

horizon news

newsletter for tenants



Welcome to our spring newsletter

I hope you've been enjoying some warm sunny weather recently. This edition has a lot about the support available to help with rising energy costs, so, if you are finding it difficult to pay your energy bills, please contact the agencies mentioned, or speak to the housing team or tenancy sustainment officers who will be very happy to help.

You'll also read a lot about our digital programme which can help with quick and easy access to services and support – find out more in the opening pages.

We want these newsletters to be useful, so please let us know if there are things you would like included in future.

Lorna Cameron
Chief executive of Horizon

Improving digital services for customers

To make it quick and easy for tenants to access services and information, our digital programme has three key objectives:

1. Support Horizon's tenants who are 'digitally excluded' – either through a lack of equipment and/or the skills to access services digitally.
2. Improve Horizon's digital services so customers can easily access services such as repairs and rent enquiries online, offering greater control for customers and free up staff resources for other priority tasks.
3. Explore how best to use digital services and equipment to help tackle social isolation and support vulnerable tenants.

Our varied digital programme includes:

Improved call systems

We have invested in upgrading our telephony system to become cloud based. This gives callers the choice to be transferred directly to our gas and hot water contractor, or leave a voicemail if lines are engaged. This has proved essential during recent times. The new system is also more cost effective.

The system is also more secure when tenants and customers are paying for services. Our new secure 'card masking' system will – if requested – safely store card details to make future payments easier.

Customer app

Our customer app continues to be a useful way for tenants to manage their tenancies at the touch of a button. Within the app you can request repairs, statements, make payments and even request your housing or property officer to get in touch. So far 21% of tenants have signed up and are finding it useful. If you haven't already signed up for this app, please get in touch as we'd be delighted to tell you more about it.

Near Me

Near Me is a video consulting service that enables people to attend appointments from home or wherever is convenient, and you can even invite another person onto the call. The system allows various devices to be used and doesn't need an internet connection.

This system has a lot of benefits, including reducing travel time and making it easier to attend appointments, especially if you normally need someone to take you to them.

If you would like us to set up a Near Me appointment, to show us a specific repair in your home or to have a face-to-face conversation with your Housing Officer, please get in touch.

Tablet and laptop loan scheme

Even those of us with phones can struggle to fill out forms or write emails on such a small screen. Therefore, having access to a laptop or tablet can be essential for many of us - whether it's saving money by getting the best deals on price comparison websites, doing an online supermarket shop, or completing a job application.

To help with this, Horizon operates a **loan scheme** for all of tenants who need access to a large screen device. This could be a tablet, a laptop, or a Chromebook (which is a tablet with a keyboard attached).

If you live in a household with no laptop or tablet and you need one for college work, or helping to manage your home, or even writing that novel you knew you had in you, ask your Housing Officer to apply to the loan scheme on your behalf.



Connecting Scotland

Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative set up in response to coronavirus to help every citizen in Scotland get online. Horizon has successfully secured 309 iPads with a year's worth of data and we are currently distributing them to eligible tenants.

We are committed to offering training and support to enable tenants to use the internet confidently and safely and many of our staff have received Digital Champion training.

If you would like us to review your circumstances to see if you're eligible for an iPad or the loan scheme or require some support to use the internet, please get in touch.

Find a Home

Horizon has joined a choice-based letting system called **Find a Home**. Before you register you will

be able to see where our homes are and decide if we have the type of property you need, in the area you want. You will also see what homes are currently available and can decide if you want to register an interest in them. More information can be found at **www.findahome.scot**.

Get in touch

There are various ways you can contact us, and we provide different information digitally:

- Horizon's website with a dedicated tenants' section **www.horizonhousing.org**
- Social media sites Facebook and Twitter where we share a variety of information
- Via email – **e-mail@horizonhousing.org**
- If you would prefer to receive this newsletter digitally, please update your email communication preference next time you are in contact with us

Do you want to help simplify how people access online benefit services?

If so, the Scottish Government is looking for people to take part in user research and would love to hear from you.

There are lots of benefits to accessing services online, such as the convenience and flexibility it offers. However, there are some disadvantages for people trying to access services online. You need to try and remember lots of usernames and passwords, and often agencies need people to provide copies of various documents, such as their passport, driving licence and proof of address.

To address this, the Scottish Government wants to introduce a digital identity service. This new service aims to improve people's access to public services by providing a secure, and easy way to prove online that they are eligible for a service or a benefit. The service is being designed to make sure the approach doesn't exclude people who are unable to use a digital service.

Anything you say will be treated confidentially, anonymously and will not be traceable to any individual. Research is being conducted as online video chats, small virtual group sessions, surveys, and telephone calls.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

To find out more please email: **digitalidentityscotland.userresearch@gov.scot**.

90% of tenants were satisfied with our services!

We were delighted with the results of our tenant satisfaction survey in August 2021. 60% of tenants responded, and most of our key indicators showed increased levels of satisfaction since the last survey in 2018.

Results included:

- 90% of tenants were satisfied with our services
- 96% said Horizon was good at keeping them informed about services and decisions
- 97% said they were happy with the opportunities they had to participate
- 92% were satisfied with Horizon's contribution to the management of their neighbourhood
- 91% of tenants were satisfied with the quality of their home
- 84% of tenants said their rent offered value for money

In addition to the above, your priorities for home improvements were window replacement (33%), and kitchens and bathrooms (22% and 24%).

Many thanks to everyone who shared their views and suggestions. Your feedback is helping us work on areas you said need to be improved.



Love Food Hate Waste

Love Food Hate Waste aims to involve people in the challenge of reducing food waste. Every bit of wasted food has an environmental impact – from transport, fuel, water, energy – and it all adds up. While governments and businesses have an important part to play, food waste in UK households produces nearly 25 million tonnes of harmful carbon emissions every year.

Did you know?

- 81% of people in the UK are concerned about climate change but only 32% see a clear link with food waste
- 70% of all food wasted in the UK is wasted by people in their own homes
- 30% of global greenhouse gases are created from the production and distribution of food
- 4.5 million tonnes of edible food is thrown away each year by UK households – the equivalent of 8 meals per week



We are being asked to consider these suggestions:

- Leftover lunches – using last night's dinner leftovers for a quick lunch is a cheap and easy way to make sure we don't throw good food away
- Cupboard swap shop – have a regular clear out of cupboards to find odd tins and jars you won't eat but you could maybe swap or donate to friends and family
- Be a freezer hero – loads of food can be frozen but we need to remember to defrost and cook again later!

For more information visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Garden competition and estate inspections



Many tenants take great pride in their gardens, and we feel it's important to mark this and encourage neighbours to get involved. The competition gives all tenants the chance to share their gardening skills and win prizes, usually in June or July.

Tenants who keep their garden tidy throughout the year will be eligible.

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 pathways are free of weeds.

Our housing and property services teams will

meet to have a chat about which tenants should get a special thank you for helping keep our estates attractive and well maintained.

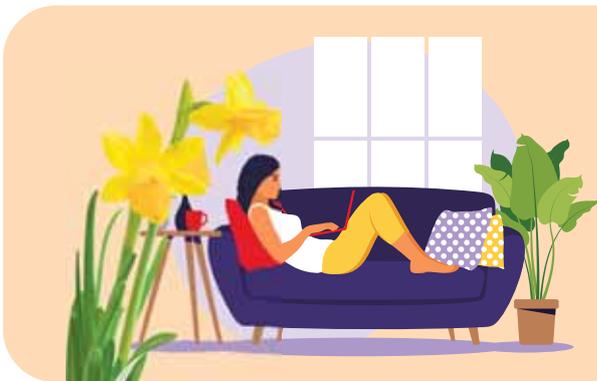
We'll be carrying out monthly estate inspections, and if you are struggling to maintain your garden or need ideas on small changes, our staff – particularly our estates team – can offer advice and can even apply for funding any equipment required to enhance the area or your individual garden.

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!

Please contact your housing officer with your ideas.

Happy gardening and we look forward to seeing the gardens in bloom!



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Horizon, like our Facebook page!

 [Facebook.com/HorizonHA](https://www.facebook.com/HorizonHA)

Prevent dampness and keep healthy

Ventilating your home is key to maintaining a healthy house. Keeping fresh air flowing through your home removes moisture and prevents dampness build-up forming and mould. If left untreated, dampness and mould have the potential to cause damage to the building and, in severe cases, affect your health.

Condensation is the most common type of dampness within our homes and is formed when there is an imbalance between sufficient heating, adequate ventilation, and moisture production. Most of the moisture in our homes is produced by our daily activities, such as cooking and washing, but can be controlled through some of the simple steps on the following page...

Do:

Keep the trickle vents on your windows open to maintain air flow throughout your home.

Use your extractor fans within your kitchen and bathroom and open windows when cooking and washing.

Have your heating set to a low continual temperature throughout the day rather than having short periods of high-level heating.

Don't:

Hang wet clothes over radiators to dry.

Leave condensation to build up on cold surfaces such as your windowsills.

Push furniture tight against external walls, allow a gap of a few centimetres so that air can flow freely through these spaces and prevent any dampness build ups.

For more helpful information on ventilating, heating, and preventing damp and condensation within your home please visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk.

Are you struggling to pay your energy bills?



Following Ofgem's announcement in February 2022 the average household's energy bill will rise by £693 or 54% a year, we know more people will need energy advice.

If you are struggling to pay your energy bills, please contact our tenancy sustainment team on 0330 303 0089.

They may have access to short-term energy funds or be able to signpost you to specialist energy advice teams in your area.

Our housing team has been able to access over £14,000 of short-term energy funds for tenants in need between December and March.

They can also carry out benefit checks to make sure you are getting as much from your benefits as possible and you are in receipt of all the benefits you may be entitled to.

The team can also signpost you to money advice services if you are struggling with debts.

Bright Deal service for deaf and hard of hearing people

Bright Deal is a home energy advice service from Deaf Action, helping deaf and hard of hearing people in Scotland understand and manage their home energy.

You can contact Bright Deal by email at brightdeal@deafaction.org.

Local energy advice services

Some areas have specialist local energy advice services, which we have listed below.

Local services:

- Glasgow – Glasgow Home Energy Advice Team (G-HEAT) – **0800 092 9002**
- Fife – Cosy Kingdom – **01592 807930**
- West Lothian – WLC Energy Advice Team – **01506 283000 (select option 4)**
- Edinburgh – Changeworks – **0800 870 8800**
- North and East Ayrshire – Lemon Aid – **0800 221 8089**
- East Renfrewshire – ERC Energy Cost Advisory Service – **0141 557 3001**

If your area doesn't have a local service, you can contact Home Energy Scotland on **0808 808 2282** or EnergyAdvice.Scot on **0808 196 8660**.

Warm Home Discount

Details of the Warm Home Discount for 2022/2023 haven't yet been released, but in previous years you could get a one-off discount of £140 on your electricity bill between October and March.

You may be able to qualify if you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit or if you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme.

Each supplier has different criteria and timescales for applying vary, so if you think you may qualify, please contact your supplier to discuss their criteria and application process soon so you don't miss out.



Need more help saving energy and keeping warm?

We have partnered with Home Energy Scotland (HES) who help people create warmer homes, reduce their energy bills, and lower their carbon footprint.

HES is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Energy Saving Trust, and have a network of regional advice centres covering all of Scotland, which offer local knowledge and expert advice on saving energy and keeping warm at home.

Our tenancy sustainment team can make referrals on your behalf to Home Energy Scotland through their online portal.

If you would like to contact Home Energy Scotland yourself, you can call them for free on **0808 808 2282**.

Looking for improvements to your home

Our asset officers and planning asset officers are currently carrying out our annual housing stock condition surveys. These surveys are designed to inspect the condition of your property and let us know where and what improvements are needed.

Each year we survey different properties, so we can see the condition of Horizon's houses and identify any issues affecting your home. We use this information to plan our future maintenance projects, such as window and door replacements and renewing kitchens and bathrooms.

If your property is due to be surveyed this year, you'll already have received a letter confirming a date when we will be in your area.

If you haven't received a letter, please don't worry as your property may have already been surveyed in a previous year.

If you have any questions about these stock condition surveys, please contact our office and we'll be able to talk to you about them.

Win a £30 shopping voucher!

How many daffodils have you spotted in this newsletter? Scan the QR code (right) and complete this short newsletter feedback survey to enter our Spring competition and be in with a chance of winning!



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www.horizonhousing.org

Opening hours:

Monday – Tuesday 9am – 5pm, Wednesday 10am – 5pm, Thursday 9am – 5pm, Friday 9am – 4pm. Our office remains closed to the public until further notice.

Out of hours emergency contacts:

Gas boiler and heating repairs: 01334 650 452

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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