

# horizon news

newsletter for tenants



## Horizon's Big Blether



Santa and two elves came to visit us at the end of the day and joined us in celebrating our 30th anniversary.

It was a great way to end a fun and busy day!

**On Saturday 1 December, tenants, Board members and staff gathered at the Studio in Glasgow for our tenant conference. It was a great day full of interactive sessions and consultation on subjects including resident participation, rent and repairs.**

Tenant participation is a subject close to our heart and the morning session gave staff an opportunity to explain why this is so important. Members of the Residents' Improvement Group (RIG) were on hand to discuss why they became involved in tenant participation and to give a flavour of the benefits it can bring to both tenants and Horizon.

During this session, we discussed what worked well, but also considered the challenges

we all face in getting involved and how we could overcome these. If you are interested in joining RIG, please speak to your housing officer or email us at [getinvolved@horizonhousing.org](mailto:getinvolved@horizonhousing.org).

The afternoon consisted of two workshops which focused on our rent structure and repairs policy. These are two subjects which are always guaranteed to get people thinking and the interactive sessions generated some fantastic ideas and suggestions.





# RIG at the CIH awards

We are delighted our Residents' Improvement Group (RIG) was shortlisted in the prestigious Chartered Institute of Housing (Scotland) Awards in the Excellence in Scrutiny category. This award recognises landlords who have worked in partnership with their tenants to embed scrutiny across the organisation and have achieved positive outcomes for their tenants.

Five members of RIG went to the awards ceremony in Edinburgh, which was attended by hundreds of tenants and housing staff from across Scotland. Despite not winning – they lost out to Maryhill Housing Association's scrutiny group – they had a great time and were proud their work has been recognised as some of the best in the country. Well done RIG!



## Best Start Grant to replace UK Sure Start Maternity Grant in December 2018

The Best Start Grant (BSG) Pregnancy and Baby Payment will replace the UK Sure Start Maternity Grant (SSMG) in December 2018. BSG is a cash payment for the parents or carers of a baby, providing lower-income families with financial support during the key early years of a child's life. The BSG can be used to help cover some of the costs of having children such as purchasing a pram, heating your home or buying clothes for your baby.

The BSG replaces and expands on the SSMG by:

- Paying £600 rather than £500 for the first child
- Introducing £300 payments for any subsequent children
- Not putting a limit on the number of children that can be supported
- Extending the application window from 24 weeks pregnant to six months after the birth
- Taking applications over the phone and online, as well as on a paper form

Applications for the BSG can be made from 10 December 2018. Applications can be made online at [www.mygov.scot/pregnancy-and-baby-payment/](http://www.mygov.scot/pregnancy-and-baby-payment/) or by calling Social Security Scotland on 0800 182 2222. Paper forms will be available to download online or requested by calling 0800 182 2222.



# Saving for Christmas 2019

With all the extra expense involved, Christmas can be a challenging time for many people. Why not make life easier for yourself next Christmas by getting advice on budgeting, accessing credit unions, and paying a little extra each month so you can have a rent-free December next year?

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## Planning for a rent-free December in 2019

Have you thought that by paying an extra £8 per week from January 2019, you could have a rent-free December in 2019? Speak to your Housing Officer by calling 0330 303 0089 to discuss how this could work for you.

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## Saving with credit unions

In credit unions, members pool their savings and lend to one another. Members have something in common, such as their employer or living in the same area. There are nearly 100 credit unions in Scotland, all of whom offer basic savings accounts. Credit union savings accounts are flexible and easier to open than a bank or building society savings account. To find out where your local credit union is, contact us on 0330 303 0089.

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## Budgeting

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team can provide budgeting advice and help you access budgeting tools. This can help you manage your finances better and make the most of your money in 2019. We can also help you check your benefit entitlements to make sure you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to and support you to make new claims if appropriate.



## Accessing Foodbanks and Baby Bank Scotland

To find your local foodbank, you can search online at [www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/](http://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/) or call the Trussell Trust on 01722 580 180.

Baby Bank Scotland supports families experiencing financial hardship through the provision of essential baby and child items such as cots, clothing, and nappies. For more information, visit [www.babybankscotland.btck.co.uk](http://www.babybankscotland.btck.co.uk). Alternatively, contact Vikki and Fern from our Tenancy Sustainment Team on 0330 303 0089.



# Tenant Satisfaction Survey

We are committed to listening to your views about the services we provide. This allows us to find out where we are performing well and where you think we need to do better. Every three years we ask an independent market research company to carry out a tenant satisfaction survey for us. In August of this year, Research Resource carried out the survey and spoke to 71% of our tenants, asking a range of questions about their opinion of the services we provide.

You'll find a leaflet produced by Research Resource providing the headline results enclosed within this newsletter. We are delighted the percentage of tenants who are satisfied with our overall services has increased since our last major survey in 2015 from 84% to 89%. However, we want to be the best we can be and aim to increase this even further.



The survey showed some areas of our service where satisfaction was lower than we would like and where improvements are needed. We also identified lower satisfaction rates in some of our developments – whilst tenants in 60% of developments were more satisfied than 2015, 40% were less happy. Over the next few months, we will develop an action plan to help address these issues, particularly around:

- Information and communication
- Day to day repairs
- Communal cleaning and grounds maintenance
- Value for money



In creating this plan, we will take on board the views raised at the Big Blether on 1 December and we will consult our Residents' Improvement Group and the tenants on our Consultation Register early in the new year.

If you'd like to get involved, email [getinvolved@horizonhousing.org](mailto:getinvolved@horizonhousing.org) or call 0330 303 0089. We will give more information about the agreed action plan in the spring newsletter.

# Keep warm and stay safe in winter

There are many helpful tips to help you stay warm and save money in winter such as using heavy curtains and closing them when it gets dark to help keep the heat in. Keep your heating set at 18 – 22°C, move furniture away from radiators to allow the heat to radiate out better and don't dry washing on them as this can cause condensation and mould. For more tips and energy savings advice, contact Energy Savings Trust Scotland on 0808 808 2282 or Age Scotland on 0800 12 44 222.

## KNOW YOUR SYSTEM AND BE PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES

Sometimes we can get caught out by cold weather and suffer damage, distress and inconvenience from burst pipes. Even with minimal damage, you could be faced with disruption whilst repairs are completed.

Familiarise yourself with the main water shut off valve so you can reach this in an emergency – contact us if you can't find this.

If you have a credit meter, make sure you keep it topped up.

Keep a list of emergency contacts handy such as BR24 for any out of hours emergency repairs. For gas emergencies, contact GasSure 01294 468 113. If you have a gas leak or smell gas in the property, contact Transco by calling 0800 111 999.

Report any dripping taps or overflows to us.

**If you intend to go away overnight or for a longer period** leave your heating on to maintain a reasonable background temperature and ask someone to visit the property regularly.

**Alternatively, drain down the system**, turn off the supply at the stop valve and open all taps and leave open. Ensure plugs are removed from sinks and wash basins and flush the toilet to empty the cistern.

## IF YOU DISCOVER FROZEN PIPES:

- Turn off the supply at the stop valve and switch off gas and electric water heaters.
- Let us know that you discovered frozen pipes.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PIPES BURST:

- Turn off the supply at the stop valve and switch off the electrical supply at the mains
- Do not operate the affected appliance(s)
- Contact us on e-mail@horizonhousing.org or 0330 303 0089

## TENANT LIABILITY

### Frost, floods, fire – are you covered?

No one wants to think about the worst happening, but it pays to be prepared! Our buildings insurance covers damage to the building and to fixtures and fittings but not any damage caused to your decoration, your floor coverings, your furniture and belongings. You need to take out contents insurance - there are lots of price comparison websites to help you find out what is right for you. Horizon tenants can access a very reasonable insurance scheme designed for social rented tenants called Thistle Tenant Risks. Find out more on our website or call us on 0330 303 0089.





## The winners from summer gardening competition!

The 2018 garden competition was a great success, with many great entries across all of Horizon properties. The competition was judged by David Peel and Sharon Snedden who were impressed by the quality and diversity of all who entered.

The best individual garden was won by Mrs S in Glasgow. This garden included a home-made water feature with a good mixture of shrubs and flowers in a natural looking surrounding with vibrant colours.

Best communal garden was won by Mrs L who has looked after the communal garden in Edinburgh. Her tireless work has been appreciated by the tenants who can sit on the bench in this tranquil part of the estate.

Best container was won by Mrs C, also in Edinburgh, with her well-proportioned garden and nice colour selection.

Best newcomer was won by Mrs A in Stoneyburn. This development only opened in 2017 and the winner has already added vibrancy and colour to the area.

Whilst we had some fabulous entries into our gardening competition this year, it became clear several of our tenants were simply too modest to enter!

Because of this, we are going to be shaking things up a bit next year. Instead of a competition, certificates and other rewards will be given to tenants who keep their garden tidy throughout the year. Our Housing and Property Services Teams will meet to have a chat about which tenants deserve a special thank you for helping to keep our estates attractive and well maintained.

You don't need to be an expert gardener to win an award. Recognition will also be given to tenants who regularly complete simple gardening tasks such as making sure the grass is cut and ensuring pathways are free of weeds.

**Would you like your estate to look brighter?** Why not nominate your estate for an improvement project everyone can enjoy? It could be a seating area, communal vegetable garden, new plants – whatever you like! For more information, contact your housing officer.



# FIND THE SNOWFLAKES

We have hidden snowflakes throughout the newsletter. Please count them and tell us how many you find. The winner will receive a prize. The competition closes on 26 January 2019. Send your entries by e-mail ([getinvolved@horizonhousing.org](mailto:getinvolved@horizonhousing.org)) or post to the Horizon office.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Number of snowflakes .....

## Digging with Davie – Gardening tips

February is the “getting ready for spring” month.



You will notice bulbs in the garden or containers starting to appear. These may benefit from protection from snow and rain by some overhead cover. You can do this by using a sheet of Perspex or glass built up on bricks.

This is also the time to deadhead your winter pansies and other winter bedding as these will carry on flowering into spring/early summer if attended to frequently. Watch out for black spot on your winter pansies. If detected remove infected leaves and destroy badly infected plants. To avoid a buildup, do not plant pansies in the same place each year.

## Christmas closure



### Festive opening hours

We will be closed from **Monday 24 December 2018** at 12:30 pm, until **Thursday 3 January 2019** at 09:00 am.

We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

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

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[www.horizonhousing.org](http://www.horizonhousing.org)

### Office opening hours:

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

Out of hours **emergency contacts:**

**Gas boiler and heating repairs: 01294 468 113**

**Other emergency repairs: 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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