



## Festive Period Opening Hours

The OTHA office continues to remain closed to the public at this time due to the ongoing situation with Coronavirus. Phone lines and other methods of contact continue to be monitored, however this will stop from 2pm on Thursday 24th December 2020 and will resume from 9am on Wednesday 6th January 2021. *In the event of an emergency please refer to the emergency numbers provided on page 2.*



Winter Newsletter 2020

# Oak Tree Housing Association are Still Here and Working For You



**01475 807000**  
(please leave a message and we will contact you)



[info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk)



**Oak Tree**  
Housing Association



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While our office may be closed we are still working standard hours and are available for all our tenants and customers. Please contact us if you need advice or assistance.

As you know, following the issue of Scottish Government Guidance during March 2020 we had to close our office and introduce service restrictions. As our office is classed as a non-essential office the Scottish Government guidance is that we should not be open at present. We are advised that all office based staff should work from home where possible and that our office should remain closed to the public. This position is reviewed regularly by the Scottish Government, but with increasing infection rates the guidance is unlikely to change soon.

We are following the government guidance and will reintroduce services which we have been unable to carry out and open our office as and when safe to do so. Staff are prioritising working to ensure that where possible services such as repairs, voids processing, allocations and lettings, dealing with anti-social behaviour, tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention work, which are all deemed essential services, continue to take place throughout this pandemic (COVID19), in line with public health advice, with OTHA taking the relevant steps to ensure infection prevention and control measures are in place.

The OTHA staff team continue to work very hard to try and keep everything as "normal" as possible. If you need advice or assistance from us during this time, we can be contacted in the following ways: **Website** - If you visit our website [www.oaktreeha.org.uk](http://www.oaktreeha.org.uk) there is a live chat facility, where you can contact a member of staff during office hours. You can also contact us via the tenant portal on the website and click on the large blue tenant login button. **Email** - You can also contact the Association via e-mail at [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk) Our **Facebook** page is Oak Tree Housing Association and our **Twitter** page is @OakTreeHA. **Telephone** - If you do not have access to our website or do not have access to e-mail, please telephone our main office number on 01475 807000, if we are busy on the phone, you will have the option to leave a message. Please leave a message by pressing option 4 and leave your name, address, contact number and some brief details and a member of staff will call you back.

Staff will be checking the messages regularly and your details will be passed to the appropriate member of staff and they will get in touch with you.

Staff working remotely may be contacting you over the course of the period of closure - they will be using mobile numbers that you may not recognise. To report a repair, please contact the repairline direct on 01475 807001.

## West Stewart Street News

You may well be aware that OTHA bought the old Council offices on West Stewart Street. We were in need of a bigger office space as the organisation grew. We took some time to draw up plans to make sure this new office provides the best environment and springboard for all our service delivery to our customers.

During the last 18 months, we have been busy reviewing lots of ideas from colleagues and our customers. We visited a number of other landlords' offices to see how they used the space and to find out about the work they did. Some tenants from our Value for Money Review Group joined us on two of these visits along with Tony Kelly from TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service). They have worked on a report with recommendations for us to take on board.

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# Coronavirus - How Our Services are Affected



## Repairs

Following the appointment of our new Maintenance contractor, The McDougall Group (TMG), we have resumed carrying out non-emergency repairs, in line with the current guidance from the Scottish Government. We have also been contacting tenants who reported non-emergency repairs during the period where we operated a restricted service as a result of Covid-19. If you reported a repair during the lockdown period that is still outstanding then please contact us on 01475 807001. The tenant's portal is also available on our web site and you can use this to report non-emergency repairs.



## Loss of Heating and Hot Water

Our contractor, James Frew (Gas Sure), are also now carrying out a full repair service in line with current guidance from the Scottish Government.



## Repair Inspection Requests

Our staff have not resumed house visits yet to carry out repair inspections but will do as much as they can to carry out a diagnosis over the phone, so if you have a repair that may need inspection phone our Repair Line during office hours and provide as much detail as you can. If need be then a Maintenance Officer may call you back if they need more information.

For now our repair service contact numbers remain as follows;

James Frew (Gas Sure)		
During Office Hours	Out with Office Hours	Weekend
Mon - Thurs 9am - 5pm Friday 9am - 4pm	Mon - Thurs 5pm - 9am	Fri - Mon 4pm -9am
01475 807 001	01294 468 113	01294 468 113
All other Repairs: The McDougall Group (TMG)		
Mon - Thurs 9am - 5pm Friday 9am - 4pm	Mon - Thurs 5pm - 9am	Fri - Mon 4pm -9am
01475 807 001	0800 975 1234	0800 975 1234

**\*\*Lift Breakdowns** should be reported directly to the lift service provider using the telephone number displayed in the lift car of your building.

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# West Stewart Street News

Unfortunately, the work required to modernise and improve the layout was delayed by the pandemic. However, things are now progressing well. The new office will be ready for us to move in when office services can resume in the New Year. We expect to move in around late March/early April if the rules allow at that time.

With news of a vaccine for Covid-19 and better testing being available in the New Year, we do think it will be possible to have events to show off the new premises around the opening, which our tenants will be welcome to attend. If not, we will still do it, but it might be when the rules allow.

We look forward to a new start in a great new office after the long dark winter of this pandemic. The best thing will definitely be seeing you all again, face to face in comfortable and safe surroundings. We can't wait!

# Reminders regarding the risks associated with Legionella & Asbestos



## Precautions Against Legionella

The risk of contracting legionella in the domestic home is minimal. There are, however, some simple steps that you should take to avoid this happening:

- You should turn your shower on at least once a week or more.
- You should make sure that you dismantle, clean and de-scale your showerheads and shower hoses at least once every 3 months or earlier if scaling is evident.



## Precautions Regarding Asbestos

Properties built after the mid-1980s are very unlikely to contain asbestos in the fabric of the building and properties built or refurbished after the 1990s are extremely unlikely to contain asbestos anywhere in the building. Asbestos cement, however, had been widely used as a cladding material and it can still be found in garages and sheds. Asbestos fibres are often present in the air and it is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibres in a domestic home will be harmful, particularly given that asbestos materials in good condition do not usually pose a danger if they are not disturbed or damaged.

- If any of our maintenance contractor's suspect there is asbestos in your home, they will contact the Association to seek further advice before they take any action. If you do have asbestos materials in your home, extra care will be taken to ensure the release of fibres does not present a danger to you. If asbestos is discovered you should refrain from carrying out DIY work where drilling or disturbance of the asbestos is required. Remember asbestos is not usually dangerous if it is not disturbed or damaged.
- Some small jobs can be undertaken if the right precautions are taken. Our information leaflet on asbestos gives advice on asbestos and this should be consulted before any work is undertaken. This leaflet can be obtained on our website or by contacting the office.



QR Code for Maintenance Information



# Oak Tree Housing Association's ADAPTATION SERVICE

The Association would like to remind its tenants of the adaptation service it provides to support the housing needs of people with disabilities.

We work closely with the Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living (ICIL) who have trained Occupational Therapists (OT's) who can assess the particular needs of individuals to determine what adaptations are best suited to allow them to continue living in their home in the degree of comfort they would normally expect from modern day living.

If you have a disability and believe you might benefit from the Association's adaptation service or you know of a family member or a friend who might also benefit from an adaptation then please contact the ICIL on 01475 714350 to arrange for an OT to visit and assess.

requirements. If the OT considers an adaptation will be of benefit then he or she will make the necessary referral to the Association. The Association will then review the request and if appropriate, ensure the work is added to its adaptations programme and have the work carried out as soon as practicably possible. Subject to available funding, adaptations will be categorised in accordance with the OT's recommendations.

The following is a list of typical adaptations that can be undertaken to aid and assist individuals with their particular disabilities. This list is not exhaustive and other adaptations may be considered. It should however be noted that there are cases where it will not be appropriate for the Association to carry out or consent to an adaptation

Typical Adaptations Work: Over bath showers; Level access showers; Wet floor areas; Handrails (internal and external); Access ramps and Lever taps.

## Planned & Cyclical Updates



### West Station Aerial Survey Update

In the summer newsletter, we informed you of the need for a more enhanced view of the roof finishes within the West Station tenement properties, as well as production of a defect list for forward maintenance planning. This aerial survey was completed over 51 blocks in early March 2020.

The outcome of this survey highlighted 679 repairs of differing types which were separated to block responsibility and lettered to all blocks associated.

In view of undertaking this work, the Association has completed investigation with a wide range of procurement frameworks to ascertain the best value options for delivery of this requirement and via the Scotland Excel procurement framework a direct award option is being investigated further through detailed pricing of the required works identified.

The Association are currently considering the costs returned and will make contact with all blocks associated to confirm tendered costs and request any consultation that may be required to allow the works to advance.

It is hoped that all works associated to this survey can proceed early 2021.

### Heat, Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detection Upgrade

Due to regulatory change passed by the Scottish Government in February 2019 in the delivery of heat, smoke and carbon monoxide detection within your home, the Association is currently undertaking delivery of this work with a view for its completion by the regulatory compliance date of 28th February 2022. J Frew (Gas Sure) are currently undertaking this work on behalf of the Association, and at the end of October 2020, have completed over 897 upgrades (around 51% of the upgrades required).

In view of accelerating these numbers, the contractor has now allocated a wider staff base to deliver this work with overall compliance of this important safety upgrade to your home anticipated by April 2021. This upgrade of the detection within your home will be predominantly completed at the same time as your gas service, however in view of the catch up required, you may be contacted by J Frew (Gas Sure) to complete this detection upgrade outwith

- Carbon Monoxide alarm
- Heat alarm
- Smoke alarm
- Wireless interlinked
- Hardwired interlinked



**Smoke alarms** - in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings

**Smoke alarms** - installed in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes

**Heat alarms** - installed in every kitchen

All smoke and heat alarms should be interlinked

**Carbon monoxide alarms**- to be fitted where there is a fuel burning appliance or a fire

This applies to **ALL** homeowners and landlords.

## Landscape Maintenance



Our landscape maintenance contractor John O'Conner returned to a full service from July onwards, and from this time have been tirelessly working through the additional work required in bringing back our landscaped areas to the agreed specification that this service requests.

Both the Association and John O'Conner would like to thank all residents for their patience over this year's growing season, and more so, the difficulties that Covid 19 restrictions have made on delivering this contract to the expectations of all. The end of October saw the last grass cut cycle being completed, and thereafter, the winter programme will begin.

The winter programme will see a programme of leaf clearance, hard standing cleansing, shrub pruning, and general landscape tidy ups.

### Stock Condition Survey

The Association have recently completed a stock condition survey covering the following areas of their housing stock:

- 20% Internal of Properties
- 100% External of Properties
- 100% Common Areas and Blocks

The survey has delivered clarity in required areas of legislation such as SHQS (Scottish Housing Quality Standards) and EESSH (Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing), as well as, the condition of our properties for future upgrade assessment.

The data returned by the consultant (Pellings LLP) who completed the survey, is now being considered by the Association for any relevant change required to the forward maintenance planning to ensure that best practice as well as best value is applied to the current stock portfolio held by the Association.

Any changes considered from this process will be conveyed to affected parties as appropriate.

### Gas Safety & Service



Aside from the day-to-day repairs to your home, the Maintenance Section also looks after the gas service programme. This service is essential to ensuring all our properties with a gas heating appliance are checked on an annual basis to ensure it is operating safely. Smoke and Carbon monoxide detectors are also checked during this service.

During the current Covid-19 crisis our contractor, James Frew (Gas Sure), has resumed this part of its operations and if your service is due, you will be contacted to arrange an appointment. You will be asked about your personal circumstances in relation to Covid -19 to assess if the service can be carried out safely.

Please ensure that you contact the service contractor, James Frew (Gas Sure) to allow access for this important safety check when they contact you, or arrange an alternative appointment if it is not suitable when they do contact you.

A number of services will not have been done as a result of the crisis and if you have had to defer it is important you arrange access with us as soon as you can. We will be writing to anyone who has an out of date service to arrange again. Ultimately this service will need to be carried out and we ask you work with us and our contractor to ensure your gas appliance is kept in safe working order.

While at present we are not taking up our right to force access to carry out this work, we will have to ultimately consider this option where we have not been given access and this remains under constant review as the Covid-19 pandemic continues.

### CUSTOMER CARE PRIZE DRAW WINNERS!

Date	Name
October 2019	Customer requested their name be withheld
November 2019	Customer requested their name be withheld
December 2019	Customer requested their name be withheld
January 2020	Customer requested their name be withheld
February 2020	Customer requested their name be withheld
March 2020	Customer requested their name be withheld

**WELL DONE TO ALL  
OUR WINNERS WHO  
WILL EACH RECEIVE A  
£10 TESCO VOUCHER!**

## Latest News: OTHA's First Virtual Annual General Meeting

On 22nd September 2020 Oak Tree Housing Association held its first ever Virtual Annual General Meeting. The success of this AGM was as a result of Members attending on the night in good numbers, in order to support the Association.

The election of members to the Management Committee saw Sharon Tritschler, Diane McCarney, Sandra Rorison and Sandra McMenamin standing down and seeking re-election, with the election to Committee of new Members Anthony Wilson, Doreen Williams and Jim Aird. Accountants Alexander Sloan, were re-appointed.

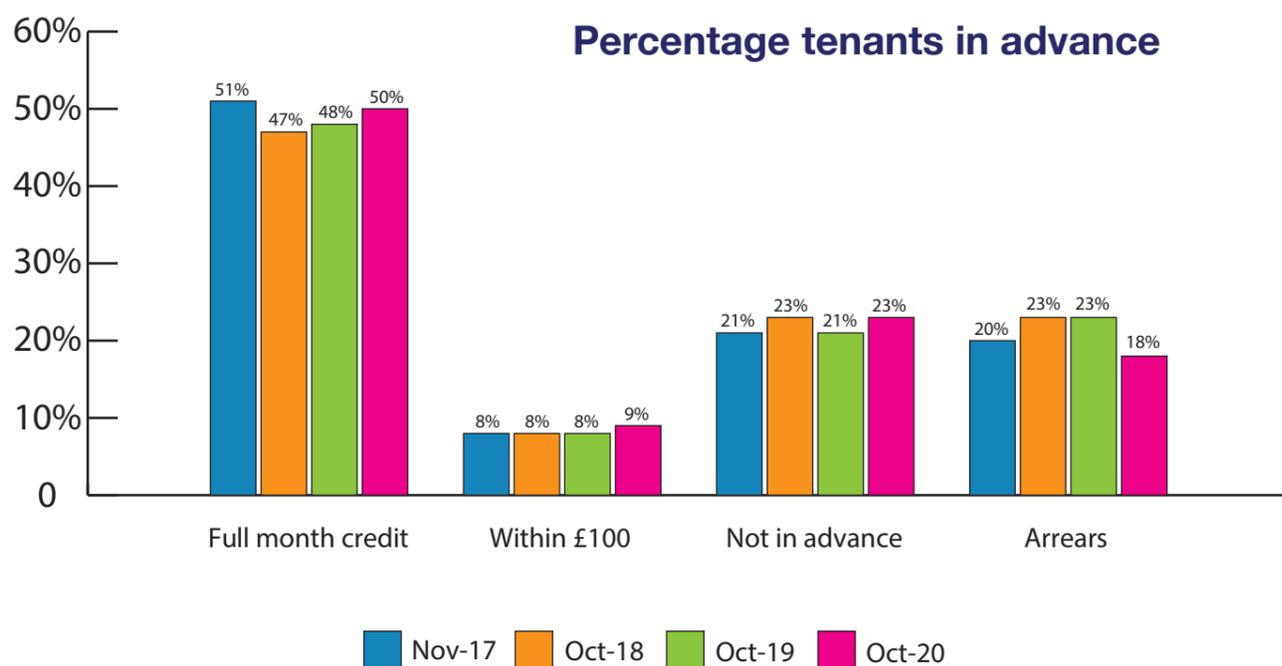
Members heard that whilst the AGM was set against a backdrop of the Coronavirus Pandemic, which had changed lives in so many ways, OTHA had a busy year during 2019-2020, with many highlights and that services had performed well.

## Rent in Advance

We are delighted to report that the number of tenants who are a full month in advance with their rent has increased and the number of tenants with an arrears balance has reduced in the last 12 months. Given the difficulties we have all faced since March 2020 this is particularly positive news.

Every OTHA tenant should be in advance with their rent which means that by the 28th of each month, your rent account should be showing a full month's rent in credit. This is to pay the rent for the coming month which is then charged on the 1st of the month.

We understand that some tenants have Housing Benefit or Universal Credit payments paid direct to the Association and they are usually paid later in the month. We take this into account when calculating who is in advance and who needs to make additional payments to become in advance.



**Remember, if you are thinking of moving to another Oak Tree Housing Association property you will need to pay the full month's rent for your new property before you sign the tenancy agreement.**

Due to the current restrictions in place and the reduced service, we will not be contacting tenants who are either within £100 of being in advance or whose rent account is clear but isn't in advance. However if you have any questions about your rent account then please contact a member of the Housing Services team to discuss your circumstances.

## Methods of Payment



We have traditionally taken money in all sorts of different ways and welcomed every payment type. However, times have changed and we want to take a look at how our tenants currently pay their rent and to see if there are more efficient and easier ways for our tenants to make payments. Already there has been a change just simply because our office is closed to the public. We were always reluctant to take cash payments in the office, but a small number of our tenants preferred this method of payment and often new tenants would pay their first month's rent payment in cash.

**We have not been able to accept cash since 20 March 2020 and we do not plan to accept it in future – even when the office re-opens.** During this Covid 19 pandemic we have all been encouraged to use cashless methods of payment and what can seem strange at first can soon become a habit. **Cheques and Standing Orders are used less commonly by everyone too and these will also be phased out.**

Many of our tenants have chosen to make weekly or fortnightly payments towards their rent instead of once a month. This may have been chosen to match your wages or benefits payment cycle at the time. Most benefits and pensions are now paid monthly or 4 weekly and more salaries or wages are now paid monthly or 4 weekly too.

Direct Debits are ideal for many of our customers and there has been a shift by all organisations to move to this method – gas, electric accounts and more recently TV licence and road tax can now be easily set up and once in place they are changed by the provider. If you pay by Direct Debit, the Association makes the required change when your rent changes in April of each year. Direct Debits also take away the need for you to go to a shop or post office and you don't need to remember to pay each month – all you need to do is pick a day of the month that suits your income payments.

We want to take time in 2021 to review how payments are made and discuss with individual tenants whether or not a change to the payment cycle may be better. Weekly Direct Debits and Allpay card payments cost the Association more to collect than monthly payments and we want to operate as efficiently and effectively as we can.

We are also planning to make changes to how you can pay your rent **on-line** and via the **Web Portal**. A different system would mean you would see payments going into your account straight away.

If you want to make changes to how you pay your rent just now, please don't wait until we contact you. We are happy to discuss it with you now. Please call **01475 807000** and ask to speak to one of the Housing team.

## Energy Activators

We were delighted to hear that the "Energy Activators" are coming back soon.

In a joint project with the Wise Group and Cloch Housing Association, Oak Tree are looking forward to working with 2 members of staff who will be appointed as Energy Activators and who can work with our tenants to help reduce their energy and fuel bills.

As soon as we know who the staff are and when they will be starting work, we will let tenants know about the service and how they can access help. In the meantime, please speak to us if you are having difficulties with your energy suppliers or meeting your fuel bills and we will do our best to help.

## Mutual Exchanges



Most of our tenants who want to move house look in the first instance to the Inverclyde Common Housing Register (ICHR) and once registered you can bid on available properties.

We often speak to people who love their house and the area that they live in but their house is either too big or too small.

Another avenue to try is a Mutual Exchange. You may find someone with a house or flat that suits both of your needs and you basically "swap" houses.

If you are a tenant of any of the ICHR landlords and are looking for a mutual exchange you will need to register on the new service House Exchange. House Exchange is an easy to use website and matches your property to other likeminded individuals who are also looking to mutual exchange.

The Inverclyde Common Housing Register has subscribed to House Exchange on your behalf therefore you won't have to pay a penny to use the service. Registration to House Exchange is quick and easy, all you need to do is fill in the online registration form and select the ICHR logo once you have clicked submit on the first page of registration.

If you need assistance registering with House Exchange please contact a member of the Inverclyde Common Housing Register team on **01475 807011** or by using the contact facility on the ICHR website.

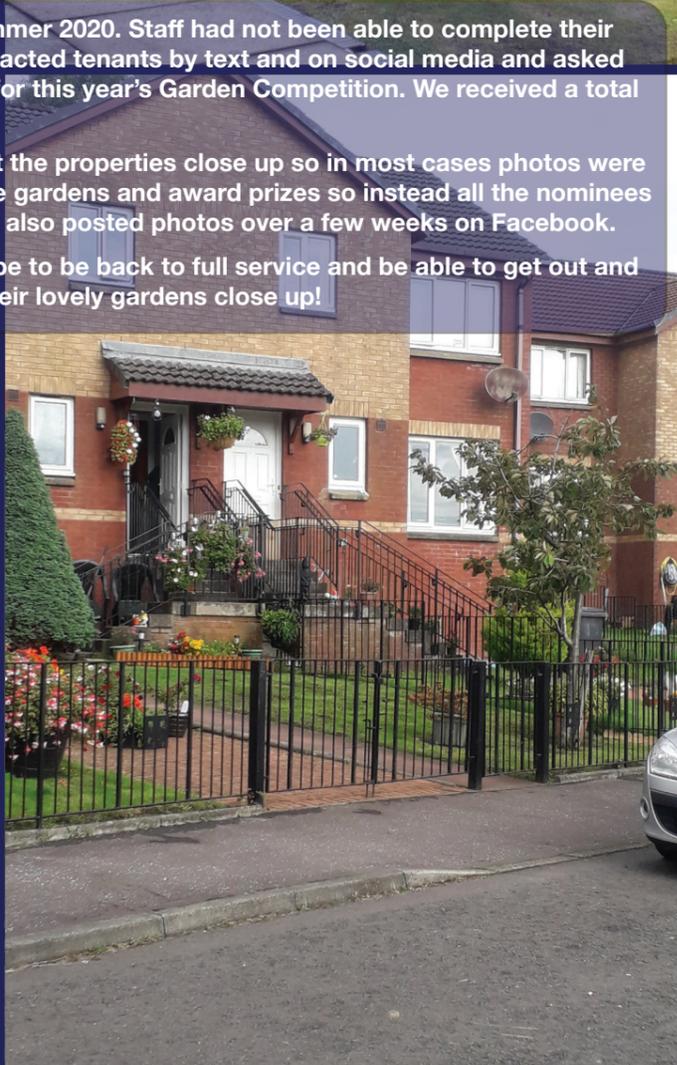
## 2020 Garden Competition



We had to have a low key garden competition in Summer 2020. Staff had not been able to complete their regular estate inspections or walkabouts so we contacted tenants by text and on social media and asked them to nominate either themselves or a neighbour for this year's Garden Competition. We received a total of 24 nominations.

Due to Covid 19 restrictions we were not able to visit the properties close up so in most cases photos were taken from a distance. It wasn't possible to judge the gardens and award prizes so instead all the nominees were written to and commended for their efforts. We also posted photos over a few weeks on Facebook.

Here is a small selection of photos. Next year we hope to be back to full service and be able to get out and about and speak to our keen gardeners and enjoy their lovely gardens close up!



## Over 500 Users Registered With 'My Oak Tree' Web Portal

In June 2018 we launched our Web Portal and we are delighted with how it has been working so far. In the summer 2020 we reached 500 users and a name was picked at random to win a £25 voucher. Congratulations Craig McDonald, we hoped you enjoyed spending your voucher.

You can register via our **website [www.oaktreeha.org.uk](http://www.oaktreeha.org.uk)** and by clicking on the blue 'Tenant Login' button. You will need to have an email address and a note of your 6 digit tenant number. If you don't have this to hand, please contact us and we will help. We can also register you direct (provided we have details of your email address). It is a 24 Hour On-line Service:

**The portal is available online 24/7, 365 days a year and the following main services are available:**

- View your rent account statement
- Make a rent payment
- View recent repairs
- Report a repair
- View the details we hold for you

**Additional items that you can benefit from are:**

- Make changes to your contact details and household
- Join our paper free service to receive documents by email
- Contact us about specific matters or arrange an appointment to speak to us
- Apply to keep a pet
- Apply to make an alteration to your home
- Get advice and information on your tenancy
- Register a comment, complaint or compliment
- Register a neighbourhood complaint
- Participate in online surveys and consultations

We want to keep developing the Portal further and add on more forms, information and features as we go along. Any suggestions or feedback would be very welcome.

We also have a free App and if you have an Apple or Android phone then it will make it even easier to access the features. You can download the app by searching "Oak Tree Housing" on either the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.



## Keep your ICHR application up-to-date



If you are looking to move home and have registered with the Inverclyde Common Housing Register, it is vital that you keep your application up-to-date. If you have changed address, your household has changed in any way (this includes people who may stay with you but will not be moving with you) or your medical circumstances have changed, then you need to complete a "change of circumstances" application.

If you place a bid for a property and there has been a change in your circumstances, you will not be considered for that property, so you should make sure all the details on your application are correct before you bid. If your email address or contact telephone numbers change too then you need to update your application too. If you place a bid, we need to be able to contact you by telephone or email so it's very important that we can get in touch, otherwise you cannot be considered.

To complete a change or circumstances, visit our website **[www.inverclydechr.org.uk](http://www.inverclydechr.org.uk)**

## Value for Money Group

Our stalwart group of four members has gone quiet since lockdown. They had a very busy year in 2019-20, which included:

- Mystery shopping on repairs, working with a consultant. An action plan was developed as part of the work and our committee, who welcomed their input, passed this.
- Site visits to other housing association landlord's offices to report and input into the development of OTHA's new office and services to be delivered there.
- Review of the void standard with a site visit to a void property.
- Review of the ARC & Charter report format.

After all this work, the focus was to be on recruitment and development of the group. Tony Kelly from TPAS was commissioned to work with the group to consider their priorities, and future focus in spring 2020. This included how to expand the group and recruit new members. Work unfortunately was halted due to Covid-19, and contact has only been possible with two members of the group since the lockdown March 2020. If you may be interested in getting involved when the group starts work again, contact Kate Dahlstrom for more information. We would love to hear from you. Any of the reports mentioned above are available on request if you are interested.

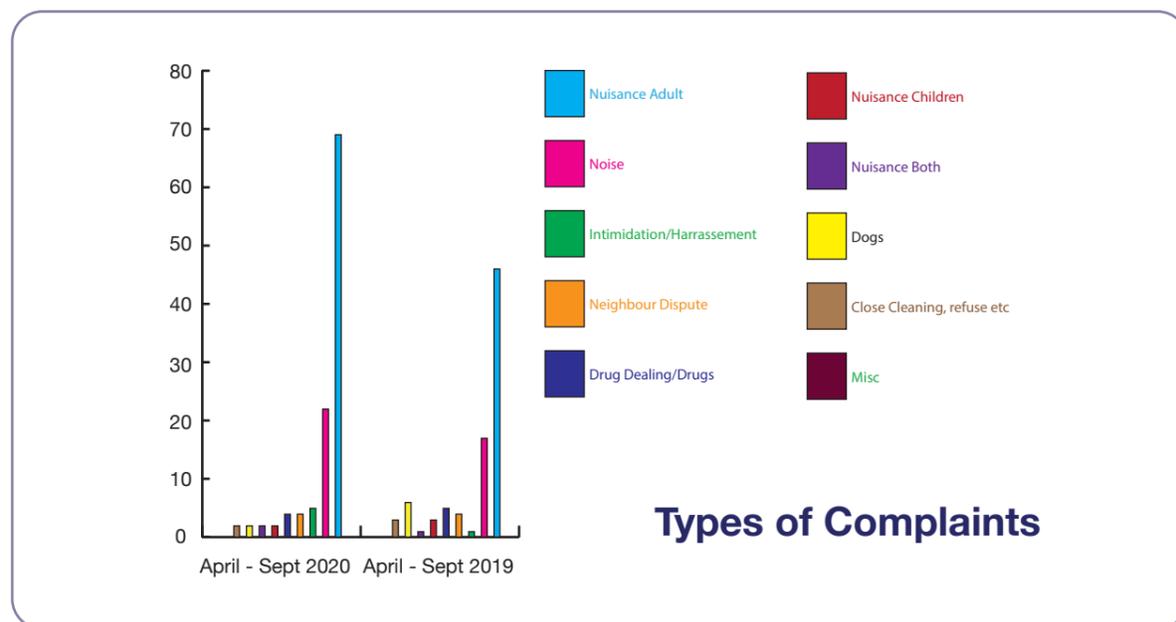
## Anti-Social Behaviour and Estate Management Complaints

Unfortunately there was an increase in complaints about anti-social behaviour in the period 1 April to 30 September 2020 compared to the same period last year. The increase in complaints came at the time when staff were working from home and this made it much harder to deal with the complaints and resolve them quickly. The Police, the Community Wardens and the Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team and Mediation Service were all providing a reduced service too.

Nevertheless, despite not being able to visit properties and speak to people face to face, we did what we could and spoke to residents on the telephone and used other methods of communication e.g. emails, texts and letters.

We know the early days of lockdown were very difficult. Lots more people were at home during the day and children were not attending school or nursery. Some people were just refusing to comply with the Covid 19 restrictions and invited people into their homes and caused a nuisance to their neighbours with their behaviour.

The chart shows the reasons for complaints. The most common reason is "nuisance adults". This category refers to general anti-social behaviour, rowdy visitors, parties, late night disturbances and vandalism or property damage. There were 46 of these complaints in 2019 and this rose to 69 in the same period in 2020.



There was also an increase in complaints about noise and tenants feeling intimidated or harassed by their neighbours. As the restrictions started to ease in July, the external agencies that we work closely with started to resume their full service and this was a huge bonus.

The Community Wardens, the Anti Social Behaviour Investigation team and the Mediation Service are a great asset in Inverclyde. We work closely with them and the Police and it means that there is a range of services available to residents to reduce and resolve anti-social behaviour.

Unfortunately in Inverclyde during this period there have been some very serious incidents that are criminal in nature and the actions of the people carrying out these crimes far exceed Anti-Social Behaviour.

Oak Tree Housing Association is committed to working with the Police and responding to requests for assistance with information whenever possible. We are also happy to pass on information that we receive from residents confidentially and anonymously.

## Complaints Feedback

During the autumn, we were looking at our complaints handling process. We carried out a survey of people who had submitted stage 2 complaints. These are the more complex complaints, which require more investigation or complaints which were not settled at stage 1.

Complaints are important to OTHA, as they are a useful barometer of when things are going wrong. Given the sheer number of repairs, anti-social cases and variety of ways we interact with our customers, it is inevitable that things go wrong sometimes. The aim of the complaints process is to accept when that has happened and learn from our mistakes going forward.

Sometimes, the expectation of a tenant or customer is out of line with the service that we provide. If a lot of people feel the same way, we can review it and make a change. In some cases, it is something that cannot be fixed or it simply is not reasonable for us for us to take action. Some people will be left dissatisfied if they have not got what they want from the complaints process even if it was well handled.

The feedback from our survey work of the most serious complaints was not very positive. We got a very small number of replies. We followed up with some discussions with people to tease out what they thought in more detail. Although more were happy with the ease of making the complaint and they were aware of how the process worked, most were unhappy with the outcome and the speed of our response. It did look like the outcome of the complaint had coloured the respondents' view in some cases. The feedback was useful and gave us lots to think about. Learning points from the survey and discussions were to be clearer in our explanations. If we cannot give the answer that the persons wants, we can at least be very clear why this is the case. Also, we need to work harder at resolving complaints quicker and within the SPSO timescales (20 working days or 4 weeks)

We would still like to get feedback about how we handle complaints. We would like to hear from you if you have been through our complaints handling process and have any thoughts about how it went. Whether or not you got the outcome you wanted, we want to know how we handled your concern.

If you want to make any comments now, contact Kate Dahlstrom using the normal methods – email [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk), phone leaving a message 01475 807000, or use our chat or message through the website or portal.



**Mexican Chicken Stew** - Ready in 45 minutes

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 12 skinless and boneless chicken thighs
- 1 large red onion, cut into wedges
- 3 peppers (any colours), deseeded and sliced
- 2 tsp smoked paprika or mild chilli powder
- 400g can chopped tomatoes with onion and garlic

### Method

Spray a deep, non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a high heat. Cut the chicken into large chunks and cook for 5-6 minutes or until browned on all sides. Reduce the heat to medium, add the onion, peppers and paprika or chilli powder and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes.

Add the chopped tomatoes then half-fill the can with water and add that too. Season lightly and bring to the boil then cover, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Serve hot.

E	X	D	Q	N	O	V	L	P	O	Y	H	E	Z	V	X	E	G	S	O	I	R	A	S	Y
S	X	E	K	Z	S	N	D	T	Y	L	I	G	M	D	L	P	P	N	J	E	S	F	J	O
N	S	J	N	B	D	B	R	V	H	I	Y	J	T	D	F	I	Y	U	K	H	H	P	S	B
Z	B	C	B	U	B	A	U	R	L	O	H	V	N	H	R	S	J	C	Q	A	Q	E	D	E
T	C	P	X	M	D	I	E	I	N	B	S	A	M	I	L	T	A	L	E	G	E	K	S	Q
R	N	H	Q	I	J	I	G	Y	I	F	C	H	T	W	U	R	Y	H	W	V	N	V	Q	F
E	C	Y	T	I	N	H	L	S	K	G	L	S	U	I	C	R	H	H	I	C	Y	S	Z	P
S	L	I	J	O	T	G	F	R	K	R	M	R	S	T	T	G	J	T	Y	E	E	R	I	K
G	O	U	E	S	F	X	S	W	S	E	N	Y	U	A	W	D	S	P	D	O	S	Q	B	K
N	T	L	Y	X	M	N	E	S	H	E	N	X	I	M	E	T	T	N	L	E	G	N	A	
S	L	K	G	Z	U	Z	A	N	Z	T	S	J	N	J	F	I	E	H	V	L	G	L	C	E
L	K	J	K	Q	B	B	S	O	P	I	Z	X	U	Y	B	H	G	F	R	G	I	A	K	J
N	H	E	K	N	B	M	O	W	I	N	I	R	Y	K	Q	Y	E	B	K	N	H	W	F	S
V	T	C	P	Y	I	K	N	M	Z	G	Q	X	F	N	I	Z	L	R	X	I	J	V	V	
I	W	X	M	J	M	N	L	A	X	S	T	O	C	K	I	N	G	S	K	D	H	A	E	S
U	X	G	E	D	P	E	T	N	D	R	A	C	N	X	Z	E	A	X	Z	D	V	J	B	A
M	U	L	S	U	X	R	P	O	I	Q	L	O	V	H	G	K	Z	T	V	U	F	Z	P	C
F	Z	E	K	D	L	Q	B	Y	Z	L	U	B	I	U	R	P	J	Q	L	P	N	T	R	

### Word List

ANGEL	LIGHTS	SNOWMAN
CANDLE	NOEL	SPIRIT
CARD	NUTCRACKER	STOCKINGS
FESTIVE	PUDDING	TRADITION
GREETINGS	SEASON	YULE



## Getting Your Feedback

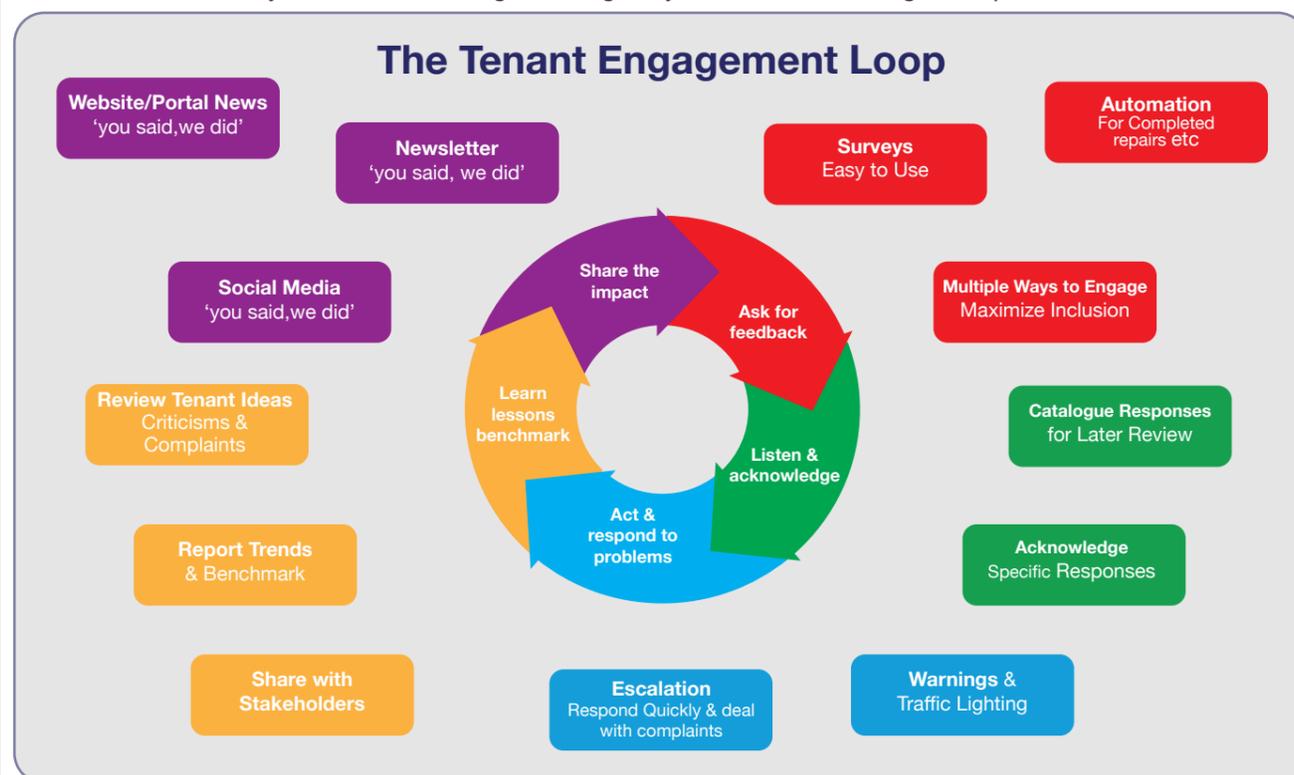
Each year we find lots of ways to speak to you and try to get your views. This helps us to make sure our services are doing what you and our other tenants want and need.

This year, things have been a bit disrupted to say the least! Our normal summer programme of events has had to be cut right down. Quite a lot of our policy work has been postponed. Where we have been getting in touch, it has been about the pandemic and how services are different during this difficult time. Lots of you have been in touch though to keep us on track.

### Engagement cycle

We have less actual engagement to tell you about this year. So why don't we look at what our engagement cycle looks like? Every time you speak to us to express an opinion, or answer a survey or submit a complaint, we record and use this as feedback.

We usually start a survey or hold meetings when we need feedback from you to fit in with work we are doing. Like when a policy is due for review or when we are thinking about making a change to our service or doing something new. A lot of our activities are on a cycle, so developing the budget and deciding on the rent increase needs feedback in time to inform that work and is done before the rent increase is due in April each year. We would also look back at feedback you have chosen to give during the year, like when making a complaint or comment.



Our engagement plan is getting back into gear as we move into the New Year. You can find the current plan on our website or by using this QR code (right). We are getting busy again (through digital means unfortunately) from January to March with the following:

- Rent increase consultation
- New tenant feedback
- Policy reviews: Rent Policy; Customer Engagement Policy; Customer Care Policy



OTHA WEBSITE  
QR Code

Perhaps more interesting, will be the chance for customers to visit and comment on the new office premises at West Stewart Street. We do not have a firm date to open yet, but it is likely to be around the end of March if the pandemic allows.

Also of importance to our tenants, Brian Praties, Development & Technical Manager, is likely to be consulting on cycles for planned maintenance. We have just got the results of a stock condition survey and it confirms what has been happening in practice when we do our inspections. Work such as replacing kitchens may need done less often. Currently on a 10-year cycle, we are finding they do not need replaced usually for 15 years. Changing this in our budget would make a significant saving allowing for a lower rent increase or expenditure on some other area of service.

## Crisis Intervention Officer – Sam Campbell



We were over the moon earlier this year to learn that our bid for funding had been successful and we could appoint a Crisis Intervention Officer for a temporary period of around 6 months.

We have had Sam Campbell working with us for 4 days a week since mid August 2020. We are working closely with the Financial Fitness team on this project and we are delighted with the progress that has been made so far.

We also share a Tenancy Support Officer post with Cloch and Larkfield Housing Associations and Tracey Blair has covered this post for some years now. The two posts are different, however, Tracey will work with new and established tenants on an intensive support basis to help them sustain their tenancy. The nature of the support can be very wide ranging and Tracey may work with someone for a lengthy period of time.

The Crisis Intervention Officer post is in place to help tenants who have found themselves at a crisis point specifically because of Covid 19.

Sam can signpost people to agencies who can provide practical support e.g. Branchton Community Centre, Belville Community Garden. She can also assist with applications for grants or benefits that will directly enhance the tenants income. Perhaps all that is needed is a friendly voice on a day when someone is feeling particularly down.

Since August 2020 our Housing Team have been keeping Sam busy by passing details of our tenants who we think might appreciate a call and we have some great examples of where this has helped those tenants.

If you have been affected by Covid 19 and feel that you could benefit from some support from Sam then please get in touch. We would love to hear from you. You can call 01475 807000 and ask for the Housing team or email [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk).

Here are some case studies to give examples of the kind of support Sam has been able to deliver so far:-

Miss C, a lone parent aged under 25, who had recently just started employment, contacted our Crisis Intervention Officer for some advice on benefits. Sam identified that Miss C had an entitlement to the Job Start Payment and supported the tenant to complete an application for this resulting in a successful award of a one off payment of £400 to help with the costs associated with starting a new job.

Mr M, a 72 year old man who suffered with ill-health was contacted by our Crisis Intervention Officer as part of our check in exercise with tenants due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Through this call Sam carried out a benefit check and was able to identify an entitlement to Pension Credit and Council Tax Exemption. The tenant was then referred to Financial Fitness for support to complete his claims, this resulted in successful awards totalling £67.81 per week (£3,278.12 yearly).

Miss L, a 28 year old lone parent was referred to our Crisis Intervention Officer as she had recently moved in to a new property but was struggling financially and unable to furnish her home. Sam identified a possible entitlement to a Community Care Grant and supported the tenant to complete this application resulting in a successful one off payment of £434.

## Contents Insurance



We provide information and promote the Thistle Tenants Risks Contents Insurance.

It is a product specifically designed for tenants and cover can start from just over £1 per week. There are several different ways to pay and there will be a level of cover and payment method to suit you.

Unfortunately many people think they don't need insurance cover because they don't have a lot of possessions. If you have a look round any of the rooms in your house and tally up how much it would cost to replace everything in the room you might be surprised.

All tenants are given information about contents insurance and the importance of having it when they sign for their tenancy and we promote it again at the new tenant visit.

When you are first moving in, it might not be the first item on your list but it is important and whilst we hope you never need to claim, it gives you piece of mind if something does go wrong.

We can post out an information pack or we can email one to you. Contact us on 01475 807000 or email [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk). Please get in touch if you would like more details.

There is also a helpful website <https://www.thistletenants-scotland.co.uk/>

Target Area	Task Targets	Target Times (Annual %)	Method of Measuring Performance	Performance Apr - Jun 2020	Performance Jul - Sept 2020
Answering Incoming Telephone Calls	Within 20 seconds	100%	Export of data from telephone system	N/A	97.68%
Return Telephone Call	By end of next working day	100%	Checking Complaints register & Customer Care survey for non-compliance	N/A	100%
Email Response	5 working days	100%	As above	100%	100%
Social Media Response	5 working days	100%	Facebook inbox & comments	100%	100%
Check New Housing Application, Point & Process	10 working days	100%	ICHR Housing Connections Software	1 date	97.7%
Time To Wait For an Appointment to see Specific Member of Staff	Same or next working day	95%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days)	N/A Office Closed	N/A Office Closed
Appointments Kept/ Attended on Time	Within 5 mins of agreed time	100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days)	N/A Office Closed	N/A Office Closed
Acknowledgement or Fully Respond to Written Enquiry	5 working days	95%	Incoming mail register	100%	100%
Behavioural Code of Committee, Staff & Contractors/Agents	Adherence to Code	100%	Based on complaints received via Complaints Handling Procedure	1 complaint	2 complaints
Behavioural Code of Customers	Adherence to Code	100%	Managers reporting incidents	1 incident	100%

From 2019 all social landlords must submit to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) an Annual Assurance Statement providing assurance that their organisation complies with the relevant requirements of chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. This includes regulatory requirements that apply to all social landlords and the Standards of Governance and Financial Management that apply to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

The Statement should be made and submitted by the RSL's governing body. Each landlord should confirm in its Statement its compliance with all of the relevant requirements at section 3 of the Framework. Where a landlord does not fully comply, it should set out in the Statement how and when it will make the necessary improvements to ensure compliance.

These assurance statements require to be submitted annually by the 31 October each year from 2019. However, this year due to the pandemic (COVID19) the SHR extended the deadline until 30th November 2020.

Below is the OTHA Annual Assurance Statement, for your information:




### Annual Assurance Statement by the Governing Body of Oak Tree Housing Association Ltd – November 2020

In considering our compliance with regulatory and legal requirements for our 2020 Annual Assurance Statement, we have taken into account the immense impact of the Covid19 pandemic and consequently the significant disruptive effect on businesses.

**Gaining the basis of Assurance**  
The evidence bank considered by the Governing Body combines reports, policies, advice and information which the Governing Body monitors and oversees on an ongoing basis throughout the year to provide continuous assurance that Oak Tree Housing Association (OTHA) and its Subsidiary Cloch Housing Association (CHA) is compliant. Additionally, the evidence bank incorporates relevant documents and information that contribute to our assurance and which form the structure of OTHA's business and governance activities. The evidence which supports this Statement includes:

- Reports about performance in key areas including finance, service delivery, asset management, development & risk
- Internal and External Audit reports
- Advice from external and specialist advisers
- Tenant Scrutiny reports and the outcomes from specific consultation
- Data analysis about our tenants and customers
- Benchmarking reports, advice and information from senior staff
- Regular reports from CHA, including Joint Internal Audit reports

In reviewing the evidence and assessing compliance, we have taken account of good practice advice and in considering our assurance both Associations continue to adopt an improvement focus. This includes Action Plans being implemented and progressed on an on-going basis.

**Covid19 Implications**  
Since March 2020, Covid19 has impacted on our service delivery including our ability to maintain full compliance with our gas safety requirements. There have been cases where gas servicing did not take place within the statutory 12-month period. This has been due to our contractor being unable to deliver the required service due to interpretation of restrictions and also due to tenant access restrictions. We have kept our tenants informed throughout and have provided safety advice to ensure that any emergency work is reported and actioned immediately. We have a rigorous system in place to rectify this and minimise any on-going non-compliance. We are kept apprised regularly on the position in respect of compliance with gas servicing requirements.

**Statement of Assurance**  
Taking into account the above declaration regarding COVID19 implications, the Governing Body of OTHA is satisfied that, to the best of our knowledge OTHA and our Subsidiary CHA are compliant with the requirements of Chapter Three of the Regulatory Framework and the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

**Ongoing Monitoring**  
We understand that we are required to notify the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) of any changes in our compliance during the course of the year and are assured that we have effective arrangements in place to enable us to do so.

**Authority to sign and submit**  
As Vice Chairperson, (Chairperson of the meeting) I was authorised by the Governing Body at its meeting held on 16th November 2020 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the SHR.

Signed *Vivienne Hearton*  
Date **16th November 2020**

# Inverclyde Mens Shed

We were very impressed to learn that the Inverclyde Mens Shed had won 'Shed of the Year 2020' and we were keen to know more about the project and get involved.

Like everything else this year, the project has been affected by Covid 19 but the Inverclyde Shed have launched a 'Digital Shed' during COVID to enable people to design things at home, get involved with digital fabrication and use remote working to connect with other people. The shed's members can access free software which allows them to design small items that can be sent directly to machines like a 3d printer, laser cutter and milling equipment. To date, all sorts of things have been made including earrings, stencils, vases, models, machine parts and much more. If you are interested in finding out more, have a look at their website and consider joining <https://inverclydeshed.co.uk/digital>

On the right are some photos of a small selection of the items made so far.

When running at full capacity, there is a workshop space at Captain Street, Greenock where the main craft and joinery workshop is. Unfortunately it is closed at the moment. There is a small supply of craft kits that can be given to members, things like wood carvings that can be done at home and there is a weekly "Virtual Shed" held via Zoom.

The other project is the Shore Street Community Garden in Gourrock adjacent to the George Wyllie Garden, both are open to the public 24/7. Now that winter is here things have slowed down a bit but there are still winter projects on the go that members can get involved with.

The shed operates on an open membership basis where all members can play an active role in the day to day operation, development and strategic direction of the Inverclyde Shed.

Membership costs £10 per annum and there is also a £1 donation every visit - these membership fees and contributions help to cover the basic running costs of the shed including utilities and tea, coffee and biscuits on a day to day basis.

Members have voting rights at regular monthly meetings and at the AGM to help direct the strategy of the shed and will also receive a monthly newsletter keeping them updated on the shed's activities.

Oak Tree Housing Association will pay the £10 membership fee for one year for any of our tenants who join. If you become a member and pay the £10 fee, please get in touch to let us know and we will refund the fee to you.

For more information please check out the website- <https://inverclydeshed.co.uk/> or their Facebook page – "Inverclyde Shed"

