

horizon news

newsletter for tenants



New leadership on the Horizon

We are pleased to announce Lorna Cameron is joining us in December 2019 as our new Chief Executive Officer.

Lorna replaces Isla Gray, who is moving onto a new role with Castlehill Housing Association.

Lorna brings a wealth of experience and a commitment to inclusive and accessible housing and communities.

Lorna said: "I am very much looking forward to joining Horizon at this exciting time, working with tenants, colleagues and the Board to continue the excellent work of Horizon and the wider Link Group."

Another important change in leadership was the election of Bob McDougall as chairperson of Horizon's Board of Management.



Bob said: "I am delighted to have been proposed by my board colleagues as chairperson and I look forward to leading the Board during this exciting period for Horizon and our customers. We are financially strong, high-performing and well-prepared to face the future."

Bob replaces Frances Wood, who announced she was stepping down at Horizon's AGM in September.

Bob continued: "My very sincere thanks to Frances for her service, I am absolutely delighted she has chosen to stay on as a board member, and I look forward to working with her and my fellow board members."

"I would also like to congratulate Lorna Cameron on her appointment and welcome her to Horizon. I look forward to working with her and like to thank Isla who has done an excellent job in the interim."

Did you know you could be entitled to additional assistance during the winter months?

If you have any questions or need help making an application, please contact our tenancy sustainment team on **0330 303 0089**.



Foodbanks



WHAT? Up to three days' emergency food supplies.

WHO? If you are struggling to buy food for yourself and/or your family

For more information, call your local council or Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Winter fuel payments



WHAT? An automatic payment made to you by 31 January 2020.

WHO? For those born on, or before, 5 April 1954, who have lived in the UK between 16 to 22 September 2019 and receive state pension or another social security benefit.

For more information, call **0800 731 0160**.

Cold weather payments



WHAT? Get £25 automatically paid to you when the temperature drops to zero degrees Celsius or below for seven days in a row.

WHO? If you're getting Pension Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit.

For more information, visit <https://coldweatherpayments.dwp.gov.uk/>

Warm Home Discount code



WHAT? £140 off your electricity bill between September and March.

WHO? If you get the guarantee credit element of Pension Credit or you are on low income and meet the energy supplier's criteria.

For more information, call the Warm Home discount helpline on **0800 731 0214**.

Fairer rents for you

We asked for your views on our rent setting proposals and based on your feedback, we have opted for a simple points system which will be based on a small range of factors:

- type of property (i.e. flat or house);
- size of property and number of bedrooms;
- heating and energy efficiency; and
- extent of work required to maintain the landscaping and keep common areas clean.

The new rent-setting structure was approved by the Board in October and will apply from April 2020.

In line with your feedback, there will be no additional charges for private gardens, the maintenance of adaptations, wet floor showers or additional bathrooms. We also recognised your views: rent will not be different dependent on where the property is.

This change is not about getting more rental income. We have recalculated all rents and will get the same amount. Some tenants will see an increase in rent and others will pay less.



We are confident that from April 2020 we will have a transparent and fair rent structure where the rent for each property fully reflects its facilities.

We recognise this may cause difficulties for some tenants and we will do all we can to support those facing increases. Please contact your housing officer if you are having problems paying your rent.

Your house should be your home for as long as you want it to be!

Sometimes this means you'll need to make changes to make sure you can continue to live independently and, if this is the case, you may want to consider an adaptation.

An adaptation is an alteration to your home to make it easier for you, or someone in your household, to carry out everyday tasks. These simple changes could mean a big difference to your lifestyle, such as:

- adding internal or external grabrails;
- replacing existing taps with lever taps to set both water and temperature with just one hand;
- changing your window or door handles so it becomes easier for you to open and close doors and windows; or
- adding banisters or handrails.

For simple adaptations, you can complete a self-assessment form and we will carry out the adaptation to your home. Call us on **0330 303 0089** and we will send you a self-assessment form to complete.



For more substantial changes, you may need to speak to your local social work department. They will arrange for an occupational therapist to visit your home to assess your needs and discuss what adaptations are required. We can advise you when you need to do this.

Get involved with



This year our Residents' Improvement Group (RIG) completed a third scrutiny project, looking at Horizon's approach to tenant and resident participation. The findings were presented to our Board and we took the recommendations into consideration when we developed our new resident participation strategy.

We've also developed an action plan and RIG will be involved in monitoring and checking progress. RIG is now considering the topic for a new scrutiny project, due to start in January 2020.

Our RIG has welcomed new members, but are always keen to get more tenants involved!

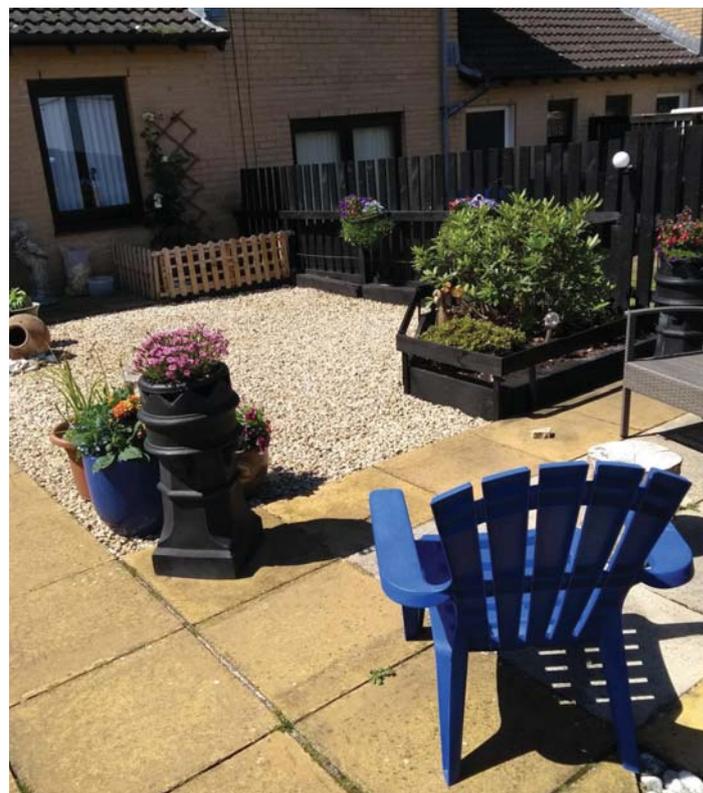
RIG said a fond farewell to Linda Johnstone from the Tenant Information Service (TIS), who provided independent support and training to the group, but were happy to welcome another TIS director, Sharon Donahoe to the role.

If you are interested in learning more about RIG, please visit www.horizonhousing.org/RIG or speak to your housing officer.

Great gardens of 2019

Instead of our usual gardening competition, this year we decided to say thank you to residents who take pride in their gardens and help brighten up our estates.

As a token of our appreciation, we have sent gift certificates and vouchers to all who took part.





Our estates team works hard to ensure neighbourhoods are clean and tidy!

Following your feedback, we carried out an estates review which resulted in changes to how the team operates.

Each member of the estates team is now responsible for a specific local area, which reduces travel time and means more time will be spent working in the estate. Once a week, the team will work together to tackle larger jobs.

We are also providing a free grass cutting service for disabled and elderly tenants and will make time to do 'good neighbour tasks' for tenants. If you would like to sign up to this service for next

season, please contact us to see if you are eligible. We have invested in new cleaning equipment for the team, including a window and steam cleaner, and all closes will receive a spring clean in early 2020. We have already trialled the new way of working and feedback on our close cleaning service has been great with 100% of tenants satisfied (85% very satisfied).

We continuously review our services and will consider making changes if required. If you have any feedback on our estates services, please contact our Estates Officer, Davie Peel, on **0330 303 0089**.

Want to have your say on estate management? We'll be reviewing our policy in early 2020. If you would like to share your views, please contact our Housing and Communities Manager, Elaine Whyte on **0330 303 0089**.

A bit of sprucing up...

Although our estates are neat and tidy we recognise our planted areas need a bit of sprucing up.

During the winter, Davie and the team will carry out improvement works in 10 estates. So far, they have planted 750 bulbs, which should bring a burst of colour in the spring.

Over the coming months, we will also be piloting three major landscape improvements in Kilmarnock, Coatbridge and Falkirk, carried out by Continental Landscapes. We then plan to tender for a three-year contract from 2020 to carry out landscaping refurbishment in all estates.

Keep your tenancy up-to-date

The government introduced changes to your tenancy rights from 1 November 2019.

The new rules mean there will be a 12-month qualifying period before tenants can apply for permission to make any substantial changes to their tenancy, and the qualifying period only begins on the day Horizon receives **written notification from the tenant of any changes.**

Add a joint tenant

If a tenant has a new partner or family member who they wish to become a joint tenant, they will need consent from us to add them to their tenancy agreement.

From 1 November 2019, proposed joint tenants will need to have lived at the property as their only or principal home for 12-months before the tenant applies for them to become a joint tenant.

The 12-month period only starts when we receive **written notification from the tenant** that the proposed joint tenant is living there.

Transferring a tenancy to someone else (assignment)

A tenant may wish to move out of their property and pass their



tenancy to a member of their household who already lives with them.

From 1 November 2019, both the tenant **and** the person they wish to pass the tenancy to must have lived in the property as their only or principal home during the previous 12 months before they apply to assign the tenancy.

The 12-month period only starts when we receive **written notification from the tenant** that the other person is living in the property as their only or principal home.

Subletting the property

If a tenant wishes to sublet all or part of their home, they must seek consent from us first.

From 1 November 2019, before a tenant can apply for consent to sublet their property, they must have been the tenant of the house throughout the 12 months immediately before applying to sublet.

We can refuse to give permission to transfer a tenancy or to sub-let a property if we have reasonable grounds to do so.

Taking over a tenancy after the tenant's death (succession)

A tenant may have people living with them who are not joint tenants, who they may wish to take over the tenancy after they die. For example, an unmarried partner, family member or carer.

To allow succession to happen after their death, a tenant must **tell us in writing** the person they wish to take over their tenancy has moved in with them at the time they do so.

If someone has already moved in and the tenant has not told us, this may affect their right to succeed to the tenancy.

To succeed to the tenancy, any person who is not a lawful spouse or civil partner must have lived in the property as their only or principal home for at least 12 months immediately prior to the tenant's death.

The 12-month period only starts when we receive **written notification from the tenant** that the other person is living in the property as their only or principal home. The succession rights for wheelchair adapted properties are covered under separate rules and can be discussed with your housing officer.

Keep warm and stay safe in winter

If cold weather is forecasted, 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.

Help others

In winter, it's important to look after yourself by eating healthy and staying active, but also to look after your neighbours who are less able to get out and about in the cold and bad weather.

You can do this by popping in for a cup of tea, offering to do the shopping and clear paths of snow and ice.

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 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 0330 303 0089 at any time;
- open all taps to drain the system and switch off central heating systems or water heaters; and
- warn neighbours if they are likely to be affected.

Frost, flood or fire: make sure you're covered!

No one wants to think about the worst happening, but it pays to be prepared. Burst pipes can cause considerable damage to your property and contents. Our building insurance covers damage to buildings and fixtures, but not to your contents.

At this time of year, it's important you take every possible step to protect your property and belongings. Make sure you have contents insurance. If you have any questions, please contact us on **0330 303 0089**.

Do you have a business idea you would like to take forward but don't know where to start? Do you need a helping hand with your business plan?

We've teamed up with Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) to offer you the chance to join an exciting (and free) programme to develop a business idea or improve business plans.

You don't need to have any experience, the RBS Pre-

Accelerator programme is aimed to help people who are starting a business or could benefit from the transferable skills this involves.

You don't have to be a RBS customer. However, places are on a first come, first served basis so don't delay.

The eight-week programme involves:

- an introductory event;
- an online learning portal; and
- access to a Facebook support network.

To ensure this opportunity is available to all, we'll cover reasonable travel expenses to the introductory event.

For more information visit <https://rebrand.ly/LinkRBS>.

Just remember to select "Link Group" when you are asked about which Hub you want to join.

Any questions, email Accelerator@linkhalt.co.uk for more information.

Did you know Horizon staff regularly contribute to charities?

We sponsor two dogs through the guide dog charity, which helps provide life changing services for people with sight loss across the UK.



We also raised over £400 for A Bear Named Buttony, a charity which provides children having bowel surgery with their own personalised bear to comfort them and help them understand what happens with the operation.

Most recently, staff showed their baking talents by taking part in a Macmillan Coffee morning. The office was filled with lots of home baked tasty treats and we raised an amazing £153 for this worthy cause.



Satisfaction survey winners

Congratulations to our satisfaction survey winner Mrs I, who received a £25 voucher!

Festive opening hours

We will be closed over the festive period from **Tuesday 24 December 2019 at 12.30pm** until **Monday 6 January at 9am**. 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

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 468113

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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