habit of saving a small amount each month if you can. Even a little savings amount can give peace of mind that you can cover an unexpected expense, such as a broken washing machine or a problem with your car. Credit Unions offer flexible saving options. If you're having trouble finding one in your area, let us know and we'll try to help.

Don't let debt get you down

Let us help you so you make sure your rent is paid and your home is not at risk. If you have multiple debts, we can refer you to Link's Tenant Transition Advice Service which helps with all aspects of money advice.

Don't struggle alone

Perhaps you know you could save money but you don't know where to start. Sometimes the paperwork and bills mount up, and it's all too much to manage. We have services that can help.

HORIZON'S TENANCY SUSTAINMENT SERVICE

is a free service available to all tenants, tailored to meet your individual needs. We are here to support you in the way that works for you. You can speak confidentially to Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Fern Marshall, or to your Housing Officer on **0330 303 0089** or email e-mail@horizonhousing.org

How to grow a sunflower

1. Your sunflower can be sown straight into the ground where you want it to flower. Make sure the space you are going to sow it is weed free.
2. Rake the soil to a fine, crumbly texture and make a small hole approximately 12cm deep.
3. Gently place your seed in the hole. Don't forget to water the seed gently.
4. Slugs and snails think that new sunflower shoots make a lovely lunch! You may want to protect it by cutting the bottom off a plastic bottle and covering seed.
5. As your sunflower begins to grow (maybe even taller than you) you will need to help support the stem, by placing a cane near the stem and loosely tying the cane to the plant with string.
6. Watch your sunflower grow and enter our completion to win a mystery prize.



Horizon in Bloom – Gardening Competition 2018



It's time to dig out your gardening gloves as, due to popular demand, our gardening competition returns this summer!

Our team of judges will visit every development, looking to award prizes in the following categories:

Best individual garden • Best communal garden • Best container • Best new tenant • Largest sunflower from seed

Our Estates Caretakers will have a supply of sunflower seeds in their vans, just ask them when you see them in your area – they might even give you a hand to plant them!

How do I enter? You can download a competition entry form from our website, at www.horizonhousing.org/tenants/getinvolved or email us at e-mail@horizonhousing.org headed "Gardening Competition Entry", giving your name, address and the categories you are entering. You can also phone our Customer Services Team and ask them to note your entry.

Deadline for entries: Friday 31 August 2018.

Can I nominate a neighbour? Yes you can – but please ask their permission first!



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www.horizonhousing.org

Office Opening Hours:

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

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**.

This newsletter is available in larger print, other languages, audio or other electronic forms. Should you require a copy of this newsletter in any of these formats, please contact **0330 303 0089**.



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